

travelBulletin

AUGUST 2017

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travelBulletin

AUGUST 2017

Google's VISION FOR TRAVEL

NTIA 2017
EUROPE
AUSTRALIA
INDIA &
SRI LANKA
SPORTS TRAVEL
ARABIA

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TRIP TO THE
PHILIPPINES!
Details see p15





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Google's vision for travel

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From the publisher

Bruce Piper

THERE may still be some sore heads from last month's travel industry festivities, which included back-to-back celebratory weekends for some.

First cab off the rank was the Flight Centre Global Gathering in Hawaii, and by all accounts this year took the event to the next level. Headline acts included DJ and producer Mark Ronson alongside 80s British superstar pop band Duran Duran, whose performance saw a massive mosh pit populated by many of the older Flight Centre staffers. And as if that wasn't sensational enough, the keynote presenter was none other than former US president Bill Clinton, who captivated the crowd with his motivational speech. It will be hard to top the event next year, but Flight Centre is certain to give it a try with the 2018 Global Gathering set to take place in Berlin, Germany.

The following week it was the National Travel Industry Awards in Sydney. The 2017 NTIA for the first time took place at the International Convention Centre Sydney, with attendees universally praising the venue as a great improvement on the facilities used for the last few years while the ICC was under construction. The industry-wide event saw top agents and suppliers honoured, and *travelBulletin* was thrilled to once again be the media sponsor and to produce the themed program. There's full coverage of all the glitz and glamour in this issue.

AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury took the opportunity afforded by the awards ceremony to deliver an upbeat assessment of the future of the travel distribution sector. "Travel agents aren't going anywhere, and the sooner the analysts, journalists, futurists and doomsayers cotton onto this, we could all do so much better together. There is no question that the travel agent in Australia has a strong and prosperous future for decades to come," he said. Westbury also raised political hackles by aggressively urging the Federal Government to "get out of our way and allow us to thrive and continue to grow – despite what you may throw at us".

It was gratifying to see *travelBulletin* co-founder Ian McMahon granted Life Membership of the Australian Federation of Travel Agents during the NTIA opening. McMahon "is a man who has been in the travel industry all of his life...he has been dedicated to telling the stories that need to be told, speaking the truth, uncovering the scoop, having some fun along the way and when it really matters supporting the industry in any and every way he can," Westbury said.

I very much echo those sentiments. We at *travelBulletin* value Ian's legacy, with the magazine now a key part of the Business Publishing Group stable alongside *Travel Daily*, *Cruise Weekly* and *Business Events News*.

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travelBulletin

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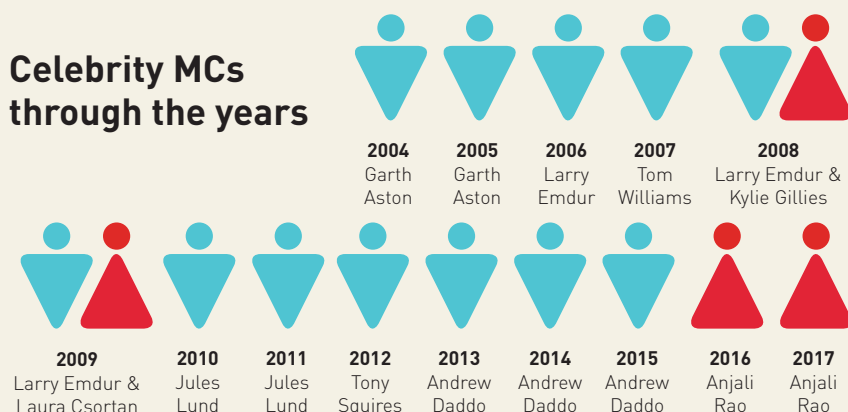
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NTIA TO 2017

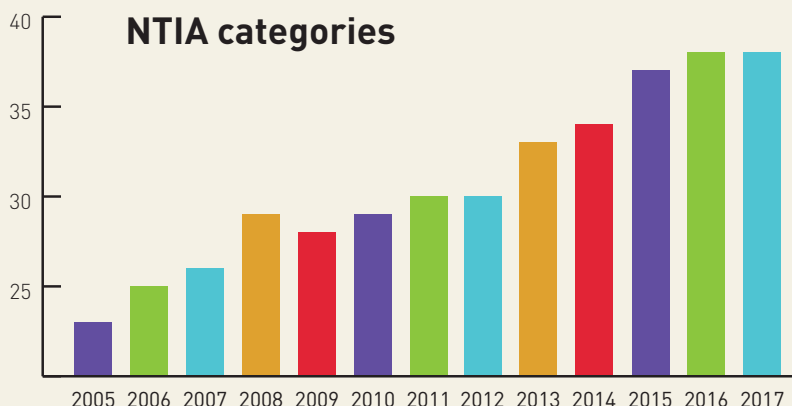
Celebrity MCs through the years



Number of nominations in 2017



NTIA categories



Aussie agents paid out from ALG collapse

THE January 2017 collapse of All Leisure Group, parent firm of Swan Hellenic and Voyages of Discovery, disrupted the travel plans of more than 13,000 clients – and also left a significant number of Australian travel agents out of pocket.

Some local intermediaries were reportedly stuck with hundreds of thousands of dollars in credit card chargebacks. While British consumers and travel agents were protected under arrangements with the UK Civil Aviation Authority and a bond held by the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), there was no such safety net for foreign travel agents or consumers, who looked to be left out in the cold.

However long-running efforts by AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury on behalf of Australian travel agents were rewarded last month with confirmation that ABTA will pay out more than \$1 million in compensation. Westbury travelled to London several times to negotiate the arrangements, which eventually saw AFTA successfully lodge 308 claims on behalf of its members. The moneys are believed to be currently in the process of being paid out – a fantastic result for the local travel sector.

John Thomas leaves Virgin unsatisfied

VIRGIN Australia's seeming succession plans took a backward step late last month, with the abrupt departure of John Thomas after less than a year with the carrier. The formerly US-based aviation consultant was appointed in late June 2016 to oversee Virgin Australia's domestic and international operations – and in the wake of his arrival

BUSINESS MONITOR

OUTBOUND MARKET

Top 10 destinations, May 2017

Destination	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Apr 17/ May 17	Trend May 16/ May 17
	000	000	000	%	%
Indonesia	97.8	99.2	98.3	+0.6	-9.9
USA	91.0	92.3	91.1	+1.3	+4.2
New Zealand	116.8	118.9	79.1	+1.0	+9.0
UK	50.8	51.8	71.1	-0.4	+5.0
China	42.6	46.7	44.8	+2.8	+15.1
Thailand	46.5	47.7	43.0	+1.7	+2.0
Fiji	27.1	28.8	26.4	-0.2	-1.6
Japan	33.8	33.0	25.8	+1.3	+13.9
Singapore	33.0	32.4	25.5	-0.9	+4.7
Italy	16.2	16.7	24.4	-1.7	+2.0
All outbound	850.8	867.1	809.0	+0.8	+3.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

INBOUND MARKET

Top 10 sources, May 2017

Source	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Apr 17/ May 17	Trend May 16/ May 17
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	111.9	111.9	104.8	-0.2	+0.6
China	108.2	109.1	79.3	+0.7	+8.2
USA	67.2	66.1	50.2	+1.9	+14.8
Malaysia	34.7	34.4	40.7	+2.1	+9.2
Singapore	39.4	40.3	38.0	+2.1	+4.1
India	23.9	24.5	31.0	+0.9	+12.0
UK	61.8	59.7	30.6	-0.1	+4.7
Japan	35.8	5.3	24.3	-0.4	+3.2
South Korea	24.4	24.6	20.3	+0.2	+3.6
Hong Kong	24.2	24.4	18.0	+2.5	+19.7
All inbound	734.9	734.3	579.1	+0.8	+7.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

Top 10 domestic city pairs at May 2017

City pair	Passengers YE May 16 (000)	Passengers YE May 17 (000)	% change
Melbourne-Sydney	8,768.1	8,943.1	+2.0
Brisbane-Sydney	4,585.3	4,685.0	+2.2
Brisbane-Melbourne	3,420.6	3,497.9	+2.3
Gold Coast-Sydney	2,696.5	2,704.5	+0.3
Adelaide-Melbourne	2,355.0	2,401.3	+2.0
Melbourne-Perth	2,121.1	2,054.3	-3.1
Gold Coast-Melbourne	1,855.5	1,989.6	+5.5
Adelaide-Sydney	1,863.7	1,880.0	+0.9
Perth-Sydney	1,760.6	1,739.7	-1.2
Hobart-Melbourne	1,514.1	1,595.3	+5.4

Source: BITRE

SINGAPORE CELEBRATES ITS 50TH



SINGAPORE Airlines took fifty Western Australian travel agents to Singapore for the Great Singapore Dash faml, which was part of the celebrations of SQ's 50th Anniversary.

The lucky participants competed in an 'Amazing Race' competition, using maps, tourist information and EZ-Link transport cards to navigate around landmarks such as the Merlion, Singapore Flyer, Gardens by the Bay, China Town and Little India. The weekend wrapped up with an awards dinner at the Village Hotel Changi, with Travel More taking away the top prize of two return business class tickets to anywhere on the SQ network.

SQ also celebrated the big birthday in Sydney with a special Friday night event featuring non other than Aussie rock legend Jimmy Barnes singing all his hits.

Helloworld profit upgrade

HELLOWORLD Travel has lifted its profit forecast, reporting full year EBITDA are likely to be "at the top end" of its earlier upgraded projections of \$52-55 million.

"We've seen positive growth in our air ticket sales across the retail and corporate networks in Australia and New Zealand, our wholesale and inbound businesses are benefitting from internal synergies and our corporate TMC business is continuing to grow," said chief executive officer Andrew Burnes.

In the same statement to the stock exchange, Helloworld Travel also announced it had signed eight stores to become fully branded Helloworld Travel outlets, including five in south-east Queensland converting from Associate membership, another two in Victoria and one in WA. They are the first stores to join the fully branded network since the launch of the updated "Helloworld Travel – The Travel Professionals" brand in May. The travel company will report on its full year results on 23 August.

New Flight Centre acquisitions

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group has moved forward on its plan to create a global destination management company (DMC) with the acquisition of Mexico-based Olympus Tours. The purchase was one of two offshore acquisitions announced last month, along with Bespoke Hospitality Management Asia (BHMA), a Thai regional operator of "design and lifestyle leisure hotels". Olympus has operations in Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica, and joins Flight Centre's

Continues over page

the carrier lost significant experience and expertise with the departure of chief commercial officer Judith Crompton, chief operating officer Gary Hammes and head of sales Shirley Field. Initiatives undertaken during Thomas' brief tenure included the new "Economy X" domestic product as well as the rejigging of the airline's Los Angeles services to offer trans-Pacific flights from all three major Australian east coast cities – as well as axing the short-lived plan to launch VA services from Perth to Abu Dhabi. Fairfax reported that management decided Thomas

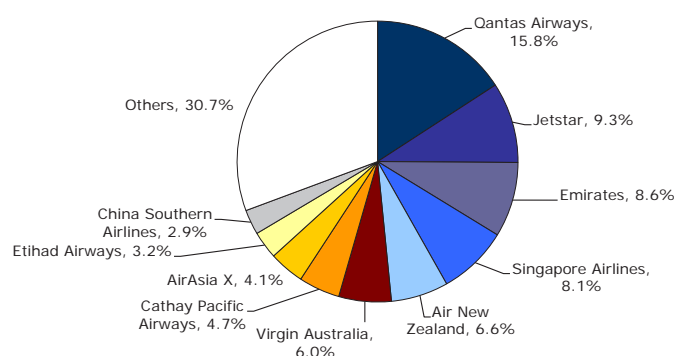
was "not the right fit" for the Virgin position.

Virgin Australia CEO John Borghetti continues to focus heavily on the airline's burgeoning partnerships with its major Chinese airline partners, Nanshan and HNA Group, which saw last month's launch (complete with Richard Branson) of non-stop services from Melbourne to Hong Kong as the "spearhead" of VA's Asian ambitions. Rob Sharp, CEO of Tigerair Australia, is currently acting in the operational role formerly held by Thomas while the company conducts a search for a replacement.

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

International passengers by major airline – year ended April 2017



Source: BITRE

DOMESTIC AIR MARKET – May 2017

	May 16	May 17	Growth (%)	Yr to May 16	Yr to May 17	Growth (%)
Total pax carried	4.67m	4.74m	+1.6	58.26m	59.17m	+1.6
Revenue pax kms (RPK)	5.40bn	5.44bn	+0.7	68.67bn	69.45bn	+1.1
Avail seat kms (ASK)	7.03bn	7.05bn	+0.3	89.12bn	88.60bn	-0.6
Load factor (%)	76.9	77.1	+0.3*	77.1	78.4	+1.3*
Aircraft trips (000)	52.7	53.0	+0.6	637.9	636.4	-0.2

Source: BITRE * Percentage points difference

DOMESTIC ON TIME PERFORMANCE – June 2017

	Arrivals on Time		Departures on Time		Cancellations	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jetstar	5,142	80.7	4,918	77.2	43	0.7
Qantas	7,652	89.5	7,738	90.5	64	0.7
QantasLink	8,695	86.5	8,676	86.4	273	2.6
REX	5,086	81.3	5,239	83.8	106	1.7
Virgin Australia	9,438	87.1	9,556	88.2	122	1.1
All Airlines	38,364	85.0	38,510	85.3	660	1.4

Source: BITRE

Continues from previous page

other recent DMC investments including in Vietnam-based Buffalo Tours.

“Expanding our in-destination network is a key global strategy and we are starting to develop strong foundations in this sector through our tour operators, DMCs and hotel management businesses,” Flight Centre managing director Graham Turner said.

Flight Centre is forecasting an underlying profit of \$325-\$330 million before tax, for the year to 30 June. The group gave a profit update last month after achieving record sales and strong growth in the second half. The company said it expected Total Transaction Value (TTV) to be more than \$20 billion for the full year, an increase on the \$19.3 billion recorded in 2015/16. Results were also boosted by record profits in the US and UK.

Dubai airline partnership

EMIRATES and low-cost carrier flydubai will leverage each other's networks to scale up their operations and accelerate growth as part of a new strategic partnership announced last month.

The partnership will include a new codesharing arrangement, set to roll out at the end of this year, along with an integrated network collaboration and coordinated flight scheduling. Through the alignment, the Dubai-based airlines aim to develop new city-pair connections along with a number of commercial, network planning, airport operations and customer journey initiatives and a coordinated frequent flyer program between Emirates' Skywards and flydubai's Open.

Currently, Emirates has a wide-body fleet of 259 aircraft operating to 157 destinations

and flydubai has 58 narrow-body Boeing 737s flying to 95 destinations – collectively offering flights to 216 airports globally.

By 2022, the duo plan to expand the number to 240 destinations using a fleet of 380 aircraft.

The arrangement will “unlock the immense value that the complementary models of both companies can bring to consumers, each airline, and to Dubai,” said HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Maktoum, chairman of Emirates Group and chairman of flydubai.

The Dubai government-run airlines will remain independently managed.

Mulpha selling Hayman

THE out-of-action Hayman Island resort in the Whitsundays is on the market for an expected \$300 million. Malay real estate bigwig Mulpha is offloading the resort after Kerner International operator One&Only pulled the pin on the Cyclone Debbie ravaged resort a few months ago.

Mulpha Australia has closed the resort until mid-next year for an extensive refurbishment and appointed commercial property sales agency McVay Real Estate to sell “one of the Asia Pacific's most luxurious and prestigious holiday destinations”.

The listing includes the iconic 160-room hotel, 15 residential estates on the island and the option to purchase four soon-to-be-completed multi-million dollar homes.

The website of the Queensland resort, currently branded as Hayman Island Great Barrier Reef, advises that the property is accepting reservations from June 2018. “We invite you to watch this space for details of our journey and look forward to sharing updates of the island's redevelopment with you,” the website says.

Mulpha has further tendered the management rights for the remainder of its Australian collection, which includes the InterContinental Hotel Sydney, InterContinental Sanctuary Cove Resort and Rydges Esplanade Cairns Resort.

US laptop bans lifted

THE United States has lifted its controversial ban on large personal electronic devices, including laptops.

The US Department of Homeland Security confirmed the devices are now allowed on flights to US destinations from the 10 airports in the Middle East which were targeted by the initiative, after the airports and airlines complied with the new standards.

Initiated in March, the ban was put into place to increase national security after intelligence was received that terrorists may be developing explosives which could be hidden in consumer electronics.

Many carriers quickly made a move to implement solutions to ease the inconvenience on passengers, including Qatar Airways' laptop loan service, which was rapidly followed by a similar service by Emirates.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) slammed the “woeful” process behind the measures, highlighting a lack of consultation with airlines, and Emirates scaled back its capacity on some US routes, citing a weakened travel demand.

At the end of June, US Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly revealed enhanced security screening measures for all commercial flights, which more than 280 airports – including the 10 targeted by the original laptop ban – complied with less than a month later.

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNET AGENCY MARKET SHARES

April 2017, compared with March 2017

Rank	Position	Visits Share	Relative Diff	Rank
Website	Feb 17	Feb to Jan	Jan 16	
Webjet Australia	15.98	-0.44	1	
Expedia Australia	11.70	-0.05	2	
Skyscanner Australia	9.56	+0.49	3	
Wotif.com	7.50	-0.48	4	
Flight Centre	6.82	+0.54	5	
Velocity Frequent Flyer	3.92	+0.34	6	
Luxury Escapes	2.73	+0.44	9	
Lastminute.com.au	2.60	+0.09	8	
Cheap Flights Aus & NZ	2.47	-0.07	7	
I Want That Flight!	1.70	-0.30	10	

Source: Hitwise, a division of Connexity

INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs (at April 2017)

City pair	Passengers YE Apr 16	Passengers YE Apr 17	% of total	% change 17/16
Auckland-Sydney	1,570,095	1,594,500	4.2	+1.6
Singapore-Sydney	1,474,592	1,456,682	3.8	-1.2
Singapore-Melbourne	1,267,436	1,391,651	3.6	+9.8
Auckland-Melbourne	1,165,265	1,210,850	3.2	+3.9
Singapore-Perth	1,109,550	1,131,649	3.0	+2.0
Hong Kong-Sydney	1,037,121	1,082,742	2.8	+4.4
Auckland-Brisbane	972,086	961,209	2.5	-1.1
Los Angeles-Sydney	931,530	882,337	2.3	-5.3
Denpasar-Perth	851,618	877,855	2.3	+3.1
Kuala Lumpur-Melb	794,076	840,300	2.2	+5.8
Top 10 city pairs	11,173,369	11,429,775	29.8	+2.3
Other city pairs	24,674,604	26,861,775	70.2	+8.9
ALL CITY PAIRS	35,847,973	38,291,550	100.0	+6.8

Source: BITRE

SHARE PRICES

at 19 July 2017

Flight Centre (FLT)	\$43.60
Helloworld (HLO)	\$4.30
Webjet (WEB)	\$12.045
Qantas (QAN)	\$5.505
Virgin Australia (VAH)	\$0.172
Ardent Leisure (AAD)	\$2.075
Air New Zealand (AIZ)	\$3.21
Auckland International Airport (AIA)	\$6.50
Sydney Airport (SYD)	\$6.87
Corporate Travel Management (CTD)	\$22.90
Village Roadshow (VRL)	\$4.13
Regional Express (REX)	\$1.065
Sealink (SLK)	\$4.04
Mantra Group Limited (MTR)	\$3.005

BIG BIRTHDAY FOR STAR ALLIANCE



THE Star Alliance marked a major milestone last month – and NTIA guests got all the presents, with member airlines generously donating tickets to attendees via a special branded napkin holder giveaway. During the industry night of nights six numbers were randomly selected, with prizes including return flights to Toronto with Air Canada, Japan with ANA, Asia on EVA Air, South Africa courtesy of South African Airways, Europe via Bangkok with Thai Airways and Turkish Airlines, and New York flying United.

Travel Daily HEADLINES

- 21 Jun Seabourn 18/19 program
- 21 Jun NSW gets funding boost
- 22 Jun Hainan adds BNE service
- 22 Jun QF enlists health experts
- 23 Jun Si to take on Infinity, QH
- 23 Jun EY ditches chauffeur service
- 26 Jun VA ACCC 'condition' risk
- 26 Jun New Mantra "masterbrand"
- 27 Jun Flight Centre, Airbnb pact
- 27 Jun Adelaide to host ATE '18
- 28 Jun Agent hacker pleads guilty
- 28 Jun AFTA chargeback solution
- 29 Jun \$1m payout for ALG agents
- 29 Jun US bumps up air security
- 30 Jun HLO announces new stores and new global head of sales
- 30 Jun HLO earnings push \$55m
- 30 Jun Regent Seven Seas boom
- 03 Jul Travel Counsellors shuffle
- 03 Jul Webjet concludes US JV
- 04 Jul StayWell sold to Prince
- 04 Jul Flight Centre departures
- 05 Jul FC forecasts profits up to \$330m
- 05 Jul Virgin debuts MEL-HKG
- 05 Jul APT expands senior ranks
- 06 Jul Closer Aus-Europe air ties
- 06 Jul VA plots domestic upgrade
- 07 Jul FLT shaping global DMC
- 07 Jul Velocity, HNA loyalty pact
- 10 Jul New Flight Centre TV show
- 10 Jul Alliance adds RPT routes
- 11 Jul People's Choice finalists
- 11 Jul Velocity partner changes
- 12 Jul Tigerair short-haul scope
- 12 Jul Serko, Air NZ partnership
- 13 Jul Airbnb 'loopholes' blasted
- 13 Jul China flights for Darwin
- 14 Jul Tempo Signature range
- 14 Jul Hayman Island for sale
- 17 Jul Star to splurge at NTIAs
- 17 Jul Apollo takes off in Canada
- 18 Jul Emirates, flydubai union
- 18 Jul Travelport's agency app
- 16 Jun AFTA annual report out
- 19 Jun OPC winding up on 01 Jul
- 19 Jun Luxury Escapes adds tours
- 20 Jun TD wins AFTA Travel Pages
- 20 Jun TNZ revitalises 100% Pure

ATG leadership restructure

APT Travel Group (ATG) managing director Chris Hall has unveiled a new senior management team, in preparation for his plans to step back from the day-to-day running of the business.

Hall will instead focus on new opportunities, partnership growth, product enhancements, acquisitions, market development and distribution, and in raising the profile of the Group globally. The team will report to Hall and includes David Cox, CEO Travelmarvel and Steve Reynolds, CEO APT.

Debra Fox has been promoted to chief

commercial officer and will be responsible for many of the shared service teams, along with all key commercial agreements with trade partners, while Ashleigh Smith will re-join ATG after a three-year hiatus in the newly-created role of chief people officer.

ATG's executive team will remain unchanged aside from the addition of Justine Lally as general manager marketing and of Mary Arbuckle, who has been promoted to head of digital.

Hall said the assembling of the team put the Group "in a much stronger position to leverage opportunities between brands while also setting our sights on future growth".

AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS

International passengers through Australia's major international airports – April 2017

Airport	Passengers YE Apr 16	Passengers YE Apr 17	% of total	% change 17/16
Sydney	14,386,524	15,383,863	40.2	+6.9
Melbourne	9,148,264	9,857,612	25.7	+7.8
Brisbane	5,299,713	5,540,225	14.5	+4.5
Perth	4,249,995	4,402,436	11.5	+3.6
Gold Coast	994,319	1,106,446	2.9	+11.3
Adelaide	853,299	948,618	2.5	+11.2
Cairns	598,621	642,658	1.7	+7.4
Darwin	257,338	283,114	0.7	+10.0
Canberra [*]	n/a	51,643	0.1	n/a
Townsville [^]	23,259	43,394	0.1	+86.6
Sunshine Coast [*]	17,376	13,728	0.0	-21.0
Norfolk Island	11,079	10,364	0.0	-6.5
Port Hedland [~]	8,156	7,449	0.0	-8.7
All Airports	35,847,973	38,291,550	100.0	+6.8

^{*}Scheduled services recommenced September 2015 [^]Seasonal services only

[~]Scheduled services recommenced September 2016 [~]Scheduled services recommenced April 2015

ATAS ACCREDITED LOCATIONS

at 20 April 2017

New South Wales	995
Victoria	718
Queensland	605
Western Australia	290
South Australia	228
Australian Capital Territory	49
Tasmania	42
Northern Territory	22
TOTAL	2,950

Got something to say?

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

haveyoursay@travelbulletin.com.au



Steve Jones' Say

I POPPED into a travel agent a couple of weeks ago to see what advice they could offer me on Antarctic cruises. My other half and I soon reach the same milestone birthday so what better time to treat ourselves to the trip of a lifetime. We're off across the Drake Passage, which is a walk in the park I understand.

After listening to my enquiry, the agent presented me with a stack load of brochures, all beautifully produced with high quality, alluring images of The Great White Continent and its charming inhabitants.

"Great," I said, "but I won't take them all. They obviously cost money. I'll have a quick flick through, take one or two and look online for the rest."

"Oh no", the mildly amused consultant replied, "They're free, take them all."

Yes, free for you and I but someone has paid for them, not least the environment, I snorted from my big green high horse.

I didn't actually say that, but I did politely explain what I meant, before departing with

fewer brochures than the forest he had originally thrust into my straining arms.

Over the next two or three days I began to notice just how many brochures are still produced. I went into several agencies to see piles of them stacked in cupboards and storerooms, the vast majority of which will fail to render a single booking.

It must be two decades ago now that I was writing about the death of the holiday brochure. It was about the time us know-it-alls were predicting bricks and mortar agents were, well, about to hit a wall.

With the internet becoming a thing, commentators were also predicting the end of the expensively-produced, expensively-distributed physical brochure. Holidaymakers won't want those anymore, not with the arrival of online resources. Operators, who had long bemoaned brochure costs, were about to save a mint. So what happened?

In fairness, distribution has got a lot smarter. Technology has enabled wholesalers to target their distribution far

more effectively, thereby eliminating waste.

But the volume of brochures produced is still clearly enormous. Shouldn't we be making renewed attempts to scale back brochure production by directing people to view them online? If the consultant I spoke to – perfectly pleasant as he was – had given me website details of where I could find the relevant information, I'd have walked out perfectly happy.

Agents may regard it as counter intuitive to encourage online research, but the prospect of losing a booking would, in reality, be no greater than someone walking out of their agency with a physical brochure.

As consumers, if we are handed something, we will generally take it. If something is taken away, we'll find alternative ways.

Maybe the industry needs to take action to almost force consumer behaviour to change, rather than wait for change to happen naturally. In an industry of tight margins, the savings from reduced brochure production and distribution should not be sniffed at.

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TRAVELTEK SETS ITS SIGHTS BEYOND CRUISE

TECHNOLOGY provider Traveltek is set to expand beyond its cruise industry stronghold as part of a worldwide growth plan.

Having been boosted by a private equity injection of more than £5 million (\$8.25 million) last October, the Scottish-based company has opened new offices in Singapore and Hong Kong in recent months and plans further offices in Latin America, North America, Europe and mainland China.

At the same time in Australia, Traveltek's Asia-Pacific regional director Paul Millan is preparing to raise the profile of the company's products beyond cruise to include a new focus on other retailers, wholesalers and consortia – areas the company already operates in, though with a lesser profile.

"For the last few years we've been known as the cruise tech guys, so

as we expand the product range in this market that's my focus – to really get out there among the non-cruise businesses," he said, adding that the Traveltek platform was equally suited to all areas of leisure travel, retail and wholesale.

"Essentially what we have is a platform that allows travel agents to search and book a variety of travel suppliers, pulling in content from GDS, hotel bed banks, car providers, attractions – anything that can be searched and dynamically built up in a basket to give them

a single item for the consumer," Millan said. "That can be done on a desktop, in an agency or online on a consumer website."

Traveltek's key offerings include its iSell point-of-sale product and the iTour product which allows agents and wholesalers to manage their own stock and contracts.

Both are used by the Flight Centre Travel Group which recently re-signed Traveltek for a second five-year term, allowing its Infinity wholesale arm to utilise them under the names Onboard for cruise and Ontrack for rail.

Other new products are planned, including a significant renewal of the Traveltek platform which will provide a next-generation web sales tool.

"We've got a fairly busy product road map," Millan said. "In the next couple of months we will be rolling out Traveltek NX and it's a rebuild of our online offering.

"We are really bringing together the three key pillars of acquisition, booking and loyalty," he said. "We're enabling travel agents and consumers to communicate much better during the enquiry through to booking and post-booking stage."

Millan said Traveltek NX would include new communication features such as messaging capabilities on services like Facebook Messenger and Whatsapp, allowing agents to communicate with consumers throughout the sales process as well as during and after the holiday.

The first phase of Traveltek NX will be a consumer facing booking process for release in the third quarter of this year, followed soon after by second-phase enhanced CMS tools and a third phase of enhanced customer features.



AFTA VIEW

Jayson Westbury, chief executive AFTA

BY NOW I am sure readers of *travelBulletin* would be well aware of the latest industry based initiative launched by AFTA last month in the form of the AFTA Insolvency Chargeback Scheme (AICS). This scheme has been in the making for some time and already the interest and participation by travel agents across the country is extensive.

It was to be expected as this scheme resolves a problem that has plagued the travel agency community for decades. How does a travel agent protect themselves against a credit card chargeback when a supplier collapses?

For years, concepts and ideas including insurance options have been considered but all the while resulted in expensive and selective solutions. Now this AFTA led industry scheme solves the problem once and for all.

The AICS scheme is free for travel agents to participate in thanks to changes to the credit card surcharging legislation and rules that the Federal Government brought in last year.

Basically what this all means is that travel agents can surcharge consumers for the use of debit and credit cards and include a small cost built into the surcharge to cover the risk of a chargeback. This means that no longer do travel agents who decided to participate in the scheme have to be concerned at all about accepting credit cards from consumers for travel purchases.

It is a simple, legal, cost effective and sensible approach to the problem and clearly from the response that we have already received being viewed by travel agents as an excellent solution.

For all the detailed information about the scheme, who is covered, how it works and who can participate, simply jump onto the www.afta.com.au home page and head to the AICS page. Of course as with all things AFTA, participants must be ATAS accredited in order to comply with the new schemes requirements.

On a final note, the NTIA last month proved to once again be an important event for the travel industry with our biggest event ever being held at the International Convention Centre Sydney. It was great to see so many from within the industry get together for a night of nights and share in the joy and celebration as the winners were announced.

37 categories awarded on the night with guests finding the new venue and format enjoyable, relaxed and something new to look forward to for years to come.

As our major sponsor, Qantas once again provided spectacular support for the event including many giveaways to experience the new 787 *Dreamliner* flight from Perth to London. Can't wait to give that go myself as it just sounds like a great idea and different way to get to London.

I can't forget to also thank all of the wonderful sponsors who put their trust and support behind AFTA each year as we produce the night of nights for the travel industry. I look forward with great expectation to the NTIA 2018 when we get to do it all over again.

‘It is a simple, legal, cost effective and sensible approach to the problem [of chargebacks]’

AFRICA 2018

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Aussies voice their love for Paris

ATOUT France has launched a new marketing campaign in Australia featuring a succession of local celebrities from movie director Baz Luhrmann to Tour de France winner Cadel Evans.

Called J'aime Paris (I love Paris), the campaign was launched last month to coincide with Bastille Day and has been running on SBS and across the country in cinemas. Atout France Australia deputy director Marc Humphries said the campaign featured seven Australian celebrities showing their love for the Paris region.

"It shows that the position Paris holds in the people's hearts has not changed and that Parisians welcome Aussie travellers with open arms," Humphries said.

The 45-second commercial also features singer Tina Arena, actor Paul Hogan, production designer Catherine Martin, chef Guillaume Brahimi and fashion designer Collette Dinnigan.

Humphries said the campaign was a big first for the tourism board and was about getting people back to the country after past terrorist incidents.

"Australians are faithful return travellers to France with just over 1.2 million travelling there in 2016, visiting the monuments and museums, shopping and walking around the Parisian streets and parks as well as further afield," he said.

The TV and cinema campaign has been produced in collaboration with the Paris Ile-de-France regional tourism body and Air France.

GDS 'GANGLAND WARS'

THE move by British Airways to begin imposing a surcharge on GDS bookings was a hot topic at last month's Travelport Live conference in Sydney. One of the most colourful descriptions of the situation came from Simon McKearney, GM of Helloworld in New Zealand who described it as having the potential to erupt in a gang war. "Currently it's more like a drive-by shooting," he said, with BA parent IAG set to launch the levy in November this year.

AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury also slammed the BA plan as pitting the carrier against the global travel agency community. "I think someone has jumped the gun," he said, with options to avoid the surcharge including a yet-to-be launched direct portal or software development linking to an API which also has not been released at this stage. Travelport's senior VP of agency commerce, Jason Clarke, told delegates Lufthansa had been impacted by fallout from its own GDS fee introduced in 2015. "What we've seen from our customers is a certain level of cross-selling to alternate airlines that run competitive routes," he said.



ATEC VIEW

Peter Shelley, managing director ATEC

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

IT'S a familiar story. Australia's tourism industry continues to shine and the expectation is this will be sustained by the strong growth trajectory of our key emerging tourism economies – China, India and Indonesia.

As I move around the industry I often find myself engaged in very positive discussions regarding its future. Right now, industry expectations are that Asia will continue to dominate our inbound visitation numbers and spend while traditional markets will continue to deliver growth, but to a lesser extent and the yield associated with many of these markets will ensure strong engagement by the broader industry.

So where should our industry place its greatest effort?

It would be of no surprise to hear that inbound air capacity to Australia grew 11.6% in 2015-16

and looks to have grown around the same for the 2016-17 period. The expectation is that this growth will continue at a strong but lesser rate for the coming few years with the strongest growth to be sourced from China, India and Japan.

As an island destination, Australia is very dependent on its ability to attract and maintain air capacity, but there is some concern this level of seat growth may be unsustainable if capacity is not matched by demand – a positive challenge.

Right now, Australian tourism is in a good place. The lower dollar of recent years has made us more affordable for many of our key markets, we have less involvement with geopolitical issues which make us a more attractive destination, and oil prices are low enough to provide competitive airfares and make long-haul travel to Australia more appealing.

But as we learnt from our experiences with the Japan market back in the late 90's, Australia's affordability is a key component of our success. Back in 1992, Japan accounted for 24.2% of Australia's inbound market and we claimed almost 6% of all Japanese overseas travellers. But by 1997, when the Japanese economy was biting the hip pockets of its travellers, Australia had lost significant market share and many in the industry suffered the harsh consequences.

Conversely, back then Australia was caught in the perfect storm. We were expensive, at a distance and Japanese visitors had less money in their pockets, closer Asian destinations were winning out. Collectively, we have learnt an important lesson with most businesses actively engaged in the inbound market implementing a more diversified approach in the market place.

As always, forward planning is all about balancing risk, there is no doubt there is an abundance of opportunity for Australia to grow its market share of international travellers, however, one always needs to keep a firm eye on external global influences which can act as a handbrake on future opportunities.

‘As an island destination, Australia is very dependent on its ability to attract and maintain air capacity...’

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2017 TRAVEL INDUSTRY EXHIBITION

THIS year's fourth annual Travel Industry Exhibition for the first time also included a paid conference stream, with a host of high profile speakers providing intriguing insights for delegates to apply in their professional and personal lives. The show was formally opened by Trent Zimmerman, formerly deputy CEO of the Tourism and Transport Forum and now member of parliament for North Sydney who spoke about the huge potential for tourism and travel to help drive the Australian economy. Other presenters explained the opportunities afforded by social media channels such as Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook, while others provided case studies on marketing, customer experience & engagement and business success strategies.

Day two of the Sydney and Melbourne events included travel industry experts such as Michael Chase-Smith from Orbit World Travel and Amadeus commercial manager Justin Montgomery. The conference sessions, hosted by urbane master of ceremonies Sam McCool, were complemented by a trade exhibition where a number of fascinating destinations and suppliers were on show. Wholesalers such as Ormina Tours were present alongside

representatives from Ethiopia, Uganda and Mexico, while South Asian destinations were also out in force including India, Bhutan, Nepal, Sarawak and Myanmar. Other suppliers present included consolidators, the SkyTeam airline alliance, travel industry employment specialists and home-based agency groups. Alongside the paid conference stream, free workshops were offered on the show floor at which delegates were provided with updates from exhibitors as well as a session on career development from the Travel Industry Mentor Experience.

Both the Sydney and Melbourne Travel Industry Exhibition and Conference events included the *travelBulletin* Christmas in July networking events, at which exhibitors, attendees and special guests mingled before a number of prizes were awarded. In Sydney the major winner was Michael Davis-Smith of Cruiseabout Rose Bay, who was thrilled to win an exotic 18-day tour package visiting Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran, courtesy of exhibitor Silk Road Travel. Global Heritage Tours also generously provided three prizes of trips to Yangon, Siem Reap and Bhutan which were won by some of the other travel agents present on the evening.





IN FLIGHT

Virgin Australia

The route

Melbourne to Hong Kong

The plane

Airbus A330-200

Class

Business Class

The seat

Virgin Australia has deployed its award-winning 'The Business' product on its newest international route, with the Melbourne-Hong Kong flights described by CEO John Borghetti as "the spearhead of our move into Asia". Passengers on board the inaugural included Virgin Group founder Richard Branson, who delighted passengers by making several in-flight announcements.

The Business product features lie-flat seats in a 1-2-1 configuration, giving every passenger up the front aisle access. A large table slides forward for dining and also provides a convenient workspace and easy access to in-seat power, USB and entertainment connections. When it's time for a nap the crew provide a turn-down service, fitting a comfy seat cover and offering pyjamas, with the seat converting to a 203cm bed. While the seat product is the same as provided on VA's flights to Los Angeles, the Hong Kong A330s don't have the in-flight bar fitted to the B777s used for the US services.

Entertainment

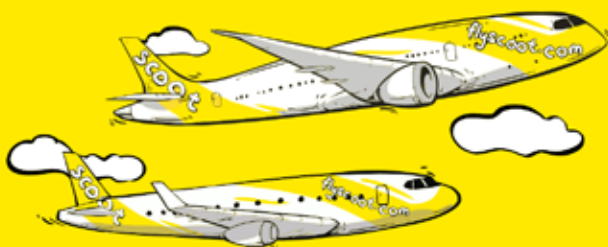
The Business features the absolute latest in in-flight entertainment, with a highly responsive, easy-to-use 16-inch touch screen interface. A wide array of new release movies and TV shows is on offer, along with an extensive library of old favourites and audio content. Business class passengers are also provided with noise-cancelling headphones.

Service and Food

The crew on the maiden Melbourne-Hong Kong flight were extremely attentive and enthusiastic about the new route. Virgin sees its polite, capable, engaging crew as a key differentiator from its competitors and they certainly exceeded expectations on this inaugural flight. Menus in The Business are designed by VA's culinary ambassador Luke Mangan, and comprised a good selection of western and Asian meals complemented by some excellent wines.

Lounge

Premium passengers are able to board the aircraft first, or at their leisure. In Melbourne VA is using the deluxe Etihad Airways lounge for those travelling in The Business, providing a good offering of breakfast prior to the 9.40am departure. In Hong Kong VA has partnered with Hong Kong Airlines to use its "Club Bauhinia" Lounge near gate 23 in terminal 1.



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INDUSTRY PAYS TRIBUTE TO RUSSELL BUTLER



LAST month's departure by long-serving Avis Travel Industry Manager, Russell Butler, has marked the end of an era, with his contributions to the industry spreading far beyond his role with the car rental firm. Butler had been with Avis for more than 28 years, establishing a phenomenal network of industry relationships, and during that time was also the driving force behind the highly successful Avis Travel Agent Scholarship of Excellence.

Celebrating two decades last year, the Scholarship program has bolstered the careers of many rising travel industry stars, with winners acclaimed for their focus on customer service, each year taking home a swag of prizes worth more than \$40,000 courtesy of key sponsors including Qantas, Avis, AFTA, CLIA and many more.

"I could never have envisaged the success the program has enjoyed for the past 20 years," Butler told *travelBulletin*. "It's not simply about the fact that the award has endured, it's about the calibre of the winners,

people like Penny Spencer, Michelle Ashcroft, Robyn Sinfield and many more. So many extraordinary travel agents have used the Scholarship as an opportunity to reflect on what they do, which has then given them the confidence to go on and grow and do so much more," he said.

‘So many extraordinary travel agents have used the Scholarship as an opportunity to reflect on what they do, which has then given them the confidence to go on and grow and do so much more’

Russell Butler
Avis Travel Industry Manager

The scholarship has also been driven by the Avis Travel Agents Advisory Board, a group of key influencers who have helped shape the car rental firm's approach to the trade. "The program has enormous credibility, and one of the reasons is that since its launch we have never stopped critically reassessing every element, which means it has never ceased evolving and improving," Butler said. Another key aspect has been the strong focus on customer service, "because despite the extraordinary changes across the travel industry, outstanding customer service has remained central to the success of retail travel businesses," he added.



Russell was also on the AFTA board in the 1990s, and was instrumental in organising the Federation's 1997 conference in India. He joined the Sydney chapter of industry networking group SKAL International in 1993, becoming president in 2003. In 2005 he joined the SKAL Australia national executive, serving as National President from 2009 to 2014 – a period which saw him chair the organising committee for the SKAL World Congress which took place in Sydney in 2010.

Butler is relocating to the NSW southern highlands with wife Diane, who has established a tourism and travel consulting business, while he considers his next move. A recent event in Sydney to celebrate the pair's contributions saw a host of senior industry figures present, including many who flew in from across the country, such as Phil Hoffmann, Max Najjar, Michelle Ashcroft and Trevor Jones alongside locals Steve Limbrick, Peter Collins, Mike Thompson, Bob Lunnon and Brett Jardine.



Diane and Russell Butler

WIN A TRIP TO THE PHILIPPINES

THE PRIZE

This month, travelBulletin and Travel Daily together with Philippine Airlines, The Peninsula Manila and Henann Regency Resort and Spa Boracay are giving readers the chance to win an island getaway to the Philippines. The prize for two people includes:

Return economy class tickets from Sydney to Manila
flying with Philippine Airlines

Two nights accommodation at The Peninsula Manila

Three nights accommodation at Henann Regency
Resort and Spa Boracay

TO WIN

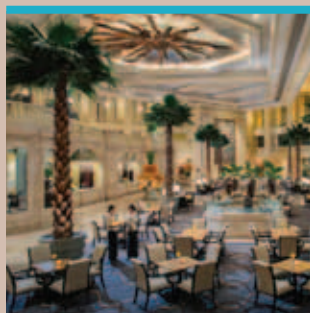
Send us your most creative image, photo, collage, meme or photoshop creation which represents your ideal Philippines island destination experience flying Philippine Airlines **AND** tell us about that experience in 50 words or less.

Send your entries to pal@traveldaily.com.au

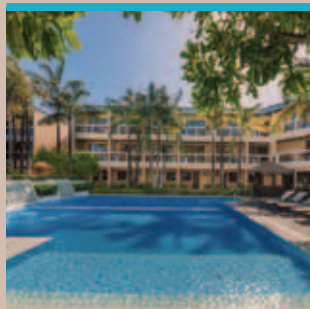
And remember, you don't have to have been to the Philippines yet, just be creative!



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HENANN REGENCY allows you to relax and experience the crystal clear waters and powder-white sand of Boracay island. With the resort's striking Mediterranean-inspired architecture, landscaped gardens and expansive beach front, it stands unparalleled in facilities and service on the entire island.



Ignite's 'My' brands have previously focused on island destinations but are now expanding into Dubai, and further into the South Pacific and Asia.

IGNITE JUST STARTING TO FIRE UP

When Australia's largest retail travel agency buys into your business, it doesn't mean they'll take over your future direction. Guy Dundas talks with Ignite Travel Group's CEO Ryan Thomas about the travel company's partnership with Flight Centre Travel Group, 11 months after it acquired a 49% stake in the Gold Coast-based travel package specialist.

RYAN Thomas has been involved with Ignite Travel Group since "day dot" as a founding shareholder in 2005, took sabbatical leave and moved to Asia in 2012 to head up the regional division for the world's largest security company, G4S, and returned to Queensland at the start of 2016 when a deal between Ignite and Flight Centre was in the wings.

By way of background, Ignite Travel Group is the parent company of RewardsCorp and Ignite Holidays, which comprises the brands My Holiday Centre (MyBali, Fiji, Maldives, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Thailand, Malaysia, Queensland and MyCruises), Holiday Exclusives and the newest brand to the stable, GET LUXE and its "sharper priced" short-life package specials.

It was Thomas' mission to oversee a smooth integration between Ignite and Flight Centre, with FCTG's Escape Travel the first cab off the rank to start selling the GET LUXE global holiday offers at its network of 150+ stores since October. Escape Travel was the test vehicle used to establish and iron out systems, processes, software, financing and accounting before launching with Flight Centre's 1,200 shops around the country just last month.

"We're spending the first two months on store engagement and then we're hitting them with a really above-the-line campaign to really bring brand awareness of the GET LUXE

brand to the market," he said.

And in FY18, expect to see GET LUXE distribution expanded to Cruiseabout offices in Australia and New Zealand, and then a greater global roll out.

On the growth-front, Thomas revealed that more 'My' brands were in the pipeline to be unveiled over the next three to six months, firstly MyDubai and then further into the South Pacific and Asia.

The Ignite CEO said the agreement with Flight Centre had been advantageous "in that they've left us alone".

"We are still very much an independent business run on the Gold Coast," Thomas said. "They understand that we're a young entrepreneurial business that needs to be kept that way and not sucked into the big beast."

'They understand that we're a young entrepreneurial business that needs to be kept that way and not sucked into the big beast'

Ryan Thomas, CEO
Ignite Travel Group

"It's great. It gives us the freedom for what we want to do. We think a bit differently to what the normal trade does. The arrangement with Flight Centre allows us to keep doing what we are good at."

A touring product is also under consideration, Thomas revealed to *travelBulletin*, saying Ignite would benefit from Flight Centre's vast experience in the touring

space with Back-Roads.

"We do see in the future, particularly touring, to be part of the GET LUXE group of products".

"We haven't explored it too much, so there's lots of options for us. There are opportunities to create some bespoke stuff, but that's offset with Back-Roads. We can utilise what they've already got."

Flight Centre Travel Group's global reach and network of offices abroad was another part of Ignite Travel's strategy to form the partnership.

"New Zealand and the US, they're the two international locations we're looking at starting up offices before we roll out further to South Africa and the UK," he disclosed. "It's a little too soon to say, but most likely the US office would be based with Flight



Centre head office in New York."

Thomas said the Flight Centre partnership was well on track to meet its total transaction value (TTV) target of \$100 million for FY18. He described the growth in business since aligning with FCTG as "fairly steady".

"But the next 12 months now that we've launched into Flight Centre branded stores, we're expecting huge growth opportunities".

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FBI Travel

CATEGORY 4 // BEST TRAVEL AGENCY RETAIL – MULTI LOCATION

Phil Hoffmann Travel

CATEGORY 5 // BEST TRAVEL AGENCY CORPORATE – SINGLE LOCATION

Spencer Travel

CATEGORY 6 // BEST TRAVEL AGENCY CORPORATE – MULTI LOCATION

Goldman Travel Corporation

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CATEGORY 9 // BEST ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCY (OTA)

TripADeal
www.tripadeal.com.au

CATEGORY 10 // BEST BUSINESS EVENTS TRAVEL AGENCY

The Events Authority

CATEGORY 11 // BEST TRAVEL CONSULTANT – RETAIL

Lena Nielson
Flight Centre Sydney International Airport NSW

CATEGORY 12 // BEST TRAVEL CONSULTANT – CORPORATE

Alison Irwin
Stage & Screen Travel Services NSW

CATEGORY 13 // BEST TRAVEL AGENCY MANAGER – RETAIL SINGLE LOCATION

Danny Englman
FBI Travel VIC

CATEGORY 14 // BEST TRAVEL AGENCY MANAGER – RETAIL MULTI LOCATION

Stuart Ingram
Destination HQ VIC

CATEGORY 15 // BEST TRAVEL AGENCY MANAGER – CORPORATE SINGLE LOCATION

Chérie Drummond
Corporate Travel Management NSW

CATEGORY 16 // BEST TRAVEL AGENCY MANAGER – CORPORATE MULTI LOCATION

Andre Moten
Corporate Travel Management QLD

CATEGORY 17 // YOUNG AGENT OF THE YEAR

Millicent Rusby
Carlson Wagonlit Travel SA

CATEGORY 18 // BEST DOMESTIC AIRLINE

Virgin Australia

CATEGORY 19 // BEST INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE – ONLINE

Emirates

CATEGORY 20 // BEST INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE – OFFLINE

Finnair

CATEGORY 21 //
BEST CRUISE OPERATOR – DOMESTIC DEPLOYMENT

Royal Caribbean International

CATEGORY 22 //
BEST CRUISE OPERATOR – INTERNATIONAL DEPLOYMENT

Royal Caribbean International

CATEGORY 23 //
BEST RIVER CRUISE OPERATOR

APT

CATEGORY 24 //
BEST TOUR OPERATOR – DOMESTIC

Contiki

CATEGORY 25 //
BEST TOUR OPERATOR – INTERNATIONAL

Topdeck Travel

CATEGORY 26 //
BEST CAR/CAMPERVAN RENTAL OPERATOR

Hertz

CATEGORY 27 //
BEST TOURIST OFFICE – INTERNATIONAL

Tourism New Zealand

CATEGORY 28 //
BEST SPECIALTY WHOLESALER

Wendy Wu Tours

CATEGORY 29 //
BEST WHOLESALER – AUSTRALIAN PRODUCT

Sunlover Holidays

CATEGORY 30 //
BEST WHOLESALER – INTERNATIONAL PRODUCT

Qantas Holidays & Viva Holidays

CATEGORY 31 //
BEST AGENCY SUPPORT SERVICE

Cover-More Travel Insurance

CATEGORY 32 //
BEST SALES EXECUTIVE – INDUSTRY SUPPLIER

Elizabeth Hutchison
Air New Zealand

NSW

CATEGORY 33 //
YOUNG SALES EXECUTIVE – INDUSTRY SUPPLIER

Stephanie Hu
Fantasea

NSW

CATEGORY 34 //
BEST HOTEL/RESORT GROUP

Shangri La Hotels and Resorts

CATEGORY 35 //
BEST REGISTERED TRAVEL INDUSTRY TRAINING INSTITUTION

The Learning Collaborative (Travel Training Australia)

CATEGORY 36 //
BEST TRAVEL WRITER – CONSUMER

Julie Miller

CATEGORY 37 //
BEST TRAVEL AGENT TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

Custom Designed Group Management System
Travel & Sports Australia

CATEGORY 38 //
EMIRATES TRAVEL CONSULTANT SCHOLARSHIP

Stefania Lasek
Travel by Design

NSW

CATEGORY 39//
**PEOPLE'S CHOICE
– ATAS TRAVEL AGENCY OF THE YEAR**

Kingscote Travel

SA/NT

NTIA 2017



MC Anjali Rao with Express Travel Group's Tom Manwaring



AS THE exclusive media sponsor of the National Travel Industry Awards, *travelBulletin* is proud to present this special supplement showcasing the excitement of the 2017 NTIA which took place the new International Convention Centre Sydney on Saturday 22nd July. While winning an NTIA award is a great achievement, the NTIAs are an annual highlight of the year for all participants including nominees, finalists and their colleagues, as the industry gathers to celebrate one another's achievements during the previous twelve months.

NTIA 2017 was no exception. We congratulate AFTA on a fabulous night which has continued the event's long tradition of encouraging excellence in the industry.



Topdeck

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A massive #TOPDECKER thank you to agents, industry partners, AFTA and everyone who voted for Topdeck as Best Tour Operator - International.

The award is an incredible acknowledgement of the combined efforts of the team. Topdeck takes so much pride in delivering life-changing travel experiences for customers and are so delighted to be recognised.



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NATIONAL TRAVEL
INDUSTRY AWARDS

WINNER 2017





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NATIONAL TRAVEL
INDUSTRY AWARDS

WINNER 2017

Thank you

BEST TRAVEL AGENCY RETAIL - SINGLE LOCATION
BEST TRAVEL AGENCY MANAGER - RETAIL SINGLE LOCATION

A special thank you to all our industry partners, clients and our outstanding team of dedicated professional Travel Advisors.





The team from Virgin Australia.

‘We work hard to keep challenging and provide the best experience we can. This is a testament to the industry that supports us...and the teams at Virgin that help make it happen’

Stuart Pike, general manager industry and corporate sales, Virgin Australia
Best Domestic Airline: Virgin Australia

BEST SALES EXECUTIVE – INDUSTRY SUPPLIER: ELIZABETH HUTCHISON, AIR NEW ZEALAND

AIR New Zealand’s Elizabeth Hutchison is a familiar face on stage at the NTIAs and already has an award in her trophy cabinet.

“I’m shocked, but it’s amazing because it’s two years in a row for me,” she said.

Last year’s victory gave her a boost, allowing her to face the judges with added confidence this time around.

“It didn’t make me complacent, but I felt more comfortable and it was a bit more fun to enjoy the process while it happened,” she said.

“I just really focussed on what I actually achieved in the past year, since last time. I had won a prestigious Air New Zealand award so I talked about that, and I talked about how I’d worked on growing my agents since the previous year and what I’ve been doing to help make a difference in their business.”

She attributed her victory to having “drive and passion” and strong support from her agents.



Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines Australia head of sales Peter McCormack with the Best Sales Executive – Industry Supplier, Elizabeth Hutchison of Air New Zealand.

CHUFFED.

We’re as excited about our sixth win in this category as we were for our first.

‘Best Travel Agency - Corporate Single Location’

Thanks for helping us go ‘above and beyond’!



**SPENCER
TRAVEL**

above & beyond
a Division of Spencer Group of Companies Pty Ltd

**EMIRATES TRAVEL
CONSULTANT
SCHOLARSHIP:
STEFANIA LASEK,
TRAVEL BY DESIGN**

WHEN it came to making a list of her greatest achievements, Stefania Lasek already had one at the top. Just being a finalist for the NTIAs was one of her proudest moments.

"So winning this award just trumped that," she said.

In her presentation, Lasek wanted to put a big emphasis on her role in a small family business with a 15-year heritage – one that "has been going from strength to strength."

"Being a travel consultant is more than just sitting behind a desk and buying tickets for people," she said. "You're also a colleague, you're also looking after your family, you're also looking after your business and you're looking back to the whole industry. I can't believe I've won, I'm blown away."

**BEST TRAVEL
AGENCY MANAGER
– RETAIL, SINGLE
LOCATION: DANNY
ENGLMAN, FBI
TRAVEL**



FBI Travel's Danny Engelman with Virgin Australia's Ann Elliott.

DANNY Engelman is quick to point out his award is the result of a team effort.

"We've got an amazing team, staff who have been at FBI for decades," he said. "We run a good tight ship and I guess to a degree I have the best job in the world – managing an A-team of staff."

As the manager of a long-standing Melbourne agency with an established team, Engelman said he had placed an emphasis on the company's recent development when it came to facing the NTIA judges.

"We talked about our evolution and how the team has evolved," he said. "Many of them pre-date me and the industry has changed drastically, so we have to focus very much on the service side of things."

"We're entrenched in the luxury market and even though that's perceived as an easier market it's a tough market to please. And they've really embraced that and it's changed the dynamic of who we are – we're now perceived as leaders in luxury."

helloworld
TRAVEL
THE TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS

Thank you

To all Helloworld Travel agency members, to our suppliers,
to our industry partners and to our wonderful staff.

We are delighted to be awarded:
BEST TRAVEL AGENCY GROUP
(50 OUTLETS OR MORE)
for the **SECOND YEAR RUNNING!**



WINNER
2016 • 2017

BEST TRAVEL AGENCY GROUP (50 STORES OR MORE): HELLOWORLD TRAVEL

HELLOWORLD Travel has gone back to back this year after winning the same award last year. The company fought strong competition from Flight Centre and Travellers Choice. Julie Primmer, head of branded network at Helloworld Travel said it was a win for all the agents that Helloworld works on the behalf of.

"Our agents are hardworking, loyal and amazing at what they do with an enormous amount of experience," Primmer said.

Helloworld had been listening to its agents' needs and desires more over the past 12 months, and this had made the travel agency even stronger.

"We are implanting so many new things into the business and I think that all of these new initiatives that we are bringing to the table have made our agents stronger, and have enabled our network members to trust us, feel loyal to the brand and go from strength to strength."



Helloworld for business' David Padman, Vanessa Hudson from Qantas, Julie Primmer of Helloworld and Qantas' Rob Harrison.



Topdeck's Kerry Tate with Julie King of Dubai Tourism

‘It's been a long time in motion – we've been operating for 43 years now and this is the first time we've taken out a gong, so it's very exciting’

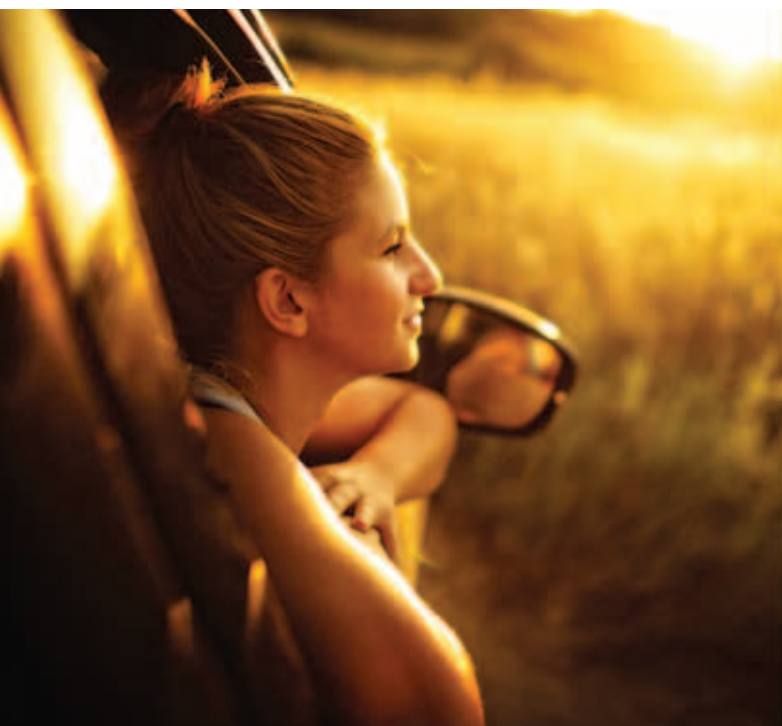
Kerry Tate, general manager product and operations Asia Pacific, Topdeck Travel
Best Tour Operator – International: Topdeck Travel

BEST TRAVEL CONSULTANT – RETAIL: LENA NIELSON, FLIGHT CENTRE EDGECLIFF

FLIGHT Centre's Lena Nielson was overwhelmed with being awarded one of the industry's top gongs after receiving commendation for the same category in 2016.

"It was so unexpected, it is very exciting to receive such an award. I'm not good with presentations, but I just spoke from the heart with the passion I have for the industry," she said.

Nielson, who recently moved from Flight Centre Sydney International Airport to the Edgecliff store, said it was great to be able to celebrate with all the other Flight Centre people.



THANK YOU.

To all of our valued Travel Industry Partners who voted for us as:

"Best Car/Campervan Rental Operator"

We are once again delighted to be recognised for this prestigious award.



Hertz®

Magellan Travel Group is thrilled to have been awarded Best Non-Branded Travel Agency Group at the 2017 National Travel Industry Awards.

We congratulate our Magellan members on receiving this outstanding industry recognition and we thank our industry partners for your ongoing support and partnership.

We are proud to have had 10 Magellan members recognised as finalists across various categories at the NTIA this year and we specifically congratulate Stuart Ingram of Destination HQ and Spencer Travel for the awards they received.



afta

NATIONAL TRAVEL
INDUSTRY AWARDS

WINNER 2015



afta

NATIONAL TRAVEL
INDUSTRY AWARDS

FINALIST 2016



afta

NATIONAL TRAVEL
INDUSTRY AWARDS

WINNER 2017

Congratulations to our members and thankyou to our industry partners

MagellanTM
TRAVEL GROUP



BEST NON-BRANDED TRAVEL AGENCY GROUP: MAGELLAN TRAVEL GROUP

Magellan Travel Group's Andrew Macfarlane and Kevin Dale.

MAGELLAN Travel Group returned to the winner's circle once again by dominating a strong contingent of hopefuls in the Best Non-Branded Travel Agency Group. Managing director Andrew Macfarlane said it was a fabulous accolade for member agencies.

"We feel some of the greatest agents in the land are in our group and we are very proud of them," he said. "This award is recognition of their excellence."

Macfarlane said since Kevin Dale, Andrew Jones and Trevor Jones created the group, they wanted to bring back value for the travel agents and he said this had separated them from their competitors.

He said member agents and suppliers loved the value and, for suppliers, it gave them the opportunity to reach Australia's top agents via the network.

‘It is elating for so many reasons, it's a culmination of all the hard work it takes to do what we do and bring everything to life, and the investment we put into people and to support agency community and customer’

Gregory Lording, general manager of wholesale, Sunlover Holidays
Best Wholesaler – Australian Product: Sunlover Holidays



Sunlover's Gregory Lording and Brooke Worrell with Amanda Belcastro from CHI Insurance.



AIR NEW ZEALAND 

**Congratulations
Liz Hutchison**

**2017 Best Sales Executive - Industry Supplier
for the second year in a row.**

Thank you to our valued partners for your ongoing support and we look forward to another great year working with you.

Air New Zealand's Virtual Vineyard

Congratulations to the six winners of our Virtual Vineyard competition who won return flights for two and wine experiences in Northland, Hawke's Bay, Wairarapa, Marlborough, Waipara or Queenstown.



THANK YOU!

APT – Best River Cruise Operator 2017

For the third year in a row APT has been voted by Australian travel agents as the Best River Cruise Operator! We would like to thank and acknowledge you, our valued industry partners for your recognition.

We are honoured given your expertise, knowledge and experience, and appreciate your ongoing support.

We are very proud of this achievement in 2017 as we continue to celebrate 90 years of unforgettable!

BEST TRAVEL AGENCY – CORPORATE, SINGLE LOCATION: SPENCER TRAVEL

THE Spencer Travel team were celebrating hard at the NTIAs after winning the Best Travel Agency – Corporate Single Location category among an array of heated competition from Anywhere Travel, Sanford International Travel and Helloworld Travel Newcastle Corporate.

Managing director Penny Spencer said there had been a lot of nerves while waiting to find out if they would take a trip to the podium.

“It is very exciting, you never know if you will win until your name is called.”

Spencer said the nerves meant it was very hard to enjoy Ricki-Lee performing, when there was a 40-minute break before the category. She said the victory was a true testament to how the Spencer team strove to grow the company each day.

“We’re always looking at new ways to grow the business, being innovative, changing the way we do things with technology and getting lots of different gains and productivity within our company and our staff,” she said.



Spencer Travel managing director Penny Spencer with the Qantas team – Rob Harrison, Vanessa Hudson and Marco Webb-Butler

BEST TRAVEL AGENCY MANAGER – RETAIL MULTI LOCATION: STUART INGRAM, DESTINATION HQ

FIRST time nominee Stuart Ingram has come out on top in the Best Travel Agency Manager – Retail Multi Location division, against a hotly contested field. Ingram said it was the ultimate honour.

“I love the travel industry, I love working with the people I work with. The award is a reflection of what I have achieved in the industry and for my employers as well.”



Ryan Davis, Travelport director of sales, Pacific with Millicent Rusby of Carlson Wagonlit Travel.

“I’m really passionate about the industry and I’ve got big hopes in this industry, so I think my presentation highlighted some of those things”

Millicent Rusby, Carlson Wagonlit Travel Young Agent of the Year

THE BEST INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE – OFFLINE FIFTH YEAR IN A ROW

WE WANT TO THANK ALL TRAVEL AGENTS AND OUR INDUSTRY PARTNERS FOR SUPPORTING US TO ACHIEVE THE AWARD FOR THE 5TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR. WE WILL CONTINUE TO ASSIST YOU AND YOUR CLIENTS WHEN FLYING FINNAIR.

To celebrate our win, Finnair will offer a special business class fare for sale from 25th of July to 9th of August 2017. Visit finnair.com for details.





A BIG Thank You

To our teams, industry partners,
suppliers and all the agents
for your ongoing support
in making this possible!



HOLIDAYS



viva! holidays



sunlover
HOLIDAYS



**QANTAS HOLIDAYS
& VIVA! HOLIDAYS
BEST WHOLESALER
INTERNATIONAL
PRODUCT**



**SUNLOVER HOLIDAYS
BEST WHOLESALER
AUSTRALIAN PRODUCT**
for the SECOND YEAR
RUNNING!

‘We try to make it as simple as we can for agents to make sure they know how to sell the product’

Maria Pantazis, regional travel industry sales manager Australia and New Zealand, Hertz Best Car/Campervan Rental Operation: Hertz



BEST AIRLINE INTERNATIONAL – OFFLINE: FINNAIR

IT'S five years in a row for Finnair, and for half a decade the airline's Australian team has changed little. That's one of the reasons the airline feels it has a better understanding of the local market than most other offline carriers.

"I would say that one competitive advantage that Finnair has is its understanding of the local markets," said area vice president Asia & Oceania, Jonne Lehtioksa. "Airline's often build products and systems from head office and try to export them to all markets, but we have the very functional combination of listening to the customers' needs in each market then combining it with our product."

BEST WHOLESALE – INTERNATIONAL: QANTAS HOLIDAYS & VIVA HOLIDAYS

THIS year brought a return to the spotlight for Qantas Holidays & Viva Holidays, past winners that have missed out in recent years.

But with a busy year behind its team, the group is in no doubt as to why it won in 2017.

"We're launching new destinations, we've upgraded our product range and we've launched an updated online booking tool, so it's been a big year of change," said group general manager Gregory Lording.

Having taken on his role almost a year ago, Lording said the company had built a great team and was now in a strong position.

"We've been through a year of change together, implementing these changes, and we've got more ahead," he said "This is just the beginning - we've got more product and more brochures on the horizon."

Lording said the award would provide the Qantas Holidays & Viva Holidays team with a "real boost".

"When you're deep in the machinations of meeting a target and getting new things out, you can get absorbed in that," he said. "So this is recognition for the hard work that goes in."



 Wendy Wu Tours

BEST SPECIALITY WHOLESALE 2017

WE'RE BUBBLING OVER WITH THANKS

BEST RIVER CRUISE OPERATOR: APT



The team from APT, including group director Robert McGeary (far left) and award sponsor Fred van Eijk, managing director Australia of Travel Counsellors (back, third from right).

APT could be forgiven for feeling a sense of ownership over the Best River Cruise Operator category. "It's a really big deal for us, we've been fortunate to win the category since its inception [in 2015]" said group director Robert McGeary.

"I think the reason travel agents chose us is our sales team work really hard with travel agents and build a strong rapport," he said. "Our product is very strong as well, and our customers keep voting us 10 out of 10 and we work very hard in making sure that customer satisfaction is right up there as good as it can be."

"Our staff know and understand that we're delivering once in a lifetime experiences every single day... and we don't take that lightly. I think that's why travel agents trust us with their very valuable customers."

McGeary said this year's award had come at an especially fitting point in APT's history.

"We're an Australian owned company and it's our 90th year," he said. "We're still privately owned and my father is still at the helm though we have a fantastic executive. It's great to pull this off in our 90th year."

NEW FACE AMONG AIRLINES

IN A category ordinarily dominated by the big two, Jetstar Airways this year celebrated its own small victory in becoming a finalist for the Best Domestic Airline award.

"It means a lot. We work hard every day to continually improve our products, service and operations," said the airline's chief commercial officer Catriona Larritt. "To be recognised by the industry feels like a great reward for all our hard work."

Though not a winner, Larritt said Jetstar would continue to do more to assist and communicate with agents.

"We're making a conscious effort to build our presence and offering in the travel agent community, Larritt said. "We have a small team, but have invested a lot more time the past year to build travel agent relationships from the frontline through to the boardroom."



Jetstar Airways
Finalist 2017 AFTA National Travel Industry Awards
Category #18: Best Domestic Airline

Thank you to our Agency Partners for your ongoing support



Google's VISION

There's no doubt that Google is a phenomenon already shaping the future of every part of life in the internet age. The technology giant's overarching vision is to "structure and make available all the data in the world" – and that definitely includes the distribution of travel. Bruce Piper investigates.

GOOGLE. It's a word which started out as a very big number (1 followed by 100 zeroes), became a company (currently worth about \$850 billion) and is now a verb (because everyone seems to be "googling" things all day every day). Google is everywhere around us – and because travel is big, the search engine giant sees it as a key sector too. In most Western markets, a vacation is the largest discretionary purchase made by many consumers each year. The wealth of travel information on the web, combined with the ease and convenience of the smartphone, has seen Google concentrate its efforts on developing solutions for all of the four key phases of the travel cycle – Dream, Plan, Book and Experience.

DREAM - "I WANT TO KNOW"

In the key markets of Europe, the UK and the USA – not to mention Australia – users are glued to their mobile devices, and a lot of the time we seem to be researching our next trip. According to a recent presentation by Javier Delgado, head of Google travel in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, the "vast majority" of users are looking to plan

future trips at least once every month. Many are terrified of making the wrong decision – choosing the wrong hotel, going to an inappropriate destination or paying too much for their trip – in fact Delgado noted that in many cases there was more anxiety about planning a forthcoming trip than the selection of a mortgage, despite a home loan having a much longer term impact. Mobile visits to travel websites are increasing month-on-month, but the time on each site is decreasing, indicating that users are taking "snacks" of data as they research their next holiday. 2015 research indicated users were visiting 38 sites on average before making a booking – and given the proliferation of mobiles and always-on connectivity that figure will have only increased since then.

All that information can get very confusing – so to make things easier Google has created Google Destinations, which uses artificial intelligence to detect when a user is in this Dreaming phase of their planning and presents data in a different, more digestible way. For example, if a user searches Google for "Colorado skiing," rather than simply a list of snow resorts, the search results include a pictorial display of options including Colorado destinations, an overview of the US state and even a curated travel guide listing the top sights and attractions.

Google Destinations also leverages different sources of information to offer users options depending on their budget, flying time, preferences and previous travel patterns. "We want to serve data in a structured way that helps make better

decisions," Delgado said. Other parts of the Google offering that can also help inspire travellers in the dreaming stage include the massive YouTube video platform, allowing suppliers to showcase their offerings in video format.

PLAN - "I WANT TO GO"

As a prospective traveller's plans crystallise, Google's offering helps them refine their choices when they further research their chosen destinations. While not normally seen as part of the online travel ecosystem, a key part of this process is Google Maps which has amazingly covered the globe with detailed information allowing people to get around. It is now possible to find out exactly where particular hotels and airports are located – and, incredibly, to even see what they look like using Google Street View. Street View also provides an in-depth experience of attractions such as the Great Barrier Reef, Uluru and the Roman Colosseum through partnerships which have seen these iconic destinations documented in detail using Google technology.

Google's input into the planning phase of travel now includes Google Flights, which recently launched in Australia and New Zealand. Built on the foundation of airfare search and pricing service ITA software, purchased by Google in 2010, Google Flights presents the results of a flight-related search in an innovative way, rather

Continues over page

FOR TRAVEL



than just providing links to airline websites. A user can simply search for “flights from Melbourne to Singapore” to be presented with a comprehensive schedule of available services, including timing and pricing. The results can be filtered by travel time, stops and particular airlines can be eliminated from the search. Previously this type of



functionality was only provided directly by some OTAs, who will surely be seeing an impact on their traffic from the new Google feature.

Google Hotels is also part of the arsenal, presenting the results of a hotel search in graphical format with a map showing hotel locations and prices, and allowing users to directly select their dates of stay, hotel class, rating, number of guests and amenities. This interface works directly with Google Hotel Ads, a product heavily utilised by accommodation providers and OTAs. While Google won't confirm any financial information, a number of sources speculate that large online travel agencies such as Priceline/Booking.com and Expedia are spending billions of dollars a year with Google on Hotel Ads, with the ability for users to simply click through from the search interface to confirm a booking.

BOOK - “I WANT TO BOOK”

When it comes to making the transaction, Google aims to be right there when the decision is made. The company wants to connect with users in so-called “micro-moments” which bring together “context, intent and immediacy”. This philosophy has seen a shift in strategy, with the previously launched Google Hotel Finder product dismantled about twelve months ago. Rather than having a dedicated site where users can compare accommodation pricing, Google now aims to leverage the context of a search – based on maps, previous search patterns, Gmail data and more – to serve inventory and pricing to users at the moment that most matters to them.

That applies to both Flights and Hotels – with a key factor being the ability to click through from results to actually make a booking. Google insists it has no plans to become an online travel agent (OTA) in its own right – but rather aims to “bring the demand closer to the supply” and then

allow the transaction to occur in the hotel or airline space.

However, the line is getting somewhat blurred, with the company also offering the new Book on Google functionality in the US and UK. This system aims to simplify the often complex process of completing a transaction on a mobile device. Rather than having to enter a complex credit card number on a small screen, Book on Google stores a user's credentials in their Google Wallet,

Google insists it has no plans to become an OTA in its own right – but rather aims to “bring demand closer to the supply” ...

allowing them to simply enter the three- or four-digit CCV number during the process. Google then securely transfers the credit card information and customer data to the supplier, which processes it as the merchant of record. In terms of a local roll-out, Google's head of business development, travel for the Asia-Pacific region, Eugenie Lam, told *travelBulletin* “we have no plans to expand Book on Google to Australia and New Zealand at this time”.

While rooms and flights are currently the key parts of Google's travel offering, the vision is certainly not limited. Asked about car hire, cruising, touring and activities, Lam said Google's goal is “to display the best information possible for travellers throughout their travel journey, and this includes in-trip experiences. We look forward to working with partners in all verticals, but have nothing to share right now”. Interestingly, dynamic packaging is also clearly in Google's sights, with combined flight and hotel offerings currently being served up in search results in the UK and Germany – two markets where the package holiday is a popular way to take a break.

EXPERIENCE - “I WANT TO DO”

The final piece of the puzzle comes when a user is actually on their holiday – and this is where the innovative Google Trips app comes in. With a host of functionality, Google Trips provides in-depth destination information including offline maps, suggested activities, places to eat and much more. Users who



Google Trips

See more, plan less.

link Google Trips to their email account get a wealth of context-sensitive information, with the app automatically collating reservations for flights and hotels into a list of upcoming travel itineraries. There's no need to forward emails to an itinerary manager or load in travel plans – Google Trips just gathers the details automatically behind the scenes and simply pops up with upcoming itineraries in a manner that seems almost supernatural.

Another key part of the travel experience is the photos we take while on holiday, and Google Photos has that wrapped up too. Providing unlimited free storage in the cloud, Google Photos also forms part of the travel ecosystem – and completes the circle back to the ‘Dreaming’ phase so users are inspired once again to enjoy a travel experience when they return. Google Photos offers incredible search capabilities – for example, you can simply ask it to find photos in your library

where your brother was wearing a red jumper at the snow two years ago, and it automatically pops up with the appropriate pics.

Google Trips provides the ability to download all of the information about a destination so it's available even without a wi-fi connection, and even offers ‘day plans’ with suggested itineraries to make the most of your holiday. In-destination content, such as where to eat and what to do, is collated and produced automatically by Google, based on website content and data sources such as the Zagat restaurant review service - bought by the company in 2011 – and information from the famous Frommers travel guides, also purchased by Google, which licensed all of its content before then selling the name back to its eponymous founder.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE THE MOST OF IT?

The power and pervasiveness of Google means that travel and tourism providers will clearly benefit by understanding where they fit into the company's ecosystem. Rather than fearing the rise of technology, the travel and tourism industry should embrace the huge array of technology offered by Google for the value, power and opportunities it offers.



Lam noted that Google is constantly working to make it easy for travel and tourism partners to provide content to Google. As well as uploading video content to YouTube, travel websites can use Google technologies such as AMP (Accelerated Mobile Pages) to ensure their content loads rapidly when clicked in the search results page. There's also Progressive Web Apps (PWA) which offer users an immersive, responsive full screen experience for mobile users regardless of the network conditions. At the very least, business owners should upload their information and photos to Google My Business, to ensure users are seeing the most up-to-date, relevant information on Google Search and Maps, she added.

Like it or not, the future is online and largely mobile – so make sure you have a good website, allowing easy interaction via “click-to-call” and encourage user-generated content – which hopefully reflects the excellent products and services your travel or tourism business offers.

WHAT'S COMING NEXT?

There's no doubt that Google is continuing to develop travel-related products across a range of verticals, so look out for future developments in dynamic packaging, tours, cruising, car rental and activities – as well as a focus on providing accurate results when a user is searching for the best deal. Another key strategy for the company is to integrate artificial intelligence into everything it does. Lam told *travelBulletin* “there is a growing focus on anticipating user needs and we are taking that to the next level with the Google Assistant. You can ask the Assistant about flights to Thailand, things to do in Thailand or even refine a query by just asking about ‘events’.” All of these queries can be done in the old-fashioned way by typing them into a browser – but Google's voice search capabilities are phenomenal too.

What does the future hold? Could it be that a Google app becomes a virtual travel agent? Possibly. But it may also be the case that all of these technologies can provide great opportunities for people working in the travel industry – because they know how to ask Google the right questions.



Hi, how can I help?



NEW PRODUCTS DEBUT AT TRAVELPORT LIVE

TRAVELPORT brought its annual technology conference to Australia for the first time last month, using the event to announce the launch of several new travel products.

Held in Sydney, the two-day conference attracted more than 350 delegates from across the country and around Asia, hosted by Travelport's director of commercial strategy in the region, Scott Barber.

Among the new initiatives announced was the Asia-Pacific launch of the Travelport Trip Assist mobile app for travel agencies, which makes its debut in a region heavily adapted to mobile use. According to Travelport, more than 50% of global mobile travel sales this year will originate in Asia Pacific countries, and by 2020 the figure is likely to reach almost 70%.

Trip Assist will allow agencies to offer customers a branded mobile app, providing itinerary management, day-of-travel services, real-time mobile messaging and several customised options.

Deployable in a matter of weeks, it also provides smart itinerary management, push-notification reminders, real-time alerts and the ability to call an agent from within the app.

Travelport Digital chief commercial officer Fergal Kelly said increasingly connected customers expected support throughout their trip.



Performers at Travelport Live

"Customer engagement via mobile is now critical for agencies of all sizes and we believe that the business travel industry and business travellers are not yet well-served," he said.

Travelport also used the Sydney event to announce a product aimed at easing disruption from flight cancellations, Travelport Resolve. The initiative is aimed at airlines and is able to automate the sourcing and distribution of hotel rooms for passengers when flights are disrupted.

It also automates air rebookings and handles meal and transport needs in a single paperless process, while at the same time allowing passengers to use a mobile app to access their revised arrangements.

"For airlines, Travelport Resolve helps improve customer service performance during disruptions, avoiding serious damage to their brand and to their relationships with affected customers," Travelport senior vice president and managing director of air commerce Derek Sharp said.

SABRE CHATBOT TO FREE UP AGENTS

SABRE Corporation is developing an AI-powered chatbot which aims to free up travel agents to focus on more complex, value-added interactions with travellers.

The bot is designed to handle frequently-asked basic support and service requests such as changing an existing flight reservation and will be tested by two Sabre-connected travel agencies. If it is unable to fulfil a request, the technology will divert to a live travel agent.

Dallas-based Travel Solutions International USA and San Francisco-based Casto Travel will test run a white-label version of the chatbot, accessible to travellers via Facebook Messenger.

The trial will evaluate travellers' preferences for how often and when they engage the chatbot and when they are likely to divert to a live agent.

The technology utilises Microsoft Bot Framework and Microsoft Cognitive Services, a set of tools

that organisations can use to add intelligent and conversational features to their applications.

"Travellers want technology to deliver a more seamless experience, especially when managing on-the-go changes and disruptions," said Mark McSpadden, vice president emerging technology and products of Sabre Corporation.

"Together with Microsoft and our agency partners, we are exploring how AI and chatbots can provide travellers

with the self-service solutions they want for routine requests while helping travel agencies provide personal service for more complex needs."

Sabre Hospitality Solutions is also working on a chatbot prototype which would allow travellers to engage with hoteliers through the most common messaging platforms, including Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Twitter. When it is ready, the company expects to test the prototype with some of its hotel customers.



AMADEUS TO OFFER DESTINATION CONTENT



Hobbiton, Sara Orme

AUSTRALIAN technology firm Livn Group has issued a call for up to 10 local Amadeus-powered travel agencies to participate in a significant new tours and activities project. The company is launching a Destination Content channel exclusively within Amadeus – which will mean that for the first time ever in a GDS environment agents will be able to add “valuable, curated non-core GDS global travel experiences” seamlessly within the booking flow process.

Livn general manager of business solutions, Gary Gelenter, told *travelBulletin* the innovation would allow consultants to easily offer their clients global tour and activity content – and make 10% commission payable at source. Suppliers currently offered on the Livn platform include Urban Adventures, G Adventures, Intrepid and Gray Line as well as thousands of local experiences such as BridgeClimb Sydney, Quicksilver, Hobbiton and Paris or Hong Kong Disneyland.

A pilot of the scheme will run for about a month before Amadeus launches the system globally.

Air Tickets EDMs online

AIR Tickets has launched a new product allowing for EMDs (Electronic Miscellaneous Documents) for extra baggage allowance and seat assignments to be issued instantly online.

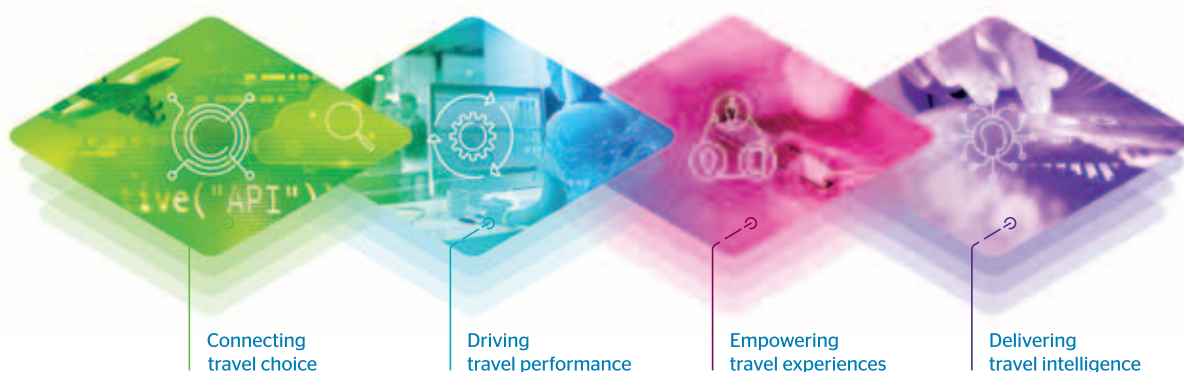
Agents can book the required service in their preferred GDS, retrieve the booking, verify the service and click to issue the EMD via Air Tickets Online.

The ‘Name Your Own Price’ and Itinerary

product has also been extended to EMDs for ancillary services and the product provides clients with an ancillary service itinerary document to complement their airline itinerary.



Travelport would like to congratulate
all the finalists and winners at AFTA's NTIA 2017



The power of the platform





DEVELOPMENT BOOM TO FUEL SYDNEY'S EVENT SECTOR

SYDNEY has entered its biggest hotel expansion phase since the 2000 Olympic Games, with a string of new high-end developments set to open in the harbor city over coming years.

As the new International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney) notches up six months of operation as the city's flagship conference venue, the events industry is set to benefit further from a multi-billion dollar hotel boom.

Major developments underway or in the pipeline will help ease Sydney's room shortage, while several additional conference venues will complement the large-scale facilities now operating at ICC Sydney.

Among the first projects to welcome guests is the newly rebranded and expanded Hyatt Regency Sydney, which in March opened an additional 220 rooms in a tower alongside its water-view conference centre. The 24-storey addition is the final stage of a \$240 million redevelopment of the former Four Points by Sheraton.

It will be joined in November by the \$350 million Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour, a 35-storey tower adjoining ICC Sydney. The 590-room five-star hotel will include additional conference facilities including nine meeting spaces and a ballroom for up to 450 guests.

Nearby, the Star Entertainment group has lodged plans for a \$500 million Ritz-Carlton adjoining its hotel-casino site in Pyrmont, involving a "six-star" 220-room hotel in a landmark tower overlooking the city and harbour. Together with other developments at the site, it will give The Star a total hotel inventory of around 1,000 rooms.

Facing off across the bay at Barangaroo will be James Packer's Crown Sydney, the 350-room hotel and casino development set to become a new landmark on the city's skyline. Incorporating

luxury apartments, restaurants, bars and high-end retail space, the development will also include conference facilities in a \$2 billion, 71-storey tower.

Other major developments include the \$300 million redevelopment of a landmark pair of heritage buildings on Bridge Street in the city centre. Known as the "sandstones", the former Lands and Education Department buildings will be reinvented by Singapore's Pontiac group as a luxury hotel with conference facilities.

The surge in hotel investment follows the \$1.5 billion spent on ICC Sydney, which is expected to generate \$5 billion in economic returns for NSW over the next 25 years.

"In the first six months of operation, we delivered almost 350 events and welcomed over 750,000 people through our doors," said ICC Sydney chief executive officer Geoff Donaghy. "ICC Sydney has been warmly welcomed and embraced by the business events industry, both locally and internationally."

Among the first events held at the centre have been the Reed Gift Fairs which attracted 18,000 visitors and the Pathology Update 2017 which brought 1,400 delegates from around the world.

Donaghy said other events, like the 4,200-delegate TEDxSydney and 13,500-delegate Salesforce World Tour had further promoted ICC Sydney as a centre of innovation.

"The opening of ICC Sydney has given NSW, and Australia, a venue that is unlike anything else ever seen before," Donaghy said. "Our nation, and industry, have been set up for the next 25 years with a flexible, integrated and highly functional design that capitalises on our location."

New developments drive growth in Canberra

DEMAND for business events in the nation's capital has seen the Canberra Convention Bureau (CCB) exceed economic contribution goals over the past year.

Giselle Radulovic, CCB director of marketing and communications, said the bureau had delivered over \$45 million in estimated economic impact for the capital region, plus developed a strong pipeline of business heading into 2017-18.

"We also now head into the new year with

a \$5.4 million refurbishment of the National Convention Centre complete," Radulovic said.

Along with a surge in business event delegates, Canberra is also seeing a hotel boom of its own with 11 new projects planned between now and 2020. Developments include two new Abode Hotels and an Adina Grand Apartment Hotel. Radulovic said this represented a 10% inventory growth over the next few years.

The launch of international flights to the city by Singapore Airlines, and possible flights from Qatar Airways, had enabled the city to further market itself.

"Internationally, we are targeting events that can take advantage of the new direct connections with Singapore Airlines, both association and incentive business," Radulovic said, adding that Canberra was also being positioned as the "Knowledge Capital".



C2 Mel wharf-side venue

MELBOURNE has again shown its talent for planning out-of-the-ordinary events, announcing it will use the historic Berth No. 5 North Wharf on the Yarra River as the venue for November's C2 Melbourne innovation conference.

Announced by the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB), it will be the first time the North Wharf precinct has been used as a pop-up business events space, and will involve the neglected car park area being transformed into a setting designed to resemble "an outdoor summer festival". The theme for C2 Melbourne is 'Ecosystems' and will focus on aspects of technology, art and design, marketing and media, impact and leadership. C2 has chosen Melbourne as its host city for the first time after being held for six years in Montreal.

Mona hotel to target events

TASMANIA'S Museum of Old and New Art (Mona) is again making headlines with news it plans to build a \$300 million hotel overlooking the Derwent River on the edge of Hobart. The museum's founder David Walsh has revealed striking designs for a 172-room five-star hotel called HOMO (Hotel Mona) and says it would be aimed at the business events market. A dedicated function centre inside the HOMO will have capacity for 800 in a banquet layout and 1,000 cocktail style, while an indoor 1,075-seat theatre will cater to music, plays, cinema, conferences and business launches.

"We expect HOMO to be attractive to large segments of the national and international business and conference markets that previously haven't turned to Tasmania due to a lack of appropriate infrastructure," Walsh said. Once approved, construction is expected to take three years, with opening slated for 2022.

Cairns Centre to expand

THE Queensland Government has revealed details of a \$176 million overhaul of the Cairns Convention Centre, which will include a new 3,000m² exhibition hall. Plans released by the state's Treasurer Curtis Pitt show that delegates will be welcomed via a sweeping floor-to-ceiling glass atrium that will be constructed in front of the existing structure. The atrium will create an arc extending out to Wharf St, where the preferred site of the new exhibition hall is located. Once completed in 2019, the expanded centre expects to attract an extra 25 large conventions per year. Construction will begin after the 2018 Commonwealth Games.



BES VIEW

Lyn Lewis-Smith, chief executive officer
Business Events Sydney

THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT

HEADING into the second half of 2017, Sydney is better placed than ever to host international business events.

There is no doubt the past three years have been challenging, as we have replaced our old, outdated convention centre. But they have also been very rewarding, and we should be proud that we were still rated Australia's number one destination for conferences during that period.*

We have remained a city open for business, and that's testament to the commitment and collaboration of the New South Wales (NSW) Government, our industries and our universities. In particular, the hotels and retailers who ensured delegates continued to enjoy a fantastic experience throughout this period.

With our new International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney) now in full operation, Sydney has the capacity and facilities to host the world's biggest, most prestigious business events, and in the next 18 months we will welcome the International Bar Association 2017, World Congress of Accountants 2018 and SIBOS 2018 to name just a few.

Securing these major events will ensure that Sydney remains a strong global destination, and means we will continue to attract the world's brightest and best to these shores. This creates opportunities to stimulate our own knowledge economy, spark global collaborations and help establish best practice. It also improves trade and development and generates jobs in key industries.

Business events will always provide a

short-term boost to the visitor economy.

But it's this longer-term social, cultural and economic legacy that continues to increase the overall value of these events long after they have finished.

As I write this, Business Events Sydney (BESydney) has secured over 150 international business events that will see more than 152,000 delegates visit Sydney and NSW over the next seven years. We expect these events to contribute an estimated \$520 million to the economy. Yet we are only just starting to tap into the real potential of this industry.

There are approximately 12,000 international meetings that rotate around the world annually, and many more that take place every few years, so there is massive potential to grow this market. With the strong cross-sector partnerships we've developed with all areas of government, industry and academia – and now a modern, centrally-located convention centre up and running – we are perfectly positioned to take advantage of that opportunity.

More and more people I speak to are seeing the real value that business events bring to the Australian economy, and we're seeing ever-increasing levels of government engagement as these events support key areas of the state and federal policy agendas.

The future for business events in Sydney and Australia has never been brighter. And I have never been so excited about playing a part in shaping that future.

* International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) Country and City Rankings report



business events news

JUNE TO JULY 2017 HEADLINES

19 Jun Hyatt Place Melbourne open
22 Jun Adelaide revamp set to open
22 Jun Upgrades in Cairns
26 Jun Bolinger joins ICESAP board
29 Jun MCB names AIME managers
03 Jul IHG expands in regional NSW

06 Jul C2 Melbourne heads for the wharves
10 Jul MONA reveals events vision
13 Jul P&O set a course for events
17 Jul New Cairns plans unveiled
17 Jul Bris posts big wins
20 Jul MCEC posts record result

CAREER IN FOCUS

CHRIS THISTLETHWAITE

**Country Manager Australia and
New Zealand, Aircalin**

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

I joined Aircalin in November 2016 as Country Manager for Australia and New Zealand. My role is to ensure that as many trade partners and consumers book and travel to beautiful New Caledonia as possible. I am responsible for working with trade partners to promote Aircalin as the International Airline of New Caledonia with direct flights from Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

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

I actually started working in investment banking because I thought it would make me rich and happy. Truth was it was a very uninteresting industry to work in. I was fortunate to travel extensively when I was younger and so I was passionate about travel. So I decided to follow my passion and join the travel industry and I was lucky enough to land my first role with Star Cruises as a Sales Executive.

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

Because I moved from another industry I thought it was important to gain a better understanding of the travel industry, so I completed a Certificate 3 in Travel and Tourism Sales with Qantas College (I don't think it exists anymore).

4. What do you love about your job?

I love the travel industry because everyone knows everyone. I also love the opportunity to sell New Caledonia as a destination as it is



‘I was fortunate to travel extensively when I was younger and so I was passionate about travel. So I decided to follow my passion and join the travel industry’

Australia's closest South Pacific destination but awareness is still growing....To me, that means plenty of opportunity!

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

The travel industry has changed a lot since I joined and it continues to change and evolve. I was fortunate to work for Helloworld during the transition from it's legacy brands to the new business that exists today. It was an incredibly tough period through the transition but it taught me a lot about many aspects of

a large complex business and the process businesses go through to innovate and stay relevant to customers.

6. What factors were central to your success?

A determination to continually advance my career by learning new things! Since joining travel I have had roles in sales, business development, franchising, contracting and now an airline.

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

A few of my old bosses will probably read this article so I would have to say that I had many great mentors!

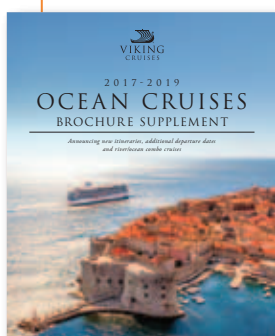
8. What are the keys to good business?

Have a strong business plan and a great team working with you. Also, continually evaluate your product to ensure it offers your customers what they want and expect!

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

Make sure you have a career progression plan in place. Your boss should know if you are interested in progressing and always put your hand up to learn new things. I'm a firm believer in the adage that hard work is of it's own reward!

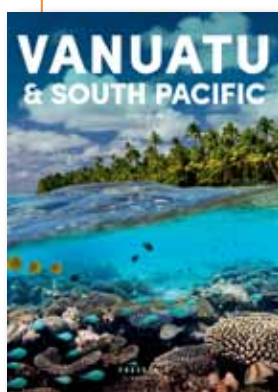
‘[Helloworld] taught me a lot about many aspects of a large complex business and the processes businesses goes through to innovate and stay relevant to customers’



VIKING have released a new ocean cruise supplement brochure, detailing six new itineraries plus additional departures for the most popular cruises. New itineraries explore Scandinavia and the Mediterranean, such as the 12-day Majestic Fjords and Vibrant Cities, sailing from Bergen to Copenhagen. In addition to the new itineraries, Viking has released two new river and ocean combination cruises enabling guests to explore Europe on back to back river and ocean cruises.



GLOBUS has released a range of new brochures including their USA & Canada offering for 2018. New for the brochure are a number of tours including the 17-day Western Canada Explorer, the seven-day Seattle, Victoria & Vancouver, seven-day Music Cities: Nashville & Memphis and the seven-day Colourful Newfoundland. The tours also include an early bird discount of 10% for tours booked up until 12 September.



FREESTYLE Holidays has launched its Vanuatu and South Pacific brochure, which also includes the Cook Islands, New Caledonia and Samoa. The brochure details a range of three, four and five star accommodation options in the destinations, as well as activities in each location. In Vanuatu the focus is on accommodation and activities in Port Vila and Espiritu Santo, including an overnight Tanna Island experience.



NEW travel brand, U by Uniworld, has released its first brochure, for cruises departing in 2018. The brochure details the new offering, including the features of the designer-inspired floating boutique hotels of *The A* and *The B*, as well as the itineraries. The brochure also explains how to match travellers with an itinerary, whether they are foodies, adventurers, romantic, night owls or explorers.



AZAMARA Club Cruises have revealed their 2018/19 brochure, which includes 23 brand new country intensive voyages. These itineraries allow guests to completely immerse themselves in one country, such as Japan or Cuba. Also new is the line's inaugural Alaska season in 2019, with the first voyage departing 25 May 2019 from Vancouver. In total the brochure features 116 itineraries, with many late night stays and overnights – allowing guests to spend longer in each destination.



ORMINA TOURS' range of small group tours continues to grow, with their 2018 brochure including three new Italian itineraries. The tours are designed to involve immersive experiences, offering guests the chance to experience new off the beaten track locations and Italian culture. New additions include a new food and wine focused culinary eight-day trip through Sicily, and the Lakes and Mountains tour around Italy and Switzerland, as well as the expansion of their FIT tailored private journeys.



NEXUS Holidays, together with International Traveller have released a brief brochure outlining some of the companies offerings in Asia. The brochure outlines the highlights of destinations such as India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Japan, Nepal, Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea, as well as detailing which Nexus Holidays tour travellers can take to explore that county.



CELEBRITY Cruises has unveiled their new Asia brochure, featuring 27 of the line's voyages. The brochure also details the new dining and entertainment offerings onboard the recently revitalised *Celebrity Millennium* and *Celebrity Constellation*. Highlights of the itineraries include double overnights in Dubai, Beijing and Bangkok, calls to the captivating ports of Kobe in Japan, Goa in India and Muscat in Oman as well as a special Pingxi Lantern Festival Signature Event Sailing in Taipei, departing February 2018.

2018 RIVER CRUISE WRAP

Jasmine O'Donoghue lines up the new and exciting additions available in river cruising in 2018.



APT will return to river cruising in Russia in 2018 for the first time since it was put on hold in 2014 due to political uncertainty. Two river cruise departures are scheduled for August, both designed to tie in with land journeys. The 13-day Russian Waterways itinerary will explore the network of rivers and lakes that joins Moscow with St Petersburg, stopping by lavish city palaces, country towns and Soviet era remnants. Two shorter river cruising itineraries in the Balkans and Netherlands have been introduced: the eight-day Springtime In Holland And Belgium and 14-day Balkan Gems. In the 2018 Europe brochure Freedom of Choice sightseeing activities have also been grouped into themes to suit individual preferences. The choices are: Cultural Insight, Gourmet Delight, Active Exploration, Relax & Revive.

AVALON Waterways will introduce a new ship in Asia, a refurbished *Treasure of Galapagos* in South America and roll out four new special interest cruises. The 36-passenger *Avalon Saigon* will begin sailing in Myanmar and Vietnam from September 2018 and a new 16-day itinerary on Myanmar's Irrawaddy River will also make its debut. Nature lovers will be able to take part in the new Gardens & Nature experience on the Tulip Time cruise in Apr, including a visit to Keukenhof Gardens and a guided walk of Amsterdam's secret hidden gardens. Other special interest cruises include a Managing Directors' cruise led by Avalon Waterways' Australasian head Stewart Williams, for the first Active Discovery on the Rhine cruise departing 3 June 2018; and two departures of a Journeys Club Cruise through France with some of the company's leadership team.

Avalon Waterways



Evergreen Cruises & Tours



EVERGREEN Cruises and Tours has expanded its cruise portfolio, offering new river and ocean combinations in 2018. River cruises can be linked with select ocean cruises with Princess Cruises, Holland America Line or MSC Cruises. Since the program launch, the 26-day Best of the Baltic – a 15-day Budapest-Amsterdam river cruise paired with an 11-day Baltic itinerary with Princess Cruises – has proved the most popular. By the end of 2017, three new river cruise ships will have been introduced: *Emerald Destiny* in May; *Emerald Radiance* in June and *Emerald Liberte* in September.

SCENIC'S 2018 program introduces an 11-day Scenic culinary cruise in the Bordeaux region of France on 8 May 2018, joined by Australia's first MasterChef Julie Goodwin. The operator has recently debuted Salt Lounge on *Scenic Diamond* in Bordeaux and *Scenic Sapphire* in the south of France. Scenic said the lounge is a "luxurious space handcrafted out of salt bricks" which "creates the health benefits and therapeutic microclimate of a natural salt mine". Also new is the Scenic Culinaire cooking class on offer along the Rhone or through Bordeaux. Scenic Culinaire participants will shop with the chef before heading back to the ship for an on board cooking class.

Scenic



THE BEST NEVER GOES ON SALE



Gourmet dinner at the Michelin-starred restaurant L'Abbaye de Collonges



The spectacular main reception aboard MS GRACE



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TRAVELMARVEL is introducing the *MS Kronshtadt* river ship on three charters in its 2018 Russia program. Itineraries are the 11-day Treasure of Russia Cruise from St Petersburg to Moscow, 14-day Treasures of Russia & Helsinki from Helsinki to Moscow and 20-day Baltic Charm & Treasures of Russia. The company has also enhanced its most popular itinerary – the 15-day Amsterdam to Budapest – with the introduction of Express Tour options in select destinations. The operator is also offering three departures for its Douro Discovery cruise through Portugal and Spain on board the *MS Douro Serenity*, a new addition in 2018.

THE new travel brand for 21-45 year olds from Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection, U by Uniworld, will make its debut in 2018. U by Uniworld will be semi-inclusive and the fare will cover two meals a day, gratuities and some excursions, while alcoholic drinks will not be included. On board, guests will be able to take part in painting classes on the top deck, mixology and cooking classes, a silent disco and yoga. Nine itineraries are available on two ships, with *The A* sailing along the Rhine, Main and Danube Rivers and *The B* deployed on the Seine River. U by Uniworld will offer four eight-day itineraries with overnight stops and longer stays in major cities and three “super cruise” options which combine two or more of the eight-day itineraries in a 15-day or 22-day trip. Rounding out the nine options are two five-day holiday departures - Dashing Through The Danube and A Merry Little Christmas Cruise - incorporating Christmas in Europe and a New Year’s Eve celebration.



UNIWORLD’s 2018 portfolio features itineraries in Europe, Russia, Egypt, India, China, Vietnam and Cambodia. The program includes the new Remarkable Rhine, which cruises from Basel to Amsterdam, showcasing The Netherlands, Germany, France and Switzerland along the way. Uniworld has enhanced the 10-day Enchanting Danube with either a Munich pre-extension or Prague post-extension now available. The Morning with the Masters exclusive excursions have also been expanded and are now offered at the Hermitage in Amsterdam on the Tulips & Windmills/Legendary Rhine/Remarkable Rhine, Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam on the European Jewels and KHM fine art museum in Vienna on multiple itineraries.

VIKING Cruises’ 2018 river program features new itineraries in Ukraine and Egypt, along with cruises across Central Europe, France, Portugal, China and South East Asia. Viking will welcome the 48-passenger *Viking Ra* to the fleet in March 2018, offering three room categories, a spa, two Jacuzzis and an outdoor pool. The new addition will introduce the 12-day Pharaohs & Pyramids cruisetour, which begins with a three-night stay at a hotel in Cairo, followed by a flight to Luxor, for a seven-day roundtrip sailing on the Nile River to Aswan, before a flight back to Cairo for a final night in the city. Also new is the 11-day Kiev to the Black Sea itinerary, which visits Ukraine’s historic cities of Zaporozhye and Kherson.



A GOLFER'S DREAM

2018 EXPERIENCES OF DISCOVERY VOYAGES



IRISH SEA SOLILOQUY CRYSTAL SERENITY

To/From Roundtrip London (Dover)

Dates 15 – 29 July 2018

Days 14

Fares from US\$7,814pp*

An enriching study of the Emerald Isles features overnights in Dublin and Edinburgh, a maiden call in Dundee and visits to Europe's charming Low Countries.



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To/From New York to Fort Lauderdale

Dates 25 Oct – 8 Nov 2018

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Golf-enthused travellers are invited to join these exclusive voyages that sail far beyond the ordinary.

Karen Christensen

Karen Christensen
Senior Vice President
& Managing Director
Australia & New Zealand

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TERMS & CONDITIONS: *Book Now Fares are cruise-only, per person, in U.S. dollars, based on double occupancy, apply to new bookings only, and include taxes, fees and port charges. Fares quoted apply to category B3 on Crystal Serenity and E2 on Crystal Symphony. Solo Traveller Fares available on request. *Crystal Cruises offers each guest the opportunity to dine at least once on a complimentary basis in Prego and at least once in Silk Road or the Sushi Bar (Sushi Bar is not available for pre-reservation via PCPC and is available on a first-come, first-served basis). Additional reservations including "walk-in" visits are subject to a US\$30 per person fee, subject to availability. Optional dining in the Vintage Room attracts an additional fee. Cruise-only fare does not include land or optional golf programs. All offers may not be combinable with other promotions, apply to first two full-fare guests in stateroom or suite, are capacity-controlled, subject to availability and may be withdrawn or changed at any time without notice. All fares, itineraries, programs, policies and shore excursions and themes and events are subject to change or cancellation with or without notice at the discretion of Crystal Cruises correct at time of printing. Restrictions apply. For complete Terms & Conditions, visit crystalcruises.com/legal. ©2017 Crystal Cruises, LLC. Ships' registry: The Bahamas.

CRUISE GROUP HAS NAVY IN ITS SIGHTS



QM2 at Garden Island © Destination NSW

SYDNEY Harbour's perennial parking problems might be a step closer to being solved, with high-profile Navy Reserve Captain and past Opposition Leader Peter Collins appointed to help find more room for cruise ships.

The former Liberal politician is leading a cruise ship industry reference group which has been asked to find a solution to the city's berthing constraints and report to the NSW Government by next month.

Collins has already named the Garden Island naval base as the most likely candidate for a new cruise facility or shared berthing arrangement, despite resistance from the Royal Australian Navy.

"I think there's room for everybody in this," Collins told ABC radio. "We can have a win-win situation."

While he stressed other locations would be considered, Collins went as far as pinpointing the site of a now-dismantled crane that once dominated the harbour skyline at the naval base.

"There are a number of locations the reference group will have to look at. Top of the list and the obvious one is where the main crane used to be at Garden Island but there are other options as well," Collins said. "All of these will be carefully examined and categorised for the minister."

Sydney's main Overseas Passenger Terminal at Circular Quay is operating close to capacity, while the White Bay Cruise Terminal is inaccessible to larger ships that can't pass beneath the Harbour Bridge.

Mega-liners including Cunard's *Queen Mary 2* have berthed at Garden Island in the past, but the Navy has a current cap of three cruise ship visits per year and no permanent terminal facilities are available.

Tender operations have become increasingly common on Sydney Harbour when coinciding visits force ships to anchor away from shore, while operators including Royal Caribbean and Carnival Cruise Line have recently directed ships away from Sydney due to a lack of berthing slots.

Princess's Majestic and Medallion

PRINCESS Cruises' ship tailor-made for China, *Majestic Princess*, was officially named in July by its ambassadors, Chinese basketballers Yao Ming and Ye Li.

Jan Swartz, group president, Princess Cruises and Carnival Australia said, "*Majestic Princess*, our new flagship, is a perfect demonstration of an 'East meets West' international cruise vacation experience".

Majestic Princess features nearly 1,100m² of boutiques and a range of entertainment offerings including private karaoke, a water fountain and multi-media light show and movies under the stars.

Princess Cruises' Ocean Medallion will be available in Australia from November 2018 on board *Golden Princess*.

"With the addition of *Golden Princess* to the fleet of Medallion Class ships, we will make available a more personalised holiday to guests sailing in and around Australia," Swartz said.

Ocean Medallion is a wearable device which stores guests' personal preferences, acts as a room key and provides access to interactive gaming, custom entertainment and smart navigation.

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www.creativecruising.com.au/letscruise



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VENICE TO SEVILLE | 18 MAY 2018 | 26 NIGHTS

Itinerary

Venice, Urbino, Split, Dubrovnik, Lecce, Corfu, Taormina,
Salerno, Sorrento, Rome, Florence, Pisa/Lucca, Elba, Bonifacio,
Ajaccio, Mahon, Palma, Malaga, Cadiz, Seville

Highlights

The Renaissance treasures of Venice and Urbino
Volcanic Mount Etna in Sicily and Stromboli
Explore Pompeii or Herculaneum
The Leaning Tower of Pisa
Elba, Napoleon's island of exile

- FREE return economy airfare from Australia* to Venice, returning from Seville
- 24 night cruise aboard *Aegean Odyssey*
- 22 included tours in 7 countries
- 2 hotel stay in Seville

Premium Inside Cabin from **\$11,395*** per person twin share



FLY FREE*

GRAND VOYAGE TO IBERIA, FRANCE, ENGLAND & NORWAY

SEVILLE TO LONDON | 9 JUNE 2018 | 28 NIGHTS

Itinerary

Seville, Lisbon, Oporto, Vigo, Bordeaux, Falmouth, Dartmouth,
Honfleur, London, Edinburgh, Ulvik/Eidfjord, Olden, Geiranger, Bergen,
Flam, Stavanger, Kristiansand, Oslo, Amsterdam, London

Highlights

Sail the Guadalquivir River into Seville
Cruise the Gironde River for an overnight call into Bordeaux
Sail the most beautiful fjords in Norway
Explore Bergen and the Norwegian capital of Oslo
Visit the Dutch city of Amsterdam

- FREE return economy airfare from Australia* to Seville, returning from London
- 26 night cruise aboard *Aegean Odyssey*
- 20 included tours in 7 countries
- 2 hotel stay in Seville

Standard Outside+ Cabin from **\$15,550*** per person twin share

*TERMS & CONDITIONS: All fares shown are Australian Dollars, per person, based on twin occupancy. Fares include gratuities & port taxes (correct as of 6 July 2017).
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RITZ CARLTON EXPANDS TO THE SEAS

RITZ Carlton is set to become the latest player to have a crack at the thriving cruise sector, becoming the first major luxury hotel brand to announce a cruise venture.

The Marriott subsidiary had confirmed plans to introduce the first of three small capacity vessels in late 2019, operating under the banner of The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection. Measuring 190 metres, the first Ritz Carlton ship will carry up to 298 passengers in 149 suites, with all guests enjoying the privacy of their own balcony on board, and modern interiors jointly designed by Ritz-Carlton and Swedish ship design firm Tillberg.

Herve Humler, president and chief operating officer of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, said the Yacht Collection would have a distinctive personality and the

vessels would be true stand outs in ports around the world.

"This unique combination of yachting and cruising will usher in a new way of luxury travel for guests seeking to discover the world in a relaxed, casually elegant and comfortable atmosphere with the highest level of personalised service," he said.

Itineraries will vary between seven and 10 days in length. Destinations for the first ship will include the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, the Caribbean and Latin America.

Due the size of the vessel, it will visit locations typically not accessible to large ships, such as Capri and Portofino in Italy and St Barths in the Caribbean. Reservations for the first season of sailings will open in May, and the ship will also be available for private charter.

Cuban cruises safe

CRUISE lines appear to have escaped the worst of United States President Donald Trump's revised Cuba policy.

Trump confirmed the country would reintroduce a ban on its citizens making solo visits to Cuba, winding back the easing of restrictions made under the previous Obama Administration, though it appears the changes will not curb cruise lines operating from the US into Cuba.

Carnival Corporation said it was pleased it could still sail to Cuba and would continue to do so.

"We will review the extent of the tightening of the travel rules, but our guests have already been travelling under the 12 approved forms of travel to Cuba since we undertook our historic first cruise to Cuba more than a year ago," the company said in a statement.

Since the policy was announced, Norwegian Cruise Line revealed it would add a second ship from Florida into Cuba. From May 2018, *Norwegian Sun* will offer four-day cruises to Havana, Cuba and Key West, and three-day cruises to the Bahamas from Port Canaveral, Florida.



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SILVERSEA

Virgin Voyages details

THE six cruise vessels planned by Virgin Voyages cruise line “won’t be the absolute biggest, but they’re going to be by far and away the best cruise ships out there,” according to founder Sir Richard Branson.

The keel will be laid in the coming months for the maiden vessel, which will carry close to 2,800 passengers. Branson said the ship would be very Virgin. “I’ve never been interested in going on a cruise ship myself, so we’re trying to create the kind of cruise that myself and my friends would want to go on,” he said.

The first ship in the Virgin Voyages fleet is scheduled to arrive in Miami in 2020, and will offer a range of seven-day Caribbean itineraries.

Seabourn Encore in Aus

SEABOURN has confirmed the Australasian deployment of its new *Seabourn Encore*, which will operate a series of voyages out of Sydney and Auckland during the 2018-19 season.

The program will see *Encore* sail four 16-day itineraries between Sydney and Auckland as well as two 16-day South Pacific voyages from Auckland. The company remained coy about its 2018/19 plans for *Seabourn Sojourn*, with speculation it may undertake a circumnavigation of Australia.

Sydney Ports currently has slots allocated for *Sojourn* between December 2018 and March 2019. Chris Austin, Seabourn senior vice president of global marketing and sales said, “For Seabourn, Australia is our third largest market for sourcing guests and we appreciate the work by so many travel professionals who trust their clients to us when it comes to choosing a holiday”.

Tempo's Croatia expansion

TEMPO Holidays has launched Tempo Holidays Cruise Croatia, a new venture in partnership with Katarina Line which will see the operator expand its range of cruises in the Adriatic.

Promised to “take Croatia cruising to another level”, Tempo said the offering would provide both niche and lifestyle cruise options at the best market rate with daily availability and ease of booking.

Tempo Holidays Cruise Croatia will include land and sea tailor-made options and introduce alternative cruises designed to appeal to adventure travellers and those with special interests such as yoga and naturist.

There will be the additional start points of Zadar, Porec and Opatija and all cruises will visit the islands along Croatia’s coast.



CLIA VIEW

Joel Katz, managing director
CLIA Australasia

TICKETS are selling fast to the Australasian cruise industry’s largest conference, Cruise360 to be held at the Hyatt Regency Sydney on Friday 25 August. Cruise360 is CLIA’s biggest professional development event of the year featuring a full day’s worth of education, networking, and updates of the latest industry trends, through keynotes, workshops, and a trade show.

Cruise360 is the must-attend event for travel agents looking to increase their share of the booming cruise industry with an impressive field of guest speakers and the new addition of “masterclass” workshops. This year’s Cruise360 is designed to be an immersive event to educate and inspire agents as we head into another record summer cruise season.

As the largest and only official conference of the cruise industry, Cruise360 brings together travel professionals, cruise line representatives, industry suppliers and CLIA preferred partners from Australia and New Zealand.

In a truly panoramic view of the cruise industry, the conference features opportunities for professional development, networking and the largest dedicated cruise industry trade show in this region showcasing major suppliers.

By attending, you are not only fast-tracking yourself to become a better cruise sales agent, you are surrounding yourself with some of the most influential people in the global cruise industry.

Whether you’re new to the industry and looking to improve your cruise sales skills, a veteran looking to take the next step, or you’ve reached the pinnacle of CLIA certification as a Master Cruise Consultant and are looking to stay current; you’ll find that Cruise360 sessions are designed to help you fast-track your sales growth.

This year’s Cruise360 features the largest number of global cruise line executives, local cruise line leaders, dynamic key note speakers, and successful travel industry professionals to share best practice, selling tips and techniques, and the latest trends, and product information.

We are thrilled to have some of the most dynamic global cruise line executives joining us this year to share their knowledge and support the development of our agent community, including:

- Jan Swartz, Group President Princess Cruises and Carnival Australia
- Larry Pimentel, President & CEO Azamara Club Cruises
- Roberto Martinoli, CEO Silversea Cruises
- Chris Austin, SVP Global Sales and Marketing for Seabourn

Plus a wide variety of successful cruise agents, and agency leaders who will be sharing their success stories, and tips/techniques to upskill yourself, grow your cruise business and maximise returns from cruise sales.

Based on feedback from prior years, this year’s Cruise360 will provide delegates with further tangible learning opportunities in the form of four Masterclasses to choose from, including sessions on how to improve sales, maximise income, and most importantly create a loyal customer base who keep coming back to you to book more cruises, and who you can leverage to drive more business.

Cruise360 is without a doubt the best opportunity of the year to meet face-to-face with your peers in the cruise industry, and become better cruise sales agents.

There are limited tickets remaining – so visit www.cruising.org.au to reserve yours now.

CRUISE WEEKLY

20 Jun	Croatia - so hot right now
20 Jun	Cuba cruises win reprieve
22 Jun	<i>Encore's</i> return down under
27 Jun	Ritz-Carlton heads to sea
29 Jun	Swan Hellenic, VOD payouts

HEADLINES JUNE AND JULY 2017

04 Jul	RSSC lifts Aussie presence
06 Jul	Cruiseco names new CEO
06 Jul	Virgin Voyages ‘the best’
11 Jul	Collins looks to Garden Island
13 Jul	Cairns port expansion

INDUSTRY IN FOCUS



John Nickel, Fiji Airways; Mark Young, Adelaide Airport; Rodney Harrex, SATC; Nick Jones, SATC and Jonathan Cheong, Adelaide Airport, recently welcomed the Fiji Airways' new service from Nadi to Adelaide.



InterAsia hosted a small group of Australian agents on a famil to India's Golden Triangle, visiting Delhi, Ranthambore, Jaipur and Agra.



Rocky Mountaineer hosted TravelManagers on a trip through Canada visiting Vancouver, Kamloops, Jasper, Banff, Lake Louise and Calgary. A highlight was the flightseeing helicopter tour.



These ten lucky Helloworld Travel agents headed to Vegas for a famil, experiencing a hot lap in a Corvette Z06, a helicopter ride, and the controversial 'Absinthe' show.

APT took 14 of their top achievers on a Small Ship Cruising adventure through the Mediterranean, from Mykonos to Barcelona, visiting Corinth Canal, Olympia, Valletta and Bosa.



Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) offered up a taste of Japanese cuisine at an event held at Sydney's Sake Restaurant & Bar recently, in support of the recent growth of Australian visitors to the nation.

Tourism WA last month took two group of German agents around the state, showing off the natural wonders and highlights between Exmouth and Broome.



ANA, Okinawa Convention and Visitors Bureau and Hilton Hotels recently showed a team of agents around the island paradise of Okinawa, Japan on a five-day famil.



Around 60 travel agents converged at Bondi Beach last month for the launch of Topdeck's 2018 Canada & USA brochure, celebrating with plenty of burgers, hot dogs, poutine and Budweiser.



The Macao Government Tourist Office has partnered with Xiamen Airlines on the new "one fare, two cities" initiative. Helen Wong is pictured sealing the deal with Xiamen Airlines' Yang Hua Chen.



Express Travel Group agents from South Australia enjoyed a weekend in Melbourne to experience the sporting capital in all its glory. They're pictured at the MCG, courtesy of Virgin Australia.



TravelCube recently restructured their sales force, adding two key account manager positions. Pictured are the team of Stacy Harsh, Teagan Greentree, Shari Rokosuka and John Stucci.



© Wonderful Copenhagen



© Image Bank Sweden



Outdoor-cafes of Södermalm,
© Image Bank Sweden

CAPITALS OF COOL

Europe's trendy, youthful northern capitals share compact chic, contemporary flair and a relaxed lifestyle that is distinctively Scandinavian, as Brian Johnston discovers.

SCANDINAVIA has always been admired for its minimalist style, elegant fashion sense and design innovators from Lego to Ikea. A visit to capital cities Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm – plus a detour to Helsinki, which doesn't consider itself part of Scandinavia, despite sharing many of its characteristics – provides endless opportunities to admire the region's distinctive Nordic designer style. What's more, these cities all mix their impressive design flair with history, lovely old towns, contemporary energy and beautiful harbour settings that rank them among Europe's most appealing small capitals.

Oslo is the smallest of the four cities, managing to combine an almost village charm with fine museums and good eateries, especially in the trendy Grünerløkka district. Its history is reflected in churches, merchant's warehouses and Art Nouveau avenues, but it blends the old with the new in an agreeable fashion, with a buzzing nightlife, good restaurant scene and funky edge. Its opera house is a startling, avant-garde building on the waterfront that looks like an iceberg: don't miss it if you have any interest in architectural design.

In summer, this is a relaxed capital where locals strum guitars in parks, munch on pancakes with fresh Arctic cloudberries, and make merry long into the pale northern

evenings. Oslo is also the kind of city in which you can be fine dining or listening to a Grieg concert one evening and, by next morning, be hiking through forests that lie just on the city's outskirts.

Helsinki is another city where sophistication meets scenery within a very compact, easily explored area. Sitting on a series of islands and peninsulas in the Gulf of Finland, it offers water vistas at every turn, not to mention bridges, parks, unbeatable neoclassical architecture and modern sculptures galore. The city's iconic white-domed cathedral tops it all like an

‘These cities all mix their impressive design flair with history, lovely old towns, contemporary energy and beautiful harbour settings...’

extravagant meringue. In summer, it's a place to enjoy bar terraces and wandering through a tangle of flower-filled streets and elegant boulevards. In winter, snuggle up in one of the city's stylish cocktail lounges, or



Downtown Oslo © Brian Johnston

indulge in the ultimate warmer and cultural experience, an invigorating Finnish sauna.

The capital of Finland is also a great place to get more familiar with Scandinavian design. Renowned interior and fashion designers such as Iittala (for glassware), Marimekko (textiles and fashion) and Artek and Aalto (furniture and homewares) all hail from Finland, and Helsinki has an entire Design District packed with some 200 design shops. It has a great range of fashion, textile, jewellery and leather stores from both established and aspiring designers. Then head to the Design Museum for an overview of Finnish design and its influences on everything from furniture to cartoon characters and vodka bottles.

Denmark is another destination where design is to the fore. Copenhagen is its hip and happening economic, artistic and royal centre and, while it has an impressive history



Ivana fashion boutique in the Design District © Visit Helsinki

Copenhagen © Brian Johnston

Helsinki cathedral © Visit Helsinki

Royal Danish Playhouse © Wonderful Copenhagen

Riddarholmen island in Stockholm © Brian Johnston

fashions, which are more colourful and internationally-influenced than you might expect of normally toned-down Nordic design.

Stockholm is a final pleasure in the smörgåsbord of stylish Scandinavian capitals. It's a city of turrets, spires and contemporary office blocks built across multiple islands so that it appears almost to float on water. The Swedish capital's gingerbread old town bursts with antique stores, quaint cafés and royal churches. Sightseeing highlights are the open-air museum at Djurgården and the Royal Flagship Vasa, a complete man-of-war dating from 1628.

However, the confident contemporary city leads the way in Swedish technology, design and fashion. For a spot of shopping, Södermalm has lately emerged as the place to hunt for funky, alternative fashions and counterculture goods, while Östermalm features terrific design boutiques. Chic glassware and stainless-steel kitchen utensils make for stylish souvenirs. Like many Scandinavian destinations, Stockholm may be rich in history but is hardly resting on its laurels, making it a vibrant and lovely place to visit.

connected with Baltic sea trade, it feels like an experimental and at times avant-garde city. Museums are eclectic, summer festivals seemingly permanently buzzing. Sit in Nyhavn with a beer, and you could be in a fishing village. (The 'New Harbour' is actually three centuries old, its coloured half-timber houses carefully restored.) Yet just around the corner, in wonderful Copenhagen contrast, stands the minimalist Black Diamond, which houses the national library. Across the way,

the Copenhagen Opera House looks like an alien spaceship.

Take the opportunity to visit the Danish Design Centre and Louisiana museum for a look at fabled Danish design. Designmuseum Danmark also has changing exhibitions of functional and decorative arts, from modernist chairs to the original Carlsberg beer label. Then browse the famous pedestrian Strøget to find streamlined Danish design on sale – just the chance to pick up an impressive souvenir.

Illums Bolighus supplies the Danish royals with their homewares and furniture, and P. Hertz is the official jewellery maker to the Danish court, where Mary and Frederik had their wedding rings made. Another must-look is Henrik Vibskov Boutique on Krystalgade, the flagship store of a leading Danish designer known for his unconventional



AIR DEAL OPENS GATEWAYS IN EUROPE

AUSTRALIA'S aviation footprint in Europe has been expanded, with the Federal Government settling new Air Services Arrangements with Italy, Cyprus and Greece.

Infrastructure and Transport Minister Darren Chester announced the new arrangements last month and said they were part of the Government's plan to expand Australia's reach in the region.

"In settling revised air services arrangements with Italy, the Australian Government has delivered on an outcome long sought by the Australian aviation industry," he said. "Under the Italy Air Services Agreement, Australian airlines can now significantly expand existing codeshare operations to Italy, a country more than 500,000 Aussies travelled to in 2016.

"Travel between Australia and Italy has been growing steadily for a number of years and it is important that our airlines can share in the growth," he said.

The agreement allows for an Australia registered carrier to operate

seven services a week in each direction.

The air services agreement between Greece and Australia will create more flexibility for each nation's airlines, with carriers allowed to operate up to seven return services a week to the Mediterranean country. In addition, each country's airlines will now be able to operate an unlimited number of freight services between Australia and Greece.

The Cyprus deal is a first for Australia and allows airlines to operate services between each country, either using their own aircraft or via code-share arrangements with other carriers.

"The Agreement further strengthens bilateral relationships between our two countries, and will enable increased tourism and trade opportunities," Chester said. "The deal signed with Cyprus allows for unrestricted capacity and frequency on any aircraft type between Larnaka and/or Pafos on the island."

Australian airlines will also be able to enter into co-operative marketing arrangements such as blocked space or code-sharing.

MONACO'S HOTEL DE PARIS REOPENS

THE famous Hotel de Paris Monte-Carlo reopened in May after a three-year refurbishment aimed at reviving the dream of founder François Blanc, who opened the property in 1863.

Blanc's vision was to offer a "hotel that surpasses everything that has been created up until now – an even more meaningful reality".

The renovations have seen the hotel given more contemporary spaces; larger, more open modern rooms; sumptuous villas; new terraces; an inner patio with abundant vegetation, and more. In September the hotel will offer a new wine cellar housing over 450,000 bottles and a tasting area.

Formula One racing fans might know the Hotel de Paris for its prime location alongside the Monte Carlo Casino, close to where the cars work their way up Avenue d'Ostende on the tight and windy street circuit.



Parts of the hotel's different wings are continuing to undergo renovations and will be progressively completed ahead of an official grand reopening scheduled for December 2018.



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AFTER a sluggish 2016 where arrival numbers dipped 6%, Austria has bounced back with stellar results over the first five months of 2017.

Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO) managing director Astrid Mulholland-Licht said Australian travellers were leading the rebound, outpacing the global average growth of 0.9% by more than sixfold at 6.3%. Australian overnight stays in Austria from January to May of 2017 totalled 130,000 nights.

"Our biggest months of September and December are still ahead," said Mulholland-Licht, who believed there was "pent up demand" as a result of a softer 2016.

Australians continue to flock to the capital, with Vienna comprising 40.7% of total visitor overnights, followed by Tyrol (25.4%) in western Austria and Salzburg at 20.2% of overnights.

The average stay in 2016 was 2.5 nights and the most recent treasury figures saw Australians inject \$111 million into the Austrian economy.

"Prior to 2016, we had five consecutive years of growth from the Australian market," Mulholland-Licht said.

The ANTO is set to engage in local marketing activities in the months ahead including exhibiting within Luxperience as well as partnering with Emirates for a trade show in Perth in October in conjunction with Vienna Tourism.

Globus unveils Europe preview

THE Globus family of brands has released early preview brochures for its 2018 European touring programs, offered with earlybird discounts ahead of the main season launch in coming months.

Top-selling tours in the company's premium touring range are outlined in the Globus Europe preview brochure, while value-oriented tours are on offer in the Cosmos Europe program. A 10% early booking discount is available for Globus Europe bookings made by 12 September.

Meanwhile, the Globus 2018 Religious touring brochure is also now available, featuring faith-based tours throughout Europe and the Holy Lands. In addition to 2018 tours, the brochure also includes details on packages available with the 2020 Oberammergau Passion Play in southern Germany.



AGENT KNOW-HOW

We ask Switzerland Tourism how to swot up on your knowledge of the European nation.

How can travel agents improve their knowledge of Switzerland?

An excellent way to learn more is via our new e-learning program, the Switzerland Travel Academy. Other useful sources include our website (www.myswitzerland.com) and our Facebook and Instagram pages where we keep our online community inspired with stories, news and updates.

What kind of training is available to Australian agents wanting to sell Switzerland and how can they sign up for it?

The Switzerland Travel Academy is the best training available. It is a fun and interactive program that will equip agents with the necessary product knowledge to help them better inform their clients and sell Switzerland more easily. The program consists of three core-modules, plus eight specialisation-modules on Switzerland for specific experiences such as the Swiss Rail System, snow and winter activities, luxury holidays or others. Agents can register to learn more here - www.australia.switzerlandtravelacademy.ch.

What activities would you recommend for first time travellers?

An unmissable experience is definitely a ride on one of our scenic trains such as the Glacier Express or the GoldenPass Line. Another must-do is a mountain excursion with one of our many mountain cableways and trains, such as Mount Pilatus accessible via Lucerne, or Europe's highest train station on Jungfrauoch. And last but not least, our lovely medieval boutique towns such as Basel (our cultural capital on the Rhine River) or Lausanne on Lake Geneva are a must-see.

What makes Switzerland a unique destination?

Its splendid nature: Switzerland is the home of the mountains, a natural playground for nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts. Its diversity: you travel an hour and you discover a new landscape, a new culture or even a new language. Its infrastructure: getting around in Switzerland is fool proof – the densest public transport network in the world offers 29,000km of rail, road and waterway routes. Switzerland really is a nature's paradise in the heart of Europe, waiting to be explored.

How can travel agents join a family to Switzerland?

The best way to do this is to become a certified Switzerland Specialist by completing the Switzerland Travel Academy. This year, we are taking 10 lucky agents who have completed the Academy's core modules on a fantastic trip to Switzerland in September. We are also regularly hosting families to Switzerland in co-op with tour operators and retailer consortia.



Basel ©Switzerland Tourism



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GERMANY BRINGS THEMES TO TOURISM OUTLOOK

WITH Germany's Australian markets defying the downturn in other parts of Europe, the German National Tourist Office (GNTO) has laid out plans to target yet more travellers over the next three years through food, music and culture.

The number of Aussies visiting Germany has more than doubled over the past decade and in 2016 broke the 100,000 barrier for the first time, a 4% increase on the previous year, according to Tourism Research Australia.

Against this growth, the GNTO has outlined marketing plans based on a series of annual themes that kicked off this year with a celebration of Martin Luther and the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Next year, Germany will focus on 'Culinary Germany' targetting young adults, families and city dwellers with the message that the country is worth a visit for its food and drink alone.

Over the year the organisation will highlight some of Germany's key food regions and trails, including the Allgäu Cheese Route, the Old Salt Road, the Baden Asparagus Route and the Beer and Castle Route. Germany will also hold international food truck events around the country to celebrate the diversity of food on offer.

After 2018, the GNTO will hold an array of events in 2019 to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of writer and poet Theodor Fontane, and to celebrate 100 years of the Bauhaus, the influential German art school that combined crafts with fine arts between 1919 and 1933.

Further ahead, 2020 will bring celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the birth of composer Ludwig van Beethoven, revolving around Bonn where a new concert hall is being built to honour the city's most famous son.

In the same year, the once-a-decade Passion Play season depicting the story of Christ is expected to attract up to 500,000 people to the town of Oberammergau in Bavaria. The five-hour play has been staged every decade since 1634.



© GNTB

FRANCE SHOWING SIGNS OF RECOVERY

THE number of Australians visiting France is heading back towards 2015 levels, according to Atout France which has reported signs of recovery after last year's slump in the wake of the Paris terrorist attacks.

The deputy director of Atout France in Australia, Marc Humphries, said data on French visa applications had shown substantial growth in the first quarter of 2017.

"Tourist visa applications for France are showing a significant 32% increase and the Paris Ile de France (region) has reported a

12.6% increase in international bed nights," he said.

Humphries said the average Australian spent 14 days in France and visited Paris, the Riviera, Provence and many of the country's famous wine regions. World War I battlefields had been extremely popular, especially around the centennial anniversary of World War I.

"The new Sir John Monash centre near Villers-Bretonneux will generate considerable interest," he said of the museum due to

open next year at the existing Australian National War Memorial north of Paris.

To capitalise on renewed interest, Atout France will hold trade events later this year for the regions of Champagne, Burgundy, and for the first time Brittany. Next year the organisation will hold its France Workshops in September 2018 in Sydney and Melbourne.



Burgundy vineyard



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*Conditions apply. SEE: aptouring.com.au/SpecialDeals for full conditions. Prices are per person (pp), AUD, twin share and include port charges where applicable. Price is correct as at 9 July 2017. Price based on EUMC15: 10 November 2018 (Cat. E). DEPOSITS: A non-refundable deposit of \$1,000 pp is due within 7 days of booking. Australian Pacific Touring Pty Ltd. ABN 44 004 684 619.



SWITZERLAND TO TARGET AUSSIES

WITH visitation to Switzerland from Australia and New Zealand up 14% this year, Switzerland Tourism has launched a new marketing campaign to entice travellers to try something different on their next visit.

'Back to Nature' is its new summer campaign which will run over the next two years and focus on three themes of 'My Swiss Experience', 'Wildlife Watching', and 'Alpine Huts'.

Switzerland Tourism aims to inspire nature and outdoor lovers to discover an array of experiences around the country, plus encourage city-dwellers to reconnect with Mother Nature.

The director of Switzerland Tourism for Australia and New Zealand, Mark Wettstein, said the themes addressed

the growing interest and demand from travellers who were after authentic experiences when visiting.

"Travellers are looking for new and different activities, knowledge and involvements to enhance their journey and itineraries; and getting to know or interacting with locals to learn about their ways of life is a major appeal."

'My Swiss Experience' offers visitors the opportunity to explore the country and regional diversities via various experiences and encounters. 'Wildlife Watching' offers animal lovers a range of encounters with Swiss fauna, with over a 100 one-day packages available. The 'Alpine Huts' initiative is targeted at travellers wanting to stay close to nature and away from the hustle and bustle of city life.

Insight's 2018 at 2017 prices

INSIGHT Vacations has revealed its 23-page 2018 Europe Preview collection, featuring eight new tours that include more immersive and engaging activities including farm-to-table restaurants and dining in local homes.

Managing director for Insight Vacations Australia Alexandra O'Connor said the experiences were in response to customer research which had found Australian travellers rated things like a gourmet walking tour of Parisian neighbourhoods as being more appealing than ascending the Eiffel Tower or visiting the Louvre.

"Our new Discovery tours are brimming with great local experiences which bring the destination to life and complement the classic highlights that we know and love," she said.

The preview collection features a price guarantee with 2018 tours at 2017 prices, an additional 10% early payment discount and additional savings for previous Insight guests.

NEW APT SMALL GROUP TOURS

TOUR operator APT has added five new Small Group Discovery tours to its Europe line-up for 2018, including options in Iceland, Morocco, Ireland, Lapland, northern Croatia and Slovenia.

The tours are aimed at guests who are after an intimate and engaging touring experience, allowing them to spend more time exploring at each stop. Small Group Discovery tours are capped at 20 people per tour, even though the tour bus is designed for 40 people.

Among the new itineraries is the 11-day Emerald Island trip, which starts in Belfast and explores the west coast of Ireland before finishing in Dublin. Along the way guests take in sights such as the Slieve League Cliffs, the Giant's Causeway and the town of Cobh, which was the last port of call for the ill-fated *Titanic*. Prices start from \$7,495pp.



Giant's Causeway © Stefan Klopp

APT says all trips involve staying in unique accommodation including glass igloos in Lapland, castles in Ireland and luxury tents at a private desert camp in Morocco. APT's Small Group Discovery tours are offered with a range of bonuses including a \$1,000 airfare credit per couple, if booked by 31 August.

APT is also expanding its 2018 Freedom of Choice program by grouping sightseeing activities into themes so guests can tailor itineraries to suit their style and taste. The groups include Cultural Insight, Gourmet Delight, Active Exploration and Relax & Revive, which are available on both cruise and land tours.

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Royal Dutch Airlines





ISLAND WANDERINGS

Jenny Piper has the chance to experience one of Tasmania's most spectacular landscapes, the beautiful Maria Island, off the East coast, with its sweeping bays, rugged cliffs and mountains and amazing wildlife as part of the four day Maria Island Walk.

optional walks), and staying in exclusive, luxury wilderness camps, not a bad way to see this World Heritage listed destination.

THE WALK

After being collected from their hotel in Hobart, guests go to the city base to get kitted up for the next few days. Packs are provided and despite the suggested gear list I still managed to overpack, which I did regret as an inexperienced hiker. Guests carry their own packs (unless you have pre-arranged the no pack option). After transfer to Triabunna we board the boat for the 40 minute crossing to the island, arriving on the beach at Shoal Bay where French explorer Nicholas Baudin landed in 1802. Fortunately the walk to our first campsite is a short one and we offload our packs to replace them with day packs for the optional afternoon walk down to Haunted Bay, home of an old whaling station and named because of all the whale bones in the bay.

Day two is the longest walk of 13km, covering five beautiful beaches. We visit one of the oldest farmhouses on the island and then have lunch at the ruins of the convict cells, before encountering our first wombat. For the beachcombers we come across some amazing finds including whale vertebrae.

On Day three we head inland through the forests towards the summit of Mt Maria. But due to inclement weather we can't climb to the summit, so instead we head straight to Darlington to dry out and explore the historic township with its many convict buildings.



Wombat tracks



Wilderness camp

Peak of Bishop and Clerk



AUSTRALIAN ESCAPES



Our final day sees us take on the twin peaks of Bishop and Clerk. This is an optional activity as it is a strenuous hike. The four hour round trip takes us along the edges of rugged cliffs and through forests and woodlands before climbing a scree slope to reach the summit at 620m. After scrambling up the last few boulders we reach the top with its spectacular views and celebrate our achievement with a cuppa provided by our wonderful guide, who has carried the thermos all the way up. Our guides for the trip have been two enthusiastic and knowledgeable young ladies – Holly and Jo. They have looked out for all of us and kept us informed about the history and the flora and fauna of the island.

FOOD AND ACCOMMODATION

The first two nights of the walk are spent 'glamping' at the wilderness camps with permanent tents, comfy beds and sleeping bags provided. There are private showering and toilet facilities as well as a dining tent and sitting area in which to relax. The campsites are nestled in the bush and situated near secluded beaches. The final night is spent at Bernacchi House, the restored cottage of Diego Bernacchi, a flamboyant resident who helped shape the history of Darlington with his various entrepreneurial endeavours. We celebrate new friendships and new experiences with a banquet dinner. Each night we have been treated to a candlelit three course gourmet meal cooked by our guides. The food is delicious and showcases the best of Tasmanian produce and local wines. There are also hot breakfasts and delicious packed lunches each day.

THE WILDLIFE

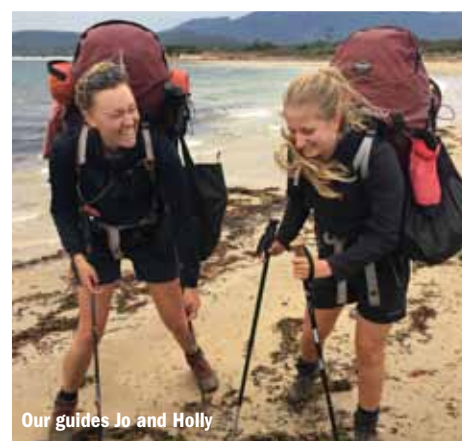
One of the highlights of Maria Island is the abundance of wildlife. We were lucky enough

to see pademelon, wallabies, kangaroos and the famous wombat. Our first encounter with the wombat saw all the group grabbing for cameras and phones to get a good picture of it hiding in the undergrowth. We were soon to discover they weren't as elusive as we all thought. In fact there are hundreds of them. We spotted them in the forest, by the side of the track and even on the rocks by the waters edge. Despite their abundance we were all excited every time we spied one of these shy creatures.

The bird life is prolific and our 'twitcher' in the group managed to identify over 26 species of bird, including various gulls, sea eagles, swans, black cockatoos and Cape Barren geese.

But the highlight would have to be the close up sighting of a Tasmanian Devil. The devils are not native to Maria Island, they have been introduced as part of a breeding program to eliminate the facial tumour disease that is endangering the species. One cheeky devil ventured up to our BBQ one night to see what was cooking, much to the delight of the group.

Our four days finish with a final champagne lunch in Darlington, just a group of new friends and the local wombats, before returning to civilisation, tired yet exhilarated, and ready for a long soak in a bath!



Our guides Jo and Holly



View from the top of Bishop and Clerk

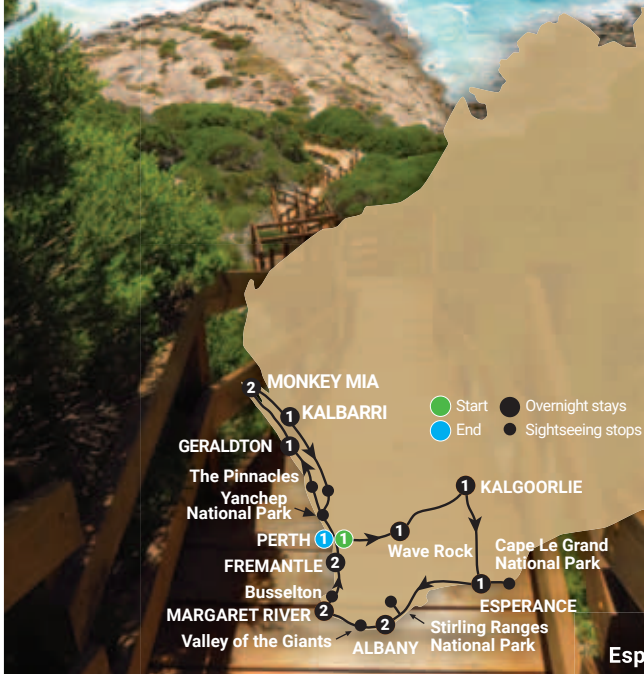


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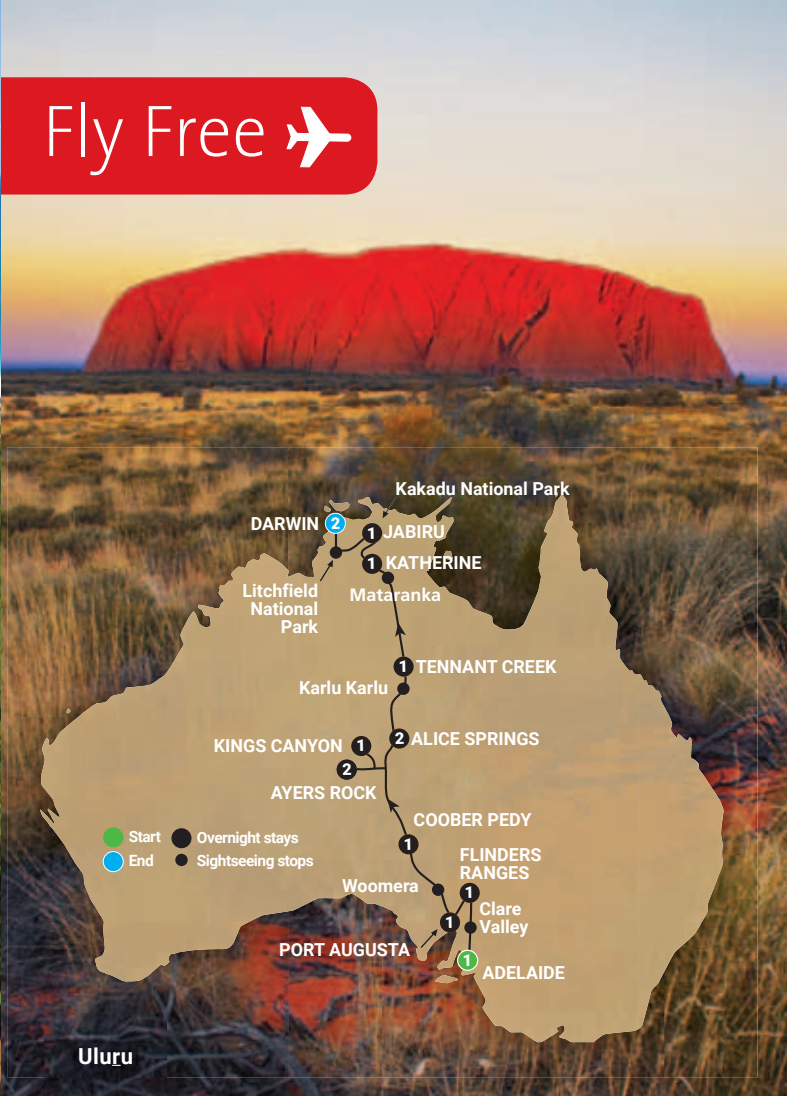
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Outback Adventure

Code: NAAD

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- Discover opals at Coober Pedy
- Toast a spectacular Uluru sunset with wine and nibbles
- Learn about indigenous culture and explore Kata Tjuta
- Cruise on Katherine Gorge and discover ancient rock art
- Swim beneath Litchfield's pristine waterfalls

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- Travel by luxury coach
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- Explore Waitomo's famous Glowworm Grotto
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- Journey aboard the TransAlpine Train
- Cruise through 'Hole in the Rock' in the Bay of Islands

INCLUSIONS

- Free return airfare to Auckland/Christchurch*
- Experienced Travel Director and Driver Guide
- Quality accommodation
- Travel by luxury coach
- Many meals including breakfast daily
- Airport transfers in New Zealand

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AAT KINGS SALUTES AGENTS

AUSTRALIAN and New Zealand travel experts AAT Kings is “having a good year” and “2018 forward numbers are looking very strong,” the company’s managing director Hans Belle told *travelBulletin*.

The Northern Territory including Uluru is booming for the operator, with the AAT Kings boss highlighting the uniqueness of the Field of Light installation as a real success story and a trigger for turning travel aspirations into bookings for both domestic and international visitors.

AAT Kings Kimberley and West Coast tours have also experienced very strong growth and Tasmania is still performing very strongly, while the UK and North American markets have displayed “real material growth,” Belle said.

“Some of the reasons we’re performing so well out of those markets is – like the rest of TTC brands – we’re very committed to supporting and working with the trade.”

“The bulk of our bookings come through the trade and so our programs are totally designed to drive guests into our travel partners,” he explained.



AAT Kings is expanding its product offering in 2018 with the introduction of a NSW South Coast Highlights day tour, venturing from Sydney down the Grand Pacific Drive and stopping at Nan Tien Temple in Berkeley – the largest Buddhist temple in the Southern Hemisphere – along with the Kiama Blowhole and Fitzroy Falls.

AAT Kings is also working through a new itinerary in the Victorian Highlands for its Inspiring Journeys portfolio which offers small, luxury and boutique tours for groups of

up to 20 travellers.

Belle said the company had been responding to a real demand for a modular approach to travel by combining shorter Inspiring Journeys itineraries, with a tendency noted for international travellers compressing the duration of their visit.

Belle said the shorter visits could be partly driven by a lack of hotel capacity due to a boost in traveller numbers, resulting in a “dampening effect on whether people can stay as long as they originally intended”.

Tailor threads new journeys

ADELAIDE-BASED Australian luxury specialist, the Tailor, is bursting at the seams with new products.

The Tailor has launched an initial batch of Luxury Day Tours in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria, promising “exclusive experiences not available anywhere else”.

Included in the release is the Exclusively Driven Barossa Experience offering a full day of touring the Henschke Winery and Hutton Vale Farm, while the Kangaroo Island Private Tour allows guests to explore Kangaroo Island with a personal guide.

The Tailor has also introduced a four-day journey which pays tribute to R.M. Williams, the creator of the clothing brand which still bears his name.

The itinerary traces his personal history, telling the story of how he created the famous riding boots.



THE Whitsundays’ local tourism industry has bounced back from Cyclone Debbie and is leading the region’s recovery efforts.

Following the disaster, the Queensland and Australian Governments dedicated \$10 million to a recovery package and jointly funded a \$2 million marketing campaign to support the state’s tourism industry as it recoups.

Visiting the Whitsundays three months on from Cyclone Debbie, Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland, Coralee O’Rourke, said the government’s efforts “built on the momentum kick started by determined local operators”.

“It’s great to see that three months on, the Whitsundays is well and truly moving from recovery mode and beginning to flourish again,” O’Rourke said.

She noted Queensland’s \$23 billion tourism industry is vital to the economy, and having the Whitsundays back to its best is a priority.

“But we have to acknowledge there is still a lot of work to do with some businesses remaining closed and a great need to reinforcing the point that the Whitsundays is open for business and there is still no place like it,” she said.

The Government has worked to support small businesses – including tourism companies – impacted by Cyclone Debbie to apply for disaster funding and National Parks rangers have been “flat out” getting tourist hotspots back up and running.

3 THINGS IN HOBART

Hobart is fast becoming a 'hot destination' for both international and domestic travellers'. Here are our top three picks of what to do while visiting.

THE \$75 million museum was founded in 2011 by philanthropist David Walsh and is located 12km north of Hobart's city centre. Spread across three underground levels, the extensive collection includes ancient antiques, modern and contemporary artworks. The collection includes work by Sidney Nolan as well as some rather provocative installations, with many of the pieces part of Walsh's private collection. There are also frequently updated exhibitions.

Built into the side of the cliff on the Derwent River the museum is open daily and can be accessed via the camouflaged ferry from Brooke St Pier or via the MONA Roma shuttle bus.



EXPLORE the historic waterfront area of Salamanca Place, with its colonial sandstone warehouses dating back to the whaling days of the 1830's. Now home to galleries, restaurants, bars and retail outlets there's plenty to do. On Saturday morning visit the Salamanca Markets.

Walk from Salamanca Place up Kelly's steps to the old maritime village of Battery Point. Wander around the lanes with their historic seafarers cottages or call in at one of the cafes in the area. A favourite for visitors is Jackman & McRoss. This bakery café is famous for its delicious pies, pastries and breads and is also a great spot for lunch.

ESTABLISHED in 1846 by the scientific society – Royal Society of Tasmania – it is Australia's second oldest museum. The combined museum, art gallery and herbarium precinct includes some of Tasmania's oldest surviving public buildings such as the Commissariat store dating back to 1810. The museum has collections of Aboriginal and colonial relics, works by Australian artists as well as an extensive zoological collection with a fascinating and comprehensive exhibit devoted to the Tasmanian Tiger.

Located just across from Constitution Dock, it is open daily with free general admission.



Rambagh Palace



Rawla Narlai room



Taj Lake Palace suite



INDIA LUXE

Rajput dining room



By Kristie Kellahan

THE strutting peacocks are your first clue that the Rambagh Palace is no ordinary hotel. Given the regal run of the sprawling 19 hectare palace grounds, the peacocks are fitting mascots of this glorious former royal residence and hunting lodge in Rajasthan.

If it's the royal treatment you seek, look no further than India.

Once home to the Maharaja of Jaipur, Rambagh Palace is opulent, gilded and bejeweled with lavish decor and cascading fountains, now admired by paying hotel guests.

Studded with sumptuous palace hotels, extravagant royal residences and breathtaking displays of architectural wonder, India is fit for kings and queens, and for those who aspire to such white-glove treatment. It's decadent and over-the-top glamour, but softened by the warmest of heartfelt welcomes.

There is stark contrast, certainly – cruel poverty lives side by side with unheralded wealth in India – but for the fortunate traveller, the destination is sure to impress.

Insight Vacations' Luxury Gold offers several escorted tours in India with an emphasis on luxury hotels, fine dining and VIP experiences. The tours visit some of the most iconic royal landmarks, including the Taj Mahal in Agra, that great monument of love,

built by a heartbroken emperor in memory of his love.

As guests of Insight, visitors receive the VIP treatment and have dawn access to the Taj Mahal complex, hours before the masses. There's also a visit to the imposing red sandstone Agra Fort on some of Insight's Gold tours, with a tour of the palatial Royal Pavilions. Private dinners in royal reception halls and mystical music performances on the rooftops of palaces are all part of the experience.

Celebrating my birthday in India, I came away feeling that if hospitality wasn't invented there, it was certainly refined in the nation.

Showered in a fragrant confetti of red rose petals, handed more bouquets of flowers than a beauty queen, and served up no less than four scrumptious birthday cakes during the course of the big day, it was clear to me that India is the perfect destination for celebrating in style.

It's also a dining destination worth getting excited about. At the Leela Palace New Delhi, the capital's only modern palace hotel, there's something for everyone in an atmosphere of approachable sophistication.

‘Celebrating my birthday in India, I came away feeling that if hospitality wasn't invented there, it was certainly refined in the nation’

Purpose-built and opened with great fanfare in 2011, the Leela Palace stands out as the modern face of Indian grand hospitality. Five stars don't seem to do it justice. Compared to the more traditional, historic palace hotels in India, the Leela is shiny, new and state-of-the-art.

Fine dining from around the world can be enjoyed at specialty restaurants: an outpost of New York's Le Cirque, Japanese delicacies at Megu, North Indian flavours at Jamavar, and cocktail nibbles in the Library Bar. At The Qube, the international breakfast buffet is one of the best we've seen, a heady mix of French patisserie temptations, South Indian dosas, freshly made smoothies and Asian bites.

The devil may be in the details, but so too is the delight. Leela Palace's curated collection of modern art would stand up to any private gallery's holdings; ask for a private tour. Breathe in the scent of the sublime fresh flowers displayed throughout



the hotel: 14,000 blooms are delivered each day. Ask and you shall receive butler service, personal shopper attention or a lift to the airport in a Rolls Royce Phantom.

More traditional luxuries are to be found at the other-worldly Taj Lake Palace Udaipur on Lake Pichola. Built in 1743 in the state of Udaipur as a royal retreat and summer palace, the hotel has been accommodating paying guests for more than 50 years. A five minute boat ride delivers guests to the palace hotel, which sits regally in the middle of the lake. The luxury rooms have been given the royal treatment, with intricately handwoven Indian textiles on the beds and sumptuous soft furnishings, but the ambiance remains timeless. Driven to town in a vintage car, it's not difficult to imagine the princely era when the Maharana's guests played here during elegant summer parties.

One of the most revered heritage hotels in India, Rawla Narlai is a meticulously restored 17th Century royal retreat. Just 32 rooms make this epic Rajasthan country house a boutique accommodation option, replete with a beautiful pool secreted away in a private walled garden.

And at the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, almost 4,000 works of art – many of them antique – grace the rooms and public spaces of this grand old wedding cake of a building. Gothic, Greco-Roman, Islamic and Rajasthan architecture is incorporated in what can best be described as a fairytale retreat.

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 **SriLankan Airlines**



PRIVATE TOURING TO INDIA & BEYOND

BEYOND Travel's foray into India and Sri Lanka has met with success on both the private and escorted touring fronts, according to general manager of sales and marketing Bryce Crampton.

The company's new division India & Beyond was launched in May and offers a selection of private tours, river cruises, a luxury rail journey and pre- and post-tour land packages. The program also includes a six-day guided tour of India's Golden Triangle, offered with weekly guaranteed departures and a choice of four or five-star hotels in New Delhi, Agra and Jaipur.

Crampton said discounted trade rates for the Golden Triangle tour had caught the attention of Australian agents, with more than 20 taking up the offer within six weeks of release.

The tour had also proved popular with consumers, selling "consistently very well" with more than 90% of travellers choosing to upgrade to the tour's five-star option, available from \$20 extra per person per night.

Growing demand for private touring had been a key factor behind the company's decision to launch an India and Sri Lanka division, in addition to Beyond Travel's established range in Africa, South America and parts of Asia.

"Consumers have shown a great liking for the inclusive private itineraries. There is a general greater awareness in the Australian markets of the ease and comfort of travelling privately in India and Sri Lanka," Crampton said.

As well as India's iconic sights and bucket-list destinations, Crampton said there was a growing number of travellers looking for an alternative to cities and monuments and were attracted by India's wildlife in wonderful National Parks, the waterways of Kerala, beach resort areas around Goa and the east coast resorts south of Chennai.

Until 30 September, India & Beyond is offering an earlybird discount of \$400 per couple on all private tours.

Nahargarh Fort, Jaipur

TOURING WITH ENTERPRISING WOMEN

EMPLOYMENT and training programs for women in southern India have inspired a new 12-day journey offered by Abercrombie & Kent.

Travelling through Tamil Nadu, the tour allows guests to meet the people behind projects aimed at combatting poverty in areas like Mahabalipuram and Pondicherry.

Called 'Women Hand in Hand: A Hosted Journey Through Southern India', it provides

contributions to the Knit One Change One project founded by Danielle Chiel, who created a co-op for women in rural villages to earn income from knitting.

The tour offers an opportunity to meet Chiel and some of the women who knit in the village of Edayanchavadi, as well as other experiences including a cooking excursion in which guests are paired with local women to shop for ingredients before cooking and dining in their homes.

Beginning in the city of Chennai (the former Madras), it visits spectacular temples, villages and historic fortresses as it heads south to destinations including Pondicherry with its colourful old quarter seen in the movie *Life of Pi*.

The Women Hand in Hand tour operates in March and October 2018, priced from \$7,435 per person twin share.



Exploring India along the Ganges

UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruise Collection links some of India's most spectacular locations with a combined land and river itinerary, the 13-day India's Golden Triangle and the Sacred Ganges.

Beginning in New Delhi, it explores the monuments of the Indian capital before setting out to the Taj Mahal in Agra and the pink city of Jaipur. Guests then fly to Kolkata to explore the country's second largest city and embark on a river cruise on board the *Ganges Voyager II*.

With room for just 56 guests, the ship sets out over seven nights to sample the temples, artisans' villages and Bengali architecture of the lower Ganges.

Until 30 September, Uniworld is offering a 15% saving on the tour which is now available from \$10,029 per person twin share.



NEXUS Holidays has expanded into India and Sri Lanka, introducing a series of new tours that aim to provide the same style of affordable luxury the company currently offers in China and Japan.

The Shanghai-based firm has released five escorted tour options that offer choices for both the first time visitor and repeat traveller.

Among them is the seven-day Passage to India, aimed at first timers and focused on the Golden Triangle between New Delhi, Jaipur and Agra, including the Taj Mahal.

Priced from \$1,599 per person twin share, it includes flights and offers a mix of four and five-star accommodation. For a more in-depth visit, Nexus has introduced its nine-day Colours of India. As well as the cities of the Golden Triangle, it also includes the blue city of Jodhpur, the lake city of Udaipur and the ancient town of Pushkar. It is priced from \$1,999 per person including flights.

Having originally planned to offer Sri Lanka as an add-on to India tours, Nexus has instead created a dedicated nine-day itinerary,

Secrets of Sri Lanka, visiting a succession of destinations including Colombo, Kandy, Galle and the Sigiriya Rock Fortress. Other tours in the program include a nine-day South India Highlights with Kerala Backwaters and the nine-day Classic Nepal.

The company is also about to release a series of tour add-ons under a program of Island Escapes – beach and resort-based packages in destinations including the Maldives, Vietnam, Langkawi, Bali and Lombok.

■ See www.nexusholidays.com.au

SRILANKAN RETURNING TO AUSTRALIA

SRILANKAN Airlines is preparing for its return to Australia, announcing plans for direct flights between Melbourne and Colombo.

Starting 29 October, the **oneworld** member will offer the only direct services between Australia and Sri Lanka with daily departures aboard Airbus A330-200 aircraft.

The move is in response to growing demand in the south-east, including from Melbourne's sizeable Sri Lankan community and growing student population.

"Despite the absence of direct connections, we have witnessed a steady increase in passengers travelling between Colombo and Melbourne via various Asian connecting points such as Singapore and Kuala Lumpur," said SriLankan Airlines' chief commercial officer Siva Ramachandran.

"Our direct services will give us a definite advantage as SriLankan is the only carrier that is able to offer connectivity of this nature at this time," he said. "We also



offer seamless onward connections beyond Colombo to a range of destinations in the Indian Sub-Continent and Middle East."

Sri Lanka's national carrier offers connections to 10 Indian points and nine Middle Eastern gateways, as well as holiday destinations in the Seychelles and Maldives.

The Melbourne services will complement SriLankan's existing double-daily services offered with code-share partners Qantas and Malaysian Airlines, travelling via Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

Australia's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Bryce Hutchesson said direct air connections between the two countries would stimulate tourism, business and trade.

"We are seeing a growing number of Australians looking to travel to Sri Lanka for tourism and business, and to reconnect with family," Hutchesson said. "And we welcome the growing number of Sri Lankans travelling to Australia for education, business, to explore Australia's culture and natural wonders, and of course to catch up with family and friends."



SPORTS TRAVEL

By Steve Jones

WHEN John Aloisi crashed home a penalty against Uruguay on that unforgettable November night in 2005, it sent 83,000 fans packed into Sydney's Telstra Stadium into ecstasy and propelled the Socceroos to their first FIFA World Cup for 32 years.

Seven months later an estimated 60,000 Australians descended on Germany to follow the national team on a football adventure that will live long in the memory.

Since then, the FIFA World Cup has become something of a pilgrimage for Aussies, albeit one that only happens every four years, with thousands flocking to South Africa in 2010 and Brazil in 2014.

Indeed, Australia sold more tickets for Brazil – 53,000 – than the footballing powerhouses of Italy, Spain and the Netherlands combined.

We may not be a giant in world football, and it's far from being our national pastime,

but the number of travelling fans underlined what we all know: Australians are rather fond of sport and will travel the length and breadth of the globe to watch it.

If witnessing the cream of the round ball crop has captured the imagination in recent times, the Rugby World Cup has not been far behind. Australia took 55,000 fans to New Zealand in 2011, while VisitBritain reported a 20% increase in arrivals from Australia during the World Cup period in England in 2015. Another huge army of Wallabies fans are expected to make the relatively short trip to Japan in 2019. Such continuing passion for sport spells good news for the burgeoning sports tourism industry.

Renee Riitano, product, brand and event manager at FanFirm which operates Australian Sports Tours, We Love Rugby and the Fanatics, said the World Cups of football, rugby and to a lesser extent cricket, are, unsurprisingly, the most sought after events by sport fans, with the four year interlude between tournaments one of the contributing factors.

"World Cups are the ultimate event that any

sports fan wants to go to, and they don't take place very often so the anticipation builds," she told *travelBulletin*. "We start working on all the World Cups two years in advance. It's the biggest part of our business.

"I think some people regard the Ashes as more important than the Cricket World Cup because of the rivalry. But football and rugby are on a different scale."

If anything, football outstrips rugby in popularity, in part, Riitano suggested, because the Socceroos rarely pit their wits against the best in the world, unlike their rugby counterparts who line up against the All Blacks, South Africa and other international teams comparatively regularly.

Daniel Cecconi, chief operating officer at sport tour operator Sportsnet, singled out the Rugby World Cup as its largest draw. "It's always big and it's really exciting to again have a World Cup on our doorstep in Asia Pacific in 2019," he said.

Sportsnet focuses on events where there is high demand and low supply, Cecconi said, with the company selling upwards of 60 events during



NOT JUST SPORT

the year. And it's not just the mass market, global events that rev up Australian sports fans.

Motor sport is "really strong", Cecconi said, with packages to October's Japan MotorGP – the first time the company has offered the event – already sold out.

"It's been an overwhelming success," he said. "The Malaysian and Texas MotorGPs are also really solid.

"We also have Formula One packages in Singapore and Malaysia, which are traditionally popular, and we always take a good number to Monaco. It's the bucket list Grand Prix for F1 fans."

Continuing the motor sports theme, Cecconi said it could sell the Isle of Man TT packages "many times over".

Another event identified by Riitano and Cecconi as a perennial strong seller is the centrepiece of the NFL calendar, the Super Bowl, where tickets are hard to come by. The Wimbledon tennis championship also draws the crowds.

Brand USA Australia and New Zealand director Matt Fletcher described sport as a

growing sector for tourism but said it is a desire to experience American culture, rather than a dream to attend a specific event, that is driving interest.

"What we hear most is that it's not that travellers are hell bent on going to the Superbowl or National Basketball finals, it's about having a unique Americana experience and going to a game with locals," he said, adding that more than a quarter of Australian visitors attend a sporting event.

But in an age where sports fans can buy tickets from a variety of sources – both official and unofficial – why would they book packages through a sports operator? The reasons are several, argued Cecconi, not least of which is peace of mind in the knowledge that tickets have been secured from a reputable source.

In addition, Sportsnet aims to provide an "experience" including functions attended by sporting celebrities.

"Every package we offer has some sort of exclusive function or experience," Cecconi said. "This year alone we must have worked

with 30 or 40 celebrities across a large number of sport genres.

"We don't want to be in the game of selling tickets and accommodation only, we want to be in the sports travel experience game."

When it comes to participating in sport, golf leads the way with several operators running escorted tours around the world, often timed to coincide with a major tournament.

Bede Hendren, owner and managing director of Teed-Up Golf, said the majority of his 3,000-4,000 clients are motivated more by playing than watching, with the US Masters a notable exception.

"That is the holy grail of golf. That is as much about going to the tournament and walking around Augusta," he said.

Tours to Ireland, Scotland, Hawaii and South Africa are among the most popular.

"We have grown each year for the past 15 years so it's a strong area of niche tourism," Hendren added. "It's also high end and high margin. Generally our clients are direct and repeat customers but travel agents can make good commission."





GOLFERS SET OUT ON THE DANUBE

SPORT tour operator The Golf Touring Company is eyeing expansion of its river cruise charter operation as its debut Avalon Waterways cruise nears a sell-out.

The company has chartered the *Avalon Vista* for a seven-night golf themed cruise on the Danube in July 2018, the first time such a product has been offered in Australia. It will be hosted by Andrew Daddo and includes a program for non-playing partners and four rounds of golf.

The Golf Touring Company has already chartered the *Vista* for a Rhine cruise in 2019, with managing director Stuart Catterson believing it has only “scratched the surface” of the golf-cruise potential.

“You have to sign your life away chartering a ship – without any bookings – but it was a calculated risk and thankfully it’s been very successful,” he said. “We’ve only got 10% of cabins left for the 2018 cruise and we launched 2019 on the strength of those bookings.

“Depending on how 2019 goes – and it has been very well received – I think we can grow to at least two departures in 2020.”

While the majority of bookings have come direct after the operator marketed the cruises through golf clubs, Catterson said recent sales have been generated by travel agents.

“When you look at the number of people taking a river cruise, I think we have only scratched the surface,” he said.

SUPER BOWL PACKAGES MADE EASY

INSIDER Experience has forged a first-of-its-kind agreement in Australia with the US National Football League (NFL) to offer real-time tickets to the sports’ annual gala, the Super Bowl.

Headquartered in Melbourne, Insider Experience is primarily a US destination management company that specialises in curated experiences for corporate and incentive groups to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas, New York and Hawaii. The company has also tapped into sporting events, such as the Kentucky Derby, and more recently the Super Bowl, providing hospitality packages direct from the NFL to this blockbuster event.

Founder and chief executive officer Karine Bulger told *travelBulletin* that until now, most Australians had purchased packages via a secondary agent, which had a number of disadvantages but none more stressful than realising tickets are fraudulent – an occurrence of which Bulger had heard horror stories.

“The Super Bowl continues to grow in popularity with Australian sports fans. It’s a bucket list event. But we realised there had to be a better, safer way of securing tickets from abroad,” Bulger explained.

And so began talks between Insider Experience and the NFL’s commercial arm, On Location Experiences, with Bulger insisting there was demand from this region for a sports group specialist to offer 100% authentic tickets to the spectacle.

In June, Insider Experience was given the green light to act as an “Authorised Agent of On Location Experiences Official Hospitality for Super Bowl LII”.

The arrangement provides Insider Experience with instant access to unique Super Bowl packages, including exclusive Platinum Ticket



packages which include insider access to a post-match on-field experience, only available to 1,200 ticket holders.

“It’s a ‘money can’t buy experience’, that money can buy. It’s one of the few opportunities to get up close to the action and is for people who want to do the Super Bowl right,” Bulger said.

Super Bowl LII takes place on 04 February 2018 in Minneapolis.

■ See www.insidersports.com.au for more information.

Sports division boosts FC

FLIGHT Centre has generated upwards of \$10m in sales from its fledgling sports events division as the retailer flagged its ambition to place a greater focus on the sector.

The 2015 Rugby World Cup in England signalled its first foray into the sporting group arena, with its range of product expanding since then to include European football packages, tennis, horse racing, cycling and triathlons.

Flight Centre Business Travel GM Daniel Heathwood, who also oversees the sports product, described the growth as encouraging. "While it's not huge for us, it's growing," he said. "People now and again want to base their holiday around a sporting event and we want to offer our customers those experiences."

The Commonwealth Games is the largest event currently being promoted by Flight Centre, with Heathwood flagging the future prospect of moving into international events.

GC2018 AUTHORISED SELLERS

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group and ATPI Sports Events have begun selling packages to the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games as Authorised Travel Agents (ATA).

The arrangement provides FCTG brands Flight Centre, Escape Travel and Travel Associates, and global travel & events management firm, ATPI, with exclusive rights to sell GC2018 tickets and travel packages in Australia and abroad.

Event chairman and former Queensland Premier Peter Beattie said both ATAs could book tickets along with entry to major state attractions and destination experiences on the Gold Coast and nationally.

Flight Centre has a three-night Opening Ceremony package (staying at Mercure Brisbane) priced from \$1,019ppts which includes a Category A ticket. Among its other packages are a three-night Athletics Super Final package (staying at Pullman Brisbane King George Street) which leads in at \$809ppts and a three-night Swimming Final Package (staying at Mercure Brisbane) priced from \$725ppts – both include Category A tickets.

ATPI has a modest range of



accommodation – two Meriton and a Quality Hotel property on the Gold Coast - along with a handful of guided tours and transfer options. ATPI's packages require at least two nights' accommodation to be booked in conjunction with event tickets.

The Gold Coast Commonwealth Games will run between 04-15 April 2018.

F1 Experiences sold locally

EVENTS Worldwide Travel has become the sales agent in Australia and New Zealand for F1 Experiences, the Official Ticket and Travel Provider of Formula 1.

F1 Experiences provides Formula 1 fans with unprecedented access through race weekend experiences around the world, such as F1 two-seater car rides, podium pictures, driver's celebration access, touring the track, walking pit land, meeting current drivers and more.

The partnership provides the Victorian sports and event travel agency with exclusive access to F1 Experiences Ticket Packages (race tickets, VIP Hospitality and

premium hotels) to all 21 races across the seasons.

There are up to six product package options available at each race, ranging from the base 'Podium' tier to 'Trophy', 'Hero', 'Champion', 'Legend' and the crème de la crème, 'Ultimate Champion' which includes hot laps around race circuits. Packages start at approximately US\$700 and can be booked via events.com.au/f1-experiences.

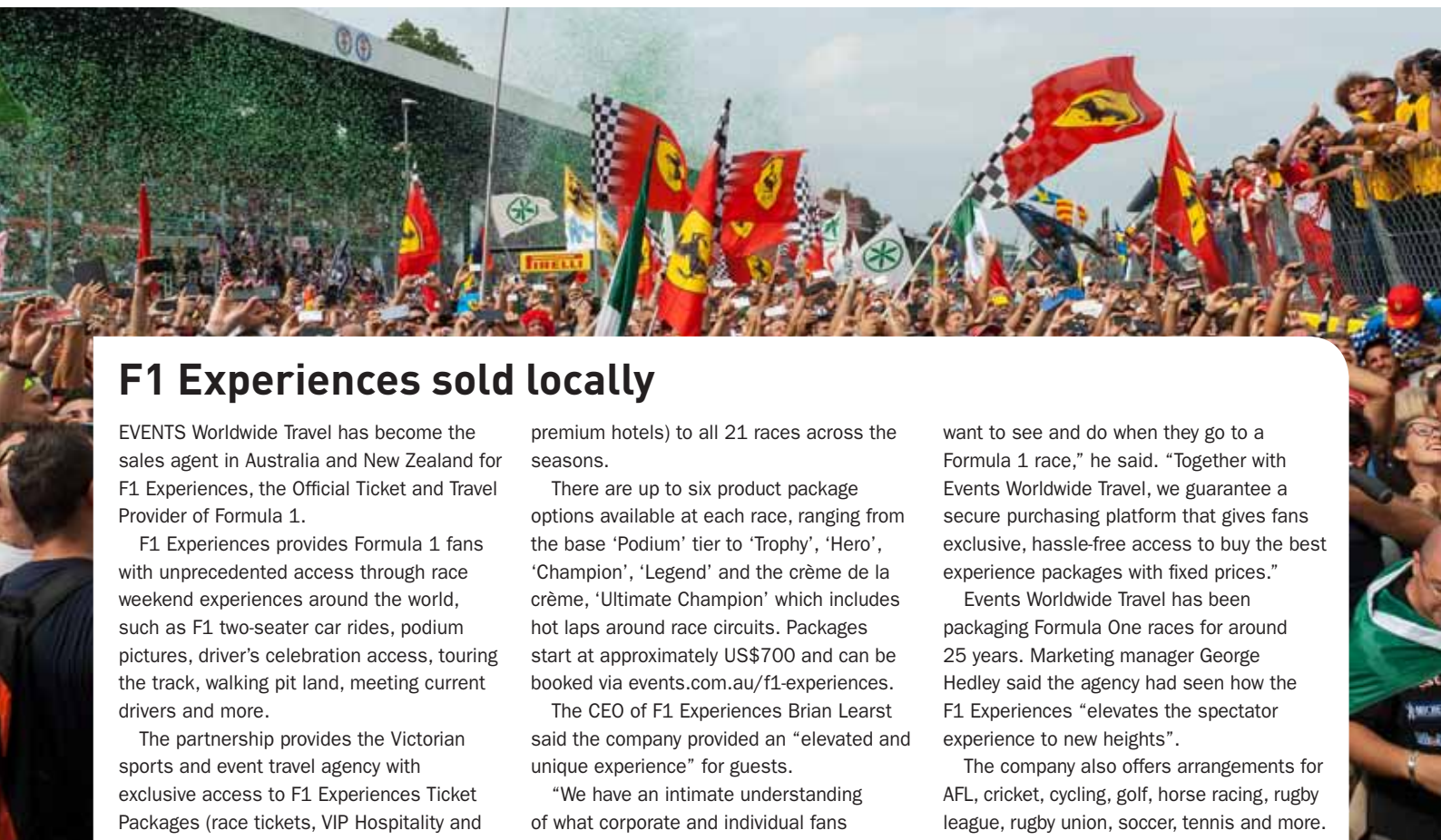
The CEO of F1 Experiences Brian Learst said the company provided an "elevated and unique experience" for guests.

"We have an intimate understanding of what corporate and individual fans

want to see and do when they go to a Formula 1 race," he said. "Together with Events Worldwide Travel, we guarantee a secure purchasing platform that gives fans exclusive, hassle-free access to buy the best experience packages with fixed prices."

Events Worldwide Travel has been packaging Formula One races for around 25 years. Marketing manager George Hedley said the agency had seen how the F1 Experiences "elevates the spectator experience to new heights".

The company also offers arrangements for AFL, cricket, cycling, golf, horse racing, rugby league, rugby union, soccer, tennis and more.



SPECTACLES BY SNAP INC.

ALL travellers these day tend to explore with some sort of camera, in order to capture those precious memories while on holidays. Snapchat has come up with a unique way for people to do this on the go with their Spectacles by Snap Inc.

The sunglasses take a 10-second video (Snap) and these are automatically saved on your Memories in the Snapchat app. They're particularly perfect for those times where you don't really want to pull out your phone because you're afraid you might drop it or lose it.

Users can also connect the Spectacles over wifi and import the videos in HD, send them to the Snapchat app or export them to another app and save them on your device's camera roll. This means they're not just for the compulsive social media user, but great for any traveller.

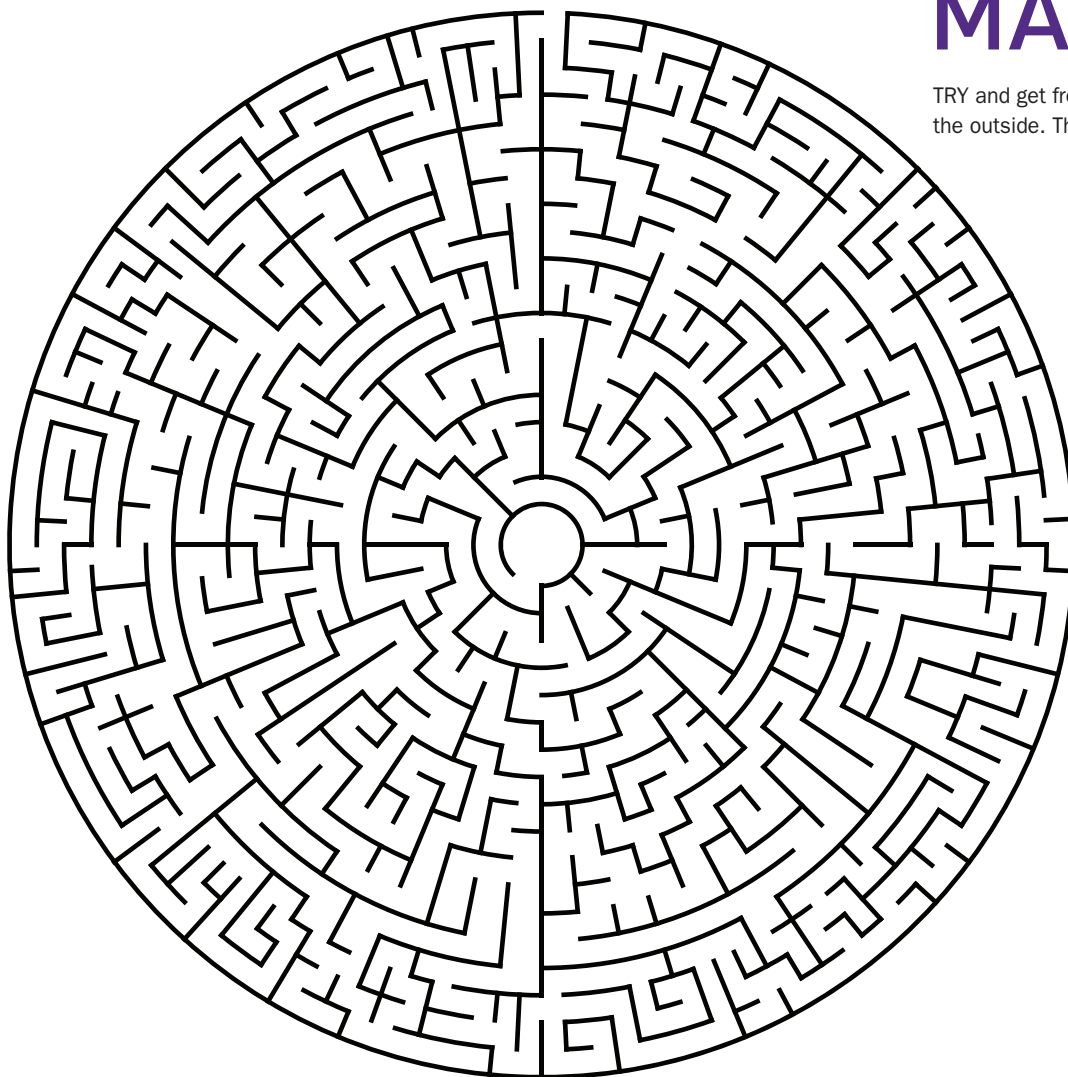
The sunglasses can create up to 100 Snaps in one charge, and come with a case that can power them back up four times, before the case needs to itself be recharged.

Spectacles are available in three colours - red, black and turquoise, and cost US\$129.99.



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