

# travelBulletin

JULY 2017



A China-Australia  
Year of Tourism Special

The Tang Dynasty Style  
Welcoming Ceremony

September 14 2017  
Xi'an, China



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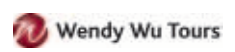
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## Stars of the NTIAs

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they now?



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# FALL GRANDEUR

NEW ENGLAND AND CANADA



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*Karen Christensen*

Karen Christensen  
Senior Vice President  
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CRYSTAL SERENITY - 7326

**To/From** Quebec to Ft. Lauderdale

**Dates** 13 - 27 October, 2017

**Days** 14 days

**Fares from US\$4,583\*pp**



## PROVINCIAL PASTIMES

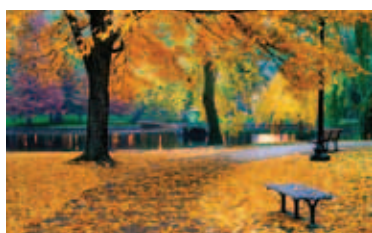
CRYSTAL SYMPHONY - 8220

**To/From** Montreal to New York City

**Dates** 13 - 25 September, 2018

**Days** 12 days

**Fares from US\$4,318\*pp**



## AUTUMN TAPESTRY

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**Dates** 15 - 25 October 2018

**Days** 10 days

**Fares from US\$4,110\*pp**

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COVER  
STORYStars of  
the NTIAs

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From the publisher  
Bruce Piper

LAST month a Darwin court case gave an insight into Flight Centre's involvement in the controversial long-running Northern Territory pensioner travel rort. While the company has long affirmed its cooperation with authorities over the matter, the conviction of former Flight Centre staffer Vanessa Barrett came with some graphic testimony about "common practice" within the branch where she worked in Palmerston between 2011 and 2013.

Barrett admitted to submitting 169 false invoices with inflated flight costs for reimbursement by the NT Health Department, when the actual cost of tickets purchased on behalf of pensioner clients was actually much cheaper. The fraud in this case amounted to \$110,000, with the prosecutor claiming the additional income went to Flight Centre, and Barrett receiving a \$4,000 bonus as a result. The court also heard that Flight Centre had already repaid \$1.8 million to the NT government to settle a separate civil dispute about the practice of submitting inflated invoices.

Previous convictions relating to similar activity have included high profile Darwin agent Xana Kamitsis and Travelworld Katherine owner Tennille Foley – who at her sentencing last year said she had been "first introduced to the process of submitting inflated invoices" when she had worked with Flight Centre in the early 2000s. The NT government probe only looked at activities since 2011. During the most recent case, Barrett's lawyer described the false invoicing practice as "widespread" and often discussed at Flight Centre staff meetings – while the prosecutor noted that "everyone was doing it, but that doesn't make this individual less culpable". For her part, Barrett is said to be "absolutely devastated and destroyed" by the situation.

If, as is claimed, the practice was widespread within Flight Centre, the company's NT staffers should be feeling fairly nervous at the moment. Despite the company's cooperation with investigators, this conviction confirms that police continue to aggressively pursue cases against individuals who, if the evidence is correct, were following procedures acquiesced to (at the very least) by Flight Centre middle management.

MEANWHILE on a happier note, I am thrilled to confirm that the Business Publishing Group – owner of *travelBulletin*, *Travel Daily*, *Cruise Weekly* and *Business Events News*, will now produce the annual *AFTA Travel Pages*. This long-running annual publication, officially endorsed by AFTA and circulated to travel agents, suppliers and key industry stakeholders across the country, will be revamped before we release the next edition early next year – including the welcome addition of an industry supplier directory which will make it an indispensable reference.

## This month's contributors

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**travelBulletin**
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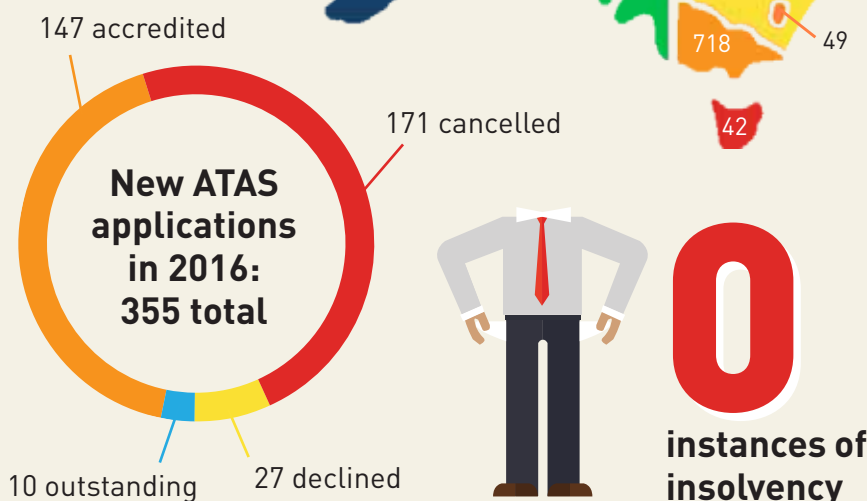
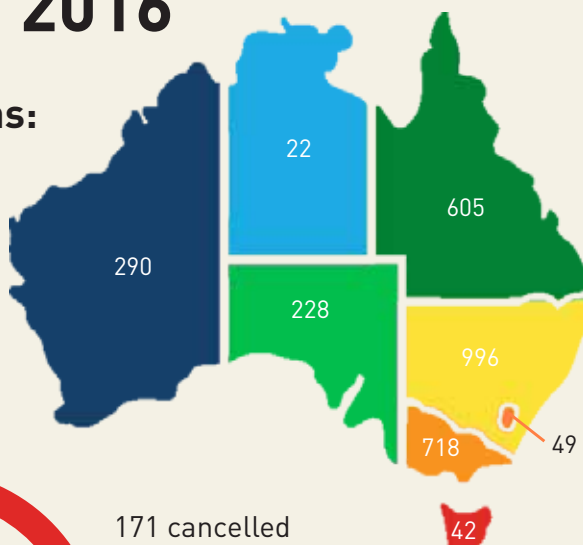
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## ATAS IN 2016

**ATAS locations:**  
**2,950 total**  
As of 31 March 2017



# \$63,004

**returned to Australia consumers in 2016**

## Queen's Birthday honours

LAST month's Queen's Birthday honours list was particularly notable for the inclusion of travel industry doyenne Anna Guillan, who was named as Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia. Guillan, who is regional director of sales and marketing for Kerzner International, is a director of Tourism Australia and has long been associated with Hayman Island in the Whitsundays. She was also honoured for her long-running commitment to charity including co-founding the Nelune Foundation which has raised more than \$18 million to help cancer patients since 2001.

Two Australian aviation leaders were also cited for their contribution in the Queen's Birthday list, with Qantas CEO Alan Joyce receiving a Companion of the Order of Australia for "eminent service to the aviation transport industry" and outgoing Etihad chief James Hogan cited for "distinguished service to the aviation transport industry, to the development of tourism and trade linkages between Australia and the Gulf States, and to international airline associations", receiving an AO. Finally Canberra tourism luminary and long-time Australian Tourism Awards judge Garry Watson received an AM for significant service to the tourism industry in the ACT.

## EK/QF's Tasman shuffle

EMIRATES surprised the industry in recent weeks by announcing the suspension of its long-running A380 flights between Sydney and Auckland. The change means EK will leave the superjumbo on the SYD tarmac each day after arriving from Dubai, rather than flying onwards to New Zealand. At the same time alliance partner Qantas is

## BUSINESS MONITOR

### OUTBOUND MARKET

Top 10 destinations, April 2017

Destination	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Mar 17/ Apr 17	Trend Apr 16/ Apr 17
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	113.9	114.6	117.2	+0.3	+6.1
USA	88.8	92.9	98.0	+0.4	+1.6
Indonesia	96.1	98.6	94.4	-0.4	-11.0
Thailand	44.5	45.4	55.1	+0.9	-2.0
China	39.1	40.5	48.0	-0.3	+4.9
UK	50.7	50.0	44.9	-0.6	+3.9
Japan	33.8	35.8	43.3	+1.9	+14.0
Singapore	34.0	33.3	34.4	+0.0	+10.3
Fiji	26.4	28.1	26.9	-2.3	-5.0
Hong Kong	18.1	18.9	24.0	+0.4	-2.0
All outbound	833.0	849.3	861.7	+0.1	+1.9

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

### INBOUND MARKET

Top 10 sources, April 2017

Source	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Mar 17/ Apr 17	Trend Apr 16/ Apr 17
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	112.3	110.2	116.2	+0.0	+2.2
China	106.7	107.8	100.7	+0.1	+7.5
USA	65.8	70.3	64.3	+2.1	+14.3
UK	62.9	64.1	57.5	+0.7	+7.3
Singapore	37.7	38.2	34.2	+2.0	+0.3
Hong Kong	23.2	26.6	33.4	+2.1	+16.2
Malaysia	33.8	35.3	30.9	+1.7	+7.7
India	23.2	23.4	25.5	+0.4	+10.6
South Korea	24.3	25.2	23.5	+0.1	+3.8
Japan	36.4	35.4	23.0	+0.2	+4.8
All inbound	727.6	746.7	701.3	+0.8	+7.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

### MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

Top 10 domestic city pairs at April 2017

City pair	Passengers YE Apr 16 (000)	Passengers YE Apr 17 (000)	% change
Melbourne-Sydney	8,739.5	8,918.0	+2.0
Brisbane-Sydney	4,567.4	4,673.0	+2.3
Brisbane-Melbourne	3,401.8	3,497.4	+2.8
Gold Coast-Sydney	2,689.4	2,698.3	+0.3
Adelaide-Melbourne	2,341.7	2,402.9	+2.6
Melbourne-Perth	2,129.8	2,053.2	-3.6
Gold Coast-Melbourne	1,872.7	1,984.4	+6.0
Adelaide-Sydney	1,859.1	1,875.7	+0.9
Perth-Sydney	1,760.3	1,593.5	-1.2
Hobart-Melbourne	1,507.0	1,593.5	+5.7

Source: BITRE



## BNE'S FIRST "SHOW AND GO"



BRISBANE Airport is strengthening ties with the travel trade, last month hosting a gala "Show & Go" event at which two lucky travel agents won an instant three night holiday in Hawaii. Dena Griffiths from Helloworld Travel Albany Creek and Kylie Gretener of TravelManagers were selected from among the crowd during the festivities to wing their way to Honolulu courtesy of Hawaiian Airlines, Hawaii Tourism, Plaza Premium and the Outrigger Waikiki Beach Resort. **Pictured** celebrating the success of the event are Brisbane Airport Corporation's Denise Brown, Toni Kasch and Oliver Philpot.

## British Airways flags GDS fee

BRITISH Airways is likely to face significant headwinds in the Australian market, with the proposed introduction of a new €9.50 (A\$14) per sector fee for all bookings not made via the airline's own websites or direct sales channels. The impost will be applied for bookings made from 01 November 2017, with the carrier promising to continue to work with GDS providers to distribute content to "valued agency partners". The new fee will be automatically collected via a Q charge on ticketing, and will be visible as a distinct line item within the fare quote line on the ticket.

The carrier helpfully pointed out that the charge can be avoided by using an IATA New Distribution Capability (NDC) direct connect solution or a new BA Booking Portal – which doesn't actually exist yet. AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury slammed the carrier for its approach, reminding the industry that the pending introduction of NDC is meant to be a partnership rather than a unilateral pronouncement. With travellers between Sydney and London currently able to access more than 50 airlines for their journey, it will be intriguing to see what the effect is on yields and loads aboard BA's single daily flight on the route.

## Qatar Airways under a cloud

QATAR Airways insists it's business as usual for its operations from Australia, despite a major diplomatic rift between Qatar and its Middle Eastern neighbours which erupted last month. The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have accused Qatar of supporting extremism and undermining

*Continues over page*

boosting operations on the route, with QF deploying its A330 international product between Sydney and Auckland. One of QF's daily 737 flights will also be upgauged to an A330, with the revised schedule ensuring the airlines have the "right amount of capacity in the market to match demand".

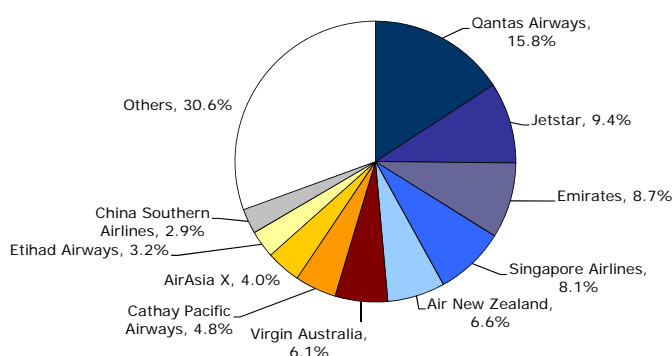
Emirates vice president Australasia, Barry Brown, told *travelBulletin* the changes showed EK and QF were using their anti-trust immunity authorisation to the maximum

partnership benefit. Emirates' recently introduced non-stop flights between Auckland and Dubai are meeting much of the need for travel to the Middle East and Europe from New Zealand, while the expanded Qantas schedule provides higher frequencies for trans-Tasman corporate travellers. Brown said previously changes had been discussed with QF, but at the time the carrier didn't have sufficient wide-body availability to make the change.

## BUSINESS MONITOR

### INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

International passengers by major airline – year ended March 2017



Source: BITRE

### DOMESTIC AIR MARKET – April 2017

	Apr 16	Apr 17	Growth (%)	Yr to Apr 16	Yr to Apr 17	Growth (%)
Total pax carried	4.84m	4.94m	+2.1	58.12m	59.10m	+1.7
Revenue pax kms (RPK)	5.67bn	5.81bn	+2.6	68.53bn	69.41bn	+1.3
Avail seat kms (ASK)	7.35bn	7.31bn	-0.6	89.31bn	88.58bn	-0.8
Load factor (%)	77.1	79.5	+2.4*	76.7	78.4	+1.6*
Aircraft trips (000)	52.8	51.6	-2.3	638.1	636.0	-0.3

Source: BITRE \* Percentage points difference

### DOMESTIC ON TIME PERFORMANCE – April 2017

	Arrivals on Time		Departures on Time		Cancellations	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jetstar	5,947	77.6	5,633	73.5	128	1.6
Qantas	7,500	88.9	7,565	89.6	104	1.2
QantasLink	8,470	87.8	8,387	87.0	394	3.9
Virgin Australia	9,613	87.6	9,665	88.0	283	2.5
All Airlines	38,915	85.4	38,767	85.1	992	2.1

Source: BITRE

Continues from previous page

regional unity, closing embassies and borders and banning overflights by Qatar Airways aircraft. All Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways flights to Doha have been suspended, and as *travelBulletin* went to print there appeared to be little likelihood of a swift resolution as the dispute rolled into its fourth week.

While QR says flights are operating normally, at the launch of its new non-stop Doha-Dublin route in mid-June a spokesperson admitted the overflight restrictions were resulting in longer flying times for the carrier's long-haul services.

That will also impact fuel burn and profitability – not to mention the fact that the ongoing publicity around the stoush will certainly impact Australian consumer perceptions of the carrier which has significant operations from Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide. Qatar Airways is responding proactively, with a new video commercial proclaiming “no borders, only horizons” and urging that “travel is a right for all”.

## One&Only, Hayman part ways

THE industry was shocked last month when *Travel Daily* exclusively revealed the cessation of the partnership between Kerzner's One&Only Hotels & Resorts and Hayman Island in the Whitsundays. The split came just three years after the resort relaunched under the One&Only brand following a stunning \$80 million upgrade.

Hayman closed earlier this year after being smashed by Cyclone Debbie and is currently undergoing further refurbishment – but One&Only won't be there for the

planned reopening in mid-2018, with resort owner Mulpha Corporation confirming it would undertake a formal process to select a “qualified luxury operator to assume the future management of the island”.

Mulpha said it was disappointing to have to close the resort after achieving record trading, but the significant capital works planned would “once again position Hayman as one of the most prestigious luxury resort properties in the Australian market”. For its part One&Only said it remains committed to the Australian market, both via its long-term agreement to manage Emirates' Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa west of the NSW Blue Mountains, as well as the ongoing growth of Australia and New Zealand as outbound markets to all of the group's properties across the globe.

## Crystal AirCruises repositions

THE ambitious growth aspirations of Crystal Cruises appear to have taken a minor detour, with the cancellation of all trips planned for *Crystal Skye*, the company's new luxury Boeing 777 aircraft, which will now be deployed to the “special interest charters” market in China. The plane has been chartered for an inaugural 10-day “Golden Week Holiday AirCruise” ex Hong Kong this September, managed by parent company Genting Hong Kong, and thereafter *Crystal Skye* will be “available for charters and other special interest AirCruises”.

Travellers booked on all previously scheduled Crystal AirCruises journeys in 2017 and 2018 will receive a full refund and a complimentary Crystal Ocean or River Cruise. Crystal president Edie Rodriguez said she was delighted about the deployment of *Crystal Skye* in the Asia-Pacific region,

saying the charter option serves the vast luxury travel market in China and increases Crystal's brand presence in the region. “As Crystal expands its portfolio of global travel experiences, the shift of *Crystal Skye* to special interest charters provides a distinct luxury option that is in great demand and is unmatched by any hotel, resort or cruise line in the world,” Rodriguez said.

## Cartel case continues

THERE has been a further development in the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's long-running case alleging collusion between airlines on cargo surcharges in the early 2000s, with the High Court of Australia finding that price fixing agreements entered into by Air New Zealand, Garuda Indonesia and other carriers breached Australian competition laws. A range of airlines including Qantas, Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific and Emirates have already paid a total of almost \$100 million to settle the case, but Garuda and Air NZ lodged appeals based on whether the relevant market is “in Australia”.

The High Court dismissed the appeals, with ACCC Commissioner Sarah Court saying “How a market is defined, including considerations of whether conduct occurs in Australia, are critical issues to the understanding and interpretation of Australian competition law”. She said the judgement sends a “clear message that the ACCC is committed to pursuing cartel conduct that impacts on Australian business and consumers”. The cases against Air New Zealand and Garuda will now return to the Federal Court for a hearing which will consider any penalties to be levied against the airlines.

## BUSINESS MONITOR

### INTERNET AGENCY MARKET SHARES

April 2017, compared with March 2017

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

Source: Hitwise, a division of Connexity

### INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs (at March 2017)

City pair	Passengers YE Mar 16	Passengers YE Mar 17	% of total	% change 17/16
Auckland-Sydney	1,563,566	1,585,334	4.2	+1.4
Singapore-Sydney	1,469,824	1,453,258	3.8	-1.1
Singapore-Melbourne	1,254,436	1,376,016	3.6	+9.7
Auckland-Melbourne	1,165,397	1,202,131	3.2	+3.2
Singapore-Perth	1,098,087	1,127,269	3.0	+2.7
Hong Kong-Sydney	1,027,180	1,076,365	2.8	+4.8
Auckland-Brisbane	974,884	955,417	2.5	-2.0
Los Angeles-Sydney	926,967	886,891	2.3	-4.3
Denpasar-Perth	851,893	880,646	2.3	+3.4
Kuala Lumpur-Melbourne	797,494	828,858	2.2	+3.9
Top 10 city pairs	11,129,728	11,372,185	30.0	+2.2
Other city pairs	24,505,498	26,572,068	70.0	+8.4
ALL CITY PAIRS	35,635,226	37,994,253	100.0	+6.5

Source: BITRE

### SHARE PRICES

at 20 June 2017

Flight Centre (FLT)	\$37.90
Helloworld (HLO)	\$3.79
Webjet (WEB)	\$12.76
Qantas (QAN)	\$5.52
Virgin Australia (VAH)	\$0.175
Ardent Leisure (AAD)	\$2.17
Air New Zealand (AIZ)	\$3.10
Auckland International Airport (AIA)	\$6.70
Sydney Airport (SYD)	\$7.455
Corporate Travel Management (CTD)	\$23.96
Village Roadshow (VRL)	\$3.89
Regional Express (REX)	\$1.04
Sealink (SLK)	\$4.05
Mantra Group Limited (MTR)	\$3.12



## NZ ALL STARS HIT THE ROAD



TOURISM New Zealand, Air NZ and Virgin Australia held a series of events around the country last month, with the All Stars roadshow held in Australia for the first time in more than a decade with the aim of "bringing New Zealand to the world". Maori cultural performances complemented opportunities to dress up as a Hobbit, jump on a bike to evoke the NZ cycle network, participate in Dunedin's Jaffa race and much more.

**Pictured** in their best Hobbit-wear are Ayla Downing and Sarah Lewis from Flight Centre.

## Travel Daily HEADLINES

- 22 May** HLO wholesale evolution
- 22 May** Cathay to slash workforce
- 23 May** Regent, Oceania sales soar
- 23 May** Backpacker tax recovery
- 24 May** Tauck Oz outpaces world
- 24 May** Trump to axe Brand USA?
- 24 May** New MGallery by Sofitel for Sydney
- 25 May** Malindo plots Au growth
- 26 May** Japan Airlines eyes MEL
- 29 May** SriLankan KKs Melbourne
- 29 May** BA, IB plan \$14 GDS fee
- 30 May** Batik Air appoints CVFR as GSA
- 30 May** Plenty of Sydney capacity
- 31 May** Scots to launch Aus push
- 31 May** EK drops A380 SYD-AKL flights
- 31 May** VA updates GDS policy
- 01 Jun** GC2018 authorised agents
- 01 Jun** EK/JQ Tasman seat surge
- 02 Jun** Federal Group expansion
- 02 Jun** VA/HNA JV draft approval
- 05 Jun** TC outlines growth plan
- 05 Jun** New China-Australia flts
- 06 Jun** Qatar hit by Gulf dispute
- 06 Jun** Brand USA delivers ROI
- 07 Jun** Mandatory Thai insurance
- 07 Jun** Visitor dispersal growth
- 08 Jun** Norwegian Joy unveiled
- 08 Jun** Hayman, One& Only split
- 09 Jun** BNE "leakage" concerns
- 13 Jun** Guillan, Joyce, Hogan hailed
- 13 Jun** Thai insurance a way off
- 14 Jun** Google Flights has landed
- 14 Jun** High Court dismisses NZ, GA appeals
- 14 Jun** ABS flags travel stats shift
- 15 Jun** CATO maps out its future
- 16 Jun** ATAS cinema ad package
- 16 Jun** FC releases travel insights report
- 16 Jun** HLO appoints new global director of corporate sales
- 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

## Departure cards depart

FROM this month travellers leaving Australian airports will no longer have to complete Outgoing Passenger Cards. The move has been mooted for some time following the roll-out of departure SmartGates, and just two weeks ago the Department of Immigration and Border Protection confirmed the cards would no longer be required effective 01 July 2017. Travel agents have been told to no longer provide the cards to passengers leaving from that date, and to remove all existing signage and stocks. Travellers must still report currency movements in excess of \$10,000, the department advised.

The changes will also result in a significant revamp of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' monthly arrival and departure figures. The ABS confirmed that this month's figures (to be released in September) will be collated based on incoming passengers and reported as "Short Term Visitor Arrivals" and "Short Term Resident Returns". The changes will also see some details no longer available, including country of disembarkation and stay for departing travellers, permanent departures for Australian residents, and "main reason for journey". An amended Incoming Passenger Card will be used to collect new data as an alternative to this information.

### AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS

International passenger through Australia's major international airports – March 2017

Airport	Passengers YE Mar 16	Passengers YE Mar 17	% of total	% change 17/16
Sydney	14,270,643	15,253,400	40.2	+6.9
Melbourne	9,091,571	9,750,879	25.7	+7.3
Brisbane	5,298,753	5,483,232	14.5	+3.5
Perth	4,239,062	4,376,142	11.5	+3.2
Gold Coast	980,149	1,097,662	2.9	+12.0
Adelaide	856,046	942,528	2.5	+10.1
Cairns	585,093	642,002	1.7	+9.7
Darwin	257,527	279,876	0.7	+8.7
Canberra <sup>~</sup>	n/a	44,255	0.1	n/a
Townsville <sup>^</sup>	20,238	42,717	0.1	+111.1
Sunshine Coast <sup>*</sup>	17,376	13,728	0.0	-21.0
Norfolk Island	11,235	10,083	0.0	-10.3
Port Hedland <sup>~</sup>	7,533	7,749	0.0	2.9
All Airports	35,635,226	37,944,253	100.0	+6.5

<sup>\*</sup>Scheduled services recommenced September 2015 <sup>^</sup>Seasonal services only

<sup>~</sup>Scheduled services recommenced September 2016 <sup>~</sup>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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,950</b>

Got something to say?

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

[haveyoursay@travelbulletin.com.au](mailto:haveyoursay@travelbulletin.com.au)



## Steve Jones' Say

FORGIVE what may appear a self-indulgent topic, but I recently found myself wondering how the industry views the trade media and what role it believes we have.

Is it to entertain and inform? To protect the industry and promote it? To criticise and analyse? It's a conversation, or argument more accurately, I've had several times over the years.

Following the attack at the Ariana Grande concert in the UK, I was drawn to an editorial in the digital pages of one of the industry websites which said it would no longer report terrorist atrocities.

Such reporting is "not really helping the travel cause", it explained, adding there are more than enough national and international media outlets providing blanket coverage of such tragic events.

Furthermore, it did not want to "unwittingly help spread fear and particularly people's propensity to travel because of it".

As you might expect, it was an approach welcomed by the industry.

I partly agree. I don't believe the role of the travel trade media should extend

to reporting directly about terrorist attacks. Not because it's unhelpful for the travel industry, but simply because regurgitating details and lifting eye witness accounts that we've already read in mainstream media is worthless. Fundamentally, terrorist attacks are not travel trade stories. Either add something of pertinence to the travel sector, or don't bother at all.

Yet such events clearly impact the industry. They can and do have short, mid and long term implications for the sector and cannot simply be ignored on the basis the subject matter is too negative, confronting or painful. "Nothing to see here" does not cut it.

Which is why reflection, analysis and commentary is very much the media's role on this and any other issue, however unpalatable it may be. If that analysis presents a sobering, less-than-optimistic outlook for travel, well, so be it. It is not the media's job to blindly talk up the industry in the face of unfolding challenges.

As it happens, the public have so far demonstrated admirable resolve and

resilience, and that should be reported. But let's not ignore or sugar coat issues just because the alternative is inconvenient.

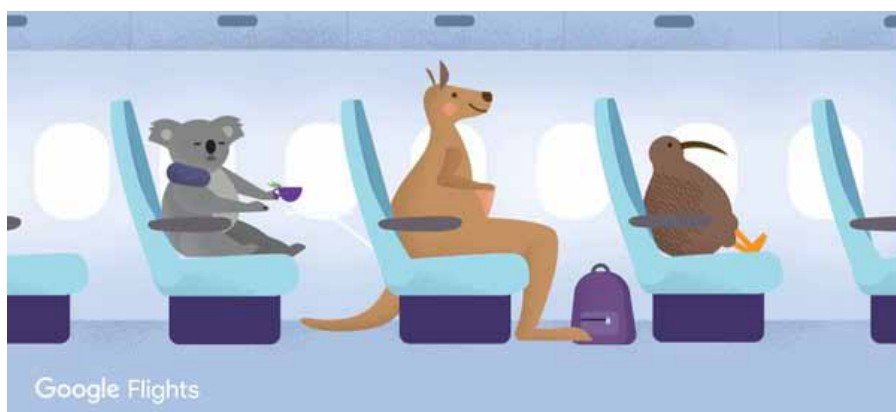
Not everything in the garden is rosy, and it should not be presented as such. Least of all by the media.

I suspect most people understand that. Yet there has always been a school of thought – hence my arguments down the years – that trade journalists should be an extension of the industry's PR machine; talking up the positives, promoting destinations, spruiking company growth, showcasing brochures.

Of course all those stories play an important part in the mix. There is a wealth of helpful, informative and engaging content – not least in this publication – and championing the success of companies and individuals at the NTIA awards for example, is part of our role.

But self-censorship, or the suppression of news or issues because it's somehow awkward for the sector or individual companies, is not the way to go.

The trade media should explore the good and the bad, not be its blinkered cheerleader.



## GOOGLE FLIGHTS TAKES OFF

CONSUMERS looking for travel inspiration now have a new tool from internet giant Google, which last month debuted its "Google Flights" product in the Australian and New Zealand markets. Previously when asked about flights between two cities Google was able to return details of the various services and their frequencies - but now the results include details of pricing and the ability to make a booking.

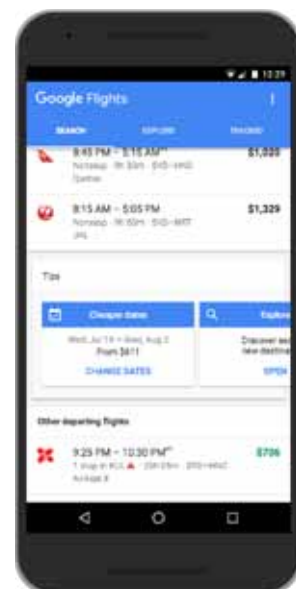
Users can enter departure dates for each sector, with one-way, return and multi-city itinerary planning possible. Searches can be filtered by price, airline, flight duration, stops, departure time and connecting airport - and once a result is returned users are invited to "book, track or share this flight" with booking buttons linked to directly to airline, OTA or travel agency websites.

Google Flights also features an

inspirational 'Explore' option for those dreaming about their next trip. They can simply specify a month and holiday duration to see a list of popular destinations and fares. Prior to booking, Google enables prices for a particular trip to be tracked, with email notifications when ticket costs change.

Google Flights is fully integrated with Google Maps and also presents hotel options in the selected destination, including pricing for the selected dates.

Interestingly, the tag-line on the Google Flights website states "Book flights with confidence" indicating the web behemoth is clearly looking to gather bookings from consumers.







## AFTA RECORDS ONE OF ITS BEST YEARS

AFTA last month released its 2016/17 annual report, celebrating an array of achievements over the last 12 months particularly including the ongoing success of the AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS). AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury noted that along with continued strong support for the scheme, not a single ATAS accredited agent had entered insolvency during the year.

"This fact is very pleasing as it does show that travel agents across the country have continued to run profitable and successful businesses - which is something that AFTA has always aspired to," he wrote in the report's review of the year. He said ATAS had been instrumental in elevating standards across the industry, with the accreditation program now standing as the "mark of quality and professionalism" for the sector.

### FINANCES

AFTA chairman Mike Thompson noted the organisation had lived within its means - despite a number of extraordinary expenses including a difficult Supreme Court challenge by former member Bestjet. The success of ATAS has seen membership numbers and overall revenue increase during the year, with the Federation reporting an operating surplus of \$9,247 for the year. Membership and accreditation fees accounted for the lion's share of income, amounting to \$2,122 million - an increase of more than \$300,000

on the prior year. The National Travel Industry Awards 2016 recorded a net profit of \$70,554 and AFTA also received income from some marketing activities such as the [afta@mail](mailto:afta@mail) newsletter, website contributions and email distribution services, worth about \$30,000 overall.

Other income included an \$85,000 grant from the Tasmanian government, which was utilised for education processes for consumers and travel agents. Key costs included employment expenses worth \$1.36 million, marketing and advertising amounting to \$297,000, \$160,000 in representation costs and \$144,700 worth of legal expenses. AFTA also received more than \$30,000 of interest income during the year.

### ATAS

ATAS grew to a total of 2,950 locations across the country, with the report also detailing a range of activities around the scheme. During the year there were 355 new applications for participation but the majority of these failed to submit the required documentation to warrant an assessment of the application. New applicants joining the scheme totalled 147, while 27 applications were declined and a further ten were still outstanding as at 31 March 2017. During the year several existing members had their accreditation cancelled, including four which

failed to demonstrate they were 'fit and proper persons' as described in the ATAS charter. A further two members had their accreditation cancelled due to solvency concerns, while 14 members closed down and 13 decided not to renew. AFTA noted that this data only referenced individually accredited entities and excludes Flight Centre and STA branches.

Interestingly 31 ATAS participants were placed on "Monitoring Agreements" requiring them to supply quarterly trading updates including cash balances, net asset positions and net profit data. Monitoring Agreements are required for a minimum of 12 months in most cases, and evaluated on an ongoing basis - and all new ATAS participants classified as start-up businesses are now required to adhere to a Monitoring Agreement as part of conditional approval for ATAS accreditation.

### COMPLAINTS

The other interesting area covered by the report was the outcome of complaints against travel agents in the ATAS procedures. A total of \$63,004 was returned to Australian consumers via the ATAS complaints escalation process, relating to 47 complainants. In all 355 complaints were received during the year, but 152 were ineligible as they related to non-ATAS participants.

# NORWEGIAN BRINGS JOY TO ASIA

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line has firmly set its sights on the Asian market, with the deployment of its brand new *Norwegian Joy* to sail out of Beijing and Shanghai year-round. The vessel was showcased in a series of preview events across the region last month, cruising from Singapore to Hong Kong and onward to Shanghai with key industry partners - including Australian agents and wholesalers - taking part.

*travelBulletin* travelled to Hong Kong to check the ship out, and it's certainly a game-changer. Said to be the first vessel expressly designed for the Asian market, *Joy* actually has a very wide appeal with 28 on-board dining options, a host of activities and entertainment and accommodation to suit people of all ages, including extended family groups.

There's plenty of action, with the ship featuring a two-storey go-kart track on the top deck, along with a laser tag arena and a "serenity garden" for those who want a bit of peace. Inside there's the 'Galaxy Pavilion' - an area hosting a range of interactive games including a virtual reality roller coaster, video consoles and much more. There are dedicated Karaoke rooms, a large theatre, a tea room and plenty of other spaces to make the most of passengers' time on board.

Our host during the ship tour said a key feature for the Asian market was the array

of on-board gambling options which include gaming floors and two VIP casinos, one of which is in the exclusive "The Haven" on-board enclave which features its own bar, lounge and restaurant. There's also a huge array of shopping available for those wanting to exercise their retail muscles. An extensive spa complements on-board beauty treatment options, and there's also a large gym for those trying to stay in shape between all those delicious meals.

While *Norwegian Joy* is primarily targeting the Chinese market, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings is also offering the product to Australian travellers, with a number of cruise specialist wholesalers bundling short cruises ex Shanghai or Beijing as part of wider Chinese travel packages.



## AFTA VIEW

Jayson Westbury, chief executive AFTA

TERRORISM, deadly destinations, arrests, hospitalisations, doom and gloom appear to be the current mantra of our beloved consumer media at the moment with more requests for comment and interview over the past few weeks and this month than any other topic.

I guess bad news makes for good stories and as is often the case AFTA does what it can to make sure the stories being told are factual, balanced and sending the right message to consumers. Misguided fear can lead to re-thinking a holiday and that is not good for the industry, nor frankly warranted.

When DFAT released its report about deadly destinations it included some big numbers. Australians who died last year include; 212 deaths in Thailand, 124 deaths in Philippines. 97 in Indonesia and 94 in Vietnam. That started the commentary and then there has been the terrorism events in London and the government challenges with Qatar.

The issue that we face is that the horrifying statistic needs to be balanced with the number of people travelling. In so many cases, travellers to these named destinations are likely to be younger and first timers which presents all sorts of risks and risks being taken resulting in tragedy.

When we turn our minds to terrorism this is much more difficult to respond to and explain. In fact, you can't explain it, which is why our message is that people should be aware, be alert, be careful of their environment at all times and ensure that someone back home knows where they are at any given time. It's good reason to use a travel agent and this point has not been lost when talking with the various media outlets about minimising risk.

All of this can't be talked about without reference to the government run Smarttraveller program that continues to deliver travel advisories and provide the opportunity for Australian travellers to register their travel with the government website. Sadly, the take up rate for this is still relatively low compared with the almost 10 million

outbound trips that are being taken by Australians each year.

However, the need for travel insurance is getting through to travellers with reports that now only 8% of outbound Aussie travellers don't hold travel insurance. It is

only some four years ago that this number was more like 28%.

These are complex issues and a melting pot of topics for the thirsty consumer media to talk about. Good thing we are in the conversation.

On a final positive note, news that from 1 July (that is this month) the green outbound departure card is abolished and is no longer required to be completed by people leaving the country is indeed good news. As the smart gates get smarter and the experience of departure gets faster, simpler and even more enjoyable, Australia will be leading on this process and it is worth congratulating Peter Dutton, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection along with his department for this excellent outcome.

‘These are complex issues and a melting pot of topics for the thirsty consumer media. Good thing we are in the conversation’



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## TASSIE TELLS A STORY

TASMANIA'S Federal Tourism Group last month opened what it describes as "the world's first storytelling hotel". Perfectly located on Hobart's waterfront, each of the 114 rooms at MACq01 (for Macquarie Wharf #1) is themed on a famous Tasmanian, with the aim of creating a unique experience for guests which will keep them coming back again and again.

Federal's portfolio also includes Hobart's Henry Jones Art Hotel and the Saffire luxury lodge at Freycinet National Park, with the group overseen by Matt Casey who told *travelBulletin* that unlike the other properties there was no natural "sense of place" for the MACq01 building. "It could have been just another three- or four-star hotel - our hope is by creating a storyline for the property we can get a higher yield and maintain customer loyalty," he said.

The hotel has been a labour of love for Casey, with many of the stories developed by his parents as they explored the Tasmanian countryside, or propped up a bar to hear some of the locals' tales. MACq01 has a team of full-time in-house "storytellers" who conduct tours both of the hotel and the Hobart surrounds, while the themed rooms also in many cases include genuine artefacts related to their namesake. The characters are classified into five key types: The Fighting Believers; The Hearty and Resilient; The Colourful and Quirky; The Grounded, yet Exceptional; and The Curious and Creative. Every room also features an original artwork by Tasmanian artist Troy Ruffels, and there's a cosy and inviting bar and restaurant featuring stunning Tassie cuisine.

Federal continues to set its sights on expanding its tourism operations. Currently the group is developing the Port Arthur Luxury Lodge, and Casey also confided that he believes the concepts used to develop MACq01 could be applied to properties on the mainland too.



Tom Wootton, Federal Group marketing manager for tourism; Federal Group managing director and CEO Greg Farrell; MACq01 general manager Jake Smith; and Matt Casey, GM of tourism for Federal Group at the opening.



## AUSCHAMBER VIEW

Richard Lindsay, manager of Australian Chamber - Tourism

### BOOMING TOURISM NEEDS POLICIES TO MATCH

AT A time when many Australian industries are struggling, tourism is booming.

The latest International Visitor Survey shows once again that the tourism industry is Australia's unsung economic hero, with international tourists staying longer and spending more when they come to Australia.

The 7.7 million visitors that came to Australia in the year ending March 2017 spent a record \$39.8 billion and stayed 262 million nights – both up by 5%.

Despite the current healthy figures, we cannot take the future growth of tourism and the visitor economy for granted, particularly at a time of uncertainty for the global economy and fluctuating currency movements.

Government forecasts tell us that international visitors to Australia are likely to rise from 8.3 million in 2016-17 to 12.3 million in 2024-25, and by that year inbound tourism expenditure could generate \$67.8 billion in today's dollars.

So with domestic tourism expenditure also expected to grow substantially, the visitor economy could be one of the biggest drivers of new jobs over the next decade – but only if the policy settings are right in this highly competitive international market.

That's why Australia Chamber – Tourism was disappointed to see the recent Federal Budget miss the opportunity to support growth in the tourism sector, hurting efforts to attract more visitors to Australia.

In particular, the decision to not quarantine Tourism Australia's funding from broader cuts means its government funding will fall 7.8% next financial year. This will reduce Australia's ability to compete in the market to attract international visitors.

This impact will be exacerbated by the decision to index visa fees, including fees for tourist visas, making Australia a more expensive destination for international tourists. This will hurt the hundreds of thousands of small businesses that rely on Australia welcoming visitors from abroad.

These businesses will also be hit by the new training contribution fees for temporary and permanent skill visas, which will exceed \$1,200 per annum for each temporary skilled migrant and \$3,000 for each permanent migrant. Inevitably this will reduce local job numbers by limiting the ability of local businesses to grow.

The significant 3.3 per cent increase in award wages from July will also affect the many sectors in tourism that are heavily reliant on awards to regulate wages.

The importance of tourism to the economy means that we need to ensure that policy decisions support and enable the sector, rather than add costs to Australian tourism operators and potential international visitors. We need to ensure Australia is effectively marketed to potential overseas visitors, the costs of visas are internationally competitive, and that our tourism businesses are not sluggish with unsustainable wage increases.



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## AFTA'S NEW CREDIT CARD SOLUTION

THERE'S a major revolution brewing in credit card payments for travel in Australia, with billions of dollars in bookings through travel agents expected to shift away from traditional banks to new merchant providers in what will become a very competitive and agent friendly environment in the future.

The change is being driven by the launch of the new AFTA Insolvency Chargeback Scheme (AICS). Under development for some time, AICS debuted late last month and will be fully operational before the next round of changes to credit card acceptance become mandatory on 1 September.

The scheme is the culmination of years of work by AFTA, prompted by the Reserve Bank review of credit card surcharging rules which kicked off with the release of an Issues Paper in March 2015. AFTA provided detailed submissions to the review which highlighted the unique features of the travel industry and the implications of third party supplier collapses for travel agents acting as the merchant. The outcome of the Reserve Bank deliberations included a provision suggested by AFTA which allows the cost associated with protecting the business against supplier chargeback to be included in the rate of surcharge when accepting card payments.

The new program puts to rest the key issue of chargebacks, which have left travel agents "caught in the middle" between consumers and collapsed suppliers, all the way back to the failure of Ansett in the early 2000s. ATAS travel agencies across the country will be able to access "solid industry owned protection against chargebacks" via the scheme, which will be a Mutual Beneficiary Fund operated similarly to an insurance product, but without the profit requirements and insurance policy complexities.

AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury said the launch of AICS means "we have finally found an appropriate vehicle to solve the missing link in the travel agency reform agenda". He said the issue of chargebacks had frustrated and concerned travel agents, and that AICS would be levied as part of the eligible credit/debit card surcharge.

"Each time a supplier has collapsed the agent has been left holding the debt and the concern of covering the chargeback from the customer. Now AICS resolves this matter once and for all, and it will come at next to no cost to the travel agent," he said. AFTA has confirmed that the new credit card rules, which require that only the costs of processing the cards be passed onto consumers, will also allow the cost of "forward delivery risk" (i.e. chargeback coverage) to be included in the overall permitted surcharge.

Owned by AFTA and operated as a separate Limited by Guarantee non-profit entity, AICS will be

run under contract by Gow-Gates. To access the scheme travel agents will need to be ATAS accredited, but there will be very few other requirements. "As new and innovative merchant services become available to agents I am confident that not only will this scheme answer the questions on credit charge chargeback, they will also provide agents with better access to affordable and innovative merchant facilities for their businesses," Westbury said.

AFTA has already ramped up its staff numbers in preparation for the launch of AICS, with long-time Cruise Lines International Association staffer and former travel agent Amanda Rixon joining as Partnership Executive. Dean Long, AFTA National Manager Strategy and Policy, will hold the key management responsibility within AFTA for the new scheme.

"I am really proud that AFTA has managed to negotiate a reform of the credit card surcharging arrangements that enables travel agents to resolve this long-standing problem," Westbury added. AFTA members will shortly receive an information pack on the scheme, with the aim of making the transition to AICS and the new merchant service providers as simple and seamless as possible.

**'We have finally found an appropriate vehicle to solve the missing link in the travel agency reform agenda'**

Jayson Westbury, chief executive officer, AFTA



# REBOUNDED EGYPT INSPIRES MEGA-FAMIL

EGYPT'S tourism recovery appears to have hit its stride, with Bunnik Tours the latest operator to signal a strong resurgence.

Six years after the country's political upheaval, managing director Dennis Bunnik says tour bookings are on track to reach 60% of their pre-2011 levels, ending a long stagnation.

"When the revolution hit, Egypt bookings dropped 90%," Bunnik said. "They stayed 80 to 90% down since then, but this year they'll be back up at 60% of pre-revolution levels. The increase in the last year is massive."

Bunnik was the only Australian tour operator on the ground at the time of the 2011 revolution and won praise for his efforts in managing and evacuating guests. Having visited the destination at least a dozen times since, he says the time is now right to launch a major re-education initiative for the trade in the form of the company's first "mega famil" for 45 agents.

"Egypt has always been very close to our hearts," he said. "We never abandoned Egypt, as soon as it was safe we got back in and continued selling tours. Now we're working with Egypt Tourism to rebuild tourism – it's the one industry that helps all



levels of society."

The Bunnik Tours' mega famil will operate from 24 October to 3 November and will be the first famil hosted by the company's full family contingent – Marion, Dennis and Sacha Bunnik.

With the support of the Egyptian Tourism Authority, Bunnik says it will include "money-can't-buy experiences" such as access to key museums ahead of public opening.

## AFTA TRAVEL PAGES HAS FOUND A NEW HOME IN 2018



From 2018, Travel Pages, the only publication endorsed by AFTA, will be published by the Business Publishing Group, owners of *travelBulletin* and *Travel Daily*.

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Travel Daily



# TRAVEL COUNSELLORS TARGETS AUSTRALIA FOR GROWTH

By Jon Murrie

TRAVEL Counsellors has set its sights on a bigger share of Australia's home-based agency sector, announcing ambitious growth plans and a renewed focus on recruitment.

As its members gathered at the Melbourne Cricket Ground last month to celebrate their 10th Australian conference, chief executive officer Steve Byrne declared the group was ready to expand both globally and locally, and predicted Australia's growth would out-strip that of other markets.

"This is about building a future without limits," Byrnes said.

"We currently have 1,600 Travel Counsellors - we want to have 3,000 Travel Counsellors globally within the next three years," he said. "We're going to double it."

"We have 300,000 customers at the moment who book with us regularly. We want to get to a million."

The Australian division, currently involving 140 home-based Travel Counsellors, was earmarked for growth to around 250-300, Byrnes said, including an additional 50-60 new recruits this year.

"We expect a disproportionate amount of our global growth to come from Australia," he said.

"So if Australia is 8% of our numbers at the moment and we're going to double our numbers globally, we don't expect to just double our numbers here - we'd expect to do more growth proportionally in Australia than the other markets.

"In all the research we've done both from a customer point of view and from an agency point of view, (the Australian division) should be bigger than it is."

Byrnes believes several key factors give Australia greater potential for the UK-based group.

"There's the propensity to travel," he said. "There's the richness of the travel experience because it's longer. Average booking values

are higher and there's a really rich mix of product on offer.

"Then you've got a large pool of experienced travel agents, comparatively, for a country of the population size you've got. You've also got a sound economic basis, and it's a market that doesn't have deep online penetration. And there's a strong corporate market.

"It's got all the ingredients to say we should be and will be doing much better. And being much better also includes being much bigger."

Having recently expanded its Melbourne regional headquarters, the group has embarked on a three-pronged strategy it calls RR2P, focussed on recruitment, referrals & re-bookings, and the expansion of its in-house technology platform Phenix.

Recruitment will draw from several key areas, including experienced travel agents and tour operator tailor-made specialists working in established businesses. Other new recruits will come from among agents who have had a career break from travel and are looking to return - a pool considered ideal for the home-based model.

Travel Counsellors' recently appointed managing director for Australia Fred van Eijk has been charged with leading the recruitment process, having previously forged the group's successful establishment in the Netherlands and Belgium, markets he still manages remotely from Melbourne.

He said agents coming back into the industry would be supported through a new "return to travel program".

"The return to travel program is very exciting," van Eijk said. "It's very much for people who have been out of the industry for several years and are now looking for work-life balance.

"They want to return to travel, but also

recognise the industry has totally changed," he said. "It's a different ballgame, so we spend more time training them and renewing their skills, using their passion and travel expertise and their foundation and traditional knowledge as a travel agent to come back and set up their own business."

As the smaller of the home-based groups operating in Australia, Byrnes acknowledges Travel Counsellors hasn't impacted the Australian industry to the extent it might have expected as it approaches its 10th anniversary, but he believes the group is now better placed to expand.

"We're much better at setting out how our business proposition is best, how we're different from the rest," Byrnes said.

More generous commission splits offered by other groups were offset by higher levels of support offered by Travel Counsellors, Byrnes said, which meant an agent could earn more by being freed from administrative burdens.

"It's a full service model," he said. "You don't want to be doing admin or chasing money or debts. Our model takes care of that. You do the job that you love best, which is looking after your customers, and you can be more productive."

**‘We’re much better at setting out how our business proposition is best, how we’re different from the rest’**

Steve Byrne, chief executive officer  
Travel Counsellors



Travel Counsellors chief executive officer Steve Byrne with managing director Australia Fred van Eijk at last month's conference at the MCG



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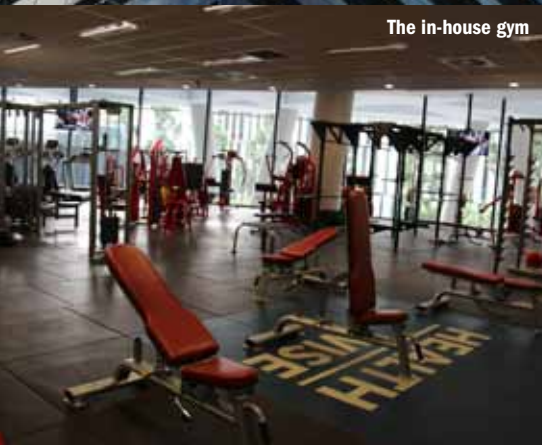
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The very approachable finance and administration department including MD Graham Turner's desk.



## FLIGHT CENTRE HQ A STUNNER

FLIGHT Centre is a multi-billion dollar company, but its Brisbane head office features innovations you are more likely to hear about in a Silicon Valley startup. In operation for about six months now, the South Bank premises occupies a 15 storey building which has enabled the company to consolidate operations and create a funky collaborative environment where it really looks like fun to come to work.

*travelBulletin* was treated to a tour last month, with ceo Graham Turner who pointed out some of the key aspects of the design. The centre of most floors features themed meeting rooms - some sponsored by key Flight Centre suppliers and shaped like aircraft cabins, cruise ships or coaches - which are surrounded by open-plan desks arranged in functional groups. Turner himself doesn't have an office, with his desk out on the floor alongside his colleagues - indicative of the open and egalitarian nature of

relationships within the company.

Yes, there really is a slippery dip, which takes adventurers in two stages from level 14 down to 12, alongside an internal staircase. The top floor features an al fresco canteen with an outdoor barbecue area overlooking the Brisbane River, where staff drinks are served every Friday afternoon. Turner confirmed that the infamous Flight Centre Christmas slip-and-slide also takes place in the canteen - overlooked by about 20 of the company's famous life-sized 'Captain' mannequins.

One floor of the building is dedicated to the in-house gymnasium which offers a full array of exercise equipment, in-house trainers and other facilities operated by Flight Centre's HealthWise offshoot - part of the company's holistic approach to looking after its staff. There are also two floors of parking, and the building is conveniently located right next to South Bank railway station.

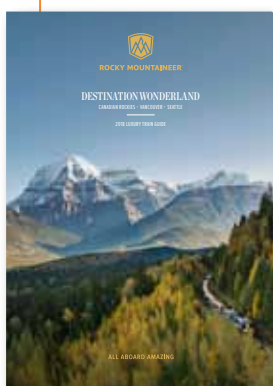


Profiles of Flight Centre leaders also grace the walls.



Themed meeting rooms hark back to the company's early days.





ROCKY Mountaineer's new 2018 brochure features over 65 holiday packages and four unique rail routes through the Canadian Rockies and Pacific Northwest. Rail journeys include their newest three-day route Rainforest to Gold Rush from Vancouver to Jasper, plus classics such as the Coastal passage from Seattle, the First Passage to the West from Vancouver to Lake Louise and the two-day Journey through the Clouds. Guests can also take part in a range of optional tours.



BEYOND Travel's newly added India & Beyond featuring Sri Lanka 2017-2018 40-page brochure features a selection of private tours, pre-and post-land packages for cruise and rail products and river cruises. Escorted tours will take in the sights of the Golden Triangle, which connects Delhi, Jaipur and Agra. Guests can also choose the heritage package and stay in an old fort or opt for a mansion as part of the luxury accommodation range.



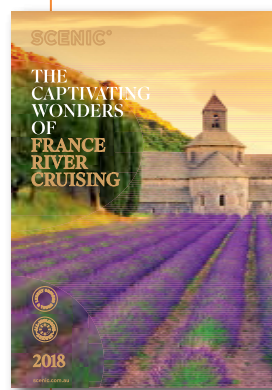
CONTIKI has six new trips and departure dates through to 2019 within its Latin America- 2017-2019 brochure. Three new itineraries have been introduced in Bolivia and Chile, as well as a Munch Mexico food-focused trip to Central America. The Lava line and Ecuador and Galapagos Island Hopper trips include working with social enterprise ME to WE at its project deep in the Amazon jungle, accessible only by boat.



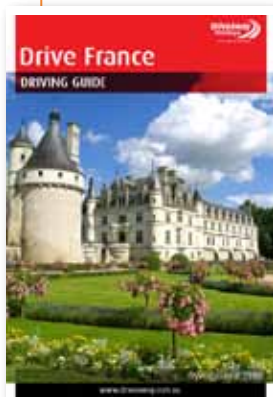
INFINITY has unveiled its 94-page 2017/18 USA West Coast featuring Mexico brochure. This marks the first time Infinity has combined Mexico and the USA West Coast offerings into one program. Inside, there are a number of cruising, rail, self-drive and extended tours available. Highlighted is a number of seven-day sailings on Carnival Miracle that depart from Los Angeles and explore the Mexican Riviera, with stops at Cabo San Lucas and Mazatlan.



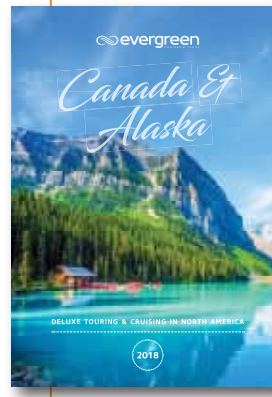
SKIMAX Holidays newest 2017/18 ski brochure covers popular northern hemisphere ski hot spots including Canada, USA, Japan, Korea and Europe. The brochure also features an early bird special for travellers. The guide includes savings of up to 50% on accommodation, lift tickets, lessons, non-ski activities and transfers. There are also facts for each ski destination such as a rough percentage of the number of beginner, intermediate and advanced/expert runs on the terrain and transport options.



SCENIC'S 126-page French river cruising brochure for 2018 features upgrades to five-star Scenic Diamond and Scenic Sapphire 'Space-Ships'. Scenic Culinaire is a new feature where guests can be taught by experts in private cooking areas and enjoy seasonal produce. There are also sample itineraries and Freechoice options ranging from active, moderate and relaxed depending on people's preferred style of travel. The brochure highlights itineraries around Lyon and Bordeaux and many of France's famous wine regions.



DRIVEAWAY Holidays brochure contains details on hiring cars in France. There's info on important road rules, licence requirements, driving laws in France, handy rental tips, attractions, events and road trip ideas. The latest brochure goes into detail on the number of self-drive tours that are available within all the different French regions, including Paris, Picardy Nord Pas-de Calais and Normandy in northern France. DriveAway also covers self-drive tours in the south of France around Provence Alpes-Cote d'Azur.



EVERGREEN Cruises & Tours explores Canada, offering various itineraries on the country's east coast including sailings up close to Niagara Falls or cruising the waters of New England past villages and rugged islands. Guests stay at the five-star Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise hotel - offered on most west coast tours. "Discover More" are extra sightseeing options such as a guided bear viewing or whale watching tour.

## Xi'an exclusive for Australians

THE China National Tourism Administration has confirmed a major initiative for Australian travellers as part of the China-Australia Year Of Tourism (CAYOT), which will see an exclusive 'Tang Dynasty Grand Ceremony' staged for customers of nine local operators. Normally reserved for visiting dignitaries and world leaders, the one-off event will include a formal Tang-style emperor's welcome, a reception at the Xi'an Grand Park Hotel for participants, as well as a "unique multimedia live action performance" for the lucky Australian visitors.

Up to 1,000 Aussies are expected to take part, with participating wholesalers including Insider Journeys, Wendy Wu Tours, Helen Wong's Tours, Scenic, China Best Tours, China Travel Service, Travman Tours, LaCity Travel and PTT Travel. The event takes part on 14 September 2017, with key partners including Hainan Airlines which will operate a dedicated 'Chang'an Express' non-stop flight from Sydney to Xi'an on the day preceding the ceremony.

Xi'an - formerly known as Chang'an - was China's capital city for 13 dynasties between 202 BC and 904 AD. The intricate costumes used by the performers are almost exact replicas of those from ancient times.

For more information see [www.cayot.com.au](http://www.cayot.com.au).



## IN FLIGHT

### Cathay Pacific

#### The route

Sydney to Hong Kong

#### The plane

A330-300

#### Class

Business Class

#### The seat

Cathay Pacific currently operates its A330-300 aircraft on this service, with the aircraft featuring economy and premium economy cabins alongside its flagship business class product. The business class cabin is ideally arranged in a 1-2-1 herringbone configuration, meaning every passenger has aisle access. The seats have all sorts of nooks and crannies, with cleverly arranged storage for just about everything - even a shoe cupboard underneath the seat.

Noise-cancelling headphones are provided for the extensive array of in-flight entertainment, and in a neat touch they are stored in a small compartment, already plugged into the correct socket. Adjacent to this is a USB charger and in-seat power point - meaning it's easy to attach a smartphone or tablet for charging and keep it in the same spot. There's also plenty of

room for a laptop, which came in handy when I needed to get some work done during the day flight up to Hong Kong.

#### Service and Food

In flight the meal service was excellent, with a good selection of Western and Asian dishes complemented by top class wines. After a suitable repast the seat reclines to a fully flat bed for a snooze, while intermediate positioning makes it a very relaxing place to catch up on a movie.

While the Cathay Pacific product is excellent, what really set this flight apart was the exceptional service from the attentive crew. They knew my name from the start, perfectly anticipated my needs and even made sure I got my first meal choice. The cabin manager even had a pack of playing cards on hand when I asked him for some CX merchandise. This was only my second flight to Hong Kong this year and I was very impressed at the recognition.

#### Lounge

Prior to the flight I had access to the Qantas International Business Lounge at Sydney Airport, and on the return CX101 service the next day enjoyed several hours in Cathay Pacific's flagship 'The Wing' lounge at Hong Kong International Airport - plenty of dim sum!





# 2017 afta NATIONAL TRAVEL INDUSTRY AWARDS



INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE  
SYDNEY // SATURDAY 22 JULY

Hosted by media personality Anjali Rao  
Sponsored by Dubai Tourism



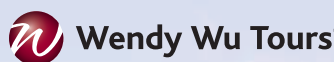
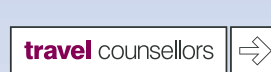
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# Stars of the NTIAs



They're the stand-out performers of the Australian travel industry, earning high praise from judges and the respect of their peers. But what happens after the names are called and the celebrations end? With the 2017 National Travel Industry Awards upon us, *travelBulletin* spoke to some of the high-profile winners from past years and asked the question, where are they now?



# Tina Killeen

**Location:** Sydney, NSW

**NTIA award:** Best Travel Consultant Corporate in 2004, 2005 and 2007 (joint winner).

**Then position:** Corporate Travel Specialist, Spencer Travel

**Current role:** General Manager, Spencer Travel

TINA Killeen couldn't stop at just one award.

When Killeen won her first NTIA in 2004, she said it helped her realise she was good at what she did and that she wanted to strive for more.

"Each year I had to push myself and make sure I was doing different things and just changing it up a bit really, it keeps you on your toes," she said.

**‘Each year I had to push myself and make sure I was doing different things and just changing it up a bit really, it keeps you on your toes’**

She worked to really understand her corporates and film and entertainment clients, venturing out on set and keeping her eye out for all things new.

"Especially when it comes to film and entertainment, if you've got an understanding of their environment it makes dealing with the travel a lot easier and a lot more things start to make sense, she explained.

Setting her sights on the (now discontinued) NTIA Hall of Fame, Killeen went on claim the award for Best Travel Consultant – Corporate again in 2005 and in 2007, earning her place in the coveted hall.

"It's the same feeling every time, it just doesn't get old, it's so nice to be recognised by the industry," she said.

Killeen said the awards helped to bring in new business for Spencer Travel, and provide her with self-satisfaction and affirmation.

"It wasn't something that I did to move into the next position, it was something I did to push myself to try and make sure that I was being the best that I possibly could,"



she explained.

As for the application process, that feeling doesn't change either, with the team at Spencer Travel banding together to support one another during the "mind-consuming" process.

"It's quite a heavy weight because there is so much in your mind to get up to present. It's 30 minutes but it feels like you're up there for three hours, so it doesn't get any easier!" Killeen admits.

The team help ensure all the hard work is worthwhile, celebrating together on the night as well as with a team lunch after the event.

Killeen joined the Spencer Travel team – and the travel industry – straight after completing her Diploma in Travel, fresh out of school.

She started in reception and as a trainee domestic consultant and 16 years later after progressing from a domestic and international consultant, as well working as the operations manager, she's now the general manager.

"When you're onto a good thing why would you move?" she said.

Killeen is also a finalist for this year's award for Best Travel Agency Manager – Corporate Single Location.

## WHAT DID THE NTIA WIN MEAN TO YOU?

The first year I won was in 2004 and I had only been in the industry since 2001. Winning the award helped me to realise that I was good at what I did and although I was relatively new in the industry, it helped me



to realise that I wanted to strive for more, to keep pushing my boundaries and apply my best to everything that I do.

## WHY DO YOU THINK YOU WON?

It's hard to say really but I do put hours into the presentations to ensure my personality, hard work and love for what I do is very clear.

## HOW HAS YOUR CAREER DEVELOPED SINCE THEN?

I am now the general manager for Spencer Travel and still love what I do. Although I don't consult as much anymore, it is still an exciting industry to be a part of.

## ADVICE TO OTHERS?

Just go for it! Step out of your comfort zone and aim for the top.

# Uschi Howard

**Location:** Yass, NSW

**NTIA award:** Best Corporate Travel Consultant, 2007. Best Retail Agency Manager, single location, 2015.

**Then position:** Travelcorp, Manager (2007); The Travel Authority Northern Beaches, Manager (2015).

**Current role:** Managing Director, The Travel Compass, powered by The Travel Authority.

HAVING made a recent "tree change", Uschi Howard is relishing a new life in rural surrounds, not far from Canberra and the NSW town of Yass.

"I'm so much less stressed and so much more satisfied," she said. "Country people are very different. They are so much more vested in my personal success, they care about it. Back in Sydney it's dog eat dog and nobody cares."

Having shifted from Sydney's Northern Beaches 15 months ago, Howard has quickly developed new clients and new relationships in a location closer to her Canberra-based daughter, an upheaval she's entirely glad to have made.

It's the second time she has uprooted her life, having moved from Germany at the age of 19 when her engineer father brought his family of eight to Australia.

"I started at Concorde Travel in 1979, it was my first job, in the ticketing office," she said. "I didn't have much English. When I think about it now it was very hard, but when you're young you just get on with it, it doesn't faze you."

That confidence held her in good stead, taking her to NTIA wins in 2007 when she worked for Travelcorp and again in 2015 when she was the manager of The Travel Authority Northern Beaches.

Both wins provided an endorsement for her personal style – which she readily admits is sometimes against the grain when a corporate culture imposes blanket rules.

"I don't adhere to the norm," she said. "It can potentially conflict with the company way of doing things, but you have to do what's best for your client."

"You're not just selling travel, you're selling a service and you have to be able to include real service in your practices. The service does not stop when you get payment or take the deposit."



## WHAT DID THE NTIA WIN MEAN TO YOU?

I do not always adhere to the standard or norm in my pursuit of excellence. I am however passionate

about travel, the travellers, the suppliers and the people working within this industry. Winning the award gave me the justification and confidence to pursue things "my way".

## WHY DO YOU THINK YOU WON?

Several reasons. The main one's probably a combination of passion, knowledge and experience. The respect of my peers got me to the finalist stage and I think the sheer passion and being able to demonstrate a deep fundamental knowledge of the industry gave me the edge. The testimonials from my clients most likely were the thing that brought it over the line.

## HOW HAS YOUR CAREER DEVELOPED SINCE THEN?

For me, the awards gave whatever I tried to achieve, develop or change substance. It helped in creating long term, reliable and valuable relationships within the industry. Without those, I would not be able to look after my clients as well as I do.

## ADVICE TO OTHERS?

Do not discard it as not a viable achievement. If nothing else, it will make you look at what have been doing, are doing and intend to be doing in your career as a travel professional. There are a lot of brilliant people in our industry. Not everyone can win an award. That does not mean you can't or should not pursue it.

# Mohammad Nasiry

**Location:** Sydney, NSW

**NTIA award:** Best Sales Executive, Industry Supplier, 2005.

**Then position:** Business Development Manager, Concorde International Travel

**Current role:** State Manager NSW/ACT, Express Travel Group

MOHAMMAD Nasiry was headed for a career in the building industry before the travel bug took a bite and diverted him onto an entirely different path.

"I wanted to be a builder when I left school, I even had an apprenticeship with a builder," he said. "But I travelled a bit and I loved it, so I wanted to get into travel after that."

It was a spell in the Middle East and Canada that provided the inspiration, leading to a new path through college and a first job at the Globus family of brands as an office assistant in 1999, "back when email was just coming in and everyone was changing the way things are done".

By 2005, he was a business development manager at Concorde International Travel and had developed a loyal backing from among travel agents he served, earning him a surprise nomination in the NTIAs and eventual success.

That endorsement reinforced an ethic that still carries him today in his role as state manager for NSW and the ACT at Express Travel Group.

"I go out of my way to assist my agents, and they really appreciate that," he said. "After work or after hours, being there to help and getting back to people right away – that's the key. Even now as a state manager, I still work the same way and still like to answer my calls and respond to people right away. They notice."

After his NTIA win, Nasiry joined Etihad for a direct involvement in the airline industry, taking up a position as national account manager at the time the carrier was launching in Australia. Though an exciting time, the launch presented big challenges for an airline that had little in the way of brand recognition in the Australian market.

"A lot of people would say 'Eti-what', is that in Africa?" he said. "I would go to see people and they wouldn't have heard of Etihad, and so we'd always have to go through the whole presentation and introduce them. There was some reluctance, but it was a great product to offer."





## Julie Rogers

**Location:** Brisbane, QLD

**Award:** Best Sales Executive Industry Supplier 2006.

**Then position:** Area Sales Manager Queensland North, Globus family of brands

**Current role:** National Business Development Manager, Ponant

TRIATHLONS, cycling and paddle boarding are just some of the exercise regimes that will prepare Julie to tackle part of the Tour de France route and climb Mount Kilimanjaro in the months ahead.

It seems that tenacious commitment to performance; setting goals and the dedication needed to achieve them has provided Julie with the right foundation for an illustrious sales career.

Entering the industry at 21 years of age, Julie has just about experienced it all from corporate, MICE and retail to airline and touring. She has now found her sea legs at luxury cruise expedition company Ponant.

I demonstrated to the judges that I wasn't just a "rep", I had great rapport with the owner/managers of each of the businesses I looked after and I could show how I would go beyond what was required to help them achieve sales success.

### WHAT DID THE NTIA WIN MEAN TO YOU?

I was incredibly honoured and proud. I thanked my managers, my travel agent partners that nominated me and my husband. I was so excited to win.

### HOW HAS YOUR CAREER DEVELOPED SINCE THEN?

After winning the award, Globus created a new role for me as a National Groups Manager to work with key accounts and the MICE industry throughout Australia.

But when the study bug kicked in, I undertook an MBA and shifted my work priorities around accepting sales contracts with Singapore Airlines, Holland America Line and Seabourn.

I later joined Rocky Mountaineer as their Asia Pacific groups sales manager which enabled me to expand my client base and understand the nuances of different markets.

In January 2016, Ponant invited me to join their company as National Business Development manager, Australia & New Zealand. I couldn't resist the lure of immersing myself into a rapidly growing industry.

### ADVICE TO OTHERS?

Use all of your connections to get nominated and into the finals then prepare well ahead, practice and don't be shy of putting on a performance.



### WHAT DID THE NTIA WIN MEAN TO YOU?

I was over the moon and it was the best feeling ever as I believe this is the highest achievement for a sales person in the travel industry.

### WHY DO YOU THINK YOU WON?

I won this award as I believe my passion for travel and assisting my agents at all times. Being consistent with my service level and always following up when required.

### HOW HAS YOUR CAREER DEVELOPED SINCE THEN?

After my role at Concorde International Travel, I joined Etihad Airways in 2007 as a National Account Manager and assisted in the launch of a new airline into Australia. Express Travel Group was creating a new role as a State Manager NSW/ACT in 2010 and I was given the opportunity to join ETG to build and grow NSW/ACT members and sales.

### ADVICE TO OTHERS?

My advice will be to never give up on your dreams as they can come true by winning the highest award in travel industry. You need to be persistent and go over and above for your colleagues and agents at all times.



Soon to graduate with an MBA from the Australian Institute of Management, she lists Robert Halfpenny (MD of Aurora Expeditions) as her mentor saying, "he encouraged me to develop a deeper experience of business through an MBA," and now seeks to return this favour by inspiring rising talent having just become a mentor herself via the Travel Industry Mentor Experience program.

### WHY DO YOU THINK YOU WON?

The judges gave me the floor and I took it! I had rehearsed and practiced with my colleagues so that it became a fun journey.

# Sophie Brasil

**Location:** Perth, WA

**Award:** Best Retail Travel Consultant – Retail 2012.

**Then position:** Team Leader, Flight Centre Mt Hawthorn

**Current role:** Money Coach, MoneyWise Global (FCTG)

THE travel industry is where Sophie Brasil always wanted to be, but it's not where she started. Work experience in Flight Centre at age 15 was enough to cement her dream of being a travel agent, but when she finished school, too much demand and a lack of sales experience led her to be knocked back three times. Brasil worked in hospitality, administration and tourism and spent time working in South Africa before she returned to her dream.

"When I left school, I wanted to be a travel agent but I never gave up on getting into that career, even though it took me 14 years," Brasil explains.

In October 2009, Brasil landed her first role in the travel industry as a novice travel consultant and within 12 months was managing her own store.

Her hard work paid off and in 2012 she became the first Flight Centre agent to win an award at the NTIAs – solidifying her decision to change in career was worth it.

Brasil said she owed a lot of her success to a leader she had in the early stages of her career, who instilled a belief in her that she could achieve her targets and the importance of customer service and building relationships.

"I certainly believe we become a product of our environment and if we've got a really good environment or support network around us, our successes grow," Brasil said.

After her award she progressed into managing the online team, turning it into a profitable business and proving online customers are "just as important" as walk-ins. She spent some time in training people on systems, as a sales coach and then as a leadership coach before "totally flipping the coin" and moving into MoneyWise, one of Flight Centre's staff benefits.

"We're not financial advisors, we're money coaches so we try and make them hungry to understand about setting financial goals and



secure in their future while they're young and not waiting until they're 40," Brasil said.

## WHAT DID THE NTIA WIN MEAN TO YOU?

It solidified that my change in career was worth all the hours of dedication, and that if you're passionate about your job and the customers, anything is possible.

## WHY DO YOU THINK YOU WON?

I believe what made me stand out from the rest was my belief in myself as a consultant, my love of delivering amazing customer service to my clients, a presentation that showed my journey and having incredible and strong relationships with the suppliers in the industry who voted for me to be a finalist.

## HOW HAS YOUR CAREER DEVELOPED SINCE THEN?

Flight Centre Travel Group has allowed me to grow as an individual, to share my experience with new people joining the company through coaching in sales, leadership development and now helping people become more literate in finances by coaching them and educating them to achieve their financial goals.

## ADVICE TO OTHERS?

Believe in yourself and your true potential, never say never and never give up.

# Andrew Blakey

**Location:** Gold Coast, QLD

**NTIA award:** Best Travel Consultant Corporate 2006 and 2008.

**Then position:** Manager Gold Coast – World Travel Professionals

**Current role:** Operations Manager – Automation & Innovation, Orbit World Travel (formerly World Travel Professionals)

STARTING off as a ground-handling agent at Grafton Airport, travel was always in Andrew Blakey's blood.

"Whenever a flight used to come in, we would get the bus from our office in Grafton to the airport, where I would throw bags on the plane, check people in, fuel planes, look after the HERTZ, the freight depot and any rail handlings – it was great way to great across everything in the industry," he said.

Having started his career in 1989, Blakey moved to Sydney in the 90s and worked in a few different roles. But he jumped at the chance to move out of the hustle and bustle of Sydney and into the more relaxed Gold Coast when it arose.

"I'm a country boy at heart, so moving out of a capital city in a position that didn't hurt my career objectives was a no brainer," he said.

Blakey is now operations manager – automation & innovation at Orbit World Travel (formerly World Travel Professionals).

One of the best parts about working in the travel industry, Blakey said, was being blessed to have had some amazing friends and colleagues.

"Without amazing mentors like Geoff Shepherd, Wayne Dorsett and Michael Chase-Smith, I would not have been able to achieve my NTIA awards or my longevity within the industry."

## WHAT DID THE NTIA WIN MEAN TO YOU?

There's no doubt that winning my NTIA awards was the absolute pinnacle of my career. Doors opened and opportunities presented themselves to engage with many at a 'higher level' within the industry. I got to meet a lot of people who I had only previously known as 'names' in the Trade Press.

## WHY DO YOU THINK YOU WON?

Apparently my presentation to the judges was highlighted by my passion, the glowing references from some longstanding clients and my commitment to passing on my





knowledge and training to those starting out in the industry. The unwavering support of my amazing and long-suffering wife Lisa, also played a huge role in my success.

## HOW HAS YOUR CAREER DEVELOPED SINCE THEN?

Operations has always been my passion. So that's the path my career has continued to take. These days my consulting workload is minimal and my focus is automation and process improvement. I am often spotted pacing around the office muttering to myself 'How can we do that better, there has to be a better way.'

## ADVICE TO OTHERS?

You have to be in it to win it! We see sporting teams regularly have the opportunity to pit themselves against each other to test their skills and talents, so as industry professionals I would encourage anyone reading this to do the same.

# Debbi Ashes

**Location:** Sydney, NSW

**NTIA award:** Best Travel Consultant Retail, 2009. Best Travel Agency Retail – Single Location, 2011. Best Travel Agency Retail – Single location, 2013.

**Then position:** Owner/Manager. Helloworld Travel – Lane Cove

**Current role:** Owner/Manager. Helloworld Travel – Lane Cove

IT WAS while working at a busy accountancy office in Sydney that Debbi Ashes decided she wanted to become a travel agent.

"One day a client we had was a travel agent, I was so interested in what they did, it made me think that becoming a travel agent was where I wanted to go", she said.

Not long after, Ashes completed a travel course and joined the retail travel industry for eight years. Early in her career, Ashes worked for ANZ in the travel agency section of the bank in North Sydney.

After 11 years as an agent, she started Helloworld Travel Lane Cove, in Sydney's North Shore. During her 21 years as owner-manager, she has won three NTIA awards for Best Travel Agency Retail in 2011 & 2013, as well as Best Travel Consultant in 2009.

Ashes said winning an NTIA is the icing on the cake for herself and her staff.

"We are most proud to be in the winner's circle three times. All the victories are a complement to my staff and their commitment to our business. We share the glory and the kudos," she said.

Whether an individual or agency is a nominated for an award, Ashes said to enjoy the incredible experience. "The whole event is a great experience and provides the office with a lot of momentum and publicity. It also gives your staff a lift whether you win or not."

Ashes is also a finalist for this year's awards in the Best National Retail Travel Manager category.

## WHAT DID THE NTIA WIN MEAN TO YOU?

The win is the icing on the cake. I am most proud to display the winner and finalist results on all emails and firmly believe the clients are also excited to share in our success as



well as giving them a feeling they are in good hands for their travel arrangements.

## WHY DO YOU THINK YOU WON?

I always make time for the industry and always attend their functions whenever possible. I do support them and give them honest feedback on their results from bookings. Once you have been selected as a finalist, your presentation to the judges requires a lot of preparation and this is paramount.

## HOW HAS YOUR CAREER DEVELOPED SINCE THEN?

I have seen my business grow and increased staff numbers. We have maintained the growth within some difficult times.

## ADVICE TO OTHERS?

The whole event is a great experience and does provide the office with a lot of momentum and publicity. Being nominated is a great honour. Once you are nominated as a finalist, you must prepare your presentation well and answer all their questions as per the handout. You must get involved in industry and make time for their visits, they are a great asset. My advice is to get involved.

# OFFSHORE PARTNERS BRING NEW PRODUCTS TO TRAMADA



TRAMADA Systems will this month introduce a new application for booking non-GDS airlines and rail tickets, one of a series of additional facilities introduced in partnership with overseas providers.

The Booking Builder Desktop will be offered in collaboration with US-based Booking Builder Technologies and will allow travel agents to more easily book low-cost carriers and other non-GDS airlines. The system aims to simplify the process of booking fares online and then manually adding them to a wider itinerary, allowing agents to automatically incorporate content via Tramada.

According to Tramada Systems chief executive officer Jo O'Brien, the new addition is one of several products introduced recently through strategic partnerships with offshore providers.

"We are always on the lookout and scouting the world for things that travel agencies and travel businesses and TMCs are doing in other parts of the world," O'Brien said.

"What it allows us to do is bring best practice that exists all over the world to travel agents in Australia and New Zealand."

The Booking Builder Desktop will be available from the end of July when Tramada's next release becomes available.

"What happens with Booking Builder is that a booking is still made on the airline website or Amtrak website but the booking data comes down to Tramada in a structured format and we can take that in and create that segment that forms that part of the itinerary and it's much more accurate than keying in that data and much more efficient," O'Brien said.

A similar partnership in recent years led to the introduction of Onyx Integration, for which Tramada received a nomination in last year's National Travel Industry Awards.

Offered in partnership with Scandinavian provider Onyx CenterSource, the product allows travel agents to keep track of and

recover hotel commissions more effectively.

"It's the old story that hotels don't pay agents commission unless they've asked three times," O'Brien said. "It's a very time consuming process sending off chase letters to hotels for commissions. The individual commissions can be very small but the combined value can be very high."

To manage this, Onyx takes a feed of hotel data from Tramada and collects hotel commissions on agents' behalf, allowing

airline tickets go unused.

"Magnatech's system identifies those unused tickets and the value that's ascribed to them, and we integrate so that data comes into Tramada and is visible to a consultant or to anyone who is on a client's profile or on a company profile, to see how many tickets are outstanding, what their value is and whether they can be used on their next booking," O'Brien said.

"Companies need to ensure they spend

**"We are always on the lookout and scouting the world for things that travel agencies and travel businesses and TMCs are doing in other parts of the world"**

Jo O'Brien, chief executive office, Tramada Systems



payments to be shown in a reconcilable document that avoids the need to manually log what commissions have or haven't been received.

"It's such a process otherwise that some agents don't bother, it's more trouble than it's worth," O'Brien said. "You might get a commission come in by bank cheque and it's US\$6.70, and of course the bank might charge \$12 to bank a foreign cheque so it's not worth it."

More recently, Tramada partnered with Canadian company Magnatech to introduce ONTRACKplus, a system to manage the credited value of cancelled and unused tickets that might otherwise go unused. Tramada says 5% of all corporate traveller

that residual value otherwise they are literally throwing money away - you can imagine in big business where there are travellers travelling every day, that's a big task."

In the future, Tramada plans to continue a process of introducing new partner products and evolutions, which O'Brien says involves regular attendance at tech expos and travel conferences worldwide.

"One of the foundations of Tramada was to give the mid-sized TMCs and Australian-based TMCs technology that would allow them to compete with those who are global. Our clients need to be able to compete effectively if they are going to be able to win and retain business. The challenge for technology companies and travel agents is to keep up."



## TRAVELPORT OFFERS FAST APP FOR AIRLINES

TRAVELPORT has released a new mobile product for airlines, allowing them to create and deploy a fully functional app within a few weeks.

The company says its Travelport Fusion platform can be quickly established and configured to reflect an airline's brand and distinctive service offerings, with the aim of reducing the time and costs of getting an app to market.

The first release of Travelport Fusion will include features such as mobile search, booking, check-in, boarding, passport scanning, day of travel assistance, itinerary management and real-time flight alerts. Further product releases will include other benefits including



the ability to incorporate unique features to differentiate an airline's digital offering.

Travelport Digital's Dublin-based chief commercial officer Fergal Kelly said mobile products continued to fundamentally

change the travel industry as travellers became more connected.

"Customer engagement via mobile is now a critical success factor for airlines of all sizes and we believe that the airline industry is not yet well-served in this area," Kelly said.

"The important fusion of user-focused design, travel industry experience and mobile technology expertise is often misunderstood. Airlines who underestimate these three key elements in mobile travel risk missing out on significant revenue from channel shift, new customer acquisition opportunities as well as the resulting improved customer loyalty."

Kelly said Travelport would continue to offer bespoke solutions for airlines, however Fusion was ideal for airlines that wished to move quickly.

"We will work with them as a strategic partner with the experience, vision, passion and commitment to realise the true value of mobile and we are excited to be leading the charge in this regard," he said.

## Sabre regional appointments

SABRE Corporation's operations in Asia will now be headed by Axel Bench who has joined as Regional Director – Asia.

Bench was previously global head of sales for the Harris Aviation Solutions Group and has more than 25 years' experience in sales and account roles.

His appointment was announced alongside that of former Virgin Australia executive Clayton Grant who has been appointed as Sabre's Senior Account Director for Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei. Grant held various roles at Virgin over 12 years including Manager of Revenue Management Development.



## LH TO ROLL OUT AMADEUS AIRPORT PAY

THE Lufthansa group has begun rolling out the Amadeus Airport Pay system across 170 airports worldwide as part of a plan to streamline payment systems.

The product has been launched by Amadeus and Ingenico and provides a wireless payment option that allows travellers to use chip-embedded cards across multiple airlines, ground handlers and banks.

The system aims to streamline payments for ancillary sales such as excess luggage or upgrades, and avoid the need for passengers to visit ticket desks or ground handler offices because check-in desks don't have suitable payment facilities.

Lufthansa Group head of payment Kai Schilb said bringing secure and seamless payment options to passengers was a core objective for the airline.

"Amadeus Airport Pay enables our travellers to choose customised ancillary services for their flight while checking in or at the gate – securely and with a variety of payment options, and without the need for detours," he said.

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# NEW ZEALAND STEPS FORWARD ON EVENTS STAGE

NEW Zealand's thriving events sector is set to benefit from more than NZ\$311 million worth of business scheduled over coming years, the result of a major budget injection announced four years ago.

The events have been secured by Tourism New Zealand and the country's conference industry, and will bring nearly 100,000 people to the country.

The success follows a NZ\$34 million investment in Tourism New Zealand made by the country's government in its 2013 budget, dedicated to attracting meetings, incentives and conferences.

"We are really pleased with the significant return on investment we have made with the support of the New Zealand business events industry," said René de Monchy, director trade, PR and major events.

"New Zealand is performing extremely well as an attractive and unique business events destination," he said. "The estimated value from all conferences bid for and won in the current financial year to date is NZ\$39.7 million, plus an expected NZ\$33 million from

secured incentive business. "

New Zealand recently rose four places in the world conference listings, taking out the 12th spot in Asia Pacific and the 47th in the world in the latest International Congress & Convention Association's (ICCA) annual data.

It has also seen a significant rise in delegate arrivals, with numbers up 4% to 66,000 in the year to March, while new convention centres will soon allow an expanded offering in cities including Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington.

"The New Zealand industry has a reputation for working together to create memorable events that international events organisers want, and delegates want to attend," de Monchy said. "It's this approach that sets us apart and is winning bids on the global stage."

Recent events secured by New Zealand include the International Association for the History of Religions being hosted in Dunedin in Spring 2020 and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association to be held in Hamilton in early June 2019.



Hot air ballooning is just one of the incentive options available in the Canterbury region © David Wall/Tourism NZ



# CHRISTCHURCH CENTRE SIGNALS RENEWAL

CONSTRUCTION work on a new convention and exhibition venue in Christchurch is now underway, providing a symbol of the city's revival in the wake of its devastating 2011 earthquake.

Named the Christchurch Centre and located on a prime riverfront site in the heart of the city, the new facility has been presented as a boutique venue and is due for completion in late 2019.

Its general manager Rob McIntyre said the convention centre would be a "dream space" for organisers and delegates, designed by Adelaide architects Woods Bagot.

"We have studied the best practice worldwide and designed purpose-built boutique facilities around the way our clients work, creating seamless transitions between spaces and sessions," McIntyre said. "The venue will be responsive to a wide range of event requirements for up to 2,000 delegates, all within easy walking distance of city hotels."

The new centre will feature a 1,400-delegate auditorium for large plenary sessions, and can be scaled to allow up to three events to run concurrently. It will be supported by break-out space and meeting rooms - from boardroom scale to large flat-floor plenary sessions.

There will also be a purpose-built banqueting area, a 3,600m<sup>2</sup> exhibition hall and public circulation space that allows for informal meetings and pre-event gatherings.

The main entrance to the Centre opens out to Christchurch's picturesque Otakaro Avon River, and has been designed to reflect the fluid curves of the South Island's rivers. Its site is surrounded by green spaces and gardens fronting onto the river.



Christchurch Centre exterior



Christchurch Centre auditorium



Christchurch Centre ground level

## Kiwis heading to Sydney conference

NEW Zealand is preparing to bring a strong contingent of destinations and venues to the Associations Forum National Conference this month in Sydney.

Conventions and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) Australia manager Sharon Auld said seven business events exhibitors from around the country would join CINZ and Tourism New Zealand on a 100% Pure New Zealand stand.

Three new exhibitors will join the team this year - Queen's Wharf Auckland, Skyline Queenstown, and Auckland Museum - Tamaki Paenga Hira.

Others include the Christchurch & Canterbury Convention Bureau, Destination Rotorua Business Events, Hobbiton Movie Set and the Langham Auckland.

"This is our seventh year under the 100% Pure New Zealand banner at the Associations Forum National Conference," Auld said. "We will be back to share stories, make connections, and excite delegates with New Zealand's diversity."

The Associations Forum National Conference will be held at the International Convention Centre Sydney on July 17 and 18.

## AUCKLAND MOVES UP THE RANKS

AUCKLAND continues to climb the ladder of world conference destinations, leaping 14 places in the latest International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) rankings. The country's biggest city shifted to position 79 this year, up from number 93 in 2016.

Auckland Convention Bureau (ACB) manager Anna Hayward said this year's ICCA rankings highlighted how Auckland had grown on the international stage.

"Auckland has shifted 32 places in the rankings since 2014 and this is before the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) is open," she said.

With the added capacity that the completion of NZICC will bring when it opens in 2019, Hayward said the region would be well placed to attract much larger international events than it does currently.



## CINZ FORGES 6,000 CONNECTIONS

CONVENTIONS and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) last month wrapped up its annual business events exhibition MEETINGS, hoping to build on the NZ\$55 million worth of business signed at the previous year's expo.

CINZ chief executive Sue Sullivan said many international buyers were now keen to book New Zealand for future events.

"Our exhibitors have had plenty of positive feedback and have collectively held over 6,000 meetings with potential clients and will be leaving MEETINGS with strong business leads to follow up," she said.

Sullivan said conference and incentive organisers had been particularly impressed by the experiences on offer in regional New Zealand. Australian organisers had been given the opportunity to explore eight regions in the lead up to MEETINGS.

New Zealand Tourism Minister Paula Bennett attended MEETINGS and spoke to industry leaders about the value of business events to New Zealand.

"From a perspective of what we are trying to achieve economically for New Zealand, our



CINZ welcome event

conventions just make a huge difference," Bennett said.

"International delegates stay longer and spend more - at an average of six nights at \$335 per night, when your overall tourist spend is around \$183. So we value it, we recognise (this sector) for what it brings."

This year's MEETINGS was launched with a high-energy welcome event for 650 people at the Grand Millennium in Auckland. Named Le Cirque, the event combined acrobatic acts with dramatic costumes and fine food, produced by The Event Group and The Dust Palace.



## Gold Coast Games legacy

A LASTING future legacy will be the focus of the 2018 Commonwealth Games, with organisers expecting the event to create a long-term impact on business events. Speaking to *BEN*, Tamara Morris, manager of communication and media for the Games said the event would have a TV audience of 1.5 billion people. "The event has and will put us on the world map as the ultimate tourist and events destination," she said. Director of Gold Coast Business Events (GCBE) Anna Case, said the Coast had secured \$38 million dollars in events that would bring 14,000 delegates to town around the Games. After the Games, GCBE hoped to capitalise on some of the city's sporting facilities and offer them as event spaces. "Our Gold Coast Indoor Sport Centre can seat 5,000 banquet style, and it gives our buyers another venue for an off-site venue, which we are already quoting," Case said.

## Qantas launches conference travel package

QANTAS has launched a new flight booking tool for business events and conferences. Labelled Qantas Conference Travel, the tool caters for events with a large quantity of international inbound delegates into Australia. Rob Harrison, Qantas head of agency partnerships, said the product offered tailored flight packages with competitive fares for delegates. The package offers airfares to Australia from 30 countries and across 16 airlines that Qantas codeshares with, such as American Airlines, Emirates, China Eastern Airlines and British Airways. To be eligible, an event organiser needs to have a conference of more than 1,000 delegates flying into Australia and designate Qantas as the official sponsor airline. If successful, Qantas hopes to expand the product into other markets.

## C2 moves to Melbourne

MELBOURNE will host the C2 international business innovation conference later this year, having lured the event away from Montreal for the first time since its inception. To be held 30 November and 01 December, the event will bring together business leaders to discuss trends, opportunities, disruption and social challenges. It was secured by the Melbourne Convention Bureau, working with the Victorian Government and MCI. The President of C2, Richard St-Pierre, said Melbourne was the ideal testing ground in which to anchor the C2 brand.



## BE VIEW

Penny Lion, executive general manager events  
Tourism Australia

THE Business Events Australia team at Tourism Australia understands how crucial it is for Australia's business events industry to have the opportunity to personally interact with international business events planners in order to convert business for Australia.

Our new website, [www.australia.com/businessevents](http://www.australia.com/businessevents) is a great example of how we provide these opportunities for industry, and delivers new pathways to reach our international audience of planners, decision-makers, and trade media.

The website was created following research with international business events planners, ensuring relevancy to their needs and delivering easily accessible and up to the minute information on Australia. It provides international business events planners with an enhanced user experience, leveraging Tourism Australia's wealth of Australian images, films and tailored written content.

Importantly, increased links out to industry also makes it even easier for planners to contact Australian business events products and bureaux directly for more information on holding a business event in Australia.

Tourism Australia is also constantly developing ways to provide Australian industry with face to face interactions with business events planners, to build solid relationships and provide opportunities to do business.

More than 80 business events planners and journalists have experienced Australia's exceptional business events products, unique experiences and event capabilities first hand by attending Business Events Australia educational visits this financial year, hosted in partnership with Australia's business events industry.

Journalists hosted on these educational visits have delivered coverage for Australia that reached over 300,000 international business events planners, providing first-hand advocacy for Australia from respected media including New Zealand publication Corporate Traveller, and US publications Prevue, Connect Meetings, and Smart Meetings.

Our international trade activity including trade shows, showcases, and workshops is also designed to bring qualified business events planners together with Australian industry to share the latest information on Australia's offering and deliver business outcomes.

In the 2016 financial year more than 130 Australian sellers have joined us at trade shows around the world including IMEX America, PAICE, IBTM World, Business Events Australia Greater China Showcase, and more recently Associations World Congress and IMEX Frankfurt.

Feedback from industry on this activity consistently tells us that it delivers real conversion opportunities for Australian industry, as does our signature incentive showcase Dreamtime, which will be held in Brisbane from the 3 to 6 December 2017.

The last Dreamtime event, held in Adelaide in 2015, saw 69 international incentive buyers and 21 media meet with 95 Australian industry and resulted in over 80 business leads for Australia, demonstrating the tangible business outcomes of joining Business Events Australia on show.

For more information about Business Events Australia's trade and marketing program and how you can join us on show, including Dreamtime 2017, visit our dedicated 'Media and Australian industry' section on the Business Events Australia website.



## business events news

- 22 May** Record crowd for 'This is GC'
- 25 May** Moreton hire joins Qantas
- 29 May** Games a focus for GCBE
- 29 May** C2 event for Melbourne

## MAY TO JUNE 2017 HEADLINES

- 01 Jun** Silversea business events push
- 05 Jun** Dreamworld back in action
- 09 Jun** Qantas to host IATA in Sydney
- 15 Jun** Shangri-La set for Melbourne

# BOOMING CRUISE SECTOR PRESENTS OFFSHORE THREATS

*travelBulletin's* exclusive Cruise Industry Survey has revealed the key issues facing Australia's travel agents as they fight for a place in a booming cruise sector. Here are some of this year's findings.

**A**MID spectacular growth and another record year for cruise sales, Australia's travel agents have offered their insight into the best performing cruise lines, the state of the local market and the looming threats that most concern them.

For the second consecutive year, *travelBulletin* and its sister publications *Cruise Weekly* and *Travel Daily* have partnered with Stollznow Research to offer a national snapshot of the cruise industry from the perspective of the Australian travel trade.

Compiled from the responses of 350 travel agents across all states and retail groups, the 2017 Cruise Industry Survey offers a unique insight into how the major cruise lines are perceived, where their strengths lie, who performs best in areas like sales support and training, and what issues are causing the most concern.

It confirms a thriving seafaring economy, with the increasingly grand and more numerous ships on offer in Australian and international waters translating directly into strong growth for local agents.

Of those surveyed, 83% said their cruise sales had grown in the past 12 months, with a further 16% saying sales were at least equal

to last year and only 1% reporting a decrease.

Just over half (51%) said that growth had come at the expense of coach touring, while others felt it had impacted on domestic tourism (46%), overseas short haul (36%) and overseas long haul travel (36%).

Royal Caribbean International took the lead as the most commonly sold ocean operator, booked by 82.2% of respondents. It narrowly overtook last year's leader Princess Cruises - sold by 81.9% of respondents - and was ahead of other major lines including P&O Cruises (75%), Carnival Cruise Lines (65%), Celebrity Cruises (60%), Holland America Line (59%) and Norwegian Cruise Line (42%).

Despite strong growth, most agents said they feared losing sales to overseas retailers, with 30% saying the risk was

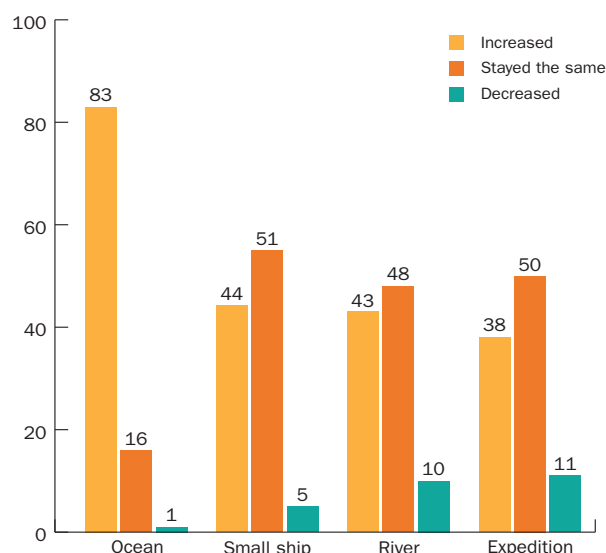
'extreme', a significant increase from last year's 24%.

Almost half (49%) said they had lost sales to overseas retailers, with a further 13% reporting they had lost "a lot" of sales off shore.

A majority were also concerned about direct sales, with 53% saying they had lost some sales to direct channels and 17% saying they lost "a lot".

**‘[The survey] confirms a thriving seafaring economy, with the increasingly grand and more numerous ships on offer in Australian and international waters translating directly into strong growth for local agents’**

**Market change in the last 12 months**



## THE BEST CRUISE LINES RANKED

Azamara Club Cruises came out on top for overall sales service in the survey's ocean cruise category.

The line's sales team achieved a score of 84 this year, placing it in front of Princess Cruises (80), Celebrity Cruises (78) and Royal Caribbean International (76).

Princess Cruises was considered best for agent training and development, coming ahead of P&O Cruises, Azamara and Crystal Cruises.

Princess was also cited as the line clients asked for most by name, followed by Royal Caribbean and P&O Cruises.

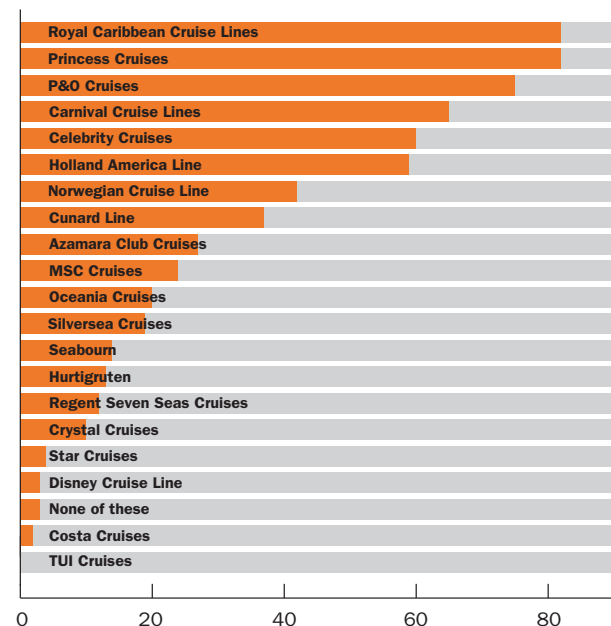
And when it came to the all-important commissions, Regent Seven Seas Cruises was considered to offer the best, ranking ahead of Silversea Cruises, Royal Caribbean and Crystal.

## RIVER OPERATORS EXTEND THEIR LEAD

Though not as bullish as ocean cruising, the river cruise sector still showed good growth since last year. Forty-three percent of respondents said their river sales had grown over the past 12 months, with 48% saying they were steady and 10% reporting a decrease.



## Ocean cruise lines regularly sold



APT and Scenic dominated the river cruise space, showing a strong lead over rivals.

Both were tied for top place as the most commonly booked river operators, sold by 61% of travel agents. They were well ahead of others including Travelmarvel (40%), Avalon Waterways (39%), Viking Cruises (31%), Evergreen/Emerald Waterways (30%) and Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection (28%).

Scenic and APT were the lines most often asked for by name, and were also considered to offer the best commissions.

## SMALL SHIPS DRAW BIG INTEREST

With a succession of new entrants and modern ships soon to debut, small ship operators and expedition lines have taken a high profile

over the past year.

Though still small segments, both areas have drawn a positive response from travel agents. Forty-four percent said their small ship sales had increased in the past year and 51% said sales were equal to last year, with just 5% reporting a decrease.

Among expedition cruise sales, 38% of agents reported an increase, 50% were stable and 11% suggested a decline.

Among small ship lines, Fred Olsen Cruises was ranked best for overall sales service, followed by SeaDream Yacht Club, Viking Cruises, Seabourn and Ponant.

The same five lines were also top for training and development, while Viking, Windstar Cruises and Seabourn were considered best for commissions.

Among expedition operators, Crystal Yacht Expeditions, APT, Scenic, Aurora Expeditions and Ponant were considered best for overall rep service.

‘Despite strong growth, most agents said they feared losing sales to overseas retailers, with 30% saying the risk was ‘extreme’, a significant increase from last year’s 24%’

The same lines were joined by Lindblad Expeditions in the top training category, while the most competitive commissions were attributed to Crystal, Scenic, APT and Ponant.

## THE FULL PICTURE

The *travelBulletin* 2017 Cruise Industry Survey covers a broad range of other travel agent insights, including their views on the most effective tactical offers, individual cruise lines’ ability to solve customer problems, their visibility in trade and consumer advertising and quality of call centre service.

To find out more email [research@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:research@traveldaily.com.au) or call 1300 799 220.

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# QUEENSLAND PORTS STEAM AHEAD

QUEENSLAND'S cruise infrastructure is in a state of transformation, with multiple cities steaming ahead on infrastructure strategies.

Plans for a Gold Coast ocean-side cruise ship terminal are progressing, with the Council agreeing to move to the next phase of planning and eyeing off the homeport market.

"A homeport would make the Gold Coast a serious contender in the cruise market, delivering up to 480,000 visitor night stays annually," Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate said.

The development follows a business case which highlighted the potential for cruise to turn around a 20% fall in domestic visitor nights over the past 10 years to the Gold Coast.

"The business case presented to Council demonstrates that we can turn that trend on its head and deliver a long-term economic windfall for tourism, jobs and generations to come," Tate said.

"It would put the Gold Coast on the global cruise map, and, together with a new terminal in Brisbane, it would make south-east Queensland a high-demand destination."

Council is working with PwC and AECOM to assess feasibility of an ocean-side terminal close to the city's major accommodation centres, including Surfers Paradise and Southport.

The proposed facility could include a



900m-long jetty (as pictured) which would support up to two wharfs, each able to take ships up to 364m in length.

MEANWHILE, The Port of Brisbane Pty Ltd (PBPL) has appointed a series of technical advisers to progress planning for the proposed Brisbane International Cruise Terminal.

The move will contribute to the development of the Port's Detailed Proposal and while the PBPL has not made a final

investment decision, PBPL CEO Roy Cummins said it is "working to deliver the most compelling business case to Government".

In Townsville, the Queensland Government has backed plans to expand the port, dedicating the project a down payment of up to \$75m in its budget.

The Townsville Channel Capacity Upgrade (TCCU) project would allow the port to accommodate ships up to 300m in length.

## Cruise 360: travelBulletin

TRAVELBULLETIN and its sister publications *Cruise Weekly* and *Travel Daily* have been confirmed as the official media partners for the upcoming Cruise Lines International Australasia Cruise360 conference.

Publisher Bruce Piper said he was thrilled to deepen relationships with CLIA, with the conference always generating significant news and commentary around the fast-growing sector.

"We would also like to thank CLIA for this recognition that *Cruise Weekly* is the only trade publication dedicated to cruising - and the only cruising publication dedicated to the trade," he said.

The conference, to be held at the Hyatt Regency in Sydney on 25 August, will be CLIA's biggest local event ever, with a strong line-up of international cruise line speakers as well as local trade and industry leaders making a range of keynote addresses. For details, see

[www.cruising.org.au](http://www.cruising.org.au)



*Pacific Explorer* sailed into Sydney Harbour for the first time on 19 June after spending 12 days in a dry dock in Singapore. The former Princess Cruises ship was freshly overhauled to transform it into a P&O Cruises Australia vessel, emblazoned with the line's new Southern Cross livery.

Over 3,000 items of new furniture and 1,200 pieces of artwork were also installed, plus waterslides and a water park. P&O will debut two new 'fast-casual' dining options on the new ship, with Luke Mangan's poolside grill called Luke's and 400 Gradi, a traditional Neapolitan pizzeria by Melbourne chef Johnny Di Francesco.

P&O Cruises President Sture Myrmell said *Pacific Explorer* would be a welcome addition to the Australian market and fleet, with something for everyone.

"We've taken the winning features of our existing ships and added a whole new layer of excitement with some big wow moments like the waterslides and the bowling green and The Bonded Store, which we're sure will put a smile on our guests' faces," he said.

P&O Cruises Australia will next welcome Carnival Cruises' *Carnival Splendor* into its fleet in 2019.



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CARNIVAL Cruise Line has released details of its 2018/19 season, in which the line will sail out of Sydney once again in November 2019, after being unable to secure a berth in 2018 due to congestion at the Overseas Passenger Terminal. In November 2018, the cruise line will instead sail out of Melbourne.

Carnival will offer more than 70 sailings from Sydney and Melbourne in 2018/19, including a record 19 short cruises on its two Australian-based ships, *Carnival Spirit* and *Carnival Legend*. Both *Carnival Spirit* and *Carnival Legend* will also go into drydock next May, meaning there will be no Carnival ships

sailing in or out of Australia for two weeks.

The cruise line promised both ships would “emerge with exciting new features in time for the bumper 2018-19 season”. During *Spirit*’s repositioning cruise to Singapore, she will make maiden visits to Koh Samui and Phuket in Thailand and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. *Legend*’s refit will come as it makes its way to Alaska for the northern summer.

Carnival vice president Australia Jennifer Vandekreeke said the expanded program meant there was something for everyone.

“We’re thrilled that so many Australians are choosing to holiday with Carnival and that we can offer enticing new destinations to our new and repeat guests.”

Carnival says it has scheduled as many sailings from Melbourne in February and March of 2019 as in 2018, noting “the response in the Victorian market for Carnival has been beyond our expectations”.

Carnival will also offer roundtrip sailings from Melbourne to New Zealand over 13 nights, the South Pacific over 10 and 11 nights as well as a four-night hop south to Tasmania. The program is the line’s biggest Australian schedule to date and packs in 43 cruises to the South Pacific and New Zealand, representing a 13% increase in sailings over the 2018 season.

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## Ponant's undersea lounge

PONANT has announced what it says will be a world-first aboard its new ship *Le Laperouse*, revealing details of a "multi-sensory underwater space" called Blue Eye. The lounge will be located within the hull beneath the water line and has been designed by architect Jacques Rougerie who has been charged with enabling guests to "perceive and feel the underwater universe".

Features include two portholes for viewing the under-sea world, digital screens showing images from live underwater cameras and a sound system that will allow guests to hear sounds via hydrophones and "subaquatic music" by contemporary composer Michel Redolfi. The lounge will debut with *Le Laperouse* next year and will also feature in subsequent ships *Le Champlain*, *Le Bougainville* and *Le Dumont-d'Urville*.

## MSC adding World Class fleet

ITALIAN cruise line MSC Cruises has inked a new Memorandum of Understanding with STX France to develop two 200,000 GRT LNG-powered mega cruise ships, with options for an additional two vessels. Branded as MSC Cruises' World Class fleet, the enormous 6,850 passenger ships will be equipped with new-generation LNG-powered engines and waste water treatment systems. The first of the 330m long World Class vessels will be delivered in 2022 and the second two years later, while the options (if converted) would join MSC's stable in 2025 and 2026. They will feature a futuristic "Y" shape structure designed to "enable panoramic sea views and increase the proportion of balcony cabins", family-friendly villages, a panoramic aft and a glass pool lounge.

## Travelmarvel coastal cruising

GREEK Island, Adriatic, Dalmatian and Montenegrin coastal cruise options have been introduced to Travelmarvel's Europe River Cruising program for 2018. Labelled as "boutique coastal cruising", Travelmarvel has chartered the 36-guest *Princess Eleganza* and 49-passenger *Panorama II* to offer sailings taking in ports such as Mykonos, Crete, Santorini, Dubrovnik, Split, Zadar and the Bay of Kotor. The 11-day Greek Islands Odyssey and Adriatic Coast & Dalmatian Islands are priced \$6,995ppts and \$4,995ppts, which includes an earlybird saving of \$1,000 per couple.



## CLIA VIEW

Joel Katz, managing director  
CLIA Australasia

## INDUSTRY SAILS TO RECORD HIGHS

CLIA has recently announced that globally the cruise industry has surpassed 2016 ocean cruise passenger projections, reaching 24.7 million cruise passengers globally up from a projection of 24.2 million. For 2017 we are projecting another positive year of growth for the industry with a passenger forecast of 25.8 million.

Much of the industry's growth can be attributed to the continuing development of the Asian market, with ocean capacity rising to 9.2 percent in 2016, a 38 percent increase from 2015. The increased capacity in the region, combined with guests in this region going on shorter, and more frequent cruises, has kept this marketplace at the top of emerging markets within the cruise industry.

Globally, the 2016 CLIA fleet comprised 458 ships and welcomed nine new ocean ships and 17 new river vessels for a total of 26 new ships. These new ships represent an additional 28,000 passenger capacity.

In this region, the growth reported in May, and the fact that it surpassed more established markets, is a reflection of Australians and New Zealanders embracing cruise as a preferred holiday. Successful cruise agents are leveraging this to their advantage and reiterating the message to their clients that cruising is an easy, relaxing and value for money way to holiday.

New Zealand, although one of the smaller cruise markets in passenger numbers, is punching above its weight in terms of growth and market penetration. New Zealand was one of only four international markets to record a double-digit increase last year, beaten only by emerging hot-spot China.

One of the many reasons that the

cruise industry continues to thrive is because of the personalisation we can offer to guests from around the world. As an industry, we listen and react to what customers want, and as a cruise agent it is important to always be on top of the latest developments and participate in events such as Cruise360.

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 for a truly panoramic view of the cruise industry. As our biggest professional development event of the year, the conference features opportunities for professional development, networking and the largest dedicated cruise industry trade show showcasing major suppliers.

The 2017 Cruise360 will be held in Sydney on Friday 25 August and will feature an inspiring line-up of local and international presenters with keynote and masterclass breakout sessions offering a choice of learning opportunities. We're expecting a cross-section of cruise focused professionals from Australia and New Zealand to attend the event, including front line travel consultants, owners, managers and CLIA Executive Partners.

On Saturday the 26th, there will be an opportunity to inspect P&O's latest fleet addition the *Pacific Explorer*.

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.

Earlybird ticket sales will close soon, visit [www.cruising.org.au](http://www.cruising.org.au) to reserve yours now.

## CRUISE WEEKLY

**23 May** HLO lifts cruise offering  
**23 May** Sydney situation "critical"  
**25 May** Tauck's small ship boost  
**30 May** Top cruise lines revealed  
**01 Jun** NZ cruising's big splash

## HEADLINES MAY AND JUNE 2017

**06 Jun** MSC's new 'World Class'  
**08 Jun** Norwegian Asia initiative  
**13 Jun** Travelmarvel goes coastal  
**15 Jun** WA gambling go-ahead  
**15 Jun** Luxury Escapes cruising

# INDUSTRY IN FOCUS



MW Tours recently took a group of agents to experience South Korea, with the help of Asiana Airlines. They are pictured here in front of the beautiful and historical Bulguksa Temple near the city of Gyeongju



Pictured at the Council of Australian Tour Operators' annual general meeting is some of the organisation's committee for the coming year.

A team from Helloworld and another from Qantas Holidays participated in the Balmoral Burn run last month, up one of the steepest streets in NSW, in support of the Humpty Dumpty Foundation.



Globus' top-selling agents were treated to a 10-day fiesta on the Globus Supertour which travelled through Mexico for sightseeing and plenty of exciting activities.



These 45 TravelManagers took part in a World's Leading Cruise Line materclass onboard *Emerald Princess*. The personal travel managers were onboard the ship for a day and indulged in a five-course lunch following the interactive training sessions as well as a privately escorted ship inspection.





Top sellers of Contours were treated to a nine-day tour of Chile last month, visiting wineries, Santiago, the Atacama desert and staying in Contour-recommended hotels.



Stevan Sipka, Sasa Savic and Amir Klicic were snapped at the event hosted by Etihad Airways, Air Serbia and the Australian Serbian Commerce Chamber (ASCC) during an AFL match in June.

Norfolk Island Tourism and Air New Zealand hosted a trip to Norfolk Island for these Helloworld agents which included a car rally in colourful Mini Mokes and a tour and cheese tasting at the Hilli Goat Farm.



Magellan Travel Group was honoured for its service to the Uniglobe Global community at last month's Uniglobe Global Rendezvous which took place in Berlin.



Destination NSW, Destination Network Country and Outback Board came together mid-last month in Broken Hill to meet NSW Tourism Minister Adam Marshall.



Hyatt regional vice president of sales operations Asia-Pacific, Kate Atkinson with Damian Dalglish, Essendon Fields development director and Karena Noble of Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia at the opening of new Hyatt Place in Melbourne.



# VAMPIRES AND VOODOO

## *NEW ORLEANS, USA*

With its vampires, voodoo rituals, shadowy cemeteries and spooky tours, New Orleans is seductive, sometimes shocking and always fascinating, says Brian Johnston.

HERE'S a lot to like about New Orleans, whose downtown was first laid out by French colonisers in the 1720s. With pedestrian streets, fast-food chains kept at bay and not a single traffic light, this is America's most un-American city centre. Indeed, this exquisite eighteenth-century masterpiece is one of few surviving historic city centres in the USA, full of elegant houses trimmed in ornate plasterwork. The steamy air smells of spices and jazz music sounds from bars. History is kept alive: you can browse for toy soldiers in the Civil War Store, investigate bookshops full of musty Southern novels, or inspect alarming-looking medical tools in the Historical Pharmacy Museum. Yet this isn't just a well-preserved downtown but a vibrant area of pulsating nightlife, crowded restaurants and local residents, too.

New Orleans is full of character: decadent and debauched, indulgent and sultry, music-loving and merrymaking. Best of all, its dark side gives it an edgy appeal unlike any other city. Stores sell love potions, incense and magic gris-gris bags to ward off evil. In







© New Orleans Online /  
Alex Demyan



Historic The Elms Mansion on St  
Charles Avenue © New Orleans Online



Mardi Gras revellers in New Orleans  
© New Orleans Online / Kate Elkins

the Historic Voodoo Museum you'll find 'Fix the Boss' powder and penis dolls to stop your man from cheating, as well as a more serious look at the voodoo culture that has so influenced this city. Later, take a look at voodoo in action at the Voodoo Spiritual Temple, a busy place of rituals and altars, drumming workshops and classes on healing and the occult.

New Orleans guides from companies such as Bloody Mary's Tours and Real New Orleans Tours regale visitors with information about local rituals, voodoo witches and the history of this strange religion. Inevitably, popular voodoo tours end up at one of the city's many historic cemeteries, which feature prominently in local literature such as Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* series.

Lafayette Cemetery and the three St Louis Cemeteries are worth visiting for their elaborate crypts and family mausoleums in atmospheric states of disrepair, crisscrossed with the shadows of saints, crosses and wrought-iron railings. The most visited grave is that of Marie Laveau in St Louis No 1 Cemetery. Mysterious chalk-marked Xs left by devotees decorate the headstone of this

**‘New Orleans is full of character: decadent and debauched, indulgent and sultry, music-loving and merrymaking’**

great nineteenth-century 'voodoo queen' of New Orleans. Suplicants often leave candles, tarot cards and Mardi Gras beads here in the hope that they'll be favoured by the legendary voodoo practitioner.

From voodoo to vampires isn't a big leap in New Orleans. The city has a lively interest in the occult, on top of which the success of hometown writer Anne Rice has helped promote the idea of New Orleans as the quintessential stomping-ground for vampires, bringing many vampire-hunting visitors to town. The more intense fans loiter outside the author's former house at 1239 First Street. The mansion was designed in 1857 in the Greek revival style with later Italianate additions, and matches Mayfair House in one of the author's best-known books *The Witching Hour* in just about every detail.

You'll experience something of a vampiric atmosphere if you walk around the Garden District, another historic part of town where the architecture has been carefully preserved. Its gorgeous Italianate and Georgian-style mansions sit in lush gardens made eerie by the Spanish moss that hangs in great hanks from oak trees. The Garden District plays on its spooky architecture and novelistic reputation. Bultman's Funeral Home is often hired out for music recitals, functions and (presumably rather sombre) board meetings. The Garden District Bookshop, where Anne Rice launches her latest blockbusters, is a former

mortuary. You'll find a good supply of Rice novels and plenty of other literature about New Orleans' darker side.

Whether or not you're an Anne Rice fan, the bestselling author is certainly good at writing descriptions of New Orleans that capture its seductiveness and seamy side. She helps encourage the image by undertaking book signings in coffins, and once staged her own mock funeral at Lafayette Cemetery. Many of her novels' background locations are genuine New Orleans places. Her characters frequent two real restaurants on Bourbon Street, Galatoire's and Desire Oyster Bar.

The home of the famous vampires Lestat and Louis (played by Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt in the 1994 movie *Interview with a Vampire*) really is Gallier House, an 1850s residence in Royal Street and now a museum full of period furniture that provides an insight into New Orleans' social history in its heyday. During the filming of *Interview* the street itself was used for some scenes. At the Boyer Antiques Doll & Toy Museum on Chartres Street, the vampire Claudia (a young Kirsten Dunst) admires a doll and then sinks her fangs into the offensive shopkeeper.

The Garden District has the sort of dilapidated grandeur and historic melancholy that makes you think of Halloween. You can feel it in the gloomy cemeteries, in the haunting notes of a saxophone that spill from a honky-tonk bar, in the shadowy interiors of voodoo shops. Sit back and absorb the atmosphere: a little touch of the black magic that is New Orleans.

**‘The city has a lively interest in the occult, on top of which the success of hometown writer Anne Rice has helped promote the idea of New Orleans as the quintessential stomping-ground for vampires’**



# BRAND USA'S FUTURE IN LIMBO

AS THE Trump Administration deals with court set-backs over its travel bans, America's tourism industry is monitoring uncertainty on another front as the country's peak tourism body falls into the President's sights.

Amid other surprise decisions by Trump since taking office in January, the President dropped a bombshell in late May when he called for an end to funding for Brand USA.

His Federal Budget proposal would terminate the government's investment the seven-year-old organisation, a move the administration claims would reduce America's deficit by US\$510 million over three years. That revenue would instead go towards customs & border protection efforts.

Unsurprisingly, the suggestion to axe Brand USA has been met with concern from a number of peak travel & tourism groups, including the US Travel Association (USTA). Its president and chief executive officer Roger Dow labelled the decision as "especially perplexing" since Brand USA had had the backing of the US Commerce Secretary and the Office of Management & Budget.

"With all that's going on in the world, unilaterally disarming the

marketing of the US as a travel destination would be to surrender market share at the worst possible time," he said. Dow added USTA was "struggling" to understand how the strategy met Trump's "stated priorities".

Brand USA itself has been tight-lipped about the proposal, with its president and chief executive officer Christopher Thompson saying at last month's annual IPW trade show in Washington DC that any

change "would have a direct impact on travel & tourism". Thompson highlighted Brands USA's successes, highlighting an independent analysis of its return on investment (ROI) over the last four years which found the body had delivered more than 4 million additional visitors to America, nearly US\$14 million in extra spending and around 51,000 new jobs.

More than 300 travel businesses, associations and destination marketing organisations are rallying around the organisation, emphasising its value and ROI, with every US\$1 Brand USA spent on marketing generating US\$27 to the US economy.

Among supporters are Loews Hotel & Co. boss Jonathan Tisch who defended the organisation, saying shelving Brand USA "makes no sense on a policy level", and that by reducing foreign travel to the USA it will increase America's trade deficit.

"With US immigration and security policies in flux, Brand USA is essential to helping travellers understand and navigate these new and changing environments. The Trump Administration shouldn't be cutting Brand USA...it should be embracing it," Tisch remarked.



## US rail booking up-tick

RAIL Plus is reporting a surge in the number of Australians booking rail travel in the US, with sales up 36% year-on-year in 2016.

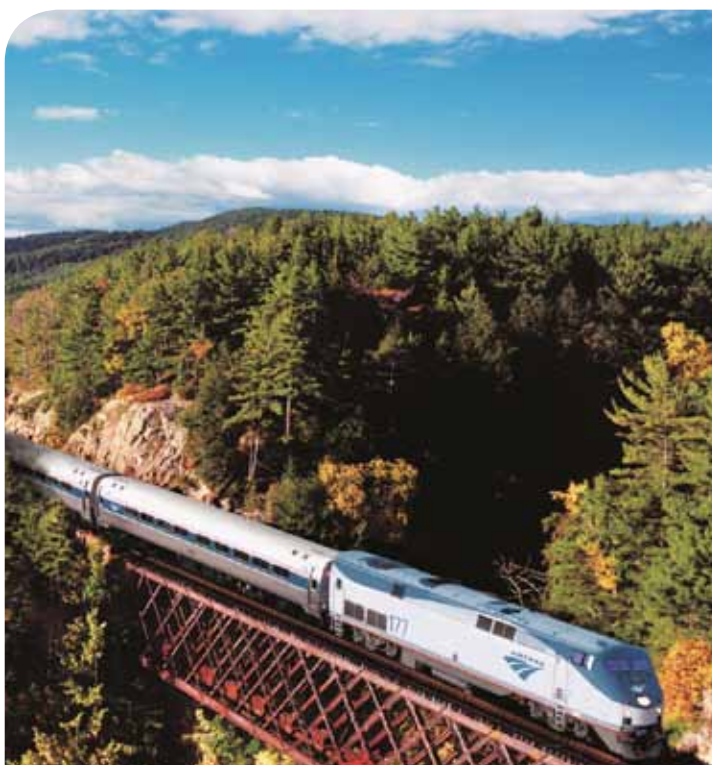
Commercial director Ingrid Kocijan says the dramatic growth has been sparked by Rail Plus' introduction of an exclusive live connection to the Amtrak system in late 2015, making it faster and more efficient for agents to search, book and ticket point-to-point trips online.

Kocijan said Aussies had embraced Amtrak's collection of independent rail packages, which combined iconic US journeys with quality hotel accommodation, sightseeing tours, transfers and select meals.

"These packages are really resonating with travel agents because they are easy and quick to book through our dedicated Great Train Journey division, and deliver outstanding margins," she said.

The most popular Amtrak rail packages include the eight-night 'Jazz, Blues & Rock 'n' Roll' voyage from Chicago to New Orleans, via Memphis, and the seven-night 'Pacific Northwest' from San Francisco to Portland or Seattle.

More information on Amtrak can be found at [www.railplus.com.au](http://www.railplus.com.au).







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\*TERMS & CONDITIONS: All fares are in US dollars, per person, twin share based on lowest available category, port taxes and early bird discounts (correct as of 9 JUNE 2017). Valid for new bookings only, cannot be combined with any other offers. All offers are capacity controlled and can be withdrawn or modified at any time without notice and are subject to availability at time of booking. Cancellation penalties & conditions apply. Solo occupancy is subject to availability and on selected cabin categories (details and fares available on request). <sup>^</sup>Deluxe Outside Stateroom, with Bay Windows. Prices based on payment by cash or cheque only. Travel agent service fees not included. American Queen Steamboat Company reserves the right to change, correct errors, withdraw from sale any or all fares, itineraries, excursions & fees. For full terms & conditions visit [www.aqsc.com.au](http://www.aqsc.com.au) or visit your local preferred Travel Agent.

The Cosmos logo is displayed in white, uppercase letters within a red rectangular box at the top center of the page. The background of the entire advertisement is a scenic photograph of a desert landscape at sunset or sunrise, featuring prominent red rock formations and a warm, orange-hued sky.

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## KIDS FREE SAN DIEGO

SAN Diego is living up to its title as 'the ultimate family vacation destination in Southern California', with loads of attractions, restaurants and hotels offering kids eat, stay and play for free promotions during the month of October.

More than 100 offers will be available over the 31-day period. Multiple kid-centric attractions are taking part, including SeaWorld San Diego, LEGOLAND California, San Diego Zoo Safari Park and a collection of child-friendly museums, such as the San Diego History Center and the San Diego Model Railroad Museum, along with other major attractions.

The campaign launched 30 years ago when San Diego Zoo celebrated its birth month by admitting children for free throughout October (traditionally a quieter time of year), and continues to grow in popularity with other adventures and tours added every year.

Hoteliers often support the incentive by offering welcome packages with games for kids, such as Paradise Point Resort & Spa which provides a \$50 gift card "island allowance", which can be spent on ice cream, bike rental or a toy from the resort's gift shop.

A number of harbour cruise lines also extend free rides to children aged 12 years and under when booking with a paid adult.



San Diego Tourism Authority director of public relations Candice Eley says, "If you're a family planning to come to San Diego and you want to go to a few parks, it's such a big money saver".

Full details for 2017 will be revealed in August - see [www.sandiego.org/promotions/kids-free](http://www.sandiego.org/promotions/kids-free)



THE perception that the election and instalment of Donald Trump as the President of the United States in January may have caused a dent in the number of Australians travelling to the States is yet to be determined, however preliminary visitor data released in late May shows visitors were already trending downward by mid-2016.

According to the US Department of Commerce's monthly arrivals data, there was a 7.1% year-on-year decrease in Australian arrivals to America for the nine months to 30 September 2016.

Despite a strong start to the year when visits to the USA spiked 10.4% in January, a nearly 5% dip in March brought the first quarter arrivals figure back to a lacklustre increase of just 3.5% (to 268,937). But that marked the last sign of growth in 2016, for now, with each month between April and September showing drops in Australian numbers. April only saw a modest fall (-1.9%), but four of the five subsequent months saw double-digit declines, including a whopping 17.2% drop during the month of May.

Australia wasn't the only country to record a decrease in visitation for the year-to-date ending 30 September, with six other Top 10 source markets for the United States also seeing drops compared to 2015 – Germany (-10%), Canada (-9%), France (-8%), the United Kingdom (-5%), Japan (-5%) and Brazil, which is down a monumental 26%.

Only Mexico, South Korea and China achieved an increase in arrivals to the US over the period. Australia is currently the USA's eighth largest inbound market.

## Travel USA magazine

THE official travel guide to the United States of America has been unveiled by Brand USA.

The Travel USA magazine features over 200 pages of content and breathtaking photography, presenting hundreds of destinations across the country.

Content is broken down into regions, including the Pacific, West, Southwest, Midwest, Southeast, Northeast and US Territories, focusing on topics such as self-drive itineraries, urban playgrounds, luxury, shopping, culture, beach destinations and much more.

The guide is available for agents this month through TIFS, at [www.tif.com.au](http://www.tif.com.au).

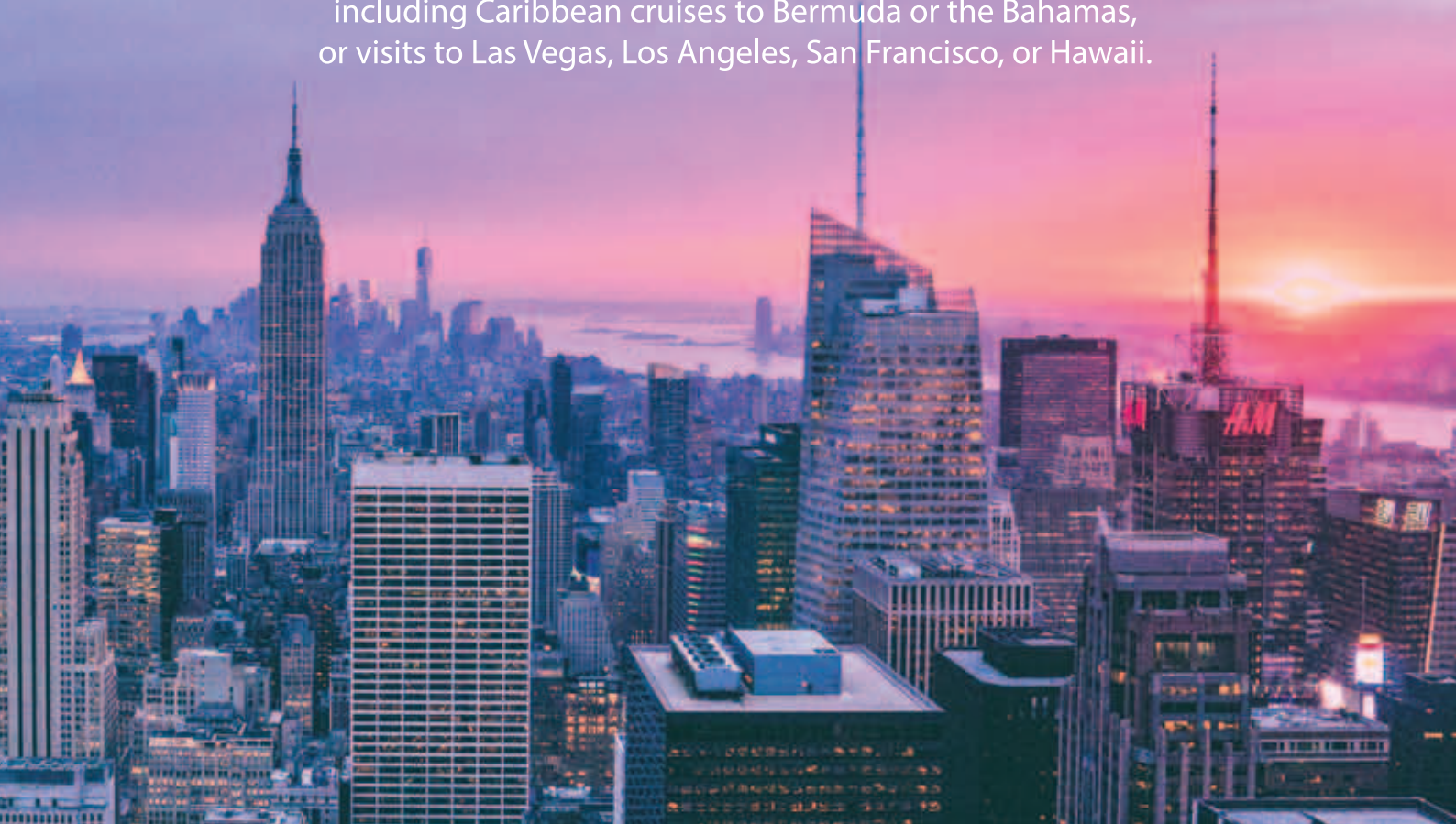




# *Highlights of* USA & CANADA EAST COAST

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## DREAMING BIG AT AMERICAN AIRLINES

Once ready to board, customers can be assured that their luxury travel experience won't end at the departure gate. In recent years, American Airlines' has taken delivery of hundreds of new aircraft, giving them the youngest fleet of any airline in the world: indeed, the average age of their fleet is sitting at just over 10 years. One of the more recent additions is a new aircraft introduced to service the trans-Pacific route between Sydney and Los Angeles; the American Airlines' Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner. Introduced to the carrier's fleet at the end of 2016, the Boeing 787-9 is American's newest aircraft type. The state-of-the-art aircraft features electronically dimmable windows, larger overhead storage

space, and a cabin air system that provides improved altitude, humidity levels and air filtration with reduced noise levels in the cabin. In total, the aircraft features 285 seats ranging from Main Cabin to Flagship™ Business. Flagship™ Business features fully lie-flat 'Super Diamond' seats with direct aisle access, premium on-board dining with a chef-inspired menu; including choices of award-winning wines for food pairing and a Cole Haan-branded amenity kit containing products from C.O. Bigelow, 3Lab and Clark's Botanicals. American also offers business class customers Bose noise reducing headphones and larger screens to better enjoy the airline's extensive inflight entertainment options. In

addition to discovering the benefits that the aircraft brings, with it they will be able to experience a new class of service, Premium Economy. Premium Economy offers leather seats with 38 inches of pitch, more legroom, wider seats and expandable foot, leg and head rests. Enhanced meals are served with complementary wine, beer and spirits in addition to travellers receiving amenity kits and noise reducing headphones. Simon Dodd, General Manager, Australia and New Zealand, American Airlines, said: "As part of our commitment to providing our customers with a world-class product and travel experience, American Airlines will introduce Premium Economy to the Sydney – Los Angeles route which it has served since December 2015; making it the first U.S. carrier to do so. "Premium Economy is an increasingly popular option for customers who want an elevated experience on their journey to Los Angeles and beyond." Customers who are hoping to experience the benefits of the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner will be able to do so when the aircraft commences service Sydney to Los Angeles on November 8. American Airlines currently operates its flagship 777-300ER Sydney to Los Angeles daily, the aircraft is configured with three classes, featuring fully lie-flat seats in First and Business Class – all with direct aisle access.







## THE GREAT AMERICAN JOURNEY: Go big or go home when flying to the USA

Simon Dodd, General Manager, Australia and New Zealand for American Airlines updated Travel Bulletin about the airlines' latest programs and what travellers can look forward to when they embark on an American Airlines flight from Sydney to Los Angeles.

## ABOUT AMERICAN AIRLINES

AMERICAN AIRLINES and American Eagle offer an average of nearly 6,700 flights per day to nearly 350 destinations in more than 50 countries. From Los Angeles alone, they fly to 52 destinations within the U.S., or have 220 flight connections a day. American has hubs in Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Washington, D.C. American is a founding member of the oneworld® alliance, whose members serve more than 1,000 destinations with about 14,250 daily flights to more than 150 countries

**American Airlines is launching Premium Economy into the Australian market - giving Australians a unique opportunity to upgrade their experience without committing to Flagship™ Business. What can customers expect from this new experience?**

Premium Economy will offer customers many of the luxuries of Flagship™ Business, but at a more accessible rate. Compared to our main cabin, customers travelling Premium Economy can expect beautiful leather seats, 38 degrees of pitch, more legroom, foot, leg and head rests, with more ways to relax than ever before. Expect enhanced meals, amenity kits and noise-reducing headphones to better enjoy your on-board entertainment options, and a more luxurious pillow and blanket for lounging at your leisure.

**What are some of the key services and product offerings that American Airlines' customers are most excited about?**

We really do have so much to offer for everybody. All of our inflight entertainment is free and we have the largest library of any U.S. carrier including movies, TV shows, music and games. We are the only airline with three classes of service on transcontinental flights. Customers often express delight in our inflight entertainment options, the greater connectivity we offer through our expansive network, and the comfortable seats we guarantee, regardless of what cabin your journey is in. And of course, those lucky enough to have sampled our First Class offering will attest to it being a truly incomparable experience.

**Where would you recommend Aussies visit within the U.S. if this is their first time in the country?**

One great thing about Los Angeles is that there really is something for everyone. From the beautiful and vibrant Venice Beach, fine dining in Beverly Hills and theme parks for all ages, you'll never be short of entertainment. If travellers fancy heading further afield, Miami offers stunning beaches and of course, a trip to New York never fails to impress.

**What's next on the agenda for Australia?**

We constantly evaluate new route opportunities, and American is committed to providing service to destinations to where our customers tell us they need to travel. Australia is a major market in the Asia Pacific region and it's important for us to provide leisure and corporate customers' access to our hub in Los Angeles and beyond.

■ [aa.com](http://aa.com)





# 3 LUXURY RETREATS

Want to maximise your commission while also giving your clients a taste of how the rich and famous holiday? Check out these three ultra-luxury American retreats.

## Little Palm Island Resort & Spa, Florida

FOR those looking for absolute privacy and seclusion, Little Palm Island Resort & Spa in Florida is just the ticket. The resort is located on a private six-acre island in the Florida Keys, accessed only by sea-plane or boat, and boasts 30 oceanfront suites. Your time is best spent here relaxing on the idyllic white sand beach, snorkelling the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary which surrounds the island or just soaking up the quiet and sun with your loved one. With guests like former US presidents and celebrities like Scarlett Johansson, you know Little Palm Island is a winner. Prices start from US\$890 per night. See [www.littlepalmisland.com](http://www.littlepalmisland.com)



The Romance Suite comes with its own private beach.



## Brush Creek Ranch, Wyoming

IF YOU'RE after some adventure with a dollop of luxury on top, Brush Creek Ranch in Wyoming is the place for you. This all inclusive resort was once a historic cattle ranch, now turned luxury holiday destination, and spans 12,000 hectares between the Sierra Madre and Snowy Mountain ranges. It's great for families, with a range of different sized accommodation and activities galore including horse riding, rock climbing, mountain biking and even clay shooting, all part of the package. The Magee Homestead is the most private of the accommodation, with nine bedrooms and your own personal chef. Rates start from US\$850 per night. Visit [www.brushcreekranch.com](http://www.brushcreekranch.com)

## The Baker House 1650, New York

THE Hamptons are well known to be the haunt of the rich and famous, favoured by New Yorkers for their holidays, and the The Baker House 1650 is the best spot to see why. The historic building has been continuously occupied since 1650, serving in the past as a tavern, meeting hall and space for religious services and now restored as a luxury hotel. The rooms are extravagant, most including a wood-burning fireplace and whirlpools. The hotel includes breakfast, as well as coveted East Hampton Village Beach Parking Permits in the summer (with towels, beach chairs and umbrellas of course) and private gardens to enjoy. Guests can also stay in the private Carriage House, with its private pool. Priced from US\$600 per night. See [www.bakerhouse1650.com](http://www.bakerhouse1650.com)







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# THE COVER YOUR CLIENTS NEED

**With more ways than ever to book travel insurance, there are still plenty of reasons why travel agents do it better, writes Kristie Kellahan.**

IT'S often said that people who can't afford travel insurance, can't afford to travel. That's truer than ever, as the cost of premiums drop to record lows, thanks to the proliferation of budget policies and direct-to-consumer online providers. Many credit card companies even offer free insurance cover for customers paying for travel on their credit cards.

But what about those travellers with insurance who get into strife, only to discover

their policy doesn't adequately cover them?

When Jo Miller, a Sydney nurse, had her bag stolen on a beach in Majorca, she reported it to local police and even paid for their report to be translated to English. In assessing her claim for a stolen camera, the budget insurance provider deducted from her payout the cost of administration fees and a hefty excess. Jo was not amused when a refund cheque for 50 cents arrived.

Michelle Grima took out travel insurance before departing on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Malta. While in Europe, her younger brother tragically died of a heart attack in Australia. Advised by the travel insurer that she would have to pay for expensive last-minute flights home for herself and her son,

with no guarantee of reimbursement, she was heartbroken to miss the funeral.

Stories like Jo's and Michelle's are not uncommon, and anecdotally appear to be on the rise as more travellers book their insurance cover online or as a low-cost add-on when purchasing a flight or cruise. Travellers who rely on free cover from a credit card company may be surprised to learn of the many exclusions and limits that apply to claims.

Last year, Quantum Market Research conducted a survey on behalf of Understand Insurance, the Insurance Council of Australia's financial literacy initiative. The survey found 19 per cent of travellers arranged their insurance through a travel





agent, compared with 31 per cent who bought directly from an insurer and 20 per cent who had travel insurance through their credit card. Another 8 per cent used a price comparison website and 6 per cent of travellers bought their policy from an airline. Those in regional areas were significantly more likely to have purchased their policy through a travel agent (26 per cent) than to those living in metropolitan areas (17 per cent).

This downward trend of fewer clients arranging insurance through their travel agent is taking a big bite out of agents' earnings potential, as most sales of insurance policies earn commission.

"There has been a massive shift in the past 10 years and it's now a much more competitive market as consumers have so many more choices," says Jan Musgrave, an independent, home-based travel agent. "Insurance used to be a huge part of travel agents' business."

Musgrave says the trend is "100 per cent" about the low- or no-cost cover that can be arranged online. But buyer beware: policies vary widely and many do not offer adequate coverage.

"It's hard to put a value on insurance,"

**‘This downward trend of fewer clients arranging insurance through their travel agent is taking a big bite out of agents’ earnings potential, as most sales of insurance policies earn commission’**

Musgrave says. "At the point in time you pay for it, it seems like a cost. But if circumstances arise that lead to you needing it, you'll need it in spades and you'll be glad you have it."

Travel agents, with their expert knowledge and daily dealings with insurance providers are well-placed to advise on the most appropriate coverage and can help ensure travellers are not underinsured. They can ask questions about the policy, and know what to look for in the PDS (Product Disclosure Statement). They can also be a valuable point

of contact if things go awry during a trip.

"Travel insurance is vital for anyone preparing to head overseas, where emergency medical bills can sometimes top \$100,000," says Campbell Fuller, spokesperson for Understand Insurance. "The Quantum Market Research found more than half of young Australians aged 18 to 29 incorrectly believe the Australian Government would arrange and pay to get them home in a medical emergency. This is not the case."

Fuller says travellers should be advised to select a policy that covers the destinations they intend to visit and the activities they wish to enjoy on their trip. Riskier activities, such as sky-diving, riding a jet ski, horse-riding, skiing or bungee jumping, are not automatically covered by all policies.

Travellers and their travel agents should read the PDS for the full details of each policy's features, limits and exclusions. Cover for personal belongings and luggage, for example, is generally limited to a specified amount, but can be increased by paying a higher premium. Policies may not cover claims made in countries where the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade recommends against travel.





## THAILAND PLANNING COMPULSORY TRAVEL INSURANCE

THE Thai Government is moving ahead with plans to make travel insurance a mandatory requirement for foreign visitors.

Officials at the Ministry of Tourism and Sports are working on a proposal which would involve checking travel insurance documents on arrival, as part of a crackdown to reduce the costs of foreign nationals seeking treatment in Thai hospitals.

John White, Head of Distribution at Allianz Worldwide Partners said the move wasn't surprising given the number of travel related insurance claims made in Thailand.

"In 2016 alone, we received over 3,000 Thai related travel claims with over 30% relating to medical claims," White said.

The most common type of medical claim for visitors travelling to Thailand in 2016 was for hospital expenses, he said, while the country also ranked third in the world for medical repatriations.

In an interview with SkyNews last month, Thailand director of tourism safety at the Ministry of Tourism Jaturon Phakdeewanit said travellers were costing the Thai health system more than A\$115 million a year.

"We need to push this through as soon as possible because the problem is becoming more serious," he said.

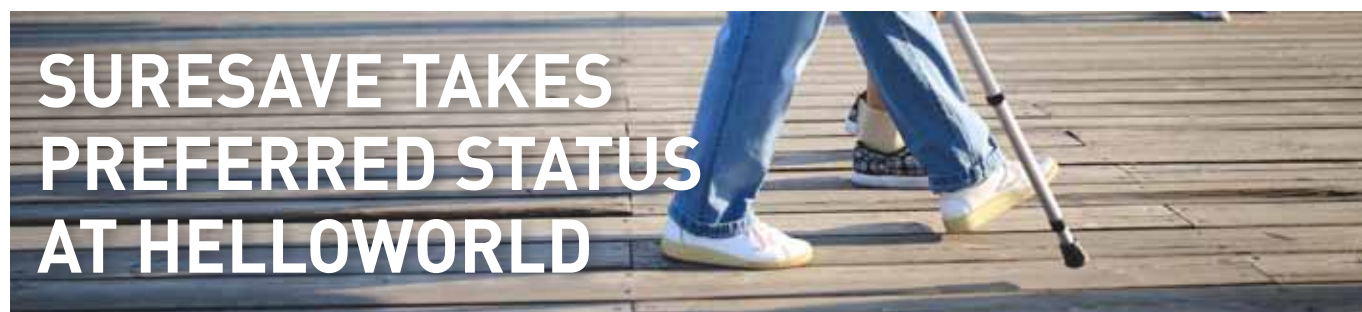
No timeframe was given for the measures, but a proposal is expected to be submitted to cabinet soon for approval.

## Allianz combines under umbrella brand

ALLIANZ Global Assistance Australia has combined its services under the one global entity, Allianz Worldwide Partners (AWP). The over-arching body combines the brands and knowledge of Allianz Global Automotive, Allianz Global Assistance and Allianz Worldwide Care.

Allianz Worldwide Partners chief executive officer Craig Dalzell said uniting the three brands would enable Allianz to streamline the capabilities of the business and provide opportunities to invest in global and customer-centric services.

"We are committed to accompanying and supporting our business partners with solutions that protect and care for their customers and employees worldwide," he said.



## SURESAVE TAKES PREFERRED STATUS AT HELLOWORLD

SURESAVE has reached agreement with Helloworld Travel to become the agency group's new preferred travel insurance provider, taking up position alongside existing supplier Cover-More.

The arrangement begins this month and will see 2,000 independent franchised agents from Helloworld offer the SureSave alternative to their customers, marking an early end to an exclusive arrangement held by Cover-More since 2014.

The dual preferred suppliers were confirmed at Helloworld's recent Gold Coast conference, where chief executive officer Andrew Burnes said the Cover-More arrangement had not performed as well as expected.

"This will give you choice and differentiated product to offer your customers," Burnes told agents.

SureSave is part of the World Nomads Group which is owned by health insurance group nib Health Funds, while Cover-More was recently delisted from the Australian Stock Exchange after its \$722 million takeover by the Zurich Insurance Group.

SureSave general manager of distribution Ross McDonald said the new Helloworld partnership would provide the best possible solutions

for travellers, so they could "go out and explore the world with peace of mind".

"As well as covering travellers with our SureSave product, our experienced business development managers look forward to sharing their skills, knowledge and understanding of travel insurance to assist agents on how to sell insurance with confidence and grow their sales," he said.

Last year, SureSave changed its traditional Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) to make the terms and conditions easier to understand for both travellers and agents.

"Our PDS describes policy cover in terms of 'events' that can happen to travellers before or during a trip, making it much easier to use," McDonald said.

"SureSave breaks down otherwise complicated policies into a simple and easy guide to travel insurance, using clear visuals and wording," he said. "The electronic version allows travellers to browse the policy from their smartphones or mobile devices."

Currently SureSave covers more than 300,000 travellers annually in Australia, with policies underwritten by Lloyd's.





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# THE MANY FACES OF







Antonio's restaurant

By Caroline Gladstone

**A**NTONIO COELHO is a larger than life character; the proprietor of one of the most popular restaurants in Macao. He greets us with glasses of chilled white port under a plaque that boasts his establishment serves “authentic Portuguese” cuisine. A big man with a huge appetite for life, along with his hearty food, his restaurant has become something of an institution even though it opened just eight years ago. When not supervising the kitchen where chefs rustle up garlic clams and pastéis de bacalhau (salted codfish cakes) he is pouring the wine and theatrically creating table-side flambés of his signature dessert, Crepe Suzette.

Tucked into a narrow street in old Taipa village, Antonio's is one of 100 Portuguese and Macanese restaurants spread over the three separate locations that make up Macao – the historic Macao city (called the peninsula) and the islands of Taipa and Coloane. The restaurant is full on my first night in Macao and we are treated to the serenades of a Portuguese guitarist wandering among diners.

I hadn't been to Macao for 18 years; my last visit in October 1999 was just weeks before the former colony was officially handed back to China after 460 years of Portuguese rule.

My guide at the time, Joao Sales, a local of Portuguese descent, told me little would change once Macao became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) and life for the population, now numbering 600,000, would go on much the same.

As a tourist it's always hard to tell what goes on below the surface, but one thing is evident, the colonial heritage of this once strategic trading port has been protected and is heartily embraced by visitors. And those restaurants, be they big and bustling like Antonio's or hole-in-the-wall cafés serving classic Macanese specialities, are thriving.

Macao's historic centre, containing 22 significant monuments including the fort, colourful churches and Chinese temples, was granted UNESCO World Heritage status in 2005, assuring its survival.

I embark on a walking tour through the cobblestone streets once again led by guide Joao, who I'm happy to discover still works for the government tourist board. I'm immediately struck by the number of Chinese visitors (the Barrier Gate border is only a few kilometres north) and in fact dodging the selfie stick wielders near the 17th century Ruins of St Paul's is an art in itself. However,

when I return a couple of days later, it is an entirely different experience, almost serene. Like everywhere it seems it's best to visit the major sites in the early morning.

Street signs and building names remain in Portuguese (along with Chinese and English) and the Pataca is still the currency.

But plenty has changed on the ground and the skyline. The Grand Lisboa hotel, with its distinctive lotus flower design, now dominates the peninsula's downtown and the lofty Macao Tower is the place not only for conferences but also bungy jumping.

Macao's area has expanded since 1999 through ongoing land reclamation and now measures about 32 sq km, 25% larger than it was before the handover.

Hotels and casinos have sprung up like mushrooms; there were 12 casinos when I was last there, now there are 35 and several more are under construction. Macao is the only place in China where gambling is legal.

I see Macao as a place with several faces, separate precincts offering different attractions, which can happily collide but need not. The colonial heart, with its pastel-coloured churches and wave-patterned Senado Square is a gem. Across the bridge in Taipa, traces of the former colony linger in the alleyways and at the Taipa Houses, a beautifully restored row of mint-green government residences.

Further south is Coloane, sparsely populated by comparison, with wooded hills and hemmed by black-sand beaches. While it appears sleepy, there is plenty of life in the island's renowned restaurants Miramar, Espaco Lisboa and Fernando's, while food-lovers also queue at Lord Stow's Bakery to sample the legendary Portuguese egg tarts.

By far the biggest development and most confronting precinct is Cotai, a strip of landfill that joins Coloane and Taipa, giving it its name. First developed a decade ago, it is a surreal world, a Las Vegas-inspired gambling strip of amazing resorts that mimic their American cousins. Having never been to Vegas I am fascinated by its huge scale and agog at its crazy copy-cat design. The huge Venetian Macao with indoor grand canal and gondolas and the half-size Eiffel Tower that fronts the newly-opened Parisian Macao resort are beguiling. It's fun for sure, whether the lure is the world's biggest casino or the entertainment of dazzling water fountains and magic shows.

Many visitors pop over to Macao from Hong Kong for a day, but there are plenty of reasons to stay longer. Free shuttle buses make it easy to get around and the gastronomic treats are worth the trip alone.

# MACAO



Studio City resort art deco statue © Caroline Gladstone

# One Fare > Two Cities



XIAMEN



MACAO

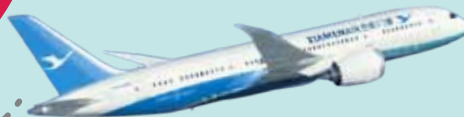


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### WYNN PALACE COTAI

Colourfully decorated, this stately, spacious resort hotel has 1706 rooms and suites with an accent on metallic gold. Its features include day spa, outdoor pool, fitness centre and a number of quality restaurants and stores.



### BANYAN TREE MACAU

This fully integrated luxury resort boasts 246 suites, including Presidential Suite and 10 standalone villas with gardens and private pools. Day spa, swimming pools and a cabana area are among features.



### ST REGIS MACAO

A modern tower overlooking the Cotai Strip, this luxury hotel has sophisticated rooms with marble bathrooms. An intimate cocktail bar, a 38th-storey spa, and an outdoor pool with cabanas and hot tubs, plus a fitness centre and event space are also featured.



### CONRAD MACAO COTAI CENTRAL

This 39-storey tower boasts 636 elegantly appointed rooms, including 206 suites, 238 Two Queens Deluxe Rooms and 192 King Deluxe Rooms. Plentiful meeting space.



### MGM COTAI

Set to open in the latter half of 2017, MGM COTAI is designed like a giant "jewellery box" with around 1400 guest rooms and suites.



### STUDIO CITY MACAO

Renowned for its Art Deco styling, the resort has a Celebrity Tower and an all-suite Star Tower with as many as 1600 elegantly presented guest rooms.



### THE PARISIAN MACAO

Inspired by the magic of the famed City of Light, The Parisian Macao features a half-scale recreation of the Eiffel Tower, the hotel offering 3,000 guestrooms and suites, convention and meeting space, international restaurants, spa, kids' club, health club, pool deck with themed water park, and 1,200 seat theatre.

***"Experience some of the world's finest yet affordable luxury accommodation on Cotai Strip, Macao."***



# MACAO'S HOTEL BOOM

© MGTO

MACAO'S hotel construction knows no bounds. The former Portuguese enclave, whose size varies depending on the latest land reclamation project (but which is around 32 sq km) had a staggering 37,634 hotel rooms at the end of 2016 spread over 113 properties. A year earlier, there were 32,608.

Most of the mega development is on the Cotai Strip, the 5.25 sq km piece of reclaimed land wedged between Coloane and Taipa islands, although a medium sized hotel, the Harbourview, opened on Fisherman's Wharf Macao.

Things have slowed down slightly

this year, with the exception of 223-room Monte Carlo-styled Legend Palace Hotel which opened in February also at Fisherman's Wharf, a theme park on the Macao Peninsula currently undergoing revitalisation.

Similarly, huge resorts are planned for the next two years, with the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) tipping they'll be in excess of 50,000 hotel rooms by late 2018. They include the Louis XIII, simply called The 13, owned by flamboyant entrepreneur Stephen Hung; the MGM Cotai to be shaped like a series

of glittering jewellery boxes; the 40-storey Morpheus owned by the City of Dreams (whose investors include James Packer) and the Lisboa Palace – all based at Cotai. The other contender, Macao Roosevelt, diminutive by comparison with just 373 rooms will have a Hollywood design with a "retro twist" and emulate its Los Angeles namesake. The most outlandish, the 13, will feature 200 villas each with a private elevator and many with Roman baths, rumoured to cost \$US7m each to build. A fleet of 30 red Rolls Royce Phantoms will ferry guests around.

## Family friendly attractions

MACAO will renew its focus on non-casino attractions and target middle class and family travellers to prop up business following successive years of declining gambling revenue.

While Macao's 35 casinos-resorts are some of the most glamorous in the world, the former colony experienced an 8.7% decline in gaming revenue and an overall 7% drop in visitor spending in the first nine months of 2016 as against the previous period in 2015.

The MGTO has always highlighted its non-gaming attractions; now resorts are putting a greater emphasis on these to attract a more diverse market.

Recent family attractions that have opened on Cotai include the Parisian Macao's half-scale model of the Eiffel Tower complete with rides to the top, the Golden Reel figure-of-eight rollercoaster at the Studio City complex along with a Batman Dark Flight ride and the House of Magic. Over at the Wynn Palace, guests arrive at reception via a cable car and can wander through foyers filled with balloons made of flowers.

On the horizon are more celebrity chef restaurants, hotels that echo Hollywood glamour with suites dedicated to Marilyn Monroe and others with interiors designed by Donatella Versace and Karl Lagerfeld. All are hoped to appeal to the burgeoning middle class Chinese and others who love a dash of panache. Most resorts offer free shuttles from the Macao ferry terminal and the China border gate.



The Parisian and Eiffel Tower at night



# MACAO-HKG BRIDGE



ONE of the big questions is when will the Hong Kong-Macao Bridge open? The 50km bridge, which includes 6.7km of undersea tunnels, was expected to open in 2016, however the MGTO is hopeful for a December 2017 completion. Newspaper reports say 2020 is more optimistic. Much of the structure can be seen during the ferry ride from Hong Kong to Macao, while construction work is visible from hotels on the waterfront.

Officially called the Hong Kong Zhuhai Macao Bridge (HZMB) as it will also link with the city of Zhuhai in Guangdong Province, the bridge will run from an artificial island off the east coast of Macao across the Peal River Estuary to another artificial island off Hong Kong's International Airport. Construction began in December 2009 and the cost (shared between the three cities) has ballooned to currently around \$US10.6 billion. The bridge will cut the road journey from 4.5 hours to 40 minutes.

The other big transport project, Macao's Light Transit Rapid Rail (LRT) is expected to be operating by 2019-20. Stage one of the system, which will use driverless rubber-tyred vehicles, will run between Macao Peninsula and Taipa on the lower deck of the current Sai Van Bridge.

## Aussies keen on Macao

AUSTRALIAN visitors to Macao in 2016 numbered 93,2886, a 1% increase over the previous. Macao witnessed a record year across all markets with a total of 30.95 million visitors. The majority or 20.45 million (66 per cent) came from China. Following in China's huge wake were Hong Kong (6.4 million), Taiwan (1.7m), Korea, (662,000), Japan (300,600) and the Philippines (287,000). Hong Kong was the only market to record a decline (-1.8%). Macao Government Tourist Office (MGTO) said overnight visitors outnumbered day-trippers for the first time in a decade. The average length of stay is now 1.2 nights.



Senado Square and its wave-patterned street

## AGENT KNOW-HOW

**travelBulletin caught up with Macao Government Tourism Organisation (MGTO) to discover how you can learn more about this fascinating destination.**

### How can travel agents improve their product knowledge of Macao?

Make sure to contact the Macao Government Tourism Office (Australia) and the staff will be able to provide ample information on all aspects of the former Portuguese enclave. You can also check out the website [www.visitmacao.com.au](http://www.visitmacao.com.au) for additional information. The MGTO also has an informative eight-page guide on how to get to Macao, getting around, what to see and do, dining ideas and where to stay.

### What kind of training is available to Australian agents wanting to sell Macao? How can they sign up for it?

Because Macao is expanding each year, the MGTO Australia office organises regular workshops to provide agents with the latest news on what to see and new hotel openings. The office will notify agents of the next workshop via email and follow up phone call.

### What activities would you recommend for first time travellers?

On arrival in Macao, make sure to visit to the Museum of Macao within the Mount Fortress. From there, there are many highlights, from the historic heart of Macao to the modern integrated resorts which today grace the Cotai area between Taipa and Coloane. A sure way to learn more is to download the "Step Out, Experience Macao's Communities" free app or pick up one of the pocket size booklets on eight self-guided walks. Macao is also famous for its annual festivals and events, among the more notable the Macao Grand Prix (Nov 16-19, 2017), The International Film Festival and Awards (Dec 8-14, 2017), the Macao Marathon (Dec 3, 2017) and the Parade through Macao, Latin City (December 2017).

### What makes Macao a unique destination?

Macao is renowned for its east-meets-west, old-meets-new characteristics. Many of the historic buildings and squares of the former Portuguese enclave are UNESCO World Heritage listed. In contrast are the giant neon-lit integrated resorts which grace the Cotai area, reclaimed land linking the two Macao islands of Taipa and Coloane. The fascinating combinations are reflected in the uniquely created Macanese cuisine: a mix of Portuguese, Indian, African, Malay and Chinese ingredients.



© Caroline Gladstone



# SOUTH AFRICA DRIVING

By Ben Groundwater

IT COMES as a shock the first time it happens. You're stuck behind a truck, a big lumbering beast that it will surely take forever to pass, when suddenly it shifts over to the edge of the road, and the driver indicates – you're safe to overtake. So you hit the accelerator and cruise past, putting on your hazard lights as a sign of thanks, watching in the rear-view mirror as the truck driver flashes his lights in acknowledgement.

What was that? That's driving in South Africa. People here are considerate. They let you pass if they're going too slow. They put on their hazard lights to say thanks if you let them through. South Africa, this country that could seem so intimidating to first-timers on its roads, is about the most relaxed place you could hope to drive in.

Even this morning in Johannesburg, where I begin my big lap of this amazing country, it's pretty relaxed. Jo'burg is no one's idea of paradise, but it is a good place to pick up a hire car and spend a night resting up before hitting the road heading south. Get started early enough and it's only half an hour or so before you're out of the city and onto smooth, open highway.

My destination on day one is Port Elizabeth, a town all the way down on the South African coastline. It's a long drive, but a beautiful one. I begin up in the bare savannah of the South African high veldt before winding down into ever-greener territory past Bloemfontein, spotting baboons by the side of the road as I approach Cradock, seeing a jackal skulk into the bushes as I near my destination.

South Africa is ideal for a road trip. If you've driven a car in Australia, then you can handle yourself here. The terrain and the distances are similar. The roads are in excellent condition. The drivers are friendly. And the scenery, of course, is stunningly

beautiful, a never-ending highlight reel of vistas that you'll want to pull over to the side of the road to properly enjoy time and again.

There are several world-famous drives that you can't miss in this country. One is the Garden Route, a 300-kilometre stretch of road from the town of Storms River in the Eastern Cape to Mossel Bay in the west. Another is the journey from Cape Town to the Cape of Good Hope, where the Atlantic meets the Indian Ocean. And the third is a gentle cruise through the wine country just north of Cape Town, around the towns of Stellenbosch and Franschhoek.

My adventure is taking in all three of these iconic drives, beginning in Johannesburg and ending in the Western Cape. That first long stretch takes me from South Africa's biggest city through to its coastline at Port Elizabeth, before, a few nights later, I work my way west to Plettenburg Bay, calling in at Kurland House, a polo club and boutique hotel. This is a throwback to South Africa's colonial past, a place of Cape Dutch buildings and posh polo lawns. It's also a beautiful spot to relax and prepare for one of the world's great drives: the Garden Route.

It begins in coastal Storms River, a place of rugged beaches and salty air, before moving inland, into the wildflower-covered hills of the Eastern Cape, winding through green-tinged farmland and small towns. There are more coastal sections, passing by windswept surf towns and high sand dunes, before the road moves back into the hills, sprayed yellow with canola flowers, and eventually pops out at Mossel Bay.

From there it's only a few more hours to Cape Town, one of the world's great cities, set in the shadow of Table Mountain. Driving here is different – it's busy, hectic, with plenty of traffic; you need a GPS to navigate the highways that wrap around the mountain and shoot you down towards the south, past the beautiful beaches of Clifton and Camps Bay.

It's worth spending a few days in this

area, parking the car and relaxing on the sand, taking in Cape Town's sights before continuing south as far as south goes. The road down there passes through the gorgeous little towns and fishing villages that make up this final section of the cape, places such as Kalk Bay, with its fish and chip shops, and Boulders Beach, with its colony of penguins, before eventually ending where Africa does, at the Cape of Good Hope.

The only way from here is north, back past Cape Town and into the famed Stellenbosch wine region, where a car is your ticket to the full gourmet experience, cruising the vine-studded valleys, sampling local wine, eating world-class cuisine, spending the night in boutique hotels or lodges in the hills.

The driving here is still easy. Your fellow drivers are still overly polite. It can take some getting used to.





Franschoek wine lands



Cape Town



Garden Route Road



Hout Bay

Cape of Good Hope



## BENCH SEES CONTINUING GROWTH



Kruger National Park

SOUTH Africa's tourism industry recorded double-digit growth from the Australian market last year, and 2017 looks like being equally successful according to specialist Bench Africa.

The company has reported a spike in interest in the Rainbow Nation this year, with bookings for its group tours almost double 2016 levels.

Bench Africa general manager Martin Edwards said the destination had "really taken off".

"South Africa especially is such a great value destination right now that Aussies are flocking over in their droves," Edwards said, citing a favourable exchange rate among key driving factors. "Availability is starting to become a bit scarce".

"The most significant trend we've noticed is on our scheduled group tours where we have seen a 96% increase in numbers of passengers travelling, compared to the previous year," he said.

The number of Australians visiting South Africa grew 10% to 109,146 in 2016, reaching six-figure levels for the first time. The first few months of this year have seen continued growth of around 5%, according to Statistics South Africa.

Bench Africa is promoting its "Grand Tour of South Africa", which is the company's bestselling group tour in South Africa. The 15-day small group tour visits the famous Kruger National Park as well as the Blyde River Canyon. There are also stops in Swaziland and Zululand, plus the Eastern Cape and the vibrant city of Cape Town. Prices start from \$4,045 per person.

## BREAKING BARRIERS AS TOURISM SURGES

TOURISM in South Africa is riding the crest of a wave, according to the country's President Jacob Zuma, and is out-pacing growth across the rest of the African continent. Arrivals in South Africa last year increased 12.8% to break through the 10 million barrier, including more than 100,000 visitors from Australia.

"We are happy with this growth because tourism has a substantial potential of changing people's lives for the better, especially during these depressed economic times globally," Zuma said at the recent INDABA travel exhibition.

"More than a billion people now travel around the world every year, and world international tourist arrivals grew by 4% on average (last year)," he said. "Africa enjoyed an 8% increase in international tourist arrivals to reach 58 million arrivals. This means that Africa is growing at twice the rate of the global average.

"It is indeed most encouraging that more and more world travellers are discovering our continent. It means they see its value as an exceptional destination for holidays and business events."



South Africa (photo Linda Loos)

His remarks were echoed by South African Airways' country manager for Australasia, Tim Clyde-Smith, who told *travelBulletin* the "wallaby route" from Australia was performing well, particularly within the leisure travel sector. "We're seeing great interest and patronage on our daily flights from Perth which fly overnight to Johannesburg. As well as offering competitive fares, we believe the value of the rand to the Aussie dollar is a real incentive to travellers. Our codeshare agreement with Virgin is certainly contributing

and the recent move by VA of all operations to Terminal 1 at Perth Airport means less transit time for passengers," he said.

"We're also benefiting from new Africa-dedicated sellers and specialists entering the Australian market. That too is raising the profile of South Africa and the rest of Africa as a strong travel choice," he said.

"These combined factors and the fact that many Aussies are putting a trip to Africa on their bucket list has us very positive about the rest of 2017 and into 2018."



# BOOST TO BLACK OWNERSHIP

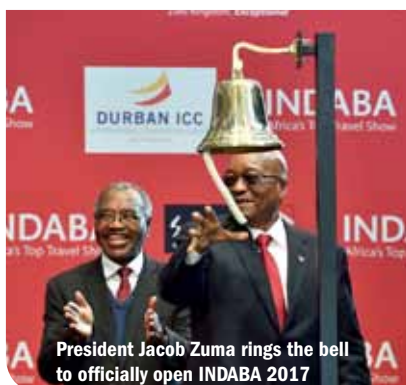
THE South African Government is aiming to boost the number of successful tourism businesses owned and operated by the country's black majority as part of an aggressive growth strategy.

At the recent INDABA travel show in Durban, South African President Jacob Zuma said economic transformation would help fuel growth in tourism, and that black entrepreneurs would be targeted to be leaders in growing new markets in Asia and the Middle East.

This would involve several programs run by South Africa Tourism, including participating in international trade shows, as part of the country's "radical economic transformation program".

"The radical economic transformation program seeks to correct the painful history of our country where the black majority was excluded from meaningful participation, ownership and control of the economy," Zuma said. "For the tourism industry, we are looking to achieve at least a 30% black ownership of the tourism industry currently."

Zuma said INDABA had involved 90 black-owned tourism businesses from all nine



President Jacob Zuma rings the bell to officially open INDABA 2017

provinces in South Africa, which he said offered authentically South African tourism products, services and experiences.

He said the country would also develop local tourism offerings in areas including "township tourism", rural tourism and homestays, which would also offer a diverse South African experience.

The measures were one element of a "five in five" tourism growth strategy, which involved an aggressive target of attracting five million more international arrivals and domestic tourists within the next five years.

## Supporting tourism

SOUTH Africa has begun promoting tourism at home as well as abroad, launching a new campaign that aims to raise awareness of the economic benefits visitors bring.

The 'I Do Tourism' initiative announced in May by South African Tourism is designed to address a lack of recognition among locals who in many communities remain detached from the benefits of tourism.

"The majority of South Africans remain unaware of how their lives are affected when international travellers decide to visit the country," said SA Tourism CEO Sisa Ntshona.

"This is precisely the attitude we hope to change through I Do Tourism," he said. "We aim to remind South Africans that tourism is everyone's business because all South Africans benefit through and from tourism."

The campaign also aims to motivate industry and government to support tourism. Visitors contribute 3% of South African economic activity and support around 500,000 jobs. "Tourism has a ripple effect, Ntshona said. "Each direct permanent tourism job opportunity that is created can have multiple spin-offs for transport, agriculture and other sectors."



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# There's more to INDONESIA than BALI



**Been to Bali? Think you know Indonesia? Think again. Christine Retschlag sails beyond Bali and discovers the remote east islands of Indonesia.**

**A**TROPICAL storm thunders like an angry Indonesian God outside, and the decks are drenched with Mother Nature's fury. But I am safe inside my top deck cabin aboard the traditional Indonesian sailing vessel *Al likai* or "*Queen of the Seas*". Among the plump pillows of my queen-sized room, and clad in batik sarong, I imagine I am a Balinese high priestess.

That's the pure bliss of sailing, pull up anchor and unleash your imagination as you drift towards the horizon, in this case the remote and romantic islands between Lombok and Timor.

And such flights of fancy are even easier to envisage when you are aboard a 37-metre

timber phinisi boat, carved in a style used by boat builders in this region for centuries, right down to the wooden pegs.

This nine-day journey, which departs Bali's Serangan Harbour, ambles along at a rate of eight knots along the Bali coastline, up the Lombok Strait to South Lombok and past Mount Rinjani, an active volcano renowned for her volatility.

Along the way we visit destinations such as Keramat, Moyo, Satonda, Mount Tembora and Wera, before arriving in Komodo National Park. And we snorkel so much we almost grow gills ourselves as we explore coral of every colour imaginable, meet the friendly fish faces of south-east Asia and glide with giant manta rays down Manta Alley.

When the dolphins aren't riding the wake of our boat, the sting rays are performing somersaults, seemingly for our enjoyment. Sea snakes, reef sharks and sea urchins... the warm waters between the Bali and Flores seas upon which we are travelling have these too.

Landlubbers will adore this journey as

well, as there are plenty of visits to charming villages such as Wera, where the women weave intricate patterns almost as bold as their betel-nut stained mouths themselves, and the men build traditional boats such as the one on which I find myself.

These are delicious days indeed, where we walk along shady paths to cool waterfalls where there are sturdy swing ropes hanging from trees, swim in volcanic craters filled with salt water, and sunbathe on white sand beaches.

There's grappa one morning at an Italian-run resort at Gili Asahan and lychee mojitos another afternoon as the sun sets over Gili Gede. Late afternoon off Gili Trawangan, we swim with the green turtles who seem to be sashaying to the beat of Bob Marley playing from a bar somewhere onshore.

And after almost eight days of sailing, we arrive at Rinca, home to half of Indonesia's population of 3,000 komodo dragons where these lizards lay languidly in the morning sun.

Australians adore Bali, but few of us venture beyond its hedonistic shores and if we do, we tend to stop at Lombok. *Al*





Images credit: Jody Poison

‘We snorkel so much we almost grow gills ourselves as we explore coral of every colour imaginable..and glide with giant manta rays...’

*likai's* Australian-born owner Amanda Zsebik is passionate about delivering an authentic experience which showcases more of Indonesia.

“I just want to take people out of Bali and to see that Indonesia is not Bali... particularly Australians,” she says.

“I want people to say ‘it is a beautiful country’. It’s got 18,000 islands.

“This is the only trip of its kind in Indonesia. It is a very nurturing boat.”

On this journey you will travel some 350 nautical miles and sail for more than 50

hours in total to the south-east islands which are known collectively as Nusa Tenggara.

Home to a staggering 300 Indonesian dialects, this is also the country’s poorest region where only around 4% of the population lives, due to its more harsh, dry climate.

But this is also what makes it so special as these are resilient people who welcome strangers into their villages for glimpses of what more traditional Indonesian life is all about.

Life on board *Al likai* is equally as colourful. The boat accommodates a maximum of 16 guests in five queen-sized bedrooms which are all air-conditioned with ensuite bathrooms, plus a bunk room with double bed, three single bunks and an ensuite.

There’s a crew of 12, who, apart from the talented Balinese chef, come from the more remote islands of Indonesia such as Flores and Sulawesi which are renowned for their superb sailors, great boat builders and the odd pirate or two.

Not that you’ll encounter too many skulls and cross bones on this journey through the largely calm, clear waters

of Indonesia. When the sailing does become occasionally rough, the competent crew are adept at finding protected coves in which to anchor the boat.

Along the way you’ll dine on traditional Indonesian delights such as beef rending, chicken laksa and gado gado. There’s juicy tropical mangos and papaya for dessert and the Bintang is always cold.

This is a journey befitting the *Queen of the Seas*, and even the odd high priestess or two.



## STAR CLIPPERS VENTURES TO INDONESIA



A NEW player appeared on the white sandy shores of Indonesia in May, with Star Clippers introducing sailings from Bali on the 170-passenger *Star Clipper*.

*Star Clipper* will sail east or west from Bali, operating a total of 19 departures of seven-, 10-, 11- and 14-night tall ship “mega-yacht” experiences through until October.

Passengers will visit untouched beach paradises, some of which are inaccessible to larger vessels, with the itinerary including Gili Kondo, Komodo National Park, Pink Beach, Satonda Island, Gili Meno, Gili Trawangan and Gili Nanggu.

A highlight of the itinerary is a walk in the company of a professionally trained park ranger in Komodo National Park. Passengers will embark on a short or medium trail to see the island’s famous dragons – which grow up to 3m in length and weigh as much as 150kg.

Guests will also get the chance to explore Java – Indonesia’s fifth-largest island and home to 121 volcanoes, national parks, rainforests, and tea and rice plantations.

## New villas for Plataran Menjangan

ECO-TOURISM destination Plataran Menjangan Resort & Spa, a tranquil hideout within West Bali National Park has recently added two new categories of villas.

Six new one-bedroom Forest Villas are now open for bookings, along with two two-bedroom Forest Villas. Guests staying in the 84m<sup>2</sup> Forest Villas can soak in a deep stone bathtub in the outside bathroom or unwind with a book on the outdoor terrace.

The spacious 174m<sup>2</sup> two-bedroom Forest Villas are designed for family retreats, offering a separate living area, outdoor bathroom and a spacious outdoor terrace.

Plataran Menjangan Resort & Spa lies within Plataran L’Harmonie – West Bali National Park, an integrated eco-development area ideal for the traveller who wants to be immersed in nature and luxury. Famous for its well-preserved ecosystems, West Bali National Park is a home to many species of animals such as deer, monkeys, pheasants and the endangered bird, the Bali Starling.

## INDONESIA-AUST ROUTES SPREAD THEIR WINGS

TIGERAIR Australia may have pulled out of Bali, but many airlines have since upped their game to fill the gap.

Jetstar Group recently signed a wide-ranging Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indonesia’s Ministry of Tourism, which aims to “deepen cooperation on tourism and promote growth in international tourism to Indonesia”.

“Our MOU with Jetstar will help us reach a target of 1.8 million tourists from Australia to Indonesia,” Vinsensius Jemadu, director for Asia Pacific Tourism Promotion, Ministry of Tourism Republic of Indonesia said.

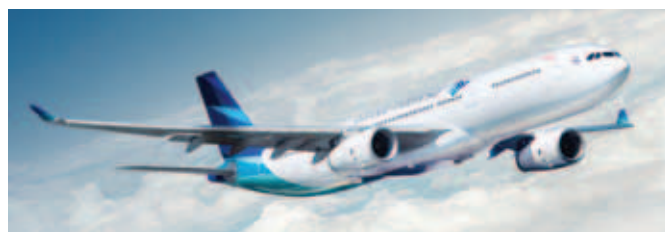
Indonesian airlines also have the market firmly in their sights, with several carriers bulking up frequency and eyeing off new routes.

Full-service airline Batik Air’s first Australian route – double daily services between Perth and Denpasar – took to the skies last month, targeting both inbound and outbound traffic.

“Perth is the most favourite destination in Australia for Indonesians, and we are very happy that we can fly directly to Perth from Denpasar,” said Batik Air CEO Captain Achmad Luthfie.

“We are planning to fly to more destinations in Australia,” he said.

MEANWHILE, Malindo Air has revealed it will add Melbourne-Denpasar-Kuala Lumpur services by the end of the year, on the back of



strong performance of its new Brisbane-Denpasar-Kuala Lumpur route.

Malindo Air CEO Chandran Rama Muthy said Australia was a key part of the airline’s network plan, noting Sydney was on the radar.

Garuda Indonesia has also bulked up its capacity to Australia, targeting passenger growth in the aviation sector to reach 650,000 passengers this year. During the May - October 2017 holiday season the carrier is offering extra departures on its services from Jakarta to Sydney, Melbourne and Perth and bumped up flights from Bali to Sydney, Melbourne and Perth as well.

The national airline said the new frequencies were in line with the high market demand to Australia and would accommodate increased traffic between Indonesia and Australia, along with providing more options and convenience for service users.



# INDONESIA'S DIVERSITY HIGHLIGHTED

WONDERFUL Indonesia, the country's tourism brand, is working to introduce Australians to other destinations within Bali, enticing them out of the usual hubs and into the lesser-known, more diverse locations.

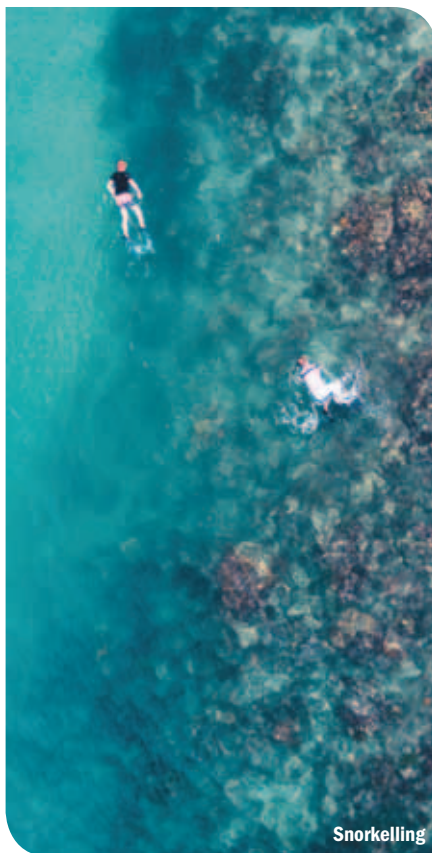
"Australia has a long-term love affair with Bali, however there are many Australians who will never go to Bali because of the perception that it has in many Australian minds that it is only for young people who are partying," Visit Indonesia Tourism Office's Australia country manager Miriam Tulevski told *travelBulletin*.

"What these Australians are missing out on is a destination that is close to Australia, that was warm, it is relatively inexpensive compared to longer-haul trips and if people enjoy warm weather, there is something for everyone."

Tulevski highlighted three areas where Australian agents could send their clients to explore.

## SANUR

Sanur is one of the quieter areas in Bali, offering a seaside village with a 10km path that hugs the beach. Tulevski said the path is perfect for a scenic cycle, jog or stroll and offers plenty of opportunities to stop at a café or restaurant along the way. A new option in Sanur is the Good Indonesian Food Tour's Sanur Foodie Cycling Tour. The 3.5km morning cycling adventure packs in six types of Balinese culinary offerings and covers the local culture and lifestyle.



Snorkelling

## LOMBOK

Lombok is fly and flop destination, which Tulevski describes as "suitable for people who really want to get away from it all". The tropical and lush island has spectacular

beaches, good Indonesian food and the opportunity for diving or trekking. A 25-minute flight from Denpasar, or the choice of a one-hour or three-hour ferry from Padang Bai, the destination offers simple accommodation, along with a couple of chain hotels and luxury boutiques. This year the Lombok Elephant Park opened, claiming the title for the first conservation institution in east Indonesia. The park's main purpose is conservation and it features over 18 animal exhibits spread across 3.5 hectares of jungle.

## FLORES ISLAND

Flores is an undeveloped island in East Nusa Tenggara Province in Indonesia featuring spectacular land and seascapes. Tulevski recommends the island for couples seeking romance, friends seeking adventure and families seeking gentle walks, snorkelling and sailing. From Flores it is possible to hop on a traditional Indonesian sailing ship, a phinisi schooner, or a yacht to visit Komodo Islands to see the dragons.

Wonderful Indonesia is working to highlight these destinations and more to the trade with a sales mission visiting Sydney and Brisbane in early July.

"The challenge for us, promoting Indonesia and for the trade selling Indonesia to Australians is that Indonesia is so diverse – 34 different provinces and they are all quite different," Tulevski said. "Indonesia is almost 30-odd different destinations in one."

## Twin hotels offer a temple gateway

ACCORHOTELS has expanded in the Javanese city of Yogyakarta, opening twin hotels in a shared location.

The Grand Mercure Yogyakarta Adi Sucipto and ibis Yogyakarta Adi Sucipto made their debut in May and are positioned to serve visitors to sites including the world heritage-listed temple of Borobudur, one of Indonesia's greatest ancient landmarks.

Located close to the city centre and its Sultan's Palace, the properties are integrated with shared facilities including a swimming pool, meeting rooms and a fitness centre.

The Grand Mercure has 305 rooms and has been designed in a style that evokes Borobudur through elements including mosaics and ornaments. It offers an executive lounge for business travellers, dining at Purple Restaurant and a grand ballroom for up to 700 people.

The adjacent ibis Yogyakarta Adi Sucipto provides an economy option with 144 rooms, dining at ibis Kitchen Wok and a 24-hour bar that also serves light meals.



Temple of Borobudur

## SUDOKU

MEDIUM

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			1	2		5		
5				9		7	6	

© Web Sudoku

## Where in the World?



THERE are many famous mountains in the world, from Everest to Kilimanjaro. But where is this one? If you think you know, send your answer to [comp@travelbulletin.com.au](mailto:comp@travelbulletin.com.au). The first person to answer correctly will win themselves a double movie pass. Good luck!

## UNUSUAL EXPERIENCES

EVERYONE remembers playing in playgrounds as a kid and loving the swingset. Well now adults too can enjoy a grown-up swingset in New Zealand.

The Nevis Swing, run by AJ Hackett Bungy New Zealand, is one of the most famous in the whole world. Located above a canyon, you are lifted out above the launch deck suspended 160m from the ground, and then released, hurtling towards the other side of the valley. The swing can reach up to 120km/h, so it's not for the faint-hearted.

It has a 300m arc and a 120m rope length (which is longer than a rugby field), and allows either one or two people to ride the swing at the same time.

There are a multitude of options that the adventurous can try, including swinging forwards, backwards, back-to-back with a friend, one upside down and the other the right way up and many more.

The Nevis Swing is located on private land and only accessible by AJ Hackett's own 4WD

buses. The adventure lasts around four hours round trip.

Adventure doesn't necessarily come cheap, with adults costing \$195 for the swing. That said, can you really put a price on the experience of a lifetime?

See [www.bungy.co.nz/the-nevis/the-nevis-swing](http://www.bungy.co.nz/the-nevis/the-nevis-swing) for more details.



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– Confucius

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Sujata Raman is Regional Managing Director of A&K Australia Asia Pacific, a position she has held for over a decade. Passionate about seeing the world and experiencing its cultures, Sujata has lived on three continents and visited all seven over many years. Having travelled extensively in China, and more recently returned from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, Sujata's deep fascination with the history, cultures and cities along the ancient trade routes of Central Asia has inspired further exploration along the Silk Road.

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*Crescent Lake, Dunhuang, China*

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