

# travelBulletin

MARCH 2017



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# travelBulletin

MARCH 2017

EUROPE

SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

SMALL GROUP TOURING

MAURITIUS

DRIVE

## SCREEN SENSATIONS

Why the big screen and travel marketing go hand in hand



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Aug & Nov 2017

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Sep 2017

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Oct & Nov 2017

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Nov 2017

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Sep 2017

### CHINA 'The Ancient Silk Road'

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\*Terms and Conditions: You must be a Qantas Frequent Flyer member to earn Qantas Points. A joining fee may apply. Membership and Qantas Points are subject to the Qantas Frequent Flyer Terms and Conditions, available at [qantas.com/terms](http://qantas.com/terms). Qantas Frequent Flyer members can earn 1 Qantas Point per AU\$1 spent on any Hosted Small Group Journey itineraries created by Abercrombie & Kent Australia Pty Ltd of seven nights or more, booked before 31 August 2017. Excludes flights. Qantas Points shall be awarded to you based upon the final amount spent on the Hosted Small Group Journey. Not valid for existing bookings or quotes.

FREQUENT  
FLYER 

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## From the publisher

### Bruce Piper

HOW low can they go? Much has been made in recent months of the bargain international airfares currently available, as carriers continue to pile on capacity into the Australian market. Every week it seems there's a new sale, and while consumers are clearly the winners, some in the industry are warning that the clearly unsustainable and irrational pricing behaviour must surely lead to a correction.

Last month a number of agents contacted me about a Xiamen Airlines economy class fare from Sydney/Melbourne to China, where the nett price was just \$8 return. That's not a typo – the carrier was charging just \$8 to take someone to China and back. Of course there was a fuel surcharge which more than doubled the fare to a whopping \$18.60 – and then those pesky Passenger Movement Charges and airport fees which boosted the price to a total of \$434. Return from Australia to China! And that wasn't just to a Xiamen Airlines long-haul port – the fare included domestic add-ons taking passengers to 23 different ports within China.

That's just one example, but there are plenty of others. China Eastern last month took the unprecedented step of offering a "buy one get one free" fare for Australian passengers – and not just to China but right across its network to North America and Europe. Business class fares to North and South America are now regularly offered for not much more than \$4,000, and one agent highlighted a British Airways economy fare from London Heathrow to Sydney which cost his client just £203. When you consider that travel agents are trying to earn a living from the small commission payable on these fares it is clear that there's just not enough money in it to pay for a cup of coffee, let alone run a business.

The minuscule margins in dollar terms mean analysts are well advised to give little credence to TTV figures. Travel businesses which have large turnovers sometimes tout their overall revenue as an indicator of increasing market share and business activity – but there's no point in having a large TTV if you're effectively losing money on every transaction. The same goes for airlines – they have lots of seats to fill, but at prices like these the yields must be practically non-existent. And amidst all that capacity continues to grow – for example, Singapore Airlines plans to boost its Sydney frequencies to five daily in the coming months!

As they say in the classics, "something's got to give". Losing money on every ticket is not a sustainable way to run a business. Let's hope that things start to come down to earth soon – with a soft landing rather than a crash.

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## Ian McMahon's perspective

### FAR-REACHING RAMIFICATIONS

NO SOONER had I switched off my PC, tidied my desk and headed off for my Christmas-New Year holiday break than the High Court handed down its decision in the long-running legal stoush between Flight Centre and the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission.

The decision likely gave Flight Centre boss Graham Turner indigestion as he tackled his Christmas pud, for the learned judges found in favour of the ACCC.

They accepted the regulator's contention that Flight Centre competes with its airline partners. So it breached retail price maintenance laws when it threatened to stop selling airlines which did not give it access to their cheapest fares.

After six years of conflicting decisions as proceedings wended their leisurely and expensive way via the full bench of the Federal Court to the High Court, we now know this: it is illegal for agents to take action against airlines offering fares on their websites that undercut the fares they make available to agents.

Returning from holidays and an indigestion-free double serving of Christmas pud, I can see one great advantage of this ruling. Airlines and other principals may not now feel the need to be quite so gushing in their often mendacious and hypocritical claims of support for travel agents.

I have longed for the day when an airline representative would address a travel agent conference thus: "Dear valued partners if we feel like using our website to undercut your fares we bloody well will." Especially as they can now add: "And there's nothing you can do to stop us!"

I don't anticipate that happening any day soon (sigh). But I do think that the High Court verdict will indeed have, as I suggested last August, far-reaching implications for travel retailing in Australia and, potentially, around the world.

In August I quoted Clayton Utz partner Michael Corrigan saying the ACCC may be alone in the world in trying to apply cartel laws to parity pricing arrangements. He predicted "very significant" consequences for agency arrangements if the commission succeeded. Well, it has succeeded!

So there should be all sorts of fall-out for all sorts of implicit and explicit deals between suppliers and retailers. Vineyard "cellar door" pricing springs to mind.

More germane to the travel industry are arrangements between online travel agents and hoteliers. Is Graham Turner correct in his claim that the ACCC has given a green light to Expedia and Booking.com preventing hotels from undercutting the OTAs' rates? If so, it is puzzling to say the least. A legal minefield may lie ahead.

### New NRMA domestic strategy

LAST month motoring group NRMA confirmed a switch in strategy, with an enhanced focus on growing domestic tourism behind the acquisition of holiday park operator Australian Tourist Park Management (ATPM). The organisations were already closely aligned, with ATPM managing four parks on behalf of the NRMA. The purchase sees the NRMA portfolio increase to 34 properties across Australia, including Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort and Ningaloo Reef Resort in Western Australia, which ATPM manages on behalf of RACWA.

NRMA said the purchase would complement its other domestic tourism investments such as Thrifty Car Rental, Travelodge Hotels and Canberra's Kurrajong Hotel. "The driving holiday is an experience that all generations of Australians can relate to, and the breadth of holiday parks under ATPM management, combined with NRMA's own portfolio, will ensure that this experience is accessible to thousands of Australian and international holidaymakers each year," said NRMA executive general manager of travel and tourism, Paul Davies. He said the organisation was committed to delivering excellent regional accommodation, as well as boosting local jobs and economic activity.

### Helloworld cruise boost

THE acquisition of Cruise Marketing Group by Helloworld will see the company's wholesale division expand, with HLO executive director Cinzia Burnes insisting the new businesses will complement the existing The Cruise Team wholesale operation. Cruise Marketing Group owners Fred Sparksman and John Simos will share just over \$1 million in proceeds, along with Peter Topping, who owns just under

## BUSINESS MONITOR

### OUTBOUND MARKET

Top 10 destinations, December 2016

Destination	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Nov 16/ Dec 16	Trend Dec 15/ Dec 16
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	111.7	111.9	184.7	-0.1	+2.3
Indonesia	98.4	98.8	103.5	-1.1	-1.0
USA	86.9	79.7	101.0	-1.3	+0.7
UK	50.7	54.8	70.8	+2.0	-1.9
India	27.8	28.5	63.9	+0.8	+9.7
China	39.3	39.7	49.3	+1.0	+7.4
Thailand	41.8	42.3	48.9	-0.9	-5.8
Japan	31.6	30.6	43.9	+0.9	+9.3
Singapore	31.7	31.8	40.0	-0.6	+3.8
Fiji	30.5	30.5	34.2	+1.2	+2.3
All outbound	823.8	828.3	1,127.9	-0.3	+1.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

### INBOUND MARKET

Top 10 sources, December 2016

Source	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Nov 16/ Dec 16	Trend Dec 15/ Dec 16
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	112.3	112.1	128.5	-0.5	+2.4
UK	59.4	60.4	116.8	+0.1	+1.1
China	105.3	104.2	98.8	+0.7	+7.6
USA	61.8	61.5	87.8	-0.2	+12.0
Singapore	36.1	35.8	57.9	-0.5	+4.4
Malaysia	33.1	31.2	43.2	-1.3	+13.9
Japan	35.7	35.8	42.0	+0.9	+13.8
Hong Kong	21.3	22.3	32.5	+0.9	+9.3
South Korea	24.6	23.8	30.4	-0.1	+10.5
India	23.3	23.1	29.5	+0.7	+19.9
All inbound	708.2	706.9	971.8	+0.2	+8.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

### MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

Top 10 domestic city pairs at December 2016

City pair	Passengers YE Dec 15 (000)	Passengers YE Dec 16 (000)	% change
Melbourne-Sydney	8,613.4	8,904.6	+3.4
Brisbane-Sydney	4,476.2	4,658.3	+4.1
Brisbane-Melbourne	3,353.8	3,493.3	+4.2
Gold Coast-Sydney	2,618.3	2,704.4	+3.3
Adelaide-Melbourne	2,311.0	2,393.6	+3.6
Melbourne-Perth	2,138.9	2,073.2	-3.1
Gold Coast-Melbourne	1,812.3	1,966.1	+8.5
Adelaide-Sydney	1,831.5	1,872.0	+2.2
Perth-Sydney	1,761.0	1,753.7	-0.4
Hobart-Melbourne	1,493.3	1,555.5	+4.2

Source: BITRE

5% of Cruise Factory which was also part of the deal. Cruise Marketing Group's brands include Seven Oceans Cruising and Cruise Abroad, as well as the Worldwide Cruise Centres network which comprises about 120 affiliated travel agencies across the country.

The Travel Corporation is certain to make hay from the announcement, with expectations the company will promote its Creative Cruising brand as "Australia's only independent cruise wholesaler," targeting Worldwide Cruise Centre members and other agents who don't wish to buy through Helloworld. There's speculation that Express Travel Group is also likely to switch allegiances, with Cruise Marketing Group currently powering its Express Cruise offering. However Burnes clearly believes the deal will be beneficial for Helloworld. "These companies bring a depth of management and an experienced pool of staff to the Helloworld business, and the existing management will continue to be involved going forward," she promised.

### Magellan keeps AJT land content

TASMANIA'S Andrew Jones Travel is now part of Corporate Travel Management, with the \$5.6 million acquisition of the business finalised early last month. Andrew Jones himself is remaining chairman of Magellan, the group he co-founded, and while the deal will certainly affect Magellan's overall TTV, the impact will not be as great as it seemed at first glance because it has now been confirmed that Andrew Jones Travel will continue to participate in the Magellan land supply buying program. Magellan CEO Andrew Macfarlane said he was thrilled that the partnership with Andrew Jones Travel, as part of CTM, would continue. "I am very optimistic that we will continue to

## #TTCSAILINGREGATTA GETS SOCIAL



THEY may not be the best sailors, but the team from AAT Kings certainly made up for it in terms of marketing during the recent Travel Corporation Sailing Regatta which took place on Sydney Harbour last month. Key industry partners took part in the annual event, with a flotilla of yachts enjoying a stunning afternoon on the water. While Adventure World took out the trophy for the second year running, the AAT Kings crew – including newly appointed MD Hans Belle (pictured left) – won a prize for the best social media performance during the afternoon. While other groups made Instagram posts using the #ttcsailingregatta hashtag, AAT Kings took it to another level by live streaming the race on Facebook – leading to lots of shares, likes and engagement.

forge strong and mutually beneficial industry partnerships such as the one we have with AJT and CTM," he enthused.

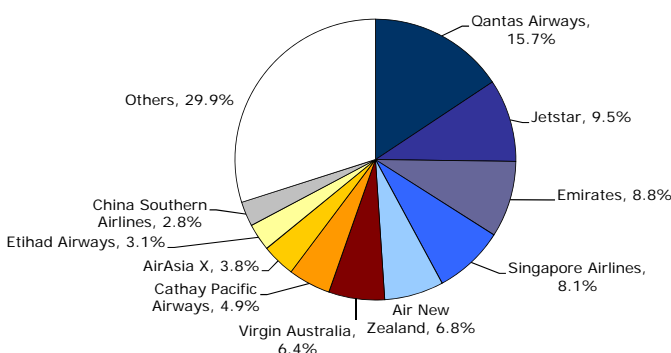
And while Andrew Jones Travel is no longer a member of Magellan, Macfarlane stressed that the group's growth trajectory was continuing. He flagged the addition of six new agencies in the coming months, with

the first of those being former Helloworld member Maxim's Travel, which specialises in the corporate market. Magellan Corporate national manager Scott Darlow said the addition of Maxim's "further vindicates the decision we made to provide additional value-adds, services and support specifically to the corporate travel management sector".

### BUSINESS MONITOR

#### INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

International passengers by major airline – year ended November 2016



Source: BITRE

#### DOMESTIC AIR MARKET – December 2016

	Dec 15	Dec 16	Growth (%)	Yr to Dec 15	Yr to Dec 16	Growth (%)
Total pax carried	5.05m	5.14m	+1.7	57.51m	58.93m	+2.5
Revenue pax kms (RPK)	6.01bn	6.11bn	+1.7	67.85bn	69.33bn	+2.2
Avail seat kms (ASK)	7.69bn	7.70bn	+0.2	88.67bn	89.06bn	+0.4
Load factor (%)	79.2	79.4	+1.2*	6.5	77.8	+1.3*
Aircraft trips (000)	53.1	53.3	+0.4	634.5	638.9	+0.7

Source: BITRE \* Percentage points difference

#### DOMESTIC ON TIME PERFORMANCE – January 2017

	Arrivals on Time		Departures on Time		Cancellations	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jetstar	6,816	81.2	6,412	76.4	83	1.0
Qantas	7,796	91.7	7,777	91.5	45	0.5
QantasLink	8,354	86.1	8,406	86.6	219	2.2
REX	4,881	89.2	5,040	92.1	9	0.2
Virgin Australia	10,458	91.6	10,465	91.7	108	0.9
All Airlines	40,799	87.6	40,569	87.2	514	1.1

Source: BITRE

## Qantas takes aim at SMEs

THE Qantas Aquire loyalty program has morphed into the new Qantas Business Rewards scheme, as the carrier continued its strong focus on attracting corporate business. Under the revamped program there are three tiers of membership, and businesses can earn Qantas Points from the first dollar of spend. The scheme also formalises a discount structure, with top level member companies offered 8% off the base price of selected airfares, and 2% on some Red e-Deals. As with Aquire the program continues to offer earning with a range of land-based partners, including a new agreement with Jaguar Land Rover for vehicle purchases, as well as a fuel pact with Caltex.

Travel agents have been closely involved with the rollout of the new scheme, with the carrier conducting information webinars in conjunction with the launch, and some agencies offering value-adds such as bonus travel passes and Qantas Club membership for new top tier Qantas Business Rewards members. Qantas CEO Alan Joyce said the scheme was “another reason for businesses to choose Qantas, on top of the network reach, reliability and level of service we offer”.

## Tigerair pulls out of Bali

VIRGIN Australia’s strategy to direct its low-cost Tigerair Australia offshoot to lower-yielding leisure routes hit a significant speed bump last month after a dispute with Indonesian authorities ultimately led to a decision to withdraw Tigerair from the Australia-Bali market. Announced with a fanfare about 18 months ago, the services involved rebranding existing Virgin Australia 737 aircraft, with Tigerair also utilising

existing capacity allocations on the Indonesia route previously held by VA. The services operated from Adelaide, Perth and Melbourne to Bali – but a regulatory glitch saw the flights suddenly stalled in January as negotiations were undertaken regarding an issue with the Tigerair AOC.

At issue was apparently the status of the services as charters, rather than regular scheduled flights which restricted the sale of one-way tickets. According to Tigerair Australia, a regulatory solution proposed by Indonesian authorities would have taken at least six months to implement, and would compromise its ability to offer budget airfares to travellers. “Providing a reliable, low-cost service is critical for Tigerair Australia and our customers, and therefore our only option is to withdraw from Bali flying altogether,” concluded the carrier’s CEO Rob Sharp.

## Marriott continues Australian focus

MARRIOTT International is promising to shake up Melbourne’s hospitality scene, with the planned debut of its funky W Hotels brand in the Victorian capital in 2020. To be constructed as part of a mixed use development in Collins Street, the property will comprise 294 rooms and suites, along with 1,200 square metres of event and meeting space. It will be the second W Hotel in Australia after the forthcoming W Brisbane, which is also under development in Queensland and is earmarked for opening next year.

W Hotels Worldwide global brand leader Anthony Ingham said “Melbourne, with its vibrant music, emerging fashion and bold street art, is a destination made for the W brand. Located in the epicentre of the city,

W Melbourne will embody the city’s creative spirit while showcasing the brand’s bold and energetic take on luxury,” he said. The new W Brisbane and Melbourne properties aren’t, however, the first time the brand has attempted to launch here, with the Ovolo Hotel in Sydney’s Woolloomooloo also originally operating as the W Sydney in the early 2000s before switching to the Taj Blue in 2006 and then becoming the Ovolo in 2014.

## Streaming in the sky

QANTAS is certainly confident about the bandwidth it will be able to offer customers through the National Broadband Network, with confirmation that in-flight content will be able to be streamed from suppliers such as Netflix, Foxtel and Spotify. The new system has already begun its rollout on its first domestic aircraft, with the remainder of the domestic 737 and A330 fleet to follow from the middle of the year. The “Sky Muster” satellite service, which is powering the offering, is claimed to offer speeds up to ten times faster than conventional in-flight wi-fi via 101 “spot beams” across the country.

Under partnerships announced last month free access will be offered to Qantas customers by the various services, with Foxtel providing three days of free access to its app every time a customer flies. Netflix will offer its customary 30-day trial to new customers, while existing members will be able to log in to continue watching at no additional charge. And Spotify is also giving a 30-day free trial of its ad-free Premium service to Qantas passengers. An in-flight web portal will also provide real-time flight data; hotel, restaurant and transport options; the latest weather; and “personalised information linked to your itinerary and Frequent Flyer account”.

## BUSINESS MONITOR

### INTERNET AGENCY MARKET SHARES

Jan 2017, compared with Dec 2016

Rank Position	Visits Share	Relative Diff	Rank
Websites	Jan 17	Jan to Dec	Dec 16
Webjet Australia	15.71	-4.11	1
Expedia Australia	12.17	+9.01	2
Skyscanner Australia	9.06	+2.73	3
Wotif.com	7.21	-14.31	4
Flight Centre	6.53	-3.56	5
Velocity Frequent Flyer	2.90	-22.23	6
Luxury Escapes	2.58	+0.68	8
Lastminute.com.au	2.40	-17.08	7
Cheap Flights Aus & NZ	2.09	-4.89	9
I Want That Flight!	1.49	+21.60	10

Source: Hitwise, a division of Connexity

### INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs [at November 2016]

City pair	Passengers	Passengers	% of	% change
	YE Nov 15	YE Nov 16	total	15/16
Auckland-Sydney	1,536,279	1,604,874	4.3	+4.5
Singapore-Sydney	1,453,133	1,451,042	3.9	-0.1
Singapore-Melbourne	1,200,244	1,351,258	3.6	+12.6
Auckland-Melbourne	1,140,905	1,183,510	3.2	+3.7
Singapore-Perth	1,054,707	1,118,803	3.0	+6.1
Hong Kong-Sydney	971,763	1,074,344	2.9	+10.6
Auckland-Brisbane	963,152	961,663	2.6	-0.2
Los Angeles-Sydney	904,502	911,137	2.4	+0.7
Denpasar-Perth	865,537	897,355	2.4	+3.7
Kuala Lumpur-Melb	832,458	826,007	2.2	-0.8
Top 10 city pairs	10,992,680	11,379,993	30.4	+4.2
Other city pairs	23,675,925	26,006,540	69.6	+9.8
ALL CITY PAIRS	34,598,605	37,386,533	100.0	+8.1

Source: BITRE

### SHARE PRICES

at 21 February 2017

Flight Centre (FLT)	\$30.20
Helloworld (HLO)	\$3.94
Webjet (WEB)	\$11.51
Qantas (QAN)	\$3.48
Virgin Australia (VAH)	\$0.19
Ardent Leisure (AAD)	\$2.18
Air New Zealand (AIZ)	\$1.98
Auckland International Airport (AIA)	\$6.52
Sydney Airport (SYD)	\$5.99
Corporate Travel Management (CTD)	\$17.17
Cover-More Insurance (CVO)	\$1.92
Regional Express (REX)	\$0.84
Sealink (SLK)	\$4.13
Mantra Group Limited (MTR)	\$2.83



## COLLETTE CHIEF IN TOWN



DAN Sullivan III, president and CEO of Rhode Island-based Collette Tours, headed down under last month as the company continued its second year of sales operations in Australia. Sullivan, who's **pictured above** with marketing manager James Hewlett and head of international business, Christian Leibl-Cote, said Australia was the fastest-growing market for Collette, which is continuing to expand its local sales force. Leibl-Cote told *travelBulletin* Collette was seeing demand across the board, with Canada and Japan particularly strong as well as Europe and North America.

## Travel Daily HEADLINES

- 18 Jan** *Radiance* White Bay shift
- 18 Jan** Airport option in doubt
- 19 Jan** Jetstar adds Ho Chi Minh
- 19 Jan** Airline ancillary fee clarity
- 20 Jan** Langham PI into Australia
- 20 Jan** Tiger set for Bali return
- 23 Jan** NTIA nominations open
- 23 Jan** Webjet sucks up to trade
- 24 Jan** FC 'virtual contact centre'
- 24 Jan** AFTA acts on All Leisure
- 25 Jan** Hogan, Rigney leaving EY
- 25 Jan** North Star to True North
- 27 Jan** Travel leaders honoured
- 30 Jan** QF/AA to reapply to DOT
- 30 Jan** Aussies hit by Trump ban
- 31 Jan** Spendless 'scamming' pax
- 01 Feb** WA backs PER/LHR route
- 02 Feb** QF ramps up 3K c'share
- 02 Feb** Etihad and LH extend links
- 03 Feb** Tiger ends Bali service permanently
- 03 Feb** W Melbourne confirmed
- 03 Feb** Virgin profits in descent
- 06 Feb** TTC invests in e-learning
- 06 Feb** Crown faces class action
- 07 Feb** New insurer targets biz
- 08 Feb** Travelpoort eyes China rail
- 09 Feb** Govt urges ACCC rethink
- 10 Feb** AHA threatens boycott
- 10 Feb** Aust tourism to hit \$162b
- 13 Feb** Cover-More margins up
- 13 Feb** Magellan growth promise
- 14 Feb** Travel advertising surge
- 14 Feb** SeaLink H1 profits up 56%
- 15 Feb** Helloworld \$1m cruise buy
- 15 Feb** NRMA expands dom tourism ops
- 15 Feb** Netflix, Foxtel on Qantas
- 16 Feb** Operator targets 45+ solos
- 16 Feb** SYD earnings reach \$1.1b
- 17 Feb** VA, HNA Aviation alliance revealed
- 17 Feb** Virgin takes domestic hit
- 17 Feb** Mantra profits up by 15%
- 20 Feb** Badgerys 'regional' push
- 20 Feb** Uniworld's 2018 out early

## Norwegian Star loses power

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line experienced a bout of unfortunate publicity last month when its *Norwegian Star* experienced propulsion problems while cruising in Australian waters. The ship was en route from Melbourne on a trans-Tasman cruise when it lost power – but fortunately for passengers all on-board systems continued operating, and they could continue to enjoy the shipboard amenities.

The ship was towed about 30km back to Melbourne for repairs, meaning the itinerary missed a number of New Zealand calls, and once seaworthy again *Star* set off directly for Auckland to resume its next voyage.

Most of those on board took the incident in their stride – and welcomed Norwegian's generous offer of a 100% credit on the current voyage plus a 50% discount on a future booking. The line also offered flight credits for those who wanted to leave from Melbourne.

### AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS

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

Airport	Passengers YE Nov 15	Passengers YE Nov 16	% of total	% change 16/15
Sydney	13,802,217	15,031,813	40.2	+8.9
Melbourne	8,754,160	9,564,120	25.6	+9.3
Brisbane	5,210,848	5,433,987	14.5	+4.3
Perth	4,185,090	4,359,370	11.7	+4.2
Gold Coast	930,514	1,087,686	2.9	+16.9
Adelaide	880,073	910,819	2.4	+3.5
Cairns	534,167	634,819	1.7	+18.8
Darwin	265,372	268,264	0.7	+1.1
Townsville <sup>A</sup>	7,573	41,196	0.1	444.0
Sunshine Coast <sup>*</sup>	12,261	18,843	0.1	+53.7
Canberra <sup>~</sup>	n/a	16,867	0.0	n/a
Norfolk Island	11,733	10,072	0.0	-14.2
Port Hedland <sup>~</sup>	4,597	8,677	0.0	88.8
All Airports	34,598,605	37,386,533	100.0	+8.1

<sup>A</sup>Scheduled services recommenced September 2015 <sup>\*</sup>Seasonal services only  
<sup>~</sup>Scheduled services recommenced September 2016 –Scheduled services recommenced April 2015

### ATAS ACCREDITED LOCATIONS

at 20 Jan 2017

New South Wales	993
Victoria	711
Queensland	596
Western Australia	292
South Australia	227
Australian Capital Territory	49
Tasmania	41
ACT	49
Northern Territory	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,931</b>

Got something to say?

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

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## Steve Jones' Say

SO DONALD Trump has thrown the world into confusion and divided us even further, as he promised he would. He didn't use that particular terminology, of course. But that was always going to be the consequence of his policies. And so it proved.

But this isn't a political rant. There's been enough of that. It doesn't need an Australian travel trade magazine to join the chorus of global disapproval, however tempting that may be for this particular columnist.

Looking at it purely from a leisure travel perspective, the concern for the industry must be the potential impact Trump's actions may have on tourist travel to the US.

Whatever you think of him, whether you find his approach abhorrent, or whether you buy into his rhetoric to Make America Great Again – and let's not forget there are tens of millions of people who do – it's fair to say he has not exactly laid out the welcome mat.

Do we really want to visit and spend our money with such a reluctant host?

How Visit USA, the state representation

‘Do you really want to visit and spend money with such a reluctant host?’

firms and the many operators and wholesalers who sell tours to the US, must wince at the reputational damage the country has suffered, and fret over its impact on arrivals. The question they will be pondering is whether it will dampen the desire of Australians to travel across the Pacific. Will people make a political and moral statement and avoid the US as a holiday destination?

It would be easy to say yes, and the widespread condemnation would suggest that will be the case. But I just can't see it.

For starters, we all have short memories. Remember the outpouring of emotion in the immediate aftermath of the Bali executions? There was talk of a travel boycott to Indonesia, Bali in particular. Yet it

didn't materialise. Within days, momentum faded. We all ran out of anger, or simply forgot and continued packing our suitcases and heading off for a cheap holiday to Kuta.

Similarly with Brexit. Amid fears of bitter disharmony and racial tension in the UK, Visit Britain, anxious over the potential impact on arrivals, issued statements insisting the country remained inclusive and welcoming. Tourism bosses needn't have worried. Brexit arguments continue today but its impact on tourist numbers? Negligible.

So it will be with the US.

The US is a terrifically diverse country. Australian arrivals have soared in recent years, drawn by its cities, mountains, national parks and coastlines.

On a practical level, it's an easy destination to visit, and a haven for families. We are familiar and comfortable with its culture. Furthermore, airfares remain excellent value.

Taking all this into account, it's hard to see consumers adopting a moral stance and tearing up their plans.

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# TTC STARES DOWN DISRUPTORS

**The Travel Corporation's president and global CEO Brett Tollman spoke exclusively with *travelBulletin* last month in his first joint interview with regional head John Veitch who joined the company from Flight Centre 18 months ago. Guy Dundas reports.**

A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC approach and being innovative with product development is the bedrock of the brands at The Travel Corporation to help ensure the company “stays relevant and successful for the future”, says president and CEO, Brett Tollman.

The fourth-generation, family-owned travel company has a diverse portfolio of businesses around the globe, the bulk of which are escorted touring and cruise programs sold through the likes of Insight Vacations, Trafalgar, Contiki and Uniworld.

Tollman says staying pertinent to consumers is vital, with the business bordering on obsessive with guest experience, to the point where Tollman's mother still reviews hundreds of faxes (yes, faxes!) every day to address any concerns from TTC's 17 general managers globally. Being responsive is key.

‘Transparency today is what it's all about. We believe embracing it rather than hiding from it’

“Our philosophy is if there ever is an issue, to resolve it while the guest is still with us. It's crucial to deliver on their holiday of a lifetime and their expectations while they are still with us, rather than trying to apologise or sort things out afterwards,” he explained.

Transparency is also fundamental. “Transparency today is what it's all about. We believe embracing it rather than hiding from it.”

In Sydney last month, he told *travelBulletin* it was paramount for TTC to “keep up” with rivals, given the sheer scope of choices, channels and disruptors like Airbnb that posed a potential threat to traditional travel companies.

“It certainly keeps the likes of John and I up at night knowing the amount of amazing



**The Travel Corporation's president and global chief executive Brett Tollman in Australia last month with regional head John Veitch.**

competition that is out there. It's critical to make sure that legacy brands like ours can be around for the next decade or two,” Tollman said.

Among The Travel Corporation's latest developments is the new youth-based European river cruise program U by Uniworld. To be pitched squarely at the 18-40 year-old market, U by Uniworld will ride the back of the success of TTC's youth brand Contiki in taking the product to market in coming weeks. Marketed under the parent company as well as by Contiki, Tollman said U by Uniworld would not be fully inclusive but would provide a generous mix of inclusions and optional extras.

Beyond guest services and product, new trade innovations have been rolled out recently or are underway.

“Our entire history has always been based on, dependent on, and loyal to our travel trade partners,” Tollman said.

Among the suite of new programs is the TTC Agent Academy which will debut in the near future. Comprising of a number of modules, the eLearning platform has been developed to educate frontline sellers on The Travel Corporation's breadth of product.

Initially available for Trafalgar, Insight, Contiki and Uniworld (and earmarked for Busabout), Veitch said the Agent Academy

would see agents receive a certificate of completion.

“It reinforces the investment of the TTC back into the travel industry, back into the travel agency chain and consortias and making it easier for agents to work with us and book our holidays with confidence,” Veitch said.

Tollman added that the TTC Agent Academy would reward agents with the opportunity to join a scheduled departure, rather than a place on a group famil, so a consultant can experience and see exactly what a customer encounters on tour.

Another initiative rolled out recently is an air portal for agents to use when booking holidays with Insight Vacations and Trafalgar. Accessed online via the websites of both companies, the portal offers a full suite of airfares to be sold in conjunction with tours.

Veitch says the TTC has “revolutionised” the touring market with its air deals to Europe and the USA. One of the promotional fares was a \$599 return Economy class ticket to anywhere in Italy when sold in conjunction with an Insight itinerary.

With increased call centre volumes, a quick and easy-to-use solution was a necessity for agents.

“We encourage agents to look at it and use it.”



# VIRGIN LOOKS TO CHINA



Hong Kong

VIRGIN Australia's push into China comes as it faces continuing tough conditions at home, with profits down 48% in the first half of the financial year and plans for new aircraft pushed back to late 2019.

The carrier last month revealed details of the first stage in its proposed alliance with its Chinese stakeholder HNA Aviation, announcing direct flights to Hong Kong and codeshare services with several of its China-based cousins.

While it hasn't revealed which Australian cities it will depart from, the airline says it will introduce Hong Kong flights by the middle of this year. Its plans are subject to approval, but involve connecting with mainland Chinese cities via codeshare services with Hong Kong Airlines, Hainan Airlines and other HNA Aviation carriers.

In return, HNA airlines will boost access to Australian markets with codeshares on Virgin's domestic services and to New Zealand via its trans-Tasman flights.

"This new alliance will be a game changer for travel between Australia and China, providing significantly more competition and choice for travellers," Virgin Australia CEO John Borghetti said.

"The alliance will accelerate and support our access to the Chinese market, which is Australia's fastest growing and most valuable inbound travel market," he said.

Borghetti positioned the alliance as a key plank in the airline's international strategy, which was among the most upbeat areas in Virgin's half-year results announced at the same time.

The international arm posted a profit of \$800,000 in the six months to 31 December, a turnaround from the underlying EBIT loss of \$30.8 million in the previous first half.

The group also reported its highest total cash balance of almost \$1.6 billion and achieved a debt reduction of \$936.3 million.

But overall the group's performance was weighed down by "ongoing subdued trading conditions in the domestic market".

Underlying profit before tax was down 48% to \$42.3 million, a \$39.2 million decline on the same period last year. Group revenues were down 9% to \$2.6 billion.

The airline is addressing the domestic malaise by managing capacity, reducing sectors flown by 4.7%.

It has also deferred delivery of the first of its Boeing 737MAX aircraft from next year until late 2019, a move that allows it to delay \$350 million in capital expenditure.

Qantas had yet to announce its half yearly results at the time *travelBulletin* went to press, but in October warned that it too had been battling sluggish conditions domestically.



## TTF VIEW

Margy Osmond, CEO,  
Tourism & Transport Forum Australia

### BIGGER THAN CHINA: THE ASIA TOURISM BOOM

While Australia celebrates soaring tourism from China, there's an even bigger, more exciting story emerging. Visitor arrivals from the whole of Asia are more than triple those of China. And they are also booming.

Last year, China delivered us almost 1.2 million visitors – an increase of over 200,000, or 20%, over 2015. This year, it will overtake New Zealand to become our biggest tourism source market, and following the recent aviation agreement between Australia and China, the potential for further growth is limitless.

But combining China's growth with that of Asia's other markets, the influx of visitors to Australia from the world's fastest-growing region was almost 3.8 million in 2016, 46% of our national total and over three times the number delivered by China alone.

‘The big question is: Are we ready for even more?’

The big question is: Are we ready for even more?

The International Air Transport Association says that by 2035, 1.8 billion additional passenger journeys will be made within the Asia Pacific region. Not surprisingly, China will be the world's fastest-growing market by passenger numbers (up 817 million to 1.3 billion), followed by the US (+488 million to 1.1 billion), India (+322 million to 442 million), Indonesia (+135 million to 242 million) and Vietnam (+112 million to 150 million).

Investments by the tourism and transport industries will go a long way towards supporting the growth of the visitor economy. But industry also needs iron-clad support from governments to facilitate and invest in tourism, not only for the next year or five years or even decade, but for 20 and 30 years, and beyond.

We need to ensure that our airports can handle the growth. Brisbane will have a new parallel runway by 2020, doubling arrival and departure capacity, and Melbourne is planning a third runway. But our biggest aviation gateway, Sydney, remains constrained not only by an overnight curfew on flights, but by restrictions on aircraft movements during operating hours. The curfew won't change. But the limit of 80 aircraft movements per hour needs to rise to at least 90. There's a critical need to expand road, rail and water transport infrastructure, vehicle capacity, networks and connectivity to accommodate both resident and visitor populations. Improving transport connectivity to regional areas is also crucial to enable international visitors to experience a greater variety of authentic Australian experiences.

Attracting more visitors also means that we need more beds, so we must ensure sufficient accommodation is available at all grades, in all cities and key destinations, and at internationally competitive prices, to accommodate the surge in arrivals.

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## GOLD COAST BIDS FOR A FRESH IMAGE

THINK you know the Gold Coast? Think again. It's not the place it used to be, nor is it the place you know from those old clichés.

As least that's the message from Gold Coast Tourism as it embarks on a multi-million dollar branding project, aiming to shape the destination as it heads towards next year's Commonwealth Games and beyond.

Under the new tagline "We Are Gold Coast", the region will put its people front and centre in a bid to reveal the "real" Gold Coast and address what it says are dated perceptions.

Chief marketing officer of Gold Coast Tourism Jan Hutton said the destination's "infectious energy" would be shared with the world through the eyes of locals.

"Through two years of research and consultation, we've discovered that what distinguishes the Gold Coast in an ever-increasing world of choice for travellers is not our beaches or theme parks," she said. "Instead, it's the unmistakable life affirming energy that lives here."

The new brand will be introduced initially through a television commercial, though the marketing strategy behind it will be "digital first" and over time promises engagement with "story tellers" who will be encouraged to share their Gold Coast tales.

"It marks a definitive shift away from the traditional product-led approach towards forward-thinking experience marketing," Hutton said. "This new brand paves the way for the remarkable people of the Gold Coast to tell their story."

"The distinction between travellers and locals continues to blur with travellers increasingly seeking deeper connections

with the people and places of a destination. They want to experience the destination in the same way locals do."

Brand creatives feature local families, couples, groups of friends and other locals like the Burleigh Longboarders who come together to showcase their home.

"Creating an authentic, compelling destination brand is vital to our success," Hutton said. "The We Are Gold Coast brand platform is part of a broader marketing strategy that will lead the growth of the city's \$5 billion visitor economy through to 2020."



## AFTA VIEW

Jayson Westbury, chief executive AFTA

### HOLIDAY RISK TAKING

THE tragic jet ski accident at Kata Beach Phuket Thailand last month which took the life of Emily Collie has attracted an immense amount of consumer media enquiry.

At issue has been the question of how these things occur and what happens when travel insurance is not taken out. For the record, I do not know what the situation was in relation to Ms Collie, and I hope travel insurance was in place.

Stories have been building for some time about the role of government in educating consumers about the risks overseas and the need for travel insurance. The problem clearly is that when people go on holiday they seem to take risks that they would not take at home. Or if that risk was taken, the Australian heavy hand of regulation would more than likely place a level of

‘As we know when things like this go wrong they can be fatal’

personal protection that rarely exists, particularly in South East Asia. As such, the idea of riding a motorbike without a helmet or getting on a high-powered jet ski becomes something people do without a second thought. As we know when things like this go wrong they can be fatal.

Personal responsibility is key in addressing this.

In fact, in recent interviews on this subject I used the line: "People pack all sorts of things when they go on holiday, but most importantly they should pack their brain". While a little harsh, the message is that people need to think about what they do on holiday and not blame someone else for their own actions.

As an active participant on the Smartraveller Consultative group which talks about this regularly, I'm not sure it's a government responsibility to educate consumers. I also don't believe it's a travel agent responsibility, though I am sure agents talk to clients about some of the risks. At the end of the day, the traveller is in ultimate control of what risks they take. But when it comes to travel insurance the message does appear to be getting there.

A recent survey by the Insurance Council of Australia found only 8% of departing Australian adults did not take out travel insurance. That means 92% of people are taking out insurance. I recall only five years ago, that number was more like 72% so the message is working. The fact remains however that not all travellers have the right insurance.

I am hopeful that in 2017 we will be able to do more work in this area to ensure that the right travel insurance is purchased. I know that travel agents are best placed to do this, but sadly people will go with the cheapest option, sourced online, or think that their credit card insurance will do the trick.

Much more work needs to be done in this area and AFTA will be talking to the Australian Government and the Insurance Council about how this might be best addressed.

My deepest sympathies go to the Collie family at this time. A really sad story indeed.



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Hall of Fame winner Carole Smethurst of Bicton Travel and CLIA's Steve Odell



Aust Agency of the Year winners - Bicton Travel's Phil Smethurst, Carole Smethurst and Michael Middleton with Uniworld's Fiona Dalton



CLIA's Steve Odell presents Wiltrans International MD Diane Patrick with a posthumous award for her late husband James Patrick

## CLIA celebrates achievers amid cruising boom

LAST month's Cruise Industry Awards coincided with one of the most prosperous seasons in Australian cruise history, giving Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia and its members much to celebrate.

The awards were announced at a gala dinner for 500 people at The Star in Sydney, where CLIA Chairman Steve Odell highlighted the growth in cruising since the first awards were held in 2005.

"Thirteen years ago we were on the cusp of a new growth trajectory," Odell said.

"We knew numbers were going to increase, but I don't think we had any idea just how much cruise would grow in this time," he said.

Bicton Travel in WA took top honours for the sixth time, winning the Australian Cruise Agency of the Year Gold award ahead of silver winner Phil Hoffmann Travel of SA and bronze recipient Cruiseabout Kew in Vic.

It became a double celebration for Bicton as owner Carole Smethurst was inducted to the CLIA Hall of Fame, recognising her contribution over two decades.

Odell also paid tribute to Ann Sherry and Gavin Smith who stepped down from the CLIA board last year, and to Brett Jardine who departs this month after 10 years heading the organisation.



Cruise Consultant of the Year Helen McMullen, Cruise Holidays QLD receives her award from NCL's Nicole Costantin



Singer Paulini entertained guests



Australian and New Zealand winners



RCI's Adam Armstrong with NZ Gold Cruise Agency of the Year winner Eve Murphy from Pukekohe Travel



# TOURISM AUSTRALIA'S WILD COLLECTION

SOME of Australia's most authentic and engaging wildlife experiences have been brought together under Tourism Australia's new online project, the Australian Wildlife Collection.

A new website houses 12 of the country's most spectacular 'wildlife in the wild' encounters, ranging from to photographing sea lions and marsupials on Kangaroo Island to swimming with whale sharks and humpbacks on Ningaloo Reef and hiking on Tasmania's Maria Island.

Tourism Australia managing director John O'Sullivan said it was genuine, natural experiences such as these that drove so many international tourists to book flights down under.

"Australia's world-class nature is a major drawcard for international visitors and we know from our consumer research that for 38% of travellers it is the most important factor when choosing their holiday destination after safety and security, and value for money," O'Sullivan said.

Tourism Australia says the purpose of the collection is to group together like-minded, independently owned and operated small businesses, passionate about raising the profile of Australian wildlife encounters within natural habitats.

The initiative was 18 months in the making with each encounter selected for its "proven track record in catering to international markets and a vision to bridge the gap between the conservation and tourism sectors".

One of the partners of the new portal, Wild Bush Luxury, describes the Australian Wildlife Collection as an important move for the tourism industry and one it is proud to be a part of.

"The Australian Wildlife Collection allows us to align with other tourism operators with similar aspirations, collectively working towards

a more sustainable Australian tourism industry," Wild Bush Luxury's founder, Charles Carlow said.

The collection details Wild Bush Luxury's Arkaba wildlife conservation property in South Australia where Macropods, reptiles and bush birds can be spotted year-round.

■ To view the whole collection head to [www.australianwildlifecollection.com](http://www.australianwildlifecollection.com)



## HONG KONG BRINGS OUT THE LOCALS



Hong Kong chef Umberto Bombana

HONG Kong's local personalities, gourmet dining, fashion, entertainment, outdoors and family adventures are being brought to life in a new global marketing campaign.

Titled "Best of All, it's in Hong Kong", the new push from the Hong Kong Tourism Board targets "towards 45+ repeat travellers" as well as first-time millennials.

Four videos take viewers on a journey, offering a taste of the region's culinary scene by three-star Michelin chef Umberto Bombana or a tour of the best fashion hangouts from designer Anais Mak. Actor and pilot Michael Wong takes the controls of a helicopter for a family city adventure and movie star Sean Lau takes viewers out into Hong Kong's breath-taking natural scenery.

"We want visitors to see, feel and taste the best Hong Kong has to offer from a local's perspective," said Hong Kong Tourism Board Regional Director, Andrew Clark.

"By watching these videos and engaging with our content, travellers can discover the breath-taking intensity, the surprising contrasts, the rewarding variety and the captivating style this wonderful city can offer."

Clark said the clips aimed to provide a snapshot of the "authentic, off-the-beaten-track, local experiences" on offer that Aussie travellers are "desperate to find".

Catch the "Best of All, it's in Hong Kong" campaign on digital channels, or spot it in trade partner tie-ups.

The new branding will appear across content media partnerships and the videos will be rolled out on social media, alongside a series of stories with a spotlight on food, nature and fashion.





THIS condensed version of the traditional brochure covers the complete collection including camping, overland tours, small group safaris, short safaris & treks and city breaks & short stays. Six new accommodated overland departures are detailed inside including the four-day Kruger Safari, seven-day Kruger, Swaziland & Beach, 12-day Coast, Lesotho & Cape Town, 19-day Kruger to Cape Town, 40-day Southern Africa Adventurer and the 46-day Southern Africa Explorer.



ADVENTURE World and its partner Brand USA have joined forces to launch their inaugural USA brochure. Itineraries featured inside include the 14-night Alaska Active departure, the 14-night Pacific Coast Sampler and the 13-night Lone Star Trail across Texas. The brochure encourages travellers to go beyond 'the bright lights of the country's world famous cities' and try unique travel experiences from "soul-stirring landscapes, quaint towns, desert skies and seaside villages".



OVER 200 guaranteed departures between 01 September 2017 and 31 May 2018 are featured in this brochure. A vast selection of trips are available to suit all travellers' tastes and budget from affordable to luxury. There's the eight to 10-day Affordable Coach Tours, nine to 19-day Escorted Coach Tours, a selection of Ultimate Small Group Tours with less than 20 travellers on board a deluxe coach and Cruise and Luxury Coach tours including a cruise on board *Celebrity Solstice* and special interest tours such as South Island Garden.



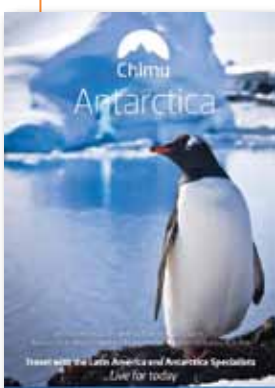
THE range of holidays, tour options and accommodation have been expanded in Qantas Holidays' fresh New Zealand brochure. New for this year are Luxury Lodges and Unique stays throughout the North and South Island and self-drive packages. A selection of 'Exclusively for You' tailored self-drive packages are also on offer, including the eight-day Southern Glacier roundtrip from Christchurch and a 15-day Simply the Best itinerary, from Auckland to Christchurch.



TWO new itineraries feature in Scenic's 2018 Europe river cruising brochure. One is the eight-day Rhine Christmas Markets, which travels between Amsterdam and Basel in December, visiting the festive markets of Germany and can also be extended by five days in Switzerland. Also new is the 15-day Imperial Russia which travels from Moscow to Volograd, stopping at ports including Kostroma and Saratov. The Douro sailing season has also been extended through until the end of December due to demand.



LOOK inside APT's 2017/18 New Zealand brochure to uncover the company's most popular itineraries. Departures range from the 23-day New Zealand Splendour trip to the 18-day Royal Tourer New Zealand and the 25-day New Zealand Voyager ocean cruise. On every NZ tour, APT's Freedom of Choice Inclusions allow guests to hand pick activities at select locations. For example, on selected itineraries Queenstown movie lovers can visit *The Lord of the Rings* filming locations, while thrill seekers take a Shotover Jet Boat ride.



THIS brochure features an expanded range of departures for travellers to the Antarctic continent and surrounds with a number of fresh itineraries on the table. New departures include an 18-day exploration, an 11-day fundraising voyage organised by Chimu in conjunction with MAD Project, and an exclusive 26-day expedition. Also new for 2017 is the possibility to experience Antarctica in a day on a 12.5-hour sightseeing flight from Sydney, Melbourne or Perth.



THIS dedicated USA brochure is a first for Qantas, with the USA previously combined with the Canada & Alaska program. New for 2017 and 2018 are a selection of special attraction passes including the popular CityPASS and GO card available in a wide range of cities, the Anaheim VIP Dine 4Less Card and Kids Eat Free card. There are also details on the Cruise American Motorhomes along with a new selection of National Parks extended tours. New 'foodie' day tours in Las Vegas and New York City also debut in the program.

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Tourism destinations are now vying with movie stars for a place on the red carpet. Jon Murrie looks at locations blessed by cinema, and what tourism bodies are doing to harness the power of Hollywood.

# SCREEN SENSATIONS

Sunny Pawar as the young Saroo Brierley in *Lion*. (©Mark Rogers)

**W**HEN Luke Skywalker stood dramatically atop the cliffs of a tiny Irish island at the end of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, he created a whole new tourism destination without drawing more than a few amps of power from the Force.

Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr did much the same thing back in 1953 when they took a passionate roll in the surf in *From Here to Eternity*, inspiring generations of visitors to frolic upon the same stretch of Hawaiian sand.

And when five-year-old Saroo Brierley was snatched from his family by the bewildering Indian rail network in the 1980s, he could

never have imagined that decades later Tasmania's tourism marketing budgets would swing behind his true-life account in this year's Oscar nominee *Lion*.

It's a pattern repeated all over the world - that beach on Phi Phi; that deli where Harry met Sally; those hills, seemingly alive with the sound of music, just outside Salzburg.

Whether through cinematic magic or freakish good fortune, there are countless instances where the hand of Hollywood has plucked locations from obscurity and thrust them onto the red carpet.

Destinations suddenly become screen icons, as if they'd just had an unnerving encounter on the casting couch. Tourism authorities become publicity agents, startled

into action by flashbulbs and film reviewers.

Yet increasingly, the rise of movie locations as tourism destinations is more strategic than accidental, and the connection between film studios and tourism bodies is becoming as familiar as the association between popcorn and celluloid.

The Garth Davis-directed movie *Lion* with Dev Patel, Nicole Kidman and David Wenham is the most recent screen success to bring Australian landscapes to the fore.

Nominated for six Academy Awards at last month's Oscars, it tells the story of Saroo Brierley and his incredible quest to locate his Indian mother, more than two decades after his misadventure on the railways and adoption by an Australian couple from Hobart.



Mt Wellington Summit, Tasmania, on of the locations from *Lion* (©Paul Flemming)Dev Patel in *Lion* (©Mark Rogers)

Cinematographer Greig Fraser contrasts dry and crowded Indian scenes with the secluded forests and coastline of Tasmania, creating a prime opportunity for the state's tourism marketers.

"We saw the potential because we knew the original book," said Tourism Tasmania's director of consumer marketing Tony Quarmby. "To then hear that Nicole Kidman had signed on, and then Dev Patel, that just ramped up expectations."

Through film financing body Screen Tasmania, the tourism organisation connected early with the movie's producers, the Weinstein Company, and local film distributors, giving it an opportunity to plan its marketing strategy around the movie's release.

"We worked very closely with Screen Tasmania and also with the distributors and their corresponding agencies," Quarmby said. "We worked out what their marketing activities were going to be, how they were going to promote the film, how they would like our assistance and how we could

repurpose things to suit our own strategic needs," he said.

Activities were planned around linking Tasmania to the film wherever possible.

"It's branding by association. When someone thinks of *Lion*, we want them to think Tasmania.

"If there's an article from an interview with one of the cast, how do we get Tasmania to be mentioned? If the distributor is promoting the screening times, how do we put an ad next to the listings linking the movie to Tasmania?"

With budgets only a fraction the size of the movie studios, Tourism Tasmania put its focus on PR, digital initiatives and promotions. It partnered with Qantas and the Nine Network's *Today Show* to offer a Tasmanian hiking holiday.

In the US, it teamed with a holiday wholesaler to connect Tasmanian travel packages with the movie's promotion. Similar projects in the UK linked with PR activity, capitalising on Dev Patel's local fame and a

publicity tour by the real Saroo Brierley, now an avid Tasmanian salesman.

"I think Saroo is an ambassador for Tasmania whether we want it or not," said Quarmby. "He loves Tasmania and he's happy to spruik it."

A microsite on Tourism Tasmania's web platform draws on the state's 'Go Behind the Scenery' catchline and offers a video in which Brierley talks of his love for the island's natural assets. He takes a boating trip and dives for lobster, interspersed with scenes from the movie.

ACROSS the world, VisitBritain is capitalising on a booming local film industry, tapping into live-action thrillers like the 007 franchise as well as computer-generated characters like *Paddington* and Roald Dahl's *BFG*.

"VisitBritain has worked on film tourism for about 15 years," said the organisation's senior brand marketing manager Emma Wilkinson. "Back in the day, we started with printed movie maps and DVD inserts. As time has gone on and technology has changed, it's now much more about digital and social media, and being as innovative as we can with those channels."

Using movies as a springboard to international promotion is now a key function at VisitBritain.

"It's really important to what we do and it's a great way for us to raise awareness of Britain overseas," Wilkinson said. "We also use it to change perceptions, challenge stereotypes and reach new audiences."

The UK's movie industry is among the biggest in the world outside Hollywood and Bollywood, last year posting a record £1.6 billion in film production and providing ample opportunity for tourism marketing.

Country manors, historic sites, London



Daniel Craig as James Bond

Continues over page

Blenheim Palace, a location from *Spectre*

Downtown Abbey (© Carnival Films &amp; Television)

landmarks and Scottish landscapes are all routine cast members in British film, appearing in everything from Jane Austen costume dramas to Harry Potter fantasies.

The impact is notoriously difficult to measure, but almost universally accepted to be huge.

“From our research we know that around 40% of potential visitors would be very likely to look at places they’ve seen in film or on TV, so that’s over a third of visitors driven by something they’ve seen on the screen,” Wilkinson said.

“There was also research released by the British Film Institute in 2015 that showed around £840 million of UK tourism spend could be attributed to film.”

VisitBritain’s film partnerships are each considered on a movie’s particular merits, Wilkinson said, working from a fixed set of criteria. Among them is the need for films to have strong links to British culture, literature or history.

The tourism body focuses on one or two major movie projects each year, often working with other arms of government to draw benefits from trade, investment and education perspectives.

The James Bond franchise has produced among the most visible activities recently, involving tourism cooperation that extended as far as placing branding from the current ‘GREAT Britain’ campaign on a taxi seen in *Spectre* starring Daniel Craig.

“The majority of our campaign took place through digital and social media and some of the valuations that we’ve run show that 64% of people who engaged with that campaign said the activity made them think that Britain was an exciting destination.”

Activities around *Spectre* included the

creation of a dedicated website with information on the movie and its shooting locations, along with suggested travel itineraries. A partnership with the website BuzzFeed included further content and an online quiz, while other activity took place on Facebook, Twitter and other social media channels.

In LA, VisitBritain posted billboards and partnered with Sony to produce a 30-second ‘Bond is Great’ video linking Bond movies

‘There was also research released by the British Film Institute in 2015 that showed around £840 million of UK tourism spend could be attributed to film’

of the past with locations in the UK. The organisation’s PR teams hosted media and influencers on Bond-themed itineraries around Britain to generate coverage online and in lifestyle publications, while a worldwide competition offered a “money can’t buy” holiday and 007 experience.

Wilkinson points to a “dual screen” phenomenon among cinema goers, in which their experience on the big screen is extended by their actions on their phones and devices, giving VisitBritain further opportunity to engage.

“Social media is very important in our campaigns because we can measure the whole customer journey,” Wilkinson said. “In terms of our metrics and evaluation, it’s

much easier to track when we run on digital and social compared to billboards and things like that.”

The digital revolution might be important, but old fashion nostalgia still plays a huge role in a destination’s screen image.

FOR the Hawaii Tourism Authority’s Australian country manager Kerri Anderson, movies screened on TV over many a wintry Saturday afternoon have left an indelible image.

“To me it’s those old movies – the Elvis movies, the Gidget movies, even the Brady Bunch specials. They really stick in my personal memories, and that was my first introduction to Hawaii as a kid,” Anderson said.

Hawaii’s screen image began developing relatively early in films like *From Here to Eternity* and *Blue Hawaii* starring the young Elvis Presley.

“I don’t know that people would go to Hawaii specifically to do movie type tours, but once you’re there those sorts of activities are really popular and it’s cool to say you’ve stood where Elvis once stood or you’ve been to the beach where Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr kissed.”

These and more recent movies like *Jurassic Park* have spawned location tours among Hawaii’s coastal landscape and lush volcanic mountains. “There are helicopter tours in Kauai among the cliffs and waterfalls where they’ll play the Jurassic Park theme song as you’re flying along,” Anderson said.

Another Kauai tour, by land, takes in locations used in Jurassic Park and in the more recent George Clooney film *The Descendants*.

“I saw the movie a second time after doing that tour and I remember getting a whole new perspective and thinking, wow, I’ve stood on





Queenstown, New Zealand



Gollum, from Lord of the Rings



Hobbiton

the same spot that George Clooney stood on,” Anderson said.

The impact of film and television comes not just from the destination’s exposure, but also from the economic contribution of the production itself. The chief of the Hawaiian Government’s creative industries division Georja Skinner says an average television series like *Hawaii Five-O* or *Lost* can generate more than \$80 million per season in economic input including jobs and tax revenue.

SOMETIMES a movie’s location has as much impact on the actors as it does on the audience.

To capitalise on Baz Luhrmann’s epic movie *Australia* in 2008, Tourism Western Australia embarked on a \$2.2 million marketing and public relations campaign that included cinema, print, online advertisements and in-flight television across Australia and the globe.

The tourism body’s CEO Gwyn Dolphin cites the campaign as one of state’s most creative, with the WA Government partnering with Tourism Australia, 20th Century Fox and the local tourism industry to promote the Kimberley region. Visitor centres in Kununurra and Broome recorded their busiest tourist numbers in the year after the movie’s release.

“Thanks to her work on *Australia*, Nicole Kidman continues to name Kununurra as one of her favourite places, including during an interview on the high-rating international talk-show, *Ellen*,” Dolphin said.

IF THERE’S one country whose tourism identity has been transformed by cinema more than any other, it’s New Zealand.

The *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and subsequent *Hobbit* films by Peter Jackson brought the country to the big screen in ways few destinations have ever known.

“These films really catapulted New Zealand onto a world stage,” said Tourism New Zealand general manager of PR and major events Rebecca Ingram. “And they did it through multiple lenses. They did it through the film itself, through the special effects

and the amazing work of Weta Workshops here in New Zealand. But they also took our landscapes and turned them into a character in the film and put them in front of hundreds of millions of people around the world.”

‘To this day approximately one third of visitors to New Zealand are intending to have what we call a Hobbit experience’

The impact has been profound, maintaining momentum over a 15-year period since the first movie’s release.

“To this day approximately one third of visitors to New Zealand are intending to have what we call a Hobbit experience,” Ingram said. “It might be a visit to Hobbiton (the movie set attraction), it might be traversing some mountains from the film which are free experiences but put you in the footsteps of the characters, or it could be here in Wellington heading up Mount Victoria where some of the scenes for *Lord of the Rings* were shot.

Tourism NZ prefers to remain tight-lipped on the strategies it deploys around movies, but has caught the attention of others.

“Globally it’s quite carefully looked at,” Ingram said. “I would probably get one to two queries a week from academics or destination marketers or students writing papers who are interested in the formula of film tourism.”

The organisation works in tandem with the New Zealand Film Commission, which helps fund both domestic and international film production, to identify films it is able to work with. It then unites with film producers and their PR teams, along with industry partners like Air New Zealand, to create campaigns around the film’s release.

Recent productions like *Pete’s Dragon* have

created additional opportunities, but *Lord of the Rings* remains the “bedrock” of film tourism in New Zealand even after 15 years, Ingram said. “I think the impact of *Lord of the Rings* and the *Hobbit* has been profound on New Zealand Tourism.

“Tourism is now our number one export earner. We employ about 185,000 people full time equivalent, so it’s a really sizeable industry for NZ and you can certainly draw a line between the growth NZ has experienced and the impact of film on tourism.”

## Big screen success

### Locations forever changed by their role in TV shows and movies:

**Skellig Michael** – a tiny rock outcrop off the coast of Ireland that now attracts more than 10,000 people each summer after its appearance in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*.

**Halona Beach Cove** – a secluded location on the island of Oahu in Hawaii, famous for the beach scene in *From Here to Eternity*.

**Phi Phi** – Maya Bay in Phi Phi is now a must-see location for many visitors to Thailand after its appearance in *The Beach* starring Leonardo di Caprio.

**Katz’s Delicatessen** – A New York institution in its own right, this unassuming deli has appeared in a string of movies, including that scene in *When Harry met Sally*.

**Salzburg** – The birthplace of Mozart in Austria is also a mecca for fans of *The Sound of Music*, attracting up to 300,000 people a year to see key locations from the much-loved film.

**Hobbiton** – New Zealand’s double life as Middle Earth in the *Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* series has left a lasting legacy in the Hobbiton movie set attraction in Waikato.

**Highclere Castle** – This manor home in Hampshire has a starring role in *Downton Abbey* and attracts thousands when open to the public over the northern summer.



# MAKING THE MOST OF BIG DATA

by Alice Almeida, Manager of Innovation & Insights, Hitwise

**G**ETTING on top of online behavioural data can be a challenging task, but understanding the information that's now available to businesses can be key to growing a brand and boosting income.

For those of you who don't know Hitwise, we are Australia's leading online marketing intelligence company. We specialise in online behavioural data which tracks millions of digital Australian footprints each day across industries, websites, search, and device (desktop/mobile).

From this, clients are able to distinguish things like their current and potential customers, their true competitive set and the desires or interests of their customers.

They can also identify consumer behaviours as well as industry trends and performance, such as what to look out for or benchmark against.

Hitwise works with many of Australia's largest travel brands every day, and has for the past 20 years. We pride ourselves on knowing Australian consumers better than anyone else. In this day and age, where 'Big Data' is talked about more than actioned or understood, brands can't help but feel a little threatened or overwhelmed by it all. Where to start? Whilst I can't help you with your own internal data, I can help you understand how to implement valuable third party data into



‘The travel industry has one of the most active consumer bases online with almost 10 million Australians seeking or booking travel just in the month of January, 2017’

your marketing strategy.

The travel industry has one of most active consumer bases online with almost 10 million Australians seeking out or booking travel just in the month of January 2017. Understanding this mass audience is key for travel brands, especially if they are seeking a slice of those consumers!

The chart below highlights the sub-industries of travel most heavily visited by potential travelers and its year on year growth. From this, you can see that all sub-industries have seen growth in the past 12 months, in particular Agencies, who saw a 17% increase.

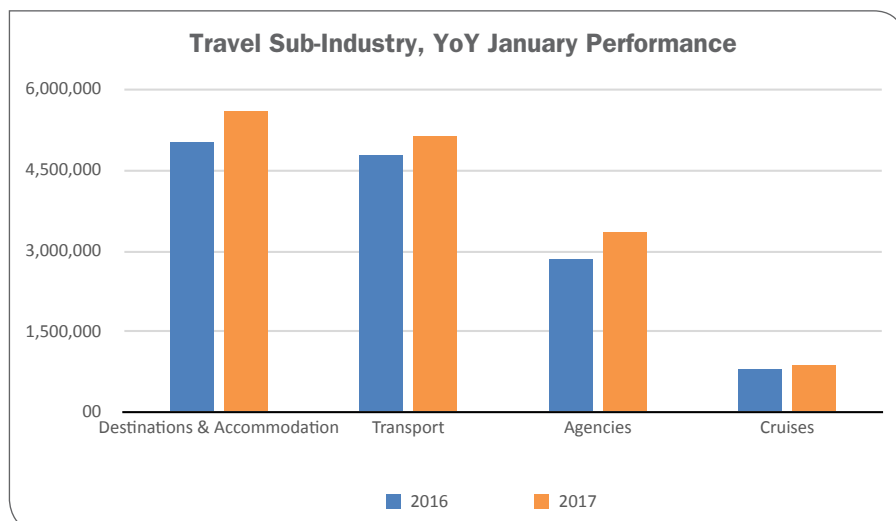
So, what is leading this growth? Well, Australians love of travel at a heavily discounted price! Those sites offering travel packages at a discounted price are definitely getting a lot of interest from Australian

travellers. Luxury Escapes grew by a massive 101% in Q4, 2016. Its promotions of resorts within Bali clearly resonated with Australian travellers. Cruise Guru, a cruise package discount site, saw phenomenal growth in Q4 – up 600% YoY. There clearly was a demand for a wide range of cruises at heavily discounted prices. Jetstar launched its annual Christmas sale, advertising flights for \$29 to some incredible destinations – Hawaii and Bali to name a few. This sale resulted in Jetstar increasing its market share by 5%.

Whilst it's not technically a 'discount' site, Airbnb saw 51% relative growth from Q4 2015 to Q4 2016. Because Airbnb enables travellers to stay in nicer accommodation than they could normally afford, there is a perception they are saving money by booking through this site.

Through search we are able to showcase 'destinations to watch'. Whilst they may be small in the grand scheme of things, interest in them is growing, and very quickly. There are two destinations which have entered the fastest growing (by search share) top 10 for Q4, 2016. The first is India. Both Mumbai and New Delhi and India overall have all seen positive shifts QoQ. The other destination is very close to my heart, Norfolk Island, my home town. From Q4 2015 to Q4 2016, the interest in Norfolk Island doubled, increasing its search ranking by 43 positions.

Online behavioural data is one of the most accurate representations of current and potential customers and the market. Being on top of this will not only assist with building successful marketing campaigns, but it will help keep your brand growing in a competitive market.



# TRAVELPORT SETS OUT ON HIGH-SPEED RAIL

HIGH-SPEED trains have captured a market almost half the size of the airline industry, prompting GDSs to eye expanding rail networks as a future growth sector for travel agencies.

Travelport cites a rapid growth in airline-rail codeshares as a sign of things to come and has begun investing in technology that will

Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. A further 360 million travel by high-speed rail in Japan, with another 80 million in Taiwan and Korea.

“We’ve counted some 1.5 billion annual passengers on high-speed railways worldwide,” Kreher said. “Contrast that to airline passengers at 3.3 billion – rail is now

begin talks with potential partners to help bring the country’s high-tech trains into its system.

Many airlines have embraced the potential of rail, with an increasing number now offering air-rail codeshares that allow seamless travel between airports and trains.

Travelport director of commercial strategy Scott Barber says this multi-modal trend is in line with customer demands for home-to-hotel travel arrangements, and that rail offers a relatively simple value-add for travel agents to offer as part of a holistic service.

“We have 93 airlines now participating in air-rail multi-modal trips, that’s a 27% increase year on year,” Barber said. “They are being fulfilled through 17 rail operators globally, in total there are 108 countries booking this.”

Through its Smartpoint platform, Barber says Travelport has attempted to simplify rail bookings and reduce unfamiliarity.

“The booking commands are exactly the same as in airline bookings, it couldn’t be simpler,” he said. “It’s low-hanging fruit which agents would be more than happy to embrace – we’re seeing good early adoption and good feedback.”



allow it to expand its offering of high-speed rail networks worldwide.

Travelport’s commercial director air commerce Klaus Kreher says more than 360 million passengers now travel each year on the fast trains of Europe, including those of France,

almost 50% of the size of airlines and that gives you an idea of the phenomenal growth of high-speed rail.”

China, meanwhile, plans to expand its fast train network to as much as 20,000km over the next 10 years, prompting Travelport to

## Sabre to feed real-time flight data

SABRE last month claimed a GDS first, with the introduction of live data feeds from FlightGlobal which will put real-time information on airline schedules onto travel agent desktops worldwide. FlightGlobal collates information on more than 900 carriers worldwide, with the feed providing consultants with the confidence to make bookings for their clients based on data which takes last minute schedule changes into account.

‘Travellers would breathe easier knowing they have the most accurate information at their fingertips’

Sabre Travel Network senior vice president of strategy, Wade Jones, said the initiative means “Sabre provides the highest level of schedule reliability to our global agency network for virtually every passenger flight around the world”. He said travellers and agents would “breathe easier” knowing they have the most accurate information at their fingertips.

The initiative continues a long-standing partnership between Sabre and FlightGlobal, with the technology ensuring that all schedule changes filed are instantly displayed in the Sabre platform. All flight data processed in the Sabre travel marketplace and through Sabre APIs for online travel sites and developers will also update dynamically as users shop for flights. Sabre said the increased schedule accuracy would also allow airlines to market more efficiently, as well as better managing seat availability.

## TRANSFORM YOUR TRAVEL BUSINESS PERFORMANCE



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# NEW YORK CITY

## *embarks on convention renewal*



DEVELOPERS in New York City have unveiled plans for a US\$1.5 billion overhaul of the city's Jacob K Javits Convention Centre on Manhattan's West Side, expanding its exhibition halls and creating vast new event spaces.

The project represents a major boost for New York's events sector and the busiest conference facility in the United States.

"The Javits Centre is one of New York State's greatest economic assets, and this project will turn this building into a 21st century marvel, a convention centre of the calibre that New York deserves," said Howard Zemsky, president and CEO of Empire State Development and the commissioner of New York State's Department of Economic Development.

‘The Javits Centre is one of New York State’s greatest economic assets, and this project will turn this building into a 21st century marvel...’

"With these new, state-of-the-art facilities, we will be able to attract the world's best conferences and events and drive economic activity throughout the region for decades to come."

The design-build team behind the project will be led by Australia's Lendlease in a joint venture with Turner Construction together with tvsdesign.

The expansion is set to include an additional 8,400m<sup>2</sup> of permanent exhibition space in a contemporary glass-walled building. When combined with existing areas, the project will result in a 46,000m<sup>2</sup> exhibition hall.

Also new will be a 5,000m<sup>2</sup> ballroom, a green roof terrace pavilion accommodating 1,500 people for outdoor events, plus 27 loading docks. There will also be new kitchen and food services installed along with back of house administrative spaces.

The revamp is forecast to generate US\$393 million in additional economic activity each year, and allow for new and larger events.

The Javits Centre claims the title of the busiest convention facility in the United States, hosting events on 337 days in 2015. The six-block facility encompasses 195,000m<sup>2</sup>, of which 78,000m<sup>2</sup> is exhibition space

In 2015, the facility hosted more than 175 events and two million visitors, generating an estimated 483,000 hotel room nights and creating an economic impact with US\$1.9 billion.

Developers are aiming to complete the project by 2021.





# VEGAS PLANS TO STAY AHEAD

THE Las Vegas Convention Centre is set for a US\$1.4 billion expansion and renovation in a bid to “remain the No.1 trade show destination in North America”.

While there have been upgrades over the years to meet basic technology needs, the Las Vegas Convention Centre outlined in a report that it was “time to do more than just keep up”.

“We need to make the entire facility ready for the future. Other cities are already doing this. Las Vegas needs to continue being a leader in the industry,” it said.

Once complete, the revamped convention centre will offer 56,000m<sup>2</sup> of new exhibition space including corresponding meeting rooms, pre-function space, and service and support areas.

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) estimates the project will bring in US\$810 million in potential economic impact and attract 610,000 new convention attendees per year.

“Conventions are an essential pillar of the Las Vegas economy,” LVCVA said.

“These events drew nearly 5.9 million visitors in 2015 and expanding the Las Vegas Convention Centre promises to draw millions more.”

The LVCVA said the budget was in line with what other US cities were spending.

“In fact, a comparison with cities like Pittsburgh, San Diego, Kansas City, Chicago and Nashville shows that the LV project comes in below the hard cost average.”

Cities such as Houston, Seattle, San

Francisco, New York and Orlando have invested between US\$1 billion and US\$1.5 billion to upgrade their convention facilities to compete with Las Vegas, LVCVA claimed.

Closer to home, Brand USA’s chief strategy and communications officer Anne Madison told *travelBulletin* America was experiencing strong growth from Australasia.

“Currently, Brand USA is directing leads for MICE business on an opportunistic basis to US partners and promoting MICE travel in the USA through our participation at key tradeshows like IMEX.”

“We are in the initial stages of developing a comprehensive MICE plan to further support our partners in this area and expect to announce our approach later this year,” she said.



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**HAWAIIAN**  
— AIRLINES —



# AIME'S STERLING SILVER ANNIVERSARY



Celebrating the 25th anniversary this sculpture was painted live during the welcome event by renowned artist David Bromley.

THE 25th annual Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Expo (AIME) continued the show's long tradition of showcasing the latest innovations for the business events sector. One of the key enhancements this year was a 'Konduko' delegate tracking system, which used NFC technology to allow attendees to instantly exchange details with one another. Exhibitors from across the globe once again took part, with around 400 hosted buyers along with hundreds more attendees joining in a packed appointment and social schedule. As always Melbourne was an intrinsic part of the program, with the Victorian capital's creative scene highlighted in the opening night cocktail party which took place at Carousel in the Albert Park precinct.

AIME is undergoing an evolution, with the show's owner, the Melbourne Convention Bureau, opening tenders earlier this year to manage the show in 2019 and 2020. The incumbent, long-time organiser Reed Travel Exhibitions, has confirmed it will not submit a bid, leaving the industry curious to see who will take over. Reed's IBTM Global Events Portfolio director Kerry Prince told *travelBulletin* the organisation had made a strategic decision to focus on shows it owns 100%, such as the World Travel Market and International Luxury Travel Market portfolios. For its part, Melbourne Convention Bureau says it's had strong interest from a range of organisations wanting to run the show going forward – and in the meantime Reed is firmly committed to running another excellent show for its final iteration in charge next year.

As well as the future of AIME, the larger question of the future of business meetings was a key focus at this year's expo, with Melbourne Convention Bureau CEO Karen Bolinger releasing a new report from McCrindle Research which looks at how the rapid rise of technology is impacting the sector. "We felt it was really important to understand the role conferences would play in the next five years," she said. And the

**‘The core desire of people to meet face to face is undampened by the increasing proliferation of social networking, VOIP and video communications’**

findings are good news, with the core desire of people to meet face to face undampened by the increasing proliferation of social networking, VOIP and video communications. "It is human nature to like to be part of a tribe or community," Bolinger said.

However, a key trend underlined by the McCrindle report was time, with the study predicting the likelihood that conferences and other events are likely to become shorter in duration in the future. Technology will increasingly facilitate customisation

of the delegate experience, so those in attendance can achieve what they need to in a briefer space of time. A common sentiment expressed by people in the study was "I am time poor, so this had better be worth my time". And while technology isn't impacting the innate desire for face-to-face meetings, it is certainly going to become an increasingly important part of any conference or exhibition, as tech-savvy Generation Z – or so-called "screenagers" – become a larger proportion of the global workforce.

Venues, in turn, will also need to adapt to facilitate the increasingly interactive and technological meetings of the future. But as the sector continues to evolve it is clear that the future of business events is bright – and so is their contribution to the Australian economy, with Tourism Australia's Penny Lion also highlighting the benefits that inbound events have, with delegates spending much more per head than leisure tourists, and often also deciding to return for a holiday in the future.

Business events are also key for Melbourne, which has for many years had a strong focus on attracting large conferences and other meetings. Despite the recent opening of Sydney's new International Convention Centre, the order book for the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) is still very full, according to MCEC CEO Peter King. "There's plenty of business to go around," he said – while noting that the current \$200 million expansion of MCEC will mean Melbourne continues to offer Australia's largest convention centre.



## Mandarin Oriental to open by Hawaii Convention Centre

A NEW Mandarin Oriental Honolulu hotel tower will be built alongside the Hawaii Convention Center and Ala Moana, with a completion date set for 2020.

Planned amenities include a rooftop restaurant and bar with outdoor terraces which provide views of Diamond Head, a lobby lounge, all-day dining and extensive banquet and meeting spaces. Situated within Mana'olana Place, a 36-storey tower with gardens and plazas being developed by investment firm Salem Partners, the Mandarin Oriental Honolulu will offer 125 rooms and suites.

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group will also manage 107 residences at the property, which will be located on the Mana'olana tower's upper floors.

## Brooklyn scene not just for hipsters

THE New York borough of Brooklyn is seeing tremendous growth in its hotel and meeting space offering, with more than 29 new hotels currently in the pipeline.

Some of the latest hotels to open include the wellness-oriented Even Hotel and boutique lodging Hotel Indigo Brooklyn in Downtown Brooklyn. Among hotels with expansive meeting spaces set to open this year is 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge in Brooklyn Heights. Situated along the panoramic Brooklyn Bridge Park waterfront, the new property will feature 194-rooms, a 3,475 ft<sup>2</sup> rooftop venue and more than 20,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of flexible meeting space.

By 2019, the borough is expected to be home to more than 3,500 hotel rooms.



## AACB VIEW

Andrew Hiebl, chief executive officer  
Association of Australian Convention Bureaux

### AN ECONOMIC GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

REVIEWING both successes and failures is one of the most important ways an industry can lift its levels of performance. Convention bureaux across Australia are now carrying out such broad reviews with the aim generating more success into the future, despite a highly competitive environment.

Members of the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB) have all agreed to share their bidding data with us – their peak association – to benchmark productivity and performance from a national perspective and this is turning out to be an invaluable advocacy tool.

The AACB's most recent analysis revealed that while 360 international business events had been secured by convention bureaux into the future (from July 2016), attracting some 290,000 delegates (190,000 international), Australia had also lost 235 international bids across the next decade.

This lost business is estimated to be valued at \$805 million in direct delegate expenditure – which will now take place in other countries. This key point should be carefully considered by governments across Australia when shaping policy and determining future levels of support.

So where exactly are these business events going? While it is hard to pinpoint this from a corporate meetings and incentives perspective, we can look to the International Congress and Convention Association's annual country and city rankings to identify trends for the association segment. In 2006, Australia was ranked in the 10 top countries (9th) to play host to major international association conventions. All other countries in the top 10 were predominantly from Europe and the USA. The closest Asian rivals were Japan at 12th and China at 14th.

Ten years on, the 2015 rankings highlight the rise of our competitors in the Asia-Pacific region, with Japan, China and South Korea all moving ahead of Australia – we are now ranked 15th. The future rise of Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia should also not be underestimated.

In fact, the top five cities in Asia-Pacific

and the Middle East now include Singapore, Seoul, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Beijing. Sydney ranks 7th, with Melbourne and Brisbane at 12th and 21st respectively.

As the organisations tasked with bringing major conventions to our cities, Australia's convention bureaux face unprecedented

“So where exactly are these business events going?”

competition from Asian and Middle Eastern destinations, many of who have new meetings infrastructure to fill. Despite this, our time to shine is now, given that Asia and the Middle East's market share of international association meetings has risen by 10% to 18.2% over the past 50 years, at the expense of Europe.

Of the 235 international bids lost, 141 were for association conventions. Some 36% of these were attributed to stronger financial packages offered by rivals, as well as risks associated with long-haul destinations, such as distance and cost.

As large conferences are extremely expensive to stage, associations seek support from governments to mitigate the risks of hosting their events in various destinations. Of the five leading host countries for conventions in Asia-Pacific, only Australia lacks a national bid fund and this places us at a competitive disadvantage.

The AACB strongly believes that the business events segment of the tourism industry can help grow the Australian economy with the assistance of targeted public policy measures. These have been outlined in the association's 2017/18 Pre-Budget Submission. In this document, the AACB supports the introduction of a national convention bid fund, a position also championed by the Business Events Council of Australia and the Tourism and Transport Forum. Hosting more business events in Australia means more jobs – both direct and indirect employment – which also benefits the economy as a whole.

### headlines business events news

- 23 Jan** AIME launches Rising Star award
- 09 Jan** Melb business events to flourish
- 16 Jan** TA launches Dreamtime RFT
- 30 Jan** TTF calls for more MICE funding
- 02 Feb** Crown Towers Perth wants slice of MICE boom
- 02 Feb** TNQ snaps up Chinese incentive group
- 06 Feb** Port Stephens launches Business Event Guides
- 13 Feb** AACB says business events are key to economic growth
- 09 Feb** EEA pens partnership with Umbrella
- 13 Feb** NYC convention overhaul



# CAREER IN FOCUS

## SIMON MCGRATH

Chief operating officer of AccorHotels



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

As chief operating officer for AccorHotels in the Pacific region, the role entails overseeing more than 210 hotels and more than 10,000 employees. For the past eight years, it's the diversity of the role and the industry which has kept my interest in the field and at the very core, the people. Aside from the overarching leadership responsibility, the role requires a strong growth focus when it comes to developing new business opportunities and growing the brand, as well as operating the company and assets on behalf of partners, all driven by strong sales & marketing initiatives, bound by a compelling loyalty program to ensure guest engagement and satisfaction.

### 2. How did you start out in your career? Why the travel industry?

At 17, my career started in the laundry of the Boulevard Hotel in Sydney, it was hard work, but allowed me to learn all facets of the industry in an accelerated way by completing a management traineeship. During this time, I observed and was intrigued by the complexities and various departments that hotels offered. Upon completing my traineeship, the doors opened up to so many opportunities, leading me to a career in international hotels.

### 3. Did you complete formal qualifications and how have they helped you in your career?

After finishing Year 12, I went to Ryde Catering Colleague for one semester, but what really interested me was working, which became more of focus. In saying that, I'd recommend people go out and get formal qualifications today, because there's some great thinking out there and I'd really encourage those

‘I'd recommend people go out and get formal qualifications today, because there's some great thinking out there... tap into what knowledge is available’

looking for a career in hospitality to tap into what knowledge is available.

### 4. What do you love about your job?

Number one, the human element. It's the most satisfying and the most complex. It's the part that really tests how good you are - the ability to build human relationships. Secondly, to put it quite simply, the hospitality industry is a very kind, caring and an enjoyable sector to work in.

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

When you're faced with a situation, even when you're not at fault, that questions your values or compromise you, those are the greatest challenges. You have to find a way to manage the situation effectively. When in doubt, aim to do what's right, all the time.

### 6. What factors are central to a successful career?

Be unselfish in the way you think, behave and operate to have a successful career, and you need to be competitive by nature, and exude confidence and positivity.

### 7. Is having a mentor an essential part of getting ahead in a career? Do you have one?

Having a mentor is not essential. A mentor should come naturally to you; it shouldn't be a forced relationship. You don't go and pick a mentor; a mentor will be standing right in front of you over many years. I'm a keen observer of people, and believe you can have a mentor in parts. I'll take different elements out of different people and apply them to areas of my own life.

### 8. What are your principals for doing good business?

When doing business, always try to put yourself in the other person's shoes, to make sure they win and achieve their desired outcomes from the relationship. In turn, be clear with what you need, and don't be afraid to ask and expect a lot.

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

It's an unbelievably satisfying industry, and it's becoming more and more prominent as a key economic driver. Be consistent, work hard and don't give up, because when you break through it's such a rewarding industry to be a leader in.



## CLEAR SAILING ON THE WORKFRONT

The popularity of cruising sees employment demand surge, while technology adaption leads to some jobs being streamlined and a new set of workplace expectations from Generation Z. Adriana D'Angelis, managing director of AA Appointments, spoke to *travelBulletin* about the year ahead in the workforce.

WITH an impressive growth rate of 10% each year, the popularity of cruising brings with it a set of welcome consequences – namely, the need for extra labour. This extends up and down the supply chain from administration staff, engineering staff and sales staff though to travel consultants.

“There’s massive growth in cruise related employment both from wholesalers and cruise companies. In particular there’s demand for cruise specialists, so anyone that’s a cruise specialist or who can get their qualifications is guaranteed to get a job,” said D’Angelis.

Welcome news for anyone seeking a job in the cruise sector. However other sectors may be in line for job shedding thanks no less to the adoption and efficient use of technology.

“Corporate is becoming more and more technology focused, there’s likely to be

‘They’re not thinking about mortgages. It’s everything else that the company can offer. They’re thinking about the total experience’

some streamlining of corporate travel roles,” D’Angelis said. “You’re finding many companies now are advancing their technology so their labour force isn’t as large as it used to be.”

However as some doors close, others open. Generation Z, or post-millennials, are now entering the workforce and bring with them a set of expectations that does not

hinge on how much money is on the table.

D’Angelis states “the younger ones are not necessarily driven by salary. They’re not thinking about mortgages. It’s everything else that the company can offer. They’re thinking about the total experience. They want it to be a fun workplace; it’s all about the experience.”

Employers may also need to offer Generation Z more in terms of work function. To them, social media is innate and they want to play in such circles continuously.

“We’re seeing savvy employers getting the younger generation involved in more marketing and social media whereas before if you started off as a retail travel consultant then that’s what you’d do. Now employers are giving them extra duties like utilising social accounts to keep them more engaged.”



# CRYSTAL SURGES FORWARD



CRYSTAL CRUISES' CEO Edie Rodriguez lathered praise on the company's newly-opened Sydney office during a visit down under last month, linking the Australian operation to the line's recent expansion.

During a ship tour and lunch on board *Crystal Symphony*, Rodriguez told media it had been a strategic decision to open the local office.

"Australia is such a big important market for us," she explained.

Heading up the local office is Karen Christensen, who told *travelBulletin* that

although it was still early days, the office was receiving regular bookings every day.

Christensen is currently overseeing 11 staff, but she assured long-term expansion plans were in place, with the office built to house 25 staff.

Crystal Cruises' development plans spread well beyond Australia, with the company amidst a massive growth stage that began when it was acquired by Genting Hong Kong in May 2015. The company has since launched Crystal Yacht Cruises (December 2015), Crystal Luxury Air (April 2016) and

Crystal River Cruises (July 2016), with a new Crystal AirCruises venture to debut this year and Crystal Exclusive Class Ocean Cruises planned for 2019.

Rodriguez said a planned new-build ocean ship to be delivered in 2022 would be "game changing on many fronts".

"One of the things that will make her extraordinarily exceptional is that she will have residences at sea – one floor of private apartments – and this will actually be the first time that residences at sea will happen concurrently with regularly scheduled cruise departures," Rodriguez said.

The new ship would offer a very different experience to what she referred to as "that other vessel floating out there" that offered residences.

Crystal's ship would offer a daily cruise program and be designed so residents only had to meet guests if they wanted to. The residents would also buy understanding they would have no say in where the ship sailed.

The residences will open for booking in December, but there was already a wait list of "over 250 very active, interested people", Rodriguez said.

## Joie de Vivre's godmother



ACTRESS and author Dame Joan Collins has been named Godmother of Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection's new ship *S.S. Joie de Vivre*, to be launched later this month.

Fiona Dalton, MD of Uniworld in Australia told *travelBulletin* that Dame Joan Collins was a terrific fit for the company.

"It was very important to Uniworld, given our commitment to France and our continued support specifically for Paris, that we could invite a godmother who would also align with our ongoing commitment and somebody who themselves is a great supporter of Paris," Dalton said. "She's someone who really epitomises the joy of living philosophy which is what the *Joie de Vivre* is all about".

The 128-passenger *Joie de Vivre* will be christened on 27 March and sail Uniworld's Paris & Normandy itinerary. At 125m the vessel is smaller than the standard 135m and will be able to dock in the heart of Paris.

## SILVER LININGS FOR SILVERSEA

SILVERSEA has much to celebrate this year, from the launch of its new flagship *Silver Muse* next month to *Silver Cloud* being transformed into a luxury expedition vessel.

*travelBulletin* caught up on all Silversea's news with the line's managing director Asia Pacific Amber Wilson when *Silver Whisper* called into Sydney recently as part of a round the world voyage.

Wilson, who stepped into the position six months ago, said getting the brand strong exposure had been a key focus since she joined, commenting that *Whisper's* visit to Australia was doing just that. Further publicity had been achieved through the line's first television campaign which launched last November. "It's been very, very well received and we've certainly noticed a spike in enquiries and bookings," she said.

Wilson was quick to add that "the

call to action will always be contact your local travel agent or Silversea" underpinning the brand's close ties with the travel agency network. In fact, agent support is a key part of Silversea's strategy with Wilson confirming there was now a business development manager (BDM) servicing each state and territory.

"Rather than pulling back BDMs, we're increasing our trade representation," she said, while adding that niche markets such as the incentives sector would be targeted.

The next six months see no signs of abating for Silversea. While no official rates were released, growth was said to be "very healthy".

"We've got a whole raft of activities from client events, functions and agent training will be a big focus for us. With *Muse* launching in April there's a big focus on this ship and then we'll turn our attention to *Cloud*."

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24 JULY 2017



CRUISE TOUR

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1 SEPTEMBER 2017



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- FREE return economy airfare from Australia<sup>^</sup> to Lisbon, returning from Athens • 2 night hotel stay in Lisbon
- 34 night cruise aboard Aegean Odyssey • 30 included tours in 9 countries • 2 night hotel stay in Athens

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20 AUGUST 2017



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\*TERMS & CONDITIONS: All fares shown are Australian Dollars, per person, based on twin occupancy and including all bonus saving discount. Fares include pre and/or post hotel stays as detailed for each itinerary, gratuities & port taxes (correct as of 10 February 2017). Cancelled bookings are subject to cancellation penalties as per the terms and conditions. Availability is limited and limited to selected cabin categories. All Cruise Tour & Fly Free offers are capacity controlled and can be withdrawn or modified at any time without notice. <sup>^</sup>FLY FREE offer is subject to availability. Airfare is economy class and based on specific airlines, routing and class. Valid for flights to/from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide & Perth. Pre & post hotel accommodation & transfers from airport/port/hotel offered on dates specified on itinerary only, ask for details. Travel agent service fees not included. Voyages to Antiquity reserve the right to change, correct errors, withdraw from sale any or all fares, itineraries, excursions & fees. For full terms & conditions visit [www.voyagestoantiquity.com.au](http://www.voyagestoantiquity.com.au) or visit your local preferred Travel Agent.



# CRUISE LINES BURST INTO CUBA



CUBA is fast becoming the hottest new cruising destination, with a handful of cruise lines receiving approval to sail to the island destination for the first time this year.

Carnival Cruise Line is one of the latest to be given the go-ahead, deploying *Carnival Paradise* for a series of four- and five-day voyages out of Port Tampa Bay in the second half of 2017.

But it's not Carnival Corporation's first foray

into the Caribbean island nation.

In May 2016, the corporation became the first US cruise company to sail to Cuba in over 40 years with its Fathom brand.

Fathom's operations as a cruise line were short lived and the brand will hand back its only ship to P&O Cruises UK in time for the northern summer season, while *Fathom* will live on as a shore excursion experience.

Royal Caribbean International, Azamara

Club Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises all revealed late last year they would begin Cuban operations. At the time, each line either unveiled a sprinkling of initial itineraries or flagged that details were on their way.

Norwegian Cruise Line has since extended its season through to December and Royal Caribbean International has added departures up to November.



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Terms & Conditions apply.

## G Adventures lifeline for Swan Hellenic

G ADVENTURES has acquired British brand Swan Hellenic after the collapse of parent company All Leisure Group earlier this year.

The travel company is planning to restart Swan Hellenic's operations in 2018 with a series of new ships and voyages. G Adventures'

‘We know how beloved Swan Hellenic is to its loyal customer base...’

vice president of Global Sales John Warner said the company was “determined” to have the legacy of the cruise brand live on.

“We know how beloved Swan Hellenic is to its loyal customer base and the respect it has in the British travel community,” Warner said.

Swan Hellenic's revamped itineraries are set to be announced this summer.

## Carnival orders two more

PRINCESS Cruises and Holland America Line (HAL) are expanding their fleets following Carnival Corporation's recent Memorandum of Agreement with shipbuilder Fincantieri for two new vessels.

Princess' new 145,000-tonne ship will be the sixth Royal class vessel, accommodating 3,660 passengers, while HAL's 99,500-tonne and 2,660-passenger vessel will be the line's third Pinnacle class vessel.

The new HAL addition will be built at Fincantieri's shipyard in Marghera, Italy, and is expected to be delivered in 2021. The Princess ship will be constructed in Monfalcone, Italy, and is due to be finished in 2022.

The new Princess ship will feature the wearable Ocean Medallion, which records guests' digital identity, allowing cashless transactions and access to staterooms.

## Viking Sky delivery

VIKING Ocean Cruises took delivery of its third ship *Viking Sky*, at a ceremony held at Italy's Fincantieri shipyards in late January.

The 930-passenger ship sailed its maiden voyage from Rome's port of Civitavecchia on 25 February to operate a series of Eastern and Western Mediterranean itineraries before being christened on 22 June under Norway's midnight sun.

The ship will then continue its season in Scandinavia and the Baltic before crossing the Atlantic in September to sail the Americas and Caribbean.



## CLIA VIEW

Joel Katz, managing director  
CLIA Australasia

### BOOST YOUR CRUISE SALES

THE cruise industry is growing at an incredible pace and on a global scale. For that reason, the research that CLIA conducts assists agents to gain the best understanding of the attitudes and behaviors around travel, and particularly around cruise travel.

The recently released CLIA Cruise Travel Report offers a revealing look at the travel preferences of cruisers and non-cruisers. The report delves into a variety of topics ranging from travel planning and the use of travel agents to destination preferences. A key highlight of the US study defines a new “Cruise Generation,” outlining the growing number of Millennials and Generation Y travellers embracing and enjoying cruise travel.

This generation rates cruise travel as the best type of vacation compared to other land-based holiday options. Ninety per cent who have experienced cruise travel say they will continue to cruise. Similar trends are being reported in Australasia.

Given the fact that cruising has consistently proven itself to be one of the fastest growing and most profitable segment of the leisure travel industry, travel consultants looking to significantly move their cruise sales needle forward should be taking advantage of the all the opportunities available. Here are two ways to do it:

1. **Sharpen your skills** . Make certain to renew your CLIA Membership for the coming year, so you can access the definitive industry training.
- ✓ Take advantage of CLIA's online courses and other professional development opportunities, including CLIA research into cruise trends and behaviors.

- ✓ Learn about the newest ocean and river cruise ships and their onboard features and amenities. Gain a solid understanding of up-and-coming ports of call, along with any unique shore excursion opportunities they might offer your clients.
- ✓ Learn about that cruise line you are not currently selling, but want to sell. Communicate your CLIA member status to your cruise line BDMs and inquire about any upcoming seminars at sea or FAM trips. Reach out to participate in any ship inspections in your area, or Webinars run by CLIA.

#### 2. Leverage your loyal clients, who already know that you are great at what you do.

- ✓ Ask them if they would act as an advocate on your behalf, sending referrals and endorsing you through testimonials and holiday snaps that you can post to your social media platforms.
- ✓ While you must always demonstrate your value, leveraging those who have experienced your great work firsthand, who are happily willing to share their experiences, multiplies the extent of your market reach and establishes you as a cruise travel authority.

Your CLIA membership is about being part of a global community of professionals who drive the cruise industry forward and prosper as a result. Please deepen your level of involvement this year and be an active participant in CLIA as we continue to advocate, educate, and promote for the common interests of the cruise community. If you are not yet a CLIA member or you have not yet renewed your 2017 membership, it's not too late – sign up via the CLIA website at [www.cruising.org.au](http://www.cruising.org.au)

## CRUISE WEEKLY

- 19 Jan *Radiance* OPT/WBT shift
- 24 Jan NCL bid for an upgrade
- 31 Jan Azamara marketing rejig
- 31 Jan Regent 2018/19
- 07 Feb Regent flight packages

## JAN TO FEB HEADLINES

- 07 Feb Contiki to sell U by Uniworld program
- 09 Feb Chimu Antarctica growth
- 14 Feb SeaLink's record 1st half
- 14 Feb Cruising drives ad spend
- 16 Feb Helloworld acquires Worldwide Cruise Centres



# INDUSTRY IN FOCUS



AIME leaders Karen Bolinger, Melbourne Convention Bureau CEO; Robert Doyle, Melbourne Lord Mayor; Penny Lion, Tourism Australia; Peter King, CEO of Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre; Kerry Prince, Reed Travel Exhibitions IBTM Global Events Portfolio director, and Ian Wainwright, AIME event director



Tahiti Travel Connection were the first group of agents to stay at the newly opened Conrad Bora Bora Nui, where they stayed a night in the resort's ultra-chic overwater villas.



This Virtuoso group recently got to explore the mountainous kingdom of Bhutan. A highlight was their final trek up to the Tiger's Nest Temple in Paro Taktsang.



The team from Silversea were snapped at a recent degustation dinner held on board *Silver Whisper* for some of its key industry partners.



Destination Canada's annual Canada Corroborree road show wrapped up last month, with over 850 travel agents across Australia attending the events.





Deb Long, Weston Cruise & Travel; Matt Endycott, Adventure World head of sales and Maria Slater, Maria Slater Travel were snapped at the launch of Adventure World's inaugural USA tailor-made collection.



Hoot Holidays and Visit West Hollywood hosted this group of seven personal travel managers in LA recently. Their trip included visits to Disneyland, Universal Studios and of course some retail therapy at Citadel Outlets.



Magellan Travel Group's award winners returned last month from five luxury nights in Dubai and Oman.

Serena Chu, Silvia Leong and Amanda Fu from Nexus Holidays all attended the recent Excite Holidays event promoting their America the Great incentive.



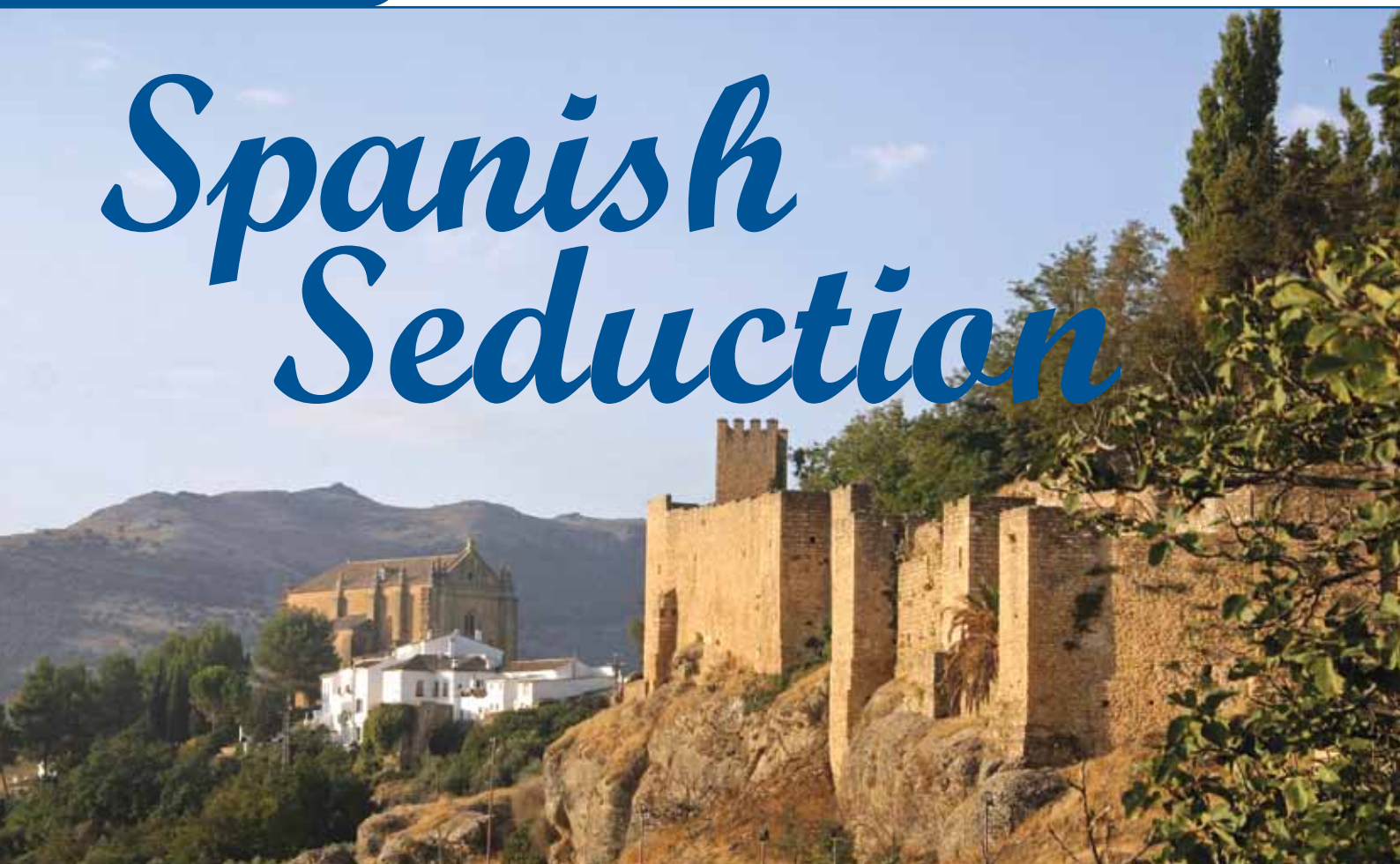
Crystal CEO Edie Rodriguez and managing director, Australia and New Zealand, Karen Christensen officially cut the ribbon on the company's new dedicated corporate office in Sydney.



Small Luxury Hotels of the World international member properties were in Sydney and Melbourne recently for the annual SLH Roadshow.



# Spanish Seduction



**Close your eyes and picture stereotypical Spain's blue-tiled patios, orange trees, flamenco dancing and whitewashed buildings – and welcome to Ronda writes Brian Johnston.**

**S**OMETIMES travel is about giving in to your expectations rather than challenging them. Ronda is Spain straight from a storybook, complete with clip-clopping horse-drawn carriages, bull fights and barrels of sherry in dim tapas bars. Lying just 60 kilometres inland from Malaga on the coast – though quite a bit further by winding road in this rugged region – it provides a gorgeous small-town alternative to Andalusia's big-name destinations, Granada and Seville. Stay for a night or two because, when the tour groups depart, it envelops you in the rhythms and all the delightful stereotypes of small-town Spain.

Lodged atop a rocky outcrop above Andalusia's hot plains, Ronda grew to prominence during Spain's long, medieval Islamic occupation, falling to the Spanish reconquest only in 1485. The remnants of this glorious period are everywhere, from the

restaurant food to the style of its whitewashed houses and orange and almond trees.

Every church seems to have started life as a mosque, and some remain looped with Arabic calligraphy. Fine mansions featuring Moorish arches, plasterwork and fountain-trickled gardens will remind you of the Middle East, though overlaid with later baroque embellishments. Casa Del Rey Moro and the Palacio Mondragón are open to the public, but you'll get almost as much Islamic architecture just by wandering the town's tangled whitewashed alleys, where old men doze and black-clad grandmothers haggle over eggplants.

The Catholics came later and added churches and convents to the mix, rich with swooning saints and gold leaf. Step into the dim, tiled hallway of Carmelitas Descalzas convent in Plaza Merced and you'll find the nuns' wares displayed on a trestle table: quince paste, macaroons, cakes oozing cream. Ring the buzzer and a disembodied voice behind a hatch will ask what you want; your order appears from the hatch on a revolving lazy Susan. It isn't uncommon in Spain for convents to operate bakeries but,

in Ronda, the nuns will also sell you a paper twist of sugared almonds, a treat straight from Islamic times.

Ronda's convents and narrow alleys seem secretive and turned inwards, but skirt the old town's edges for magnificent views outwards over the Andalusian countryside. The town's rocky perch is split in two by a gorge spanned by an eighteenth-century stone bridge, Puente Nuevo. Walk the promenades along the cliff edges, where eucalyptus trees are a disconcerting reminder of home. Whitewashed houses cling to the rocks, while down below lies a panorama of silvery olive groves and patchwork fields.

As the sun slides down behind the suburbs and the sky turns mauve, it's time to move across into the new part of town, which shakes off the day's heat and comes alive. Locals emerge in shoals, licking pyramids of scarlet ice cream and watching their children play in the fountains. After a long siesta, shutters rattle open along Calle Espinel, revealing shirts in bright colours, stylish kitchen utensils and the ruffled, polka-dotted skirts and dangling earrings of fiesta attire. Later, it's time to laze at an outdoor café over some olives as a busker strums his guitar and sings







melancholy songs in the fading light.

As darkness settles in, the new town reveals its trump card: neighbourhood tapas joints. Squeeze in past huge wooden barrels of sweet Malaga wine, bottled olives and great wheels of cheese, and take a stool at the bar. Tapas start off in cold dishes arranged along the countertop:

slices of oily eggplant, potato salad, tiny purple-shelled cockles in garlic and parsley sauce. You can also order hot dishes from a waiter in a crisp white apron: tiny omelettes, juicy green peppers roasted over an open flame until the skin is charred, deep-fried squid sprinkled with lime juice. Tuck in, because you can hardly expect a proper meal in Spain any time before ten o'clock.

There's good reason, though, to behave like a vampire while in Ronda and linger over both tapas and dinner. It isn't until after midnight, as the stone streets finally give up the last of their heat, that you'll hear distinct, strangely arrhythmic clapping from inside dim bars; then the rasping tones of an old man singing of treacherous women, all overlaid by mumbled conversation and the rattle of dishes and cutlery as if to remind you this is no Carmen opera stage.

Instead, it's just Rondans enjoying themselves. Happily, flamenco in Andalusia isn't a quaint and dying art, and the same trendy youngsters you see shopping in jeans during the day are just as likely to be clapping and dancing at night, silk roses in their hair and knotted shawls around their shoulders. Castanets click, feet rattle floorboards, a singer moans, and Ronda seduces you once more.

Watch a well-performed flamenco dance and it will tear your heart out. Gaze at the baroque magnificence of Ronda's mansions and give a sigh. Wander about in the perfumed gardens of its Islamic terraces and dream of yesteryear. There's poetry and passion everywhere in Ronda – as in all Andalusia – and your spirit will soar.





# TOUR OPERATORS TAKE AN OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK



Ashford Castle

By Nathalie Craig

AUSTRALIANS are approaching European travel this year with “a renewed sense of optimism”, according to Scenic’s acting general manager of sales and marketing Liz Glover.

“We all got 2016 fatigue; it was a challenging year for everyone in so many ways and I think people have started 2017 afresh,” Glover said.

The same sentiment has been echoed across several of the major tour operators, each of whom has spoken of a stronger consumer confidence around European destinations after a difficult time last year.

Trafalgar Tours, Scenic and Globus have each recorded a rise in sales in the first month of 2017 when compared to January 2016, with Britain and Ireland departures being in particularly hot demand.

“Britain and Ireland always go extremely well for us and Eastern European land tours go really well as well,” Glover said.

Globus family of brands national

marketing manager Chris Fundell concurred, while also highlighting the success of a Scottish Highlands tour this year.

“It’s January and we have already beaten last year’s sales on this one,” he said.

Tour operators are reporting that Scandinavia and Switzerland are standing out as trending destinations, with a strong increase in bookings for 2017.

“Scandinavia is definitely somewhere that is on everybody’s map,” Glover said.

Fundell reported the same, saying Scandinavia was selling “exceptionally well”, along with a selection of Switzerland rail offerings. “People are looking for new experiences,” he said.

While the shadow of terrorism saw France take a hit last year, operators remain confident the destination won’t lose its appeal in the longer term.

Trafalgar managing director Matt Cameron-Smith highlighted a resilience in France.

“People are still going to France without question – there’s a lot on offer,” Cameron-Smith said.

“Paris is the number one tourist destination

in the world and I think it will hold that place”.

He said while there was no question sales were down for the city of light last year, Trafalgar was seeing traction again on the destination.

At Scenic, Glover suggested customers were being a little more cautious and said France was not expected to regain “healthy bookings” until 2018.

“While we’re not seeing a downturn this year we expect to see growth happen in 2018,” she said.

“Our clients don’t say ‘I’m never going there’. They just say ‘I’ll just wait a year and go somewhere else in the meantime.”

“They just show a slight caution which I guess comes with age,” Glover admitted.

Fundell, on the other hand, thinks France is already well on its way to recovery.

“I think there has been a short term hit but we haven’t seen a great impact on overall sales”.

Overall, the major European tour providers *travelBulletin* spoke to are all expecting to see notable year-on-year growth in their European sales across 2017.



# SCANDINAVIAN APPEAL

TRAVELLERS can't get enough of Scandinavia right now. Demand for 2017 tours is swelling right across Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland, with the latter's tourism figures showing a massive 40% year-on-year increase in 2016.

Europe specialist Beyond Travel is expanding its Scandinavian range this year and introducing Iceland in response to strong customer demand. Beyond Travel marketing manager Bryce Crampton said the "unique destination" of Iceland was fast becoming the place to visit for 2017.

"It is known to be somewhat difficult to access but with our new product range including escorted touring, self-driving tailor-made tours and coastal voyages, we have made it more accessible to a range of Australian traveller markets," Crampton said.

A new option for Iceland is the eight-day coastal cruise, The Land of Fire & Ice. Sailing from Reykjavik to Akureyri or vice versa, the itinerary includes majestic coastal scenery with cruising through remote fjords, port visits to some of Iceland's best kept secrets, picturesque fishing villages, volcanic landscapes and plenty of opportunities for wildlife spotting.

Meanwhile, Trafalgar's managing director Matt Cameron-Smith said while the volume people travelling to Scandinavia didn't match traditional favourites such as Italy and the UK, it was still the region seeing the biggest increases in demand. Some of Trafalgar's offerings to the area include the 14-day Scenic Scandinavia and its Fjords departure visiting Norway, Sweden and Denmark and the 10-day Ultimate Iceland Summer 2017.



Geiranger Fjord, Norway

# SKY'S YOUR LIMIT

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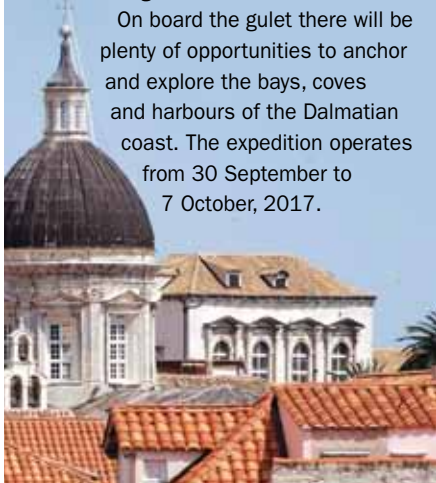


## Peter Sommer on foot in Croatia

HISTORICAL and cultural specialist Peter Sommer Travels has launched its first Croatian walking and cruising itinerary. The eight-day tour along the southern Dalmatian coast is hosted by archaeologist and historian Dr Helena Tomas and combines cruising aboard a traditional wooden gulet with walks to explore ancient forts, towns and castles.

Highlights include walking atop of a five-kilometre wall at Ston built in the 14th and 15th centuries and navigating a network of paths and tracks on Mljet to take in vistas of the sea, lake, hills and valley. On the island of Hvar guests will explore the Stari Grad Plain, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

On board the gulet there will be plenty of opportunities to anchor and explore the bays, coves and harbours of the Dalmatian coast. The expedition operates from 30 September to 7 October, 2017.



## BRIGHT OUTLOOK FOR BRITAIN

Tower Bridge of London

THE desire to travel within the UK has not been dampened as a result of last year's Brexit vote. If anything, the resulting depreciation of the pound has been an added impetus for overseas travellers to spend up bigger in the UK, according to British tourism officials.

VisitBritain declared at the start of the year that it was expecting 2017 to be another record year for inbound tourism to the UK. This year's overseas visitor spend is expected to increase 8% on 2016 to £24.1 billion, thanks to the 38.1 million international arrivals forecast by the end of this year.

In the words of Trafalgar's managing director Matt Cameron-Smith "Britain is hot right now". A popular Trafalgar offering this year is the eight-day Britain and Ireland Highlights which takes in Shakespeare's

Birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon, Edinburgh Castle, York Minster, the Irish National Stud Farm, the Roman landmarks of Bath and the ancient stone circle at Stonehenge.

Meanwhile, national marketing manager for Globus Chris Fundell confirmed England, Ireland and Scotland were always front runners that he could rely on to do well for the company.

Globus' 14-day Scottish Highlands and Islands tour had been a massive hit for the company this year, he said, having already exceeded total 2016 sales by the end of January 2017. The Glasgow to Glasgow round-trip takes in Edinburgh, Inverness, Thurso, the Isle of Skye and the Isle of Mull. The tour offers visits to famous castles and historical sights with breathtaking scenery from Scotland's northern coast to the waterfalls and jagged peaks on the Isle of Skye.

## BELMOND PUTS SPA ON RAILS

THE boom in spa treatments has made its way to rail, with Belmond launching its first day spa carriage on board its luxury Belmond Royal Scotsman train next month. The Bamford Hayburn Spa will offer indulgent treatments for passengers travelling on overnight rail journeys throughout Scotland and other parts of Britain.

"We are excited to launch our first spa carriage – we are now able to offer our guests a new way to relax, to de-stress and slow down and to reflect on their journey with us," managing director of Belmond Trains & Cruises Gary Franklin said. "Train journeys are incredibly relaxing and the new Hayburn Spa offers another way to take time and reconnect with the things that are important while travelling through stunning Scottish scenery".

The spa features two single treatment rooms designed using sustainable wood from Scotland and the Cotswolds. The spa menu includes a deluxe facial incorporating reflexology, lymphatic drainage, stimulating lifting and ancient yogic breathing finished off with a deep tissue back massage using hot stones. Other options include the Bamford de-stress massage, deep tissue massage, manicures and pedicures using eco-natural Kure Bazaar nail polishes.

The Belmond Royal Scotsman offers two seven-night itineraries from Edinburgh across the Scottish Highlands.





# Eurail on Sale

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- ▶ 5 extra days



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#### Passes and Validities:

##### Eurail One Country Pass

- ▶ all validities 1 free travel day

##### Eurail Greek Islands Pass

- ▶ all validities 1 free extra trip

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**Sale:** 01 February – 31 March 2017. **Travel:** Normal travel rules apply (11 month advance purchase). **Conditions:** No exchange or refund of the promotional passes.



To book, please contact your preferred rail wholesaler.



# ART WITH IMPACT

Time is precious and the great galleries of Europe can be vast and overwhelming. For anyone who can't face the crowds at the Louvre, here are five other options that pack a lot of punch with minimal fuss.



## NEUES MUSEUM, BERLIN

Among the treasures of Berlin's Museum Island is the Neues Museum, a symbol of the city's rebirth and a trove of ancient wonders. Bombed during World War II, it lay in ruins for half a century before its modern revival under the vision of architect David Chipperfield. It now houses an incredible collection of pre-historic and ancient Egyptian artefacts.

**Don't miss:** The extraordinary bust of Egypt's Queen Nefertiti, a 3,000-year-old work whose striking beauty has beguiled archaeologists and artists for decades.



## MUSEO REINA SOFIA, MADRID

Spain's national museum of 20th century art demonstrates how much the modern art world owes to Spanish artists and the movements they helped spawn. Just a short walk from the more sober masterpieces of Madrid's famous Prado Museum, the Reina Sofia is home to a vibrant collection of more recent Spanish icons including Picasso, Dali, Miro and more.

**Don't miss:** Picasso's *Guernica*, the arresting mural that became an international symbol of anti-war protest, painted in defiance of the Nazi and Fascist regimes that swept Europe in the 1930s.



Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris

## REMBRANDT HOUSE, AMSTERDAM

Among the picture-perfect canals of Amsterdam is an atmospheric little house that makes up for in character what it lacks in size. The Rembrandt House Museum is a careful re-creation of the artist's home as it was when he lived here from 1639 to 1656. On show are examples of his etchings, several paintings and items from his personal collection.

**Don't miss:** Rembrandt's original studio, bathed in natural light and tinged with the evocative smell of oil paints, as if the master had only just left his easel.

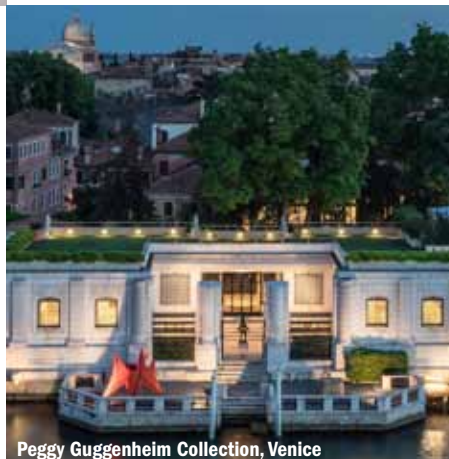


Rembrandt's self portrait, hanging in the Louvre

## MUSÉE DE L'ORANGERIE, PARIS

Across the Tuileries gardens from the Louvre, this small but beautifully designed gallery is like a private conservatory for French artists including Monet, Matisse, Renoir and Rousseau. Most visitors come for the spectacle of Monet's famous waterlilies, but the rest of the collection is also superb and offers a peaceful sanctuary from the crowds at other Paris landmarks.

**Don't miss:** Well, there's no missing those waterlilies. Claude Monet's giant masterworks are displayed in two oval-shaped rooms, in all their 360-degree glory.



Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice

## PEGGY GUGGENHEIM COLLECTION, VENICE

As art patrons go, Peggy Guggenheim had an eye for the greats. Picasso, Pollock, Miro, Kandinsky and other bohemian masters of the modernist era quickly caught the eye of this wealthy American heiress. She also had an eye for real estate, and her home on the Grand Canal of Venice is now one of the most spectacularly located galleries in the world.

**Don't miss:** Jackson Pollock's *Alchemy*, one of the intense drip paintings that came to define his style and a fine example of why Guggenheim became a champion of his work.



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Temple Mount, Jerusalem



# JOURNEY TO THE PLACE

By Ben Groundwater

**T**HERE'S a moment when you realise that this is the spot. Right here: this is the place where history changed. This city, where your feet are planted, is where so many of the world's formative spiritual events took place, where entire religions and kingdoms have risen and fallen, where so many of the myths and stories that have been told throughout our lives are centred.

Jerusalem. High above on the hill there is the Dome of the Rock, one of the most sacred sites in Islam, a mosque perched upon a citadel that's considered deeply sacred, too, by the Jewish people. Below that sits the Western Wall, the holiest place for modern-day Jews, a site of pilgrimage and worship. And at your feet lies the paved walkway known as the Via Dolorosa, the street where, more than 2,000 years ago, a man said to be the son of God was forced to

carry his own cross to his crucifixion.

This is the ancient city of Jerusalem, and surely there's no place more closely connected to the spirituality of the world. Three of human civilisation's greatest religious movements, their modern-day followers collectively numbering almost four billion, can trace their history to this beautiful but contested city.

Whether you're a believer or skeptic, a follower of any or none of these religions, you can't help but be affected by Jerusalem. Its walled Old City, an area inhabited for more than 4,000 years, is a slice of living history, a car-free warren of narrow alleyways and covered bazaars, where you can get lost in minutes, and yet stumble upon one of the world's most important religious sites without even trying.

The most obvious of those sites is the Dome of the Rock, the gold-topped mosque that commands the highest vantage point in the Old City. These days, visitors can't simply arrive at this point on Temple Mount without realising it – as one of the most contested

areas of a divided city, seen as holy and extremely important to Muslims, Jews and Christians, Temple Mount is heavily guarded, off-limits to those of the Jewish faith, and a site even non-believers will have to be heavily searched in order to access.

It's worth the hassle, however, to tread on these hallowed stones, to see the place where Jews and Christians believe God gathered the dirt to create Adam, and where Muslims believe the prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven. The entire Temple Mount site these days is a peaceful haven, a place where men sit and chat in the shade of tall trees, and tourists move from site to site taking it all in.

Just below here lies another of the world's most famous religious monuments. For Jewish people, given their barring from Temple Mount itself, the Western Wall, also known as the "Wailing Wall", is the holiest place in which they're allowed to pray. This 20-metre-high stone embankment on the perimeter of the mount is busy any time of the week; however, at sunset on a Friday,



Jerusalem



Jerusalem Gate

# WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

the beginning of the Shabbat, thousands of followers of the Jewish faith stream in from across the city to pray and chant and lay hands upon its sacred surface.

Near the wall, groups of Israelis, some young, some old, some in military uniforms, others in traditional Orthodox garb, gather in groups to celebrate the Shabbat. The devout touch the wall and chant. Tourists and other onlookers mingle and stare. It's part festivity, part ancient religious rite.

Back on those paved alleyways, the Old City buzzes. Members of East Jerusalem's Arabic community sell falafel and hummus

from hole-in-the-wall restaurants. Ancient stores peddle antiques and knick-knacks.

Wander these streets long enough and you'll inevitably stumble upon the third in Jerusalem's triumvirate of history-defining religious locations. Near the end of the Via Dolorosa lies the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a place of worship built on the spot where Jesus Christ is said to have been crucified, buried, and eventually resurrected.

The church, charmingly ramshackle for such an important site – different parts of the building belong separately to Eastern Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, and

Oriental Orthodox Christians – has been built to surround Jesus's original tomb, a structure that's lit brilliantly during the day by beams of sunlight that descend from the ceiling high above. You can't fail to feel the significance of this beautiful place of pilgrimage. There are many other sites in Israel and the Palestinian Territories that Christian tourists come to see, from Jesus's birthplace in Bethlehem, to his home city of Nazareth, to the site of some of his miracles at the Sea of Galilee, but this is the one in which their fervour seems at its most intense.

It's fitting for a city such as Jerusalem that an event as formative as Jesus's crucifixion should have taken place here. This is, after all, where history and religion, stories and myths, parts of life that once seemed so abstract, actually happened. That realisation, in itself, is a religious experience.

*Please note: The rules regarding entry to the Temple Mount area for non-Muslims are in a constant state of flux, and should be checked by travellers before they attempt to visit.*



Mount of Beatitudes, Jerusalem



# COSMOS BUILDS ON WYD SUCCESS

THE Australian arm of Cosmos is preparing to bid for a second stint as the official tour operator of World Youth Day (WYD) when the event is held in Panama in 2019, coming after its success in Poland last year.

The budget tour specialist hosted more than 3,500 young Australian pilgrims as they travelled to the city of Krakow for WYD 2016, joining a series of specially created pre- and post-event tours in Poland and other parts of Europe with Catholic significance.

Globus family of brands national marketing manager Chris Fundell said Cosmos had received an outpouring of positive feedback based on the WYD product it created for the Australian pilgrims.

He said not only had the 2016 event been a great success, but the knock-on effects WYD had generated for the company had been particularly pleasing.

“It was a great experience,” Fundell said. “It has helped generate a lot of new leads for our spiritual products, not just ones from our brochure but our custom group itineraries too,” he said.

These customised itineraries usually blend together trip ideas from the European brochure and the religious tours program, with clients drawing inspiration from both before working closely with Cosmos to



include additional sites and services.

“The religious travel program allows people to explore Europe and the Holy Lands in more detail than a regular tour, travelling with specialist guides and meeting other travellers with a shared interest,” Fundell said.

Most of the groups making these custom itinerary requests come from church groups, schools or cultural communities. For clients to be eligible for custom trips they simply need a group of 20 or more passengers.

Fundell said it was common for itineraries to be built around a major global event, such as this year’s 100th anniversary of the Our Lady of Fatima apparitions in central Portugal, expected to draw pilgrims from around the world in May to visit a shrine in the Portuguese town of Fatima.

Both Cosmos and its parent brand Globus offer a range of specialist religious tours in destinations across Europe and the Holy Lands.

## A spiritual adventure in India



Taj Mahal

UNIWORLD is this year offering a 13-day Golden Triangle and Sacred Ganges spiritual adventure by land and river. The journey’s highlights include a pilgrimage to Kolkata, visits to the site of Mother Teresa’s home and tomb, a trip to the Rajbari Temples devoted to the Hindu god Shiva, plus a chance to see the mesmerising Taj Mahal at Agra.

There is also a three-day optional extension in the subcontinent’s holiest city, Varanasi, to visit the River Ganges. Highlights include a private boat ride to observe a Ganga Aarti ceremony led by a Hindu priest at sunset, a devotional ritual performed in honour of the goddess of the river. There will also be an option to take a boat ride along the sacred river at sunrise when hundreds of Hindus can be seen bathing, performing yoga asanas, and making offerings to Mother Ganga. Prices for the tour lead in at \$12,409 per person.

## Collette Faith offerings

COLLETTE has launched its new Faith brochure for 2017/2018, offering eight itineraries exploring some of the world’s most iconic spiritual sites and destinations.

Faith-based tours detailed inside include Shrines of Italy, St Patrick’s Ireland, Pilgrimage to Fatima and Lourdes, a Pilgrimage to Poland, Greece: In the Footsteps of Paul the Apostle, On the Trail of Martin Luther, as well as two denomination-specific Israel tours.

The brochure also provides information on how travellers can register their interest in Collette’s planned tour to the Oberammergau Passion Play in Germany in 2020.

The performances will run five days a week from 16 May to 4 October in the town of Oberammergau, and Collette travellers will have at least seven programs to choose from, ranging from nine to 13 days in length. Each itinerary will include either a one- or two-night Passion Play premium category package with reserved accommodation and seating at the event.



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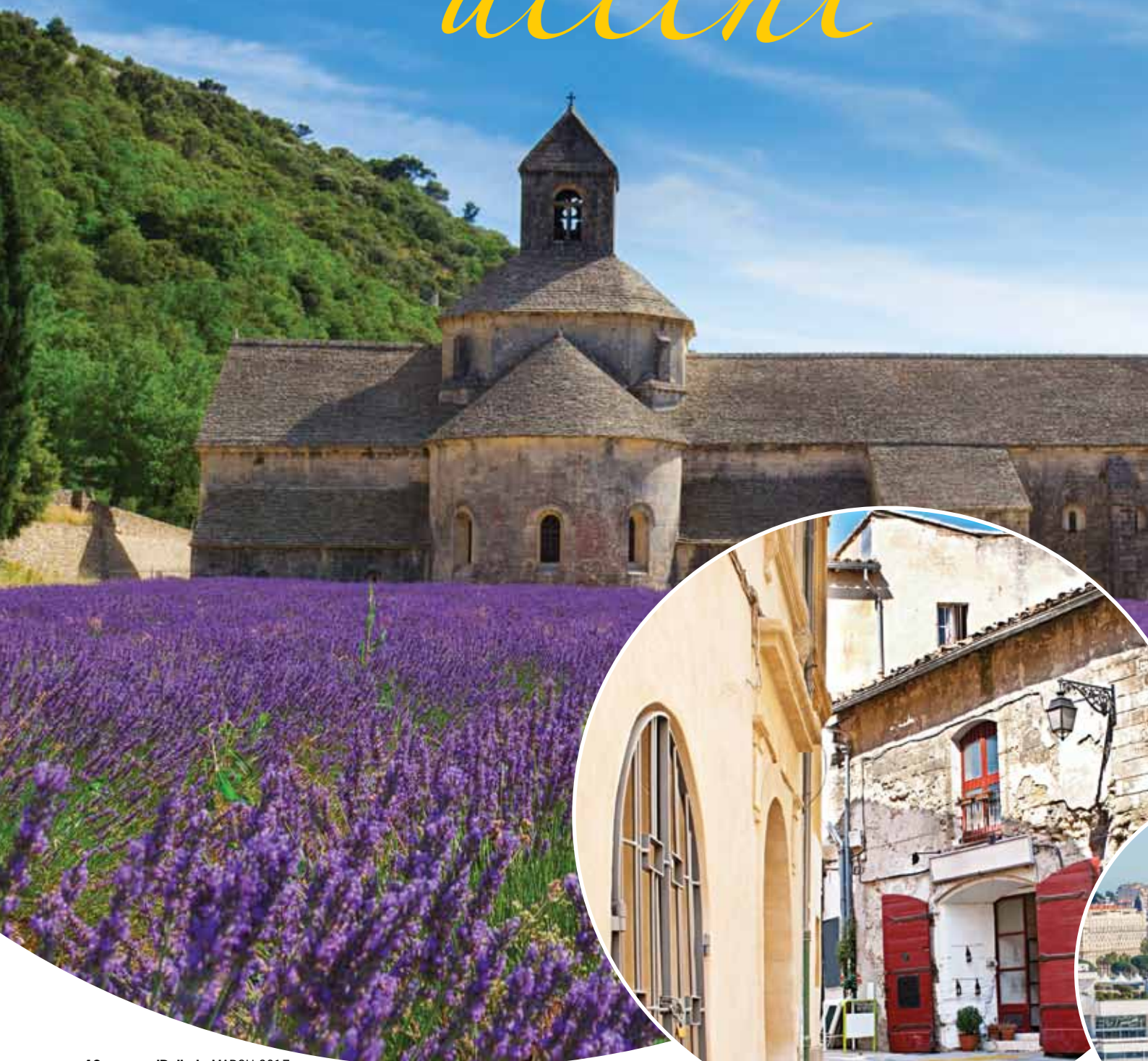
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# *French accent*





### Kristie Kellahan visits Provence with a small group of big-hearted travellers.

**T**HE sense of camaraderie in our group was first ignited, as often happens, with a good laugh. Gathered on the sunny terrace of Grand Hotel Nord-Pinus, in the charming Provençal town of Arles, we had come together as 12 strangers who were about to embark on a week-long Back-Roads tour of Provence.

Escorted by guide Erik Jelinek and driver Rachel Watkins, we were assembled for a meet and greet, just a few steps from the spot where post-Impressionist painters Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin had once lived and worked.

Of the 12 passengers, seven were Brits and five Australians; two men were outnumbered by 10 ladies; ages ranged from 40 to 80 and four birthdays were to be celebrated during the cruise week. Introducing ourselves to our fellow travellers, a pattern emerged: one Sue, two Sues, three Sues... and a Mrs Susans. The randomness of our Sue surplus was enough to cue laughter all round.

Explaining the Back-Roads' philosophy as 'organised independence', Erik ran us through what to expect of the seven-day tour.

The unique sights of this striking region of southern France are well-known: lavender fields, paddocks of sunflowers, elegant pink flamingoes, medieval villages and sunny market squares. We would have ample opportunities to see and photograph them all during the week; in addition we would be venturing off the well-trodden tourist trail to enjoy authentic local experiences including a visit to a bull ranch deep in the Camargue and small-batch olive oil and jam tasting on a family-run farm. Surely one of the most valuable

advantages of signing up for small group travel rather than going it alone is the ease with which logistics are taken care of by someone else, leaving holidaymakers with nothing more to do than sit back and enjoy the ride.

Offered as an all-inclusive package, Back-Roads fares cover transport, meals, drinks, excursions and the services of tour guides. Our home base was onboard the CroisiEurope barge, the *MS Anne-Marie*. A much more compact vessel than most avid river cruisers will be accustomed to, the barge accommodates 11 twin/double cabins, as well as living quarters for the crew who would be keeping us fed, watered and on course. A spacious roof deck and jacuzzi hot tub were at our disposal.

Our chariot was a 20-seater Mercedes luxury coach, with capable driver Rachel at the helm. Some days we would cover hundreds of kilometres, in hot pursuit of unforgettable sights, ranging from snow-white Camargue horses to the stunning pink salt flats of Aigues-Mortes. Each night we would return to a welcome aperitif onboard the *MS Anne-Marie*.

Back-Roads has been offering small group tours in Europe since 1990. The company, a joint venture of Flight Centre and businessman James Nathan, operates 44 small luxury coach tours in regions including the UK, Scandinavia, France, Morocco and Italy.

Barge-and-coach holidays in France are a recent addition to the Back-Roads catalogue. Combining the experience of slow cruising along rural canals and lesser-known waterways with scenic back roads touring, passengers experience the diversity and depth of famed French wine regions.

This year, itineraries will be offered in Provence, Burgundy and Champagne, all wine-growing regions of world-renown. Did we mention the trip tariff includes wine?

As guests of Back-Roads, we could do as much or as little as we liked. A Clayton's tour for people who wouldn't normally think of themselves as the type of travellers who join escorted group tours.

For our group, with varying degrees of mobility and energy, that would mean the flexibility to go our own way at times. One sunny afternoon, when most of the group drove to Pont du Gard, a spectacular ancient Roman aqueduct, others stayed behind on the boat to enjoy some bubbles in the jacuzzi.

On the day we visited the delightful village of Pezenas, we each experienced it in our own way: some people grabbed the opportunity to shop the sprawling Saturday

market, while others visited the medieval church, and a few chose to sit and enjoy a coffee in the sunshine.

With all the choose-your-own-adventure flexibility, there's an emphasis on mixing and mingling – guests are encouraged to get to know each other by sitting with different people each night at dinner, and pre-dinner drinks are a shared affair – and as the week progressed, the small group bonded in a way that a larger group may not have.

Sharing cheese and Côtes de Provence Rosé on the deck after dinner, as the summer



sun dipped slowly, I learned of a fellow guest's ambitious plan to build a home near Rome, and was touched by the romance still evident in the marriage of two elderly travellers, almost 60 years after they first met.

Laughing, chatting, toasting new friends' birthdays and sharing stories over a glass or two of good French wine... surely these are some of travel's sweetest pleasures.

■ For more information visit [backroadstouring.com](http://backroadstouring.com)





# REMARKABLE EAST UNVEILED



Madulkelle Tea and Eco Lodge, Sri Lanka

THERE'S a new player in small group touring, with Melbourne-based India and Sri Lanka wholesaler India Unbound releasing a new brand called Remarkable East.

Venturing to India and Sri Lanka in groups of eight to 12, Remarkable East has five tours on offer in 2017.

Designed by the founder of India Unbound, Lincoln Harris, the itineraries feature more than just the highlights of the destinations

and are based on decades of travelling, living and working in India and Sri Lanka.

"We believe small group tours should be just that – genuinely small – as it offers travellers experiences they simply can't have in a large group," Harris said.

"A small group tour allows us to engage with unique people and places – an intimate heritage hotel, meeting people renowned in their field or an interesting character whom

we've known for many years."

Itineraries range from 12-14 days in length and highlights include a stay at the Taj Mahal Palace, dining with a descendant of Rajasthan royalty and a scenic flight over central and southern Sri Lanka. The Remarkable East tours are North India Revealed, Sri Lanka in Style, Brahmaputra River Cruise, Fabulous India and Heritage Golf India.

■ Visit [www.remarkableeast.com.au](http://www.remarkableeast.com.au)

## TOURING THAT DOESN'T CRAMP YOUR STYLE

TOURING isn't all just sunshine and selfies, it's also long-queues, cramped coaches and comfort stops. However, those that choose to travel in smaller groups will find that many of these inconveniences are minimised, according to Bunnik Tours managing director Dennis Bunnik.

"Most of the time group touring is linked with the idea of a large group, being rushed around and corralled between destinations," he said. "But there are some smaller group tour experiences available that offer all the benefits of group touring... without the irritations that come with the practicality of travelling in a large group."

Bunnik Tours, which was founded by Marion Bunnik more than two decades ago, is a family-owned company launched to give Australians a "better way of touring".

While the company utilises full-sized coaches, its tour sizes are kept to a maximum of 20 people, meaning guests can comfortably spread out on empty seats.

"It's like finding out the seat next to you on a flight is free... you can experience that feeling every day of your holiday on a small



group tour," Bunnik told *travelBulletin*.

Last month, Bunnik Tours released its 2017-18 Middle East Brochure, which takes travellers on adventures throughout Egypt, Kenya and Zanzibar.

New to the small group operator this year is an itinerary which combines the ancient wonders of Egypt and Jordan with the idyllic Mediterranean island of Cyprus.

Highlights of the program include visits to the twin temples of Abu Simbel, adventures through the Valley of the Kings and exploring the Commonwealth War Cemetery.

When asked if tourism in Egypt was on the rebound, Bunnik replied "forward sales are the strongest they have been in five years".

"Unlike most operators we never left Egypt – It's a destination that is very close to our hearts."



# INSIDER JOURNEYS SPOTLIGHTS CHINA

INSIDER Journeys has outsourced its private travel operations for China to Qantas Holidays so it can direct its attention solely to the delivery of its Small Group Journey product to China.

Qantas Holidays has been looking after all forward bookings for private travel requests since 01 February and in addition, is featuring the Insider Journeys Small Group Journeys range in its latest China brochure.

Insider Journeys managing director Tony Mayell said the move was in response to 32% growth in the China Small Group Journey segment over the past 12 months, prompting the company to remain focused on and expand the product.

“Rather than trying to be all things to all people, we have made the strategic decision to focus on our strengths, and deliver our group itineraries,” Mayell said.

“This will provide better value and experiences to our passengers and travel industry partners.”

Mayell emphasised the scale of China, highlighting an “ever-expanding” number of tourist attractions and destinations.

“Our Small Group Journeys are our core product; they are the foundation of the company, and have been instrumental in developing our reputation as purveyors of quality tours with exceptional insights,” he added.

Mayell stressed the decision was relevant to China only, noting it was in response to “market needs and where we see the greatest opportunities”.

“This decision pertains only to China, and does not impact our private travel portfolios across Indochina, India, Thailand & Myanmar and Japan,” he explained.

Future private travel bookings which have already been deposited will be honoured.



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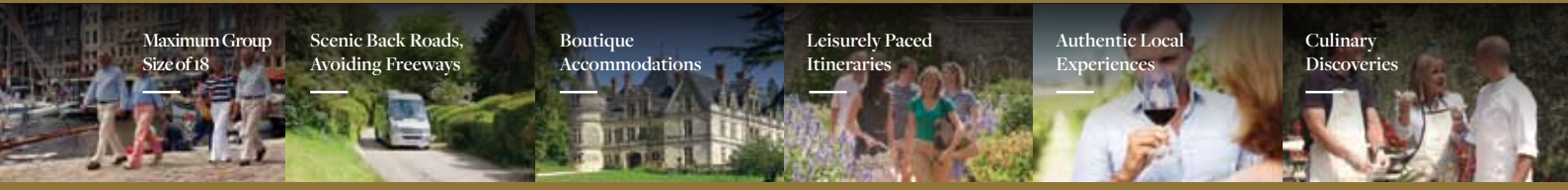


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# FIVE REASONS TO CONSIDER A SMALL GROUP TOUR

travelBulletin spoke with Chip Popescu, managing director of Eastern Eurotours & Mediterranean Holidays, on the benefits of opting for a small group tour.



**1 PERSONALISATION:** Small group tours allow passengers to have more interaction with the tour leader, meaning an operator to provide a more personalised service. Guests can ask more questions and the leader can provide more of the information that they are interested in.

**2 LIKE-MINDED TRAVELLERS:** At the core of many small group tours is a theme or interest. Whether it's zoning in on classical music, architecture from the Baroque era or satisfying a passion for food and wine, special interest tours attract travellers who are looking for similar things. This can help provide a deeper travel experience as travellers spend time delving into the topic they are passionate about, accompanied by people that have shared interests.

**3 MORE TIME:** A compact size means the group can be moved much faster from one place to another, leaving more time to dig up the intricacies of a destination. It also opens up transport options other than a coach, allowing the group to be more agile.

**4 LOCAL ENGAGEMENT:** Travellers can see the area from a local's perspective by moving in small groups because there can be more opportunities to engage with the people. Venturing through the backstreets on a bike or learning a region's dances accompanied by a crowd of 40 just doesn't have the same feel.

**5 VARIETY:** Particularly when travelling to more remote, smaller towns, not all hotels or restaurants can cater for a coach-full of travellers. Moving around in teams of 20 or less may unlock the opportunity to sleep in lesser-known unique hotels or provide the chance to be immersed in the culinary culture with a cooking class.



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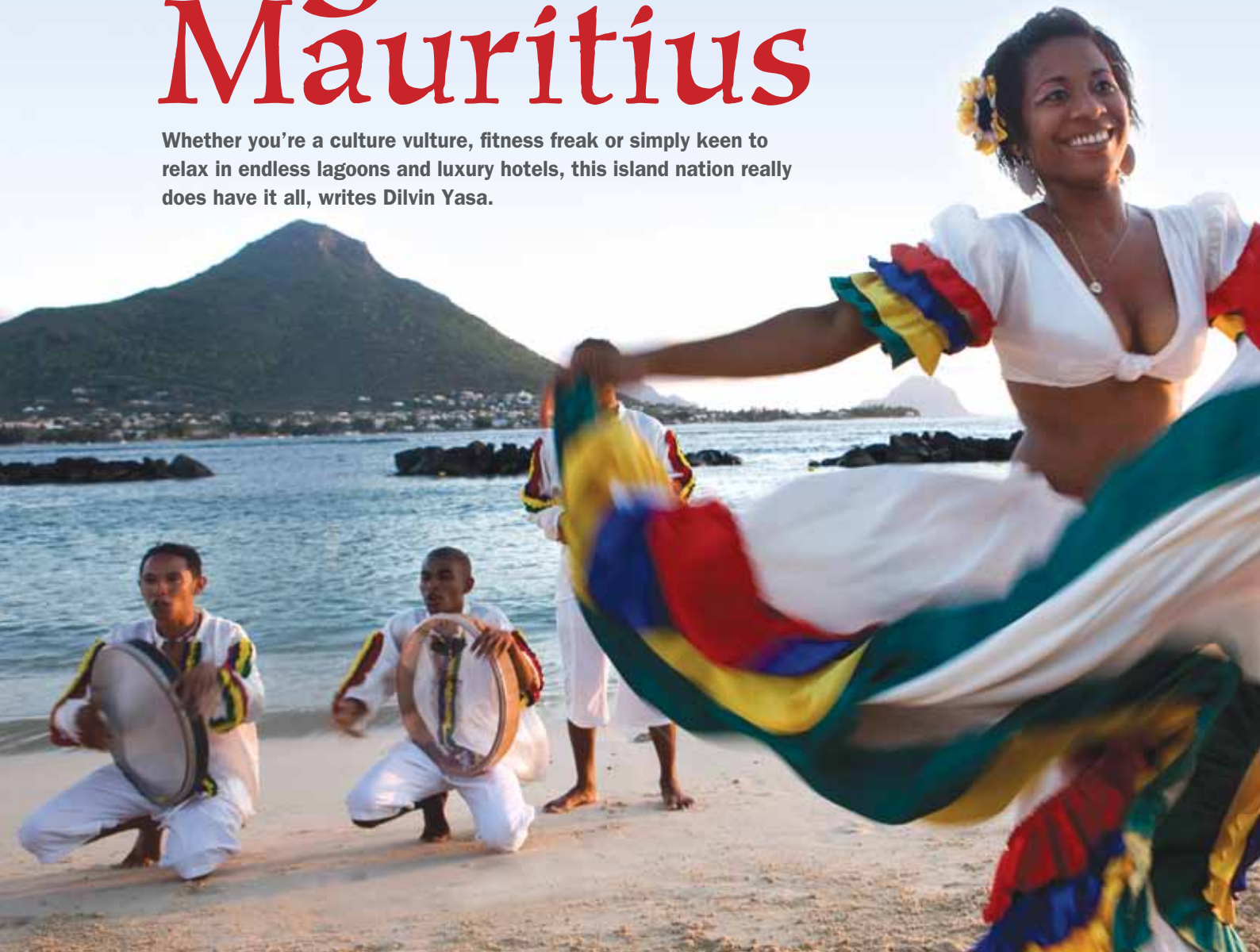


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# Magical Mauritius

Whether you're a culture vulture, fitness freak or simply keen to relax in endless lagoons and luxury hotels, this island nation really does have it all, writes Dilvin Yasa.



© Four Seasons



**I**F EVER I've felt like I'm starring in an over-the-top rap video, this must surely be the moment. Lazing at the back of a 45ft luxury catamaran around the pristine waters off Ile aux Aigrettes Island, I'm raising a toast to the sunset behind me as three handsome men in a riot of bandanas sing questionable lyrics in my general direction. I might not be so keen on 50 Cent's 'Candy Shop', but what I am is deliriously happy – happy to be atop the water for once rather than fully submerged in it like I have been since I arrived.

## INTO THE BLUE

Let's be honest, water play was always going to be a huge part of any trip to Mauritius. Rising out of the azure waters of the Indian Ocean some 2000kms off the coast of Africa, the tiny island is famous for her pristine lagoons, pretty beaches and sparkling seas positively teeming with aquatic life (trust me, it's like dolphin soup out there) and most visitors take to her water sports and charter boats with gusto. I was not original by any stretch of the imagination. Dropping off my things at the luxurious Four Seasons Resort Mauritius at Anahita (fourseasons.com) located at Beau Champ, one of the island's loveliest seaside areas, I took a dip in my private pool before heading out onto the beach to plan a Jacque Cousteau-style assault on the island – one swim-spot a time.

Now, it should be noted that Ile Aux Cerfs with its crowded beaches and over-priced cocktails isn't for everyone, but I quickly discovered the reason why the crowds are here in the first place – the sand is so white and fine it looks like Pablo Escobar's backyard circa 1985 and the snorkelling is second to none. Actually, that's a lie: the snorkelling is a little better at Blue Bay, a public beach which grants the average Joe immediate access to a protected marine park just a short paddle away. If you're serious about snorkelling (I wasn't), experts recommend taking one of the organised tours that operate from this area. Me? I recommend spending the odd day at Belle Mare Plage doing absolutely nothing but enjoying the scenery.

## PLANET EARTH

Now that I'm out of the water and sailing around the seas like I'm an extra in a Duran Duran video, I've begun yearning for a taste for Mauritius outside of the life aquatic – a space where I can sample some of the island's rich cultural heritage (she was discovered by the Portuguese and occupied by first the Dutch, then

the French), and enjoy some of her more earthly riches. The following morning, I head to the island's bustling capital, Port Louis, where the vendors of the colourful Central Market are hard at work trying to 'suggestive sell' all manner of embroidered dresses and carved ornaments to passers-by. I'm an easy target (between you and me, I once bought an umbrella for \$40 in Bali) and I head off to my next stop – Casela Nature Park (caselapark.com) where animal safaris and walking with lions are popular experiences – weighed down with armfuls of gifts. A zip-line adventure is also offered, but lunch at Eureka La Maison Creole (maisonureka.com), a grand colonial 1830s home set against the backdrop of Moka Mountains is calling. Renowned for its menu laden with curries and coconut chutneys, I eat lunch on the atmospheric deck before wandering around the home which still sits relatively untouched with original furniture from the 19th century. And after a morning walk admiring the giant water lilies at Pamplemousses Botanic Gardens (AKA Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam), and eating my body weight in masala dosa along the waterfront kiosks of Le Caudan, I hit the road once more.

## NATURE CALLS

If Eastern Mauritius is known for its beaches and water sports, the south-western part of the island is all about nature pursuits. I start by enjoying a morning coffee at the Seven Coloured Earths in the Chamarel Plain, which is exactly what it sounds like – an area that contains earth coloured seven different colours. It may not be the most exciting way to start the day, but it's certainly one of the prettiest, and when I'm put through my paces doing a walking trail at nearby Black Gorges National Park (not only the island's largest, but said to be its finest filled with more than 300 species of native plants), I'm glad I didn't peak too early. The park offers over 60km of walking trails, waterfalls, canyoning adventures and scenic picnic areas, but I make do with an elementary level trek and high-tail it over to one of the island's most popular sites – Ganga Taleo (also known as Grand Bassin), a peaceful crater lake where the faithful (and the curious) line up to visit the temple dedicated to Lord Shiva and pay their respects to the other Gods lined up along the waterside. It is gorgeous – particularly as the sun goes down, but I feel like I'm missing something.

It's only when I check into the award-winning Maradiva Villas (maradiva.com) at Flic en Flac, known as one of the island's prettiest (and most crowded) beach towns, and leap into yet another private pool that I realise what I was missing – water. And happily, surrounded by endless lagoons to explore once more, there really could be nowhere finer.



# AIR MAURITIUS TO INCREASE ITS SALES FOOTPRINT

WHEN James Blake joined Air Mauritius as its new regional manager for Australia and New Zealand in June last year, he made it his mission to make the carrier and destination as accessible as possible to the travel trade. And this year, he told *travelBulletin*, he'll be taking steps to make good on that promise.

"We have a lot of exciting things happening in 2017," Blake revealed. "There are lots of opportunities for Air Mauritius in the Australia and New Zealand market... we're trying to squeeze as many of those in as possible."

A series of new initiatives are in the pipeline to increase Air Mauritius' sales footprint within the Australian market, Blake revealed, which include plans to expand its team by introducing two new roles to support local travel trade partners.

Former Malaysian Airlines staffer Julia Lim has filled the newly created Victoria-based role of sales and marketing executive, where she will oversee travel trade sales in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. At the same time, Air Mauritius' GSA Airline Marketing Australia is currently in the middle of recruiting a new

Perth-based sales executive to look after the carrier's Western Australia and South Australia customers.

‘There are lots of opportunities for Air Mauritius in the Australia and NZ market...’

Blake hinted that the carrier would also be hosting a "record number" of agent famils in partnership with some of its wholesalers this year, and while he remained tight-lipped as to the exact number, he said "it's a very significant amount".

This year will involve many milestones for the carrier, with Air Mauritius to celebrate 50 years since it first commenced global commercial operations, as well as the 25th anniversary of the launch of its flights to and from Australia.

To mark the significant milestones, Air Mauritius will be rolling out a number of special fares in a bid to lure more visitors to experience the East African paradise.

To keep up with demand, Blake also told *travelBulletin* the carrier would be upping its Perth services from twice to thrice weekly from 07 July, with an additional fourth service to be operated during the peak Christmas/New Year's period between 14 December and 19 January.

This year will also see Air Mauritius take delivery of its first A350 aircraft, which features fully lie-flat seating in Business Class, upgraded inflight entertainment systems in Economy as well as on board internet. There are also plans to upgrade the airline's existing fleet of A330 and A340 aircraft, with Blake confirming the planes will undertake a progressive retrofit program at the end of Jan so that the carrier can introduce new inflight product across the fleet.

When questioned if the carrier would relaunch its triangular service between Melbourne, Sydney and Perth, Blake replied "what we need to do is concentrate on our Perth service".

"At the moment we have two flights a week and we're going up to three. You could say we're increasing our capacity by 50%. But there is a still a great opportunity for us to further enhance our position here."

# WHAT'S NEW IN MAURITIUS?

**travelBulletin brings you up to speed with all that's fresh and upcoming on the island paradise of Mauritius.**

■ **FAMILY resort Le Canonnier Beachcomber Golf Resort & Spa** will temporarily close from 02 May to undertake an extensive renovation program of its guest rooms, suites and public areas. More details on the refurbishment will be revealed in late March. The property is slated to reopen from early September this year.

■ **FIND** your inner zen by departing on a magical 10-day Mauritius yoga retreat with **Active Travel**. Departing from 26 March and running through until 04 April, the inaugural program includes visits to the Domaine des Aubineaux, a colonial house from the late 19th Century; excursions to the Ile des Deux Cocos; morning yoga and meditation sessions, and a tour of Trou aux Cerfs, an extinct volcano located in the middle of the central plateau.

■ **MAURITIUS'** many monuments and heritage sites will be open to the public for free between 22-23 April. There will be guided visits, open days and much more. The island boasts two UNESCO World Heritage sites: Le Morne Cultural Landscape and Aapravasi Ghat, inscribed in 2008 and 2006 respectively. Visit [www.tourism-mauritius.mu](http://www.tourism-mauritius.mu) for more information.

■ **St Regis Mauritius Resort** has appointed Nicolas De Visch as its Executive Chef. De Visch is an industry stalwart, bringing to the table more than 25 years of experience. Prior to his role at St Regis, De Visch worked in several Michelin Star restaurants across Belgium and France, including the three-star Michelin Bruneau in Brussels, as well as executive chef roles within top luxury hotels including Grand InterContinental Seoul in Korea, the W Taipei and the InterContinental Doha in Qatar.

■ **UNCOVER** a side of Mauritius rarely seen by most travellers with **Explore!**. Highlights include stargazing with a local astronomer, exploring the local markets of Mahebourg and learning how to cook traditional creole food during a cookery class in Port Louis. Trips depart in June, August, September and October 2017 and cost from \$4,339 per person. The price includes 13 nights' hotel accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis, some other meals, transport and the services of an Explore Leader, driver and local guides. For details, visit [www.exploreworldwide.com.au](http://www.exploreworldwide.com.au)



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6 nights all-inclusive from \$2,370pp<sup>1</sup>



# OUTRIGGER INTRODUCES INTERNATIONAL FLAVOURS



GUESTS staying at Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort will this year be given the opportunity to sample two new sumptuous international dining options: Cambodian and Hawaiian.

The Royal Khmer Cuisine menu from Cambodia will be available at the resort's Plantation Club colonial-style restaurant every Friday night and features evocative creations such as spicy soft shell crab, steamed

marinated duck with herbs, steamed langoustine in coconut milk and wok-fried beef with crushed pepper and piquant dip.

"I want to help guests try different tastes without fear," said chef Samreth. "Trust me and it will lead to a sensational dining experience fit for the royal court of Cambodia."

On Saturdays, the resort's Mercado restaurant is transformed into a Hawaiian paradise, offering a menu of Big Island

clam-lemongrass soup, Hawaiian-style fish tacos with Mahi Mahi, Kalua whole pork, Huli Huli chicken, grilled calamari and more.

Themed activities such as hula dancing and Mai Tai cocktails will also be available as well as a range of Pacific Island desserts such as coconut haupia, malasadas and banana guava pie.

■ For more information on the resort's latest dining offerings visit [www.outrigger.com](http://www.outrigger.com).

## Q&A

**Looking for water sports or luxury resorts? Travel Counsellors consultant Julie Savill gives some inside tips on selling Mauritius, including the best times to visit for activities like diving and surfing.**



### Is there much interest among Australians for travel to Mauritius?

For Australians, Mauritius is still more of a boutique destination. Mauritius' resorts offer a similar style of holiday to Bali but as a destination that is more expensive and harder to get to, it isn't on the radar for many Australian travellers. Having said that, many people use Mauritius as a stopover on the way to South Africa or Madagascar.

### Which areas are most popular?

The south and east coasts have most of the luxury resorts while the west coast has more mid-range options. The south-west part of Mauritius has great conditions for kite surfing so plenty of kite surfers head to that part of the country.

### What are the must see highlights for first time travellers?

Water sports are a big drawcard. Many people head to Mauritius for the swimming,



snorkelling, diving and surfing opportunities. All-inclusive beachside resorts are a popular choice for families and couples who want to relax and indulge by the beach.

### What sort of travellers are visiting Mauritius?

These days, I mainly book business travellers (en route to Madagascar) but the luxury resorts make Mauritius a top spot for honeymooners. Resorts with kids clubs make it a good destination for families also. Most of the major upscale, five-star resort brands are represented in Mauritius so

there are plenty of luxe options to choose from.

### Is there any particular time of year that is best or most popular to travel to Mauritius?

The weather is pretty warm all year round but summer runs from October to April (although it can get very humid). If you like a cooler, dryer climate then July to September is ideal. For people interested in diving and snorkelling, the water is usually clearest from December to March, and the surfing conditions tend to be best from June to August.

### What should an agent consider when selling Mauritius?

Flights can be tricky to arrange from Australia as flights are not regular, so clients will have to tailor their trip around the flight schedule.



## Closer than you think

---

Located in the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean, Mauritius is a contrast of colours, cultures, flavours and experiences making the island so charming that the scene is set for an unforgettable holiday all year round.

[Perth to Mauritius: 8-hour direct flight]



# GREAT AUSTRALIAN ROAD TRIPS

By Amanda Woods

**I**N A country as vast as Australia flying may be faster, but with so much to see between destinations there's a lot to be said for hitting the road. Depending on the path chosen, an Australian road trip can offer the meditative calm that comes from driving through wide open spaces or the sense of discovery that's sparked by exploring charming villages and towns, not to mention some spectacular scenery along the way.

Take advantage of cheaper petrol prices and get your road trip playlist ready as you set out on some adventures to remember.

## EAST COAST ESCAPE, TASMANIA

[eastcoasttasmania.com](http://eastcoasttasmania.com)

The East Coast Escape takes road trippers through some of the most beautiful places in Tasmania, exploring mountains, beaches, vineyards, islands, and the apple isle's tallest waterfall.

Savour some of Tasmania's famous produce from fresh lobsters, oysters and scallops in fishing villages to award winning cheese and cool climate wines.

The Freycinet Walk and Bay of Fires Walk are among Australia's best walking trails, or you can go for a less challenging stroll along pristine beaches including Wineglass Bay which has been recognised as one of the world's best. You can also leave the car behind for

a day or two and hop a ferry to Maria Island. This national park is home to historic ruins, dramatic cliffs and sweeping bays and visitors can do a day trip or spend the night camping in the World Heritage Listed penitentiary.

**Stay along the way:** Overlooking the Hazards Mountains and Great Oyster Bay, Saffire Freycinet is considered one of the world's top luxury boutique hotels and promises a stay to remember.

## THE SAVANNAH WAY, QLD, NORTHERN TERRITORY AND WA

[www.savannahway.com.au](http://www.savannahway.com.au)

A 3,700km adventure from Cairns in Tropical North Queensland through the Northern Territory to Broome in Western Australia's Kimberley, the Savannah Way is an extraordinary road trip that covers 15 National Parks, five World Heritage areas, and a whole lot of wide horizons.

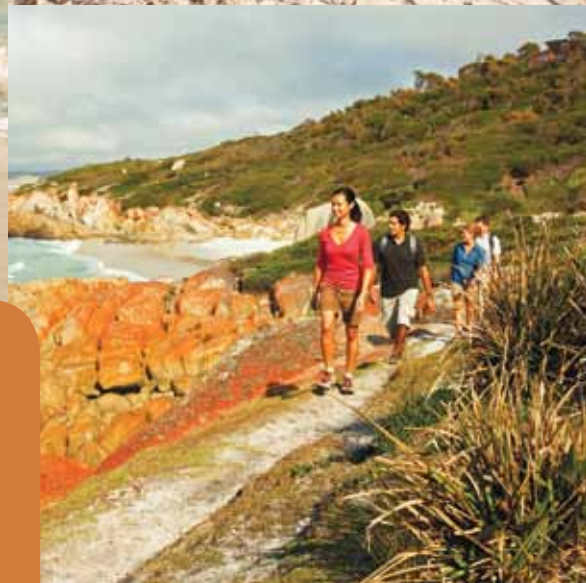
Travel through lush rainforests, ancient gorges, dry outback plains and wetlands and be sure to stop in Undara to walk through the world's longest and largest lava tubes. This trip provides a chance to get to know Aboriginal and outback heritage and meet some great Aussie characters along the way.

If driving all 3,200km is too much, start by doing smaller sections of the Savannah Way. **Stay along the way:** The movie *We of the Never* was filmed at Mataranka Homestead Tourist Resort which is open year round and also provides a home to orphaned wallabies.



All images courtesy of Tourism Australia





## THE CORAL COAST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

[www.australiascoralcoast.com](http://www.australiascoralcoast.com)

The desert meets the sea on this drive from Perth to Ningaloo Reef where the landscape changes from green farmland to red dirt, with plenty of turquoise water along the way. Visit the ancient rock formations the Pinnacles, walk the One Mile Jetty, see wildflowers in bloom, stop for fresh seafood in fishing towns and stock up on flavour packed fruit at orchards. Then dive in and swim with whale sharks, dolphins, turtles and manta rays before lazing on soft white beaches.

**Stay along the way:** You don't have to tow your own caravan to take advantage of tourist parks, with RAC Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort, RAC Exmouth Cape Holiday Park and Ningaloo Reef Resort among those offering cabins or apartments.

## THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD, VICTORIA

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

There's a lot more to Australia's most famous road trip than the Twelve Apostles. There are charming towns to visit, coastal scenery to breathe in, beaches to lie on and waterfalls to discover on rainforest walks where koalas, echidnas, wallabies and native birds may also be spotted.

Stop in at cellar doors and farm gates to get a taste for the local produce, check

out the breaks at Bells Beach, and do some cultural exploring through museums, galleries and heritage collections. As for those dramatic limestone stacks, visit at dawn or dusk for the most golden photo opportunities and moments.

**Stay along the way:** *The Age* Good Food Guide's Restaurant of the Year for 2017, Brae, is a contemporary organic restaurant with six luxury guest suites featuring artisanal finishes and star gazing skylights.

## THE LEGENDARY PACIFIC COAST, NSW AND QLD

<http://pacificcoast.com.au>

One of the most travelled routes in the country and a nostalgic one for those who remember family trips as a kid, this legendary road stretches 900km from Sydney to Brisbane along the Pacific Coast corridor.

There are 48 national parks and 12 state forests to stretch the legs in, and a seemingly endless line of surf beaches, rolling green hills, and beachside and riverside towns to visit.

New attractions for kids include the world's longest rollercoaster ziplines in Ourimbah State Forest while the Big Banana has been making children smile in Coffs Harbour for more than 50 years.

**Stay along the way:** The Bangalow Guesthouse is an immaculately renovated historic home just five minutes' walk from Bangalow's boutique shops, cafés and market.



# THL TAKES OVER EL MONTE



NORTH America's second largest RV rental company based on fleet size, El Monte, has been acquired by Auckland-based motor home specialist, thl (Tourism Holdings Ltd) for NZ\$93.5 million.

The addition expands thl's portfolio of brands to six, joining Kea, Maui, Britz, Mighty Campers and Road Bear.

El Monte has over 30 locations spread across the USA, predominately in California, as well as in Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, Texas, Florida, New York, Utah and six other states. Only Cruise America is larger in size than El Monte RV.

The acquisition rapidly expands thl's presence in the US, while complementing its existing boutique operation, Road Bear RV, which it bought seven years ago for US\$17

million and has seven outlets in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Denver, New York and Orlando.

thl chairman Rob Campbell said the purchase was part of the company's newly revised growth goal to achieve NZ\$50m net profit after tax in financial year 2020.

"We are making the right steps to be truly global in our platform," Campbell said in December when announcing the buy-out, flagging potential expansion to Europe "at the right time".

El Monte will continue to operate

separately for at least the first 12 months.

CEO of thl Grant Webster said El Monte's operational excellence, meshed with its approach to "capital deployment is expected to create realisable synergies".

"We are looking forward to combining fleet procurement, operating different rental brands and maximising RV sales through both our traditional wholesale channels and the El Monte retail sites; a model we know. This is a much lower risk than trying to grow an equivalent market share from the Road Bear platform," Webster said.

## Europcar expands car sharing program in Europe



Milan

UBEEQO, the car sharing business in which Europcar Group has a majority stake, has made further ground in the niche market after acquiring GuidaMi in Italy.

Based in Milan, GuidaMi has a collection of over 150 vehicles available to share across the city, providing an alternative solution to private cars. Europcar entered the "mobility market" when start-up Ubeeqo purchased Spanish car sharing provider Bluemove in June 2016.

Europcar executive Fabrizio Ruggiero said the buyout would see Ubeeqo "make a lively entry into yet another European country where our Group can capitalise on a solid position".

"This new acquisition marks a key step in our drive to become a global mobility solutions leader," Ruggiero added.



## AVIS CONTACTLESS CAR HIRE OPTION

CUSTOMERS arriving at key airport hubs around the country who are signed up to Avis Car Rental Australia's express rental program Avis Preferred can now experience a streamlined service following enhancements to its mobile app.

Through the Avis Now app, customers can manage a range of vehicle preferences and push notifications to inform them when their vehicle is ready and its precise location.

Other features of the Avis app provide specifics such as the make and model of the

car, a copy of the rental agreement and an itemised receipt.

Guests can also swap their vehicle for another within the same category or upgrade to a higher tier, extend their rental directly and even return the vehicle with the app.

Managing director of Avis Australia Kaye Ceille said the app's introduction locally kept pace with the needs of today's savvy traveller.

"We worked closely with our customers to design the new rental process around their

needs and wishes, and the result is an app experience that is more convenient, quicker and more personalised."

Ceille said when the product debuted in the United States last year, customer feedback showed they enjoyed having the ability to view their vehicle in real-time and to exchange or upgrade before arriving at the depot.

The contactless car hire option has initially been rolled at airport locations in Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. Avis Preferred is free to join.

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# BRAIN TWISTER

FOUR friends were competing in the internationally renowned *travelBulletin* snorkelling competition. As usual, the judges were a little careless and once again, they managed to lose the results. Luckily, a number of spectators were able to remember the following snippets of information:

Only one person wore the same number as the position they finished. Gary, who didn't wear green, beat Barry. Larry beat the person who wore yellow. The person who wore number 3, wore green. The person who wore number 2 finished first whereas Harry came last. The person who finished second wore green, Barry wore yellow and the person wearing red beat the person wearing blue.

Can you work out who finished where, the number and colour they wore?



Answer below.

Puzzle © Kevin Stone

## Funnies Flashback



**We love trawling through the *Travel Daily* Window Seat archives, because we always seem to come across some crackers. Here are some gems from 2002:**

POLICE in the US city of Des Moines are investigating whether a dead man boarded an America West flight from Phoenix on Sun. When the wheelchair traveller, aged 80, was found to be dead on arrival, relatives in Phoenix were contacted and a son who took the man to the airport reportedly said he was pretty sure his father was dead before he was wheeled to the plane. But no one has yet found out why the son allowed him to be boarded.

CHINESE tourists have been criticised for "sitting cross-legged in fine restaurants" during trips abroad. The practice is listed as one of seven "deadly sins" travellers are said to be committing around the world. The list appears in a newspaper called *Huaxi City Daily* ahead of the release later this month of government guidelines for the conduct of outbound tours. Other "deadly sins" include:

- men squatting in the street when they're dressed in suits.
- women wandering along hotel corridors in pyjamas, "giving the impression they're prostitutes".
- competing for baggage space on aircraft.
- leaving rubbish behind "wherever they go"

# FUNNY FESTIVALS: EL COLACHO

KNOWN in English as the Baby Jumping Festival, this peculiar celebration happens every year in a small Spanish town called Castrillo de Murcia, during the Corpus Christi religious feast.

The festival has been happening since at least 1620, and is most likely an old pagan tradition that was adopted into Christian traditions when the Catholic church grew in the area.

El Colacho is what you would expect, in the sense that it really is jumping over babies. Each year, infants born in the last 12 months are laid out in neat rows on pillows spaced out in the main street. Men dressed in bright traditional devil outfits then proceed through the streets, whipping bystanders and terrorizing onlookers before leaping over the kiddies.

The idea of the jumping devils is that the children are then absolved of man's original transgression (rather than the more traditional light dunking that most Catholic baptisms involve).

The village of Castrillo de Murcia is rather small, and best reached by flying into nearby Burgos Airport.

The festival takes place on the first Sunday after Corpus Christi so its date will vary accordingly each year.



Celestebombin

Answer:  
# Name  
Wore Colour  
1 Gary 2 red  
2 Larry 3 green  
3 Barry 1 yellow  
4 Harry 4 blue

# WELL COMPOSED

FOUR RIVER YACHTS JOIN CRYSTAL'S ELEGANT FLEET



### JEWELS OF THE RHINE

CRYSTAL BACH - 7R15R

**To/From** Frankfurt to Amsterdam

**Dates** 22 Oct - 05 Nov, 2017

**Days** 14 days

**Fares from US\$6,705pp**



### GRAND EUROPE

CRYSTAL MAHLER - 7D08R

**To/From** Amsterdam to Budapest

**Dates** 17 Nov - 03 Dec, 2017

**Days** 16 days

**Fares from US\$6,825pp**



### INAUGURAL: TULIPS & WINDMILLS

CRYSTAL DEBUSSY - 8S01R

**To/From** Roundtrip Amsterdam

**Dates** 09 Apr - 16 Apr, 2018

**Days** 7 days

**Fares from US\$4,700pp**



### DANUBE SERENADE

CRYSTAL RAVEL - 8F08R

**To/From** Vienna to Budapest

**Dates** 02 Aug - 09 Aug, 2018

**Days** 7 days

**Fares from US\$4,270pp**

**Crystal River Cruises**, the World's Most Luxurious River Cruise Line™, sails into the New Year with the anticipation of four sleek new-build, Rhine-class river yachts. Crystal Bach and Crystal Mahler will join Crystal Mozart on the picturesque waterways through Germany, Austria, Hungary and Slovakia in June and August respectively, and Crystal Debussy and Crystal Ravel make their debut in the autumn of 2018.

The European itineraries for the inaugural years include new 7, 14 and 16-day voyages, at least two overnight stays on most sailings and visits to some of the region's oldest and most fascinating riverside villages.

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