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MAY 2017



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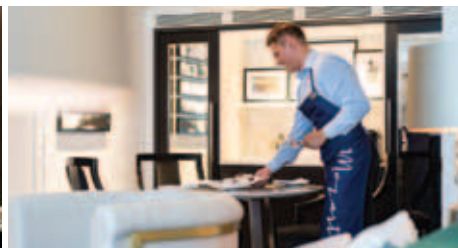
THE FLEET

	CRYSTAL MOZART	CRYSTAL MAHLER CRYSTAL BACH	CRYSTAL RAVEL CRYSTAL DEBUSSY
Capacity	154 guests	106 guests	106 guests
Reimagined	2016	Built 2017	Built 2018
Restaurants	4	3	3
Butler Service	All-suite, All-butler	All-suite, All-butler	All-suite, All-butler
Crystal Adventures	Included	Included	Included
Destinations	The Danube	The Danube, Rhine Moselle* & Main Rivers	The Danube, Rhine & Main Rivers

*Crystal Bach sailings.

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From the publisher

Bruce Piper

IT'S been a very busy few months for AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury, who has been in deep negotiations on behalf of Australian travel agents affected by the collapse of British operator All Leisure Group just after Christmas. The company, which operated a range of brands including Swan Hellenic and Voyages of Discovery, ceased trading and immediately cancelled all forward bookings, affecting some 13,000 travellers. Sister brands Travelsphere and Just You were snapped up by G Adventures, saving about 200 jobs - but the cruise operations were shut down impacting forward bookings by passengers from across the globe.

While British clients were covered by All Leisure Group's bond with the Association of British Travel Agents as well as the UK Civil Aviation Authority's ATOL scheme, no such protection was afforded to travellers from Australia and the mainstream media was soon reporting tales of customers who had lost significant sums - not to mention their travel agents who in many cases were hit by credit card chargebacks amounting to thousands of dollars. In Australia the brands were represented by Discover the World, with country director Jeannie Foster caught in the crossfire.

As this issue went to press Westbury told *travelBulletin* talks were at an advanced stage, with AFTA "very hopeful of a successful outcome". He has visited London to negotiate with his British counterparts at ABTA - where ironically All Leisure Group chairman Roger Allard was a director until the collapse. It's understood more than \$1 million is at stake - and if AFTA can manage to finalise a cross-border compensation deal of that size it will be a major coup and a credit to Westbury's considerable behind-the-scenes negotiating skills.

MEANWHILE Tourism Australia's lofty 2020 target of \$140 billion in annual visitor expenditure is now looking to be achievable, with the inbound sector booming by all accounts. Last month TA hosted the Destination Australia conference in Sydney, and the organisation's managing director John O'Sullivan was clearly looking further ahead, hinting at an ambitious \$230 billion annual figure by 2030. That will clearly involve significant development of Australia's own tourism product - so in this issue's cover story Steve Jones has looked at the burgeoning opportunities posed by Indigenous tourism and the people working hard to make it better than ever.

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Ian McMahon's perspective

HAPPY BIRTHDAY APT

MUCH longer ago than I care to remember, in the mid-1970s when I worked firstly for the now defunct *Traveltrade* and then for the similarly 'now defunct' *Travelweek*, one of my regular news sources was a young, entrepreneurial coach tour operator by the name of Geoff McGeary.

I would phone him every fortnight or so and he would bring me up to date on the latest tour programs being released by the company of which he was joint managing director – Australian Pacific Tours.

He was a very hands-on managing director when it came to producing brochures that could be powerful selling tools. He firmly believed the way to achieve this was to pack in as much detail as possible about each tour's inclusions.

He may not have known much about (or, to express it more accurately, he may not have been formally educated in) graphic design or copywriting; but he knew what sold coach tours.

I had encountered Geoff McGeary and APT at just one stage of an incredible journey that began with Geoff's father founding a local Melbourne transport business. When his father died prematurely, Geoff, a painfully shy and dyslexic teenager, persuaded his mother not to sell the business but instead allow him to take his best shot at running it.

Some best shot! Today the business

has grown into an iconic Australian travel company with offices around the globe, owning and operating coach tours, river and ocean cruises, rail journeys, air charters and tourist accommodation.

When APT last month celebrated its 90th birthday at a glittering function in Melbourne, Geoff McGeary was a commanding presence – clearly still "hands on" in ensuring his company provides product that sells.

MEANWHILE, as I write this column, the death of Peter Isaacson at the age of 96 has been announced.

A war hero, who defied death every time he commanded a Lancaster bomber on missions over occupied Europe and who famously flew one of those aircraft under the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Peter Isaacson became a highly successful publisher of, among dozens of titles, a national daily, a Melbourne Sunday and a series of suburban newspapers. He was also the founder of *Travel Week* which I edited for close to 30 years.

The passing of PI, as he was known to his staff, has seen an outpouring of tributes from former employees praising the unique working environment he created and the many opportunities he gave us. I proudly add my name to the list of those paying tribute to this great Australian.

Helloworld ups profit forecast

HELLOWORLD last month announced an upgrade to its current pre-tax earnings guidance, with the company now forecasting a full year EBITDA result of between \$52 and \$55 million. The company is also expecting annual TTV to be \$5.8 billion, with the company saying that while trading conditions remain challenging with continued airfare discounting and strong competition, TTV and margins are being maintained. Moreover the synergy benefits identified as part of the company's merger with AOT will all be delivered by the end of next month, with the full benefit flowing into 2018.

"It is pleasing to see the combination of solid TTV, margin improvement, particularly in the wholesale division, and careful cost control delivering improved outcomes for the business," said CEO Andrew Burnes. "We always said it was a two year process to get this business to where it needed to be and fortunately we have achieved a lot over the last 14 months," he said. In particular the agency network reported "very strong trading" in the March quarter, while Helloworld's own transactional businesses had also performed well, Burnes added.

Flight Centre training on Sabre

WHILE no formal confirmation has been provided by anyone involved, Flight Centre's major GDS switch from Travelport to Sabre appears to be well under way, with consultants across the Flight Centre group now undergoing training in the lead up to a planned 01 July changeover.

The move is understood to have been

BUSINESS MONITOR

OUTBOUND MARKET

Top 10 destinations, February 2017

Destination	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Jan 17/ Feb 17	Trend Feb 16/ Feb 17
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	112.8	112.1	115.5	+0.1	+3.9
Indonesia	97.5	98.3	71.4	-0.4	-6.5
USA	88.2	88.2	55.6	-0.1	+1.8
Japan	32.2	33.4	35.6	+0.8	+8.9
Thailand	42.4	42.1	34.3	+0.2	-3.6
Singapore	34.9	35.6	29.1	+2.2	+15.8
India	27.4	27.0	25.3	+0.2	+5.5
China	38.7	34.2	22.4	-1.0	+3.9
UK	52.9	52.7	19.1	+1.5	+6.4
Vietnam	20.9	22.7	18.6	+0.6	+4.5
All outbound	837.3	832.6	590.0	+0.3	+3.2

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

INBOUND MARKET

Top 10 sources, February 2017

Source	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Jan 17/ Feb 17	Trend Feb 16/ Feb 17
	000	000	000	%	%
China	106.4	103.2	142.2	+0.3	+8.9
UK	62.6	65.1	87.1	+1.5	+6.7
New Zealand	113.1	113.1	82.4	+0.1	+3.6
USA	60.7	60.0	74.1	-0.5	+7.3
Japan	36.0	35.1	41.3	+0.2	+8.1
South Korea	24.6	24.0	29.8	-0.4	+5.9
Singapore	35.5	37.2	27.2	-0.4	-1.8
Malaysia	31.6	32.9	26.9	-0.9	+3.8
India	23.5	24.7	25.8	+0.6	+16.9
Germany	17.8	17.5	22.8	+0.4	+8.2
All inbound	713.5	716.0	780.1	+0.3	+7.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

Top 10 domestic city pairs at February 2017

City pair	Passengers YE Feb 16 (000)	Passengers YE Feb 17 (000)	% change
Melbourne-Sydney	8,696.4	8,885.7	+2.2
Brisbane-Sydney	4,526.1	4,666.2	+3.1
Brisbane-Melbourne	3,387.3	3,487.5	+3.0
Gold Coast-Sydney	2,664.0	2,692.4	+1.1
Adelaide-Melbourne	2,332.2	2,400.2	+2.9
Melbourne-Perth	2,139.8	2,062.3	-3.6
Gold Coast-Melbourne	1,843.9	1,970.5	+6.9
Adelaide-Sydney	1,847.5	1,873.1	+1.4
Perth-Sydney	1,763.1	1,747.9	-0.9
Hobart-Melbourne	1,498.1	1,575.3	+5.2

Source: BITRE

APT CELEBRATES 90 YEARS



LAST month the APT Travel Group marked a major milestone, with a lavish Melbourne function commemorating the company's 90th year. The night, hosted by TV personality Larry Emdur, featured a who's who of the Australian travel sector, with leaders of all the major travel agency chains present alongside top achieving agents from across the country. One of the major winners was Helen Paulus from Geelong Travel who was the top selling consultant for 2016, having sold the highest dollar amount of APT and Travelmarvel product over the last 12 months. She's pictured accepting the accolade from APT Travel Group managing director Chris Hall, Victorian sales manager Scott Ellis and the company's founder Geoff McGeary.

part of the outcome of a global tender under which the different Flight Centre divisions were able to select their own GDS provider.

As detailed in the December 2016 issue of *travelBulletin*, Travelport still maintains it has a multi-year agreement with Flight Centre but it's clearly no longer the worldwide deal that had been in place. Flight Centre in Australia and New Zealand have gone with Sabre, while Amadeus is believed to have

won the company's business in Europe. A Flight Centre spokesperson was unable to confirm or deny the change, saying "because of confidentiality we are unable to make any comments about our GDS contract".

Scenic Eclipse program out

THE inaugural itineraries for Scenic's highly anticipated super-luxury expedition ship

Scenic Eclipse were released last month, with a suite of brochures detailing the on-board offering and 2018/19 voyages. The 228-passenger "discovery yacht" is on track to launch in August 2018, with a maiden season including the Americas, Europe & the Mediterranean, Antarctica & South Georgia and the Arctic.

While sailing in polar regions the vessel will be equipped with two helicopters, while in other locations one helicopter will be complemented by a submarine capable of diving to 200 metres. A luxurious on-board experience will complement the adventurous offerings, with Scenic touting "ten dining experiences" including five distinct on-board restaurants. Bookings for *Eclipse* have been so strong already that Scenic has opened pre-registration for the 2019/2020 season.

Webjet tones down advertising

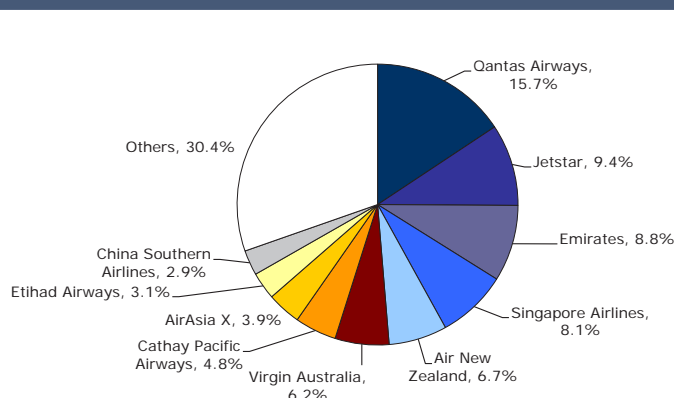
WEBJET'S contenders for the most annoying ads on TV have disappeared from our screens, but we haven't seen the last of the online travel agent in our living rooms. After raising hackles across the country with its claim of offering a wider range of airfares than bricks-and-mortar travel agencies, Webjet appears to have taken a different approach with its latest campaign which avoids anti-agent provocation.

A new ad series on Australian television urges travellers to "go to the one website that lets you easily compare all your available choices at anytime from anywhere", before offering travellers the backing of 24/7 customer support. The online juggernaut's previous campaign incited outrage from travel agents and prompted AFTA to raise the issue with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

International passengers by major airline – year ended January 2017



Source: BITRE

DOMESTIC AIR MARKET – February 2017

	Feb 16	Feb 17	Growth (%)	Yr to Feb 16	Yr to Feb 17	Growth (%)
Total pax carried	4.46m	4.35m	-2.4	57.90m	58.97m	+1.8
Revenue pax kms (RPK)	5.09bn	4.93bn	-3.1	68.29bn	69.35bn	+1.5
Avail seat kms (ASK)	6.87bn	6.56bn	-4.6	89.18bn	88.76bn	-0.5
Load factor (%)	74.1	75.3	+1.2*	76.6	78.1	+1.6*
Aircraft trips (000)	50.6	48.5	-4.0	637.4	637.3	+0.0

Source: BITRE * Percentage points difference

DOMESTIC ON TIME PERFORMANCE – February 2017

	Arrivals on Time		Departures on Time		Cancellations	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jetstar	4,604	75.8	4,472	73.6	125	2.0
Qantas	7,276	87.6	7,437	89.6	86	1.0
QantasLink	7,953	84.8	8,030	85.7	251	2.6
REX	4,517	79.4	4,751	83.5	32	0.6
Virgin Australia	9,210	85.9	9,394	87.6	241	2.2
All Airlines	35,402	82.8	35,924	84.0	781	1.8

Source: BITRE

Constellation Journeys enters air touring

THE luxury air touring market in Australia is set for a shake-up with the launch of a new entrant from the former head of APT's Captain's Choice brand, Dan Kotzmann. Called Constellation Journeys, the start-up will offer all-inclusive tours from April next year. Qantas veteran Captain David Oliver will pilot a chartered QF Boeing 747 on a 21-day launch itinerary, taking up to 215 passengers on a round-world trip via Hanoi, Agra, Delhi, the Serengeti, Marrakech, New York, Havana and Tahiti.

Kotzmann left his role as managing director of Captain's Choice last year, having spent 15 years with the APT Group. He said his new company would tap the trend towards "experiential, educational and active adventure", and that it would "make the extraordinary accessible". Prices on the inaugural tour range from \$19,500 in Economy class up to \$78,000 in First class. Kotzmann says he is in talks with Qantas about a second charter later in 2018.

U by Uniworld age shift

U BY Uniworld has altered its targeted age bracket from 18-40 to 21-45, the brand's chief executive officer Ellen Bettridge revealed to *travelBulletin*. Bettridge said the company decided the 18 to 20-year-old demographic was "a little too young" as those travellers had "a different mindset". The decision was also prompted by feedback from trade partners on board the inaugural sailing of Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection's S.S. *Joie de Vivre*, who said they wished the age range was a little older.

"We heard this and we listened to them

and we said 'you know what? Let's go for it, let's change it, it's not too late,'" Bettridge said. Fiona Dalton, managing director Australia for Uniworld said "the sweet spot" for the brand would be within the 25-35 year old age bracket.

Virgin Australia to offer Economy X

FROM 21 May, Virgin Australia will introduce Economy X into its Boeing 737 fleet, in what the airline describes as a product designed to provide more comfort and to enhance passengers' experience. Economy X will offer up to 30 seats with extra leg room in the first three rows of the economy cabin as well as exit rows. Passengers will enjoy a minimum of 3 inches (7.62cm) of extra legroom, along with preferred overhead locker space, priority boarding and priority security screening.

The seats will be installed in Virgin's 737 fleet over the coming months, and the airline will install the product on its international services, which replaces the current Economy Space+ offering. On long-haul international flights, it includes a guaranteed first meal choice and a premium noise-cancelling headset. Economy X will be free of charge for Velocity Frequent Flyer Platinum members and their companions on the same booking, while others can select the option for an extra fee.

Outrigger eyes return to Australia

HONOLULU-BASED hotelier Outrigger Enterprises Group is keen to re-enter the Australian market as part of a broad global expansion under new owners KSL Capital Partners. Speaking to *travelBulletin*, Outrigger

executive vice present and chief operating officer Paul Richardson signalled that KSL was keen to reboot its presence down under, specifically back into Queensland.

"I'm pretty sure that given Australia's stability and what we have to offer, we can come back here in an equity position and offer the Outrigger hospitality to Australian people in their own country," Richardson said. Outrigger exited Australia in 2015, selling its portfolio of four properties to the Mantra Group. The hotel chain has 37 properties, mostly in Hawaii and in the Pacific. Beyond Australia, KSL has plans to boost its presence to Florida, California, Mexico and Hawaii's outer islands.

Wireless contest takes off

THE race to offer inflight wi-fi on domestic flights is hotting up, with both Qantas and Virgin Australia launching customer trials in recent weeks. After months of in-house testing, Qantas was the first to begin trials with its passengers in early April when it switched on systems aboard its first "internet-capable" Boeing 737-800. Testing will continue on the initial aircraft over coming months before a wider roll-out across the 737 and Airbus A330 domestic fleet through to late 2018. Virgin followed just two weeks later with its own system, also aboard a 737-800, beginning a three month testing process.

Both carriers promise lightning fast downloads in the air, with Qantas using the nbn Sky Muster satellite service, while Virgin has partnered with Optus and Gogo to implement its system which uses a dual-antenna system to deliver simultaneous transmissions. Qantas chief executive officer Alan Joyce said the technology QF used was

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNET AGENCY MARKET SHARES

Feb 2017, compared with Jan 2017

Rank	Position	Visits Share	Relative Diff	Rank
Websites	Feb 17	Feb to Jan	Jan 16	
Webjet Australia	16.35	+4.08	1	
Expedia Australia	11.35	-6.74	2	
Skyscanner Australia	9.18	+1.31	3	
Wotif.com	7.86	+9.0	4	
Flight Centre	6.29	-3.62	5	
Velocity Frequent Flyer	3.49	+20.47	6	
Luxury Escapes	2.64	+2.25	7	
Lastminute.com.au	2.39	-0.48	8	
Cheap Flights Aus & NZ	2.16	+3.38	9	
I Want That Flight!	1.81	+21.31	10	

Source: Hitwise, a division of Connexity

INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs (at January 2017)

City pair	Passengers YE Jan 16	Passengers YE Jan 17	% of total	% change 17/16
Auckland-Sydney	1,544,038	1,603,531	4.2	+3.9
Singapore-Sydney	1,462,942	1,462,385	3.9	+0.0
Singapore-Melbourne	1,228,994	1,369,732	3.6	+11.5
Auckland-Melbourne	1,154,589	1,200,946	3.2	+4.0
Singapore-Perth	1,066,615	1,131,327	3.0	+6.1
Hong Kong-Sydney	1,007,947	1,079,454	2.9	+7.1
Auckland-Brisbane	970,197	965,575	2.6	-0.5
Los Angeles-Sydney	921,565	898,603	2.4	-2.5
Denpasar-Perth	852,638	886,884	2.3	+4.0
Kuala Lumpur-Melb	813,195	833,672	2.2	+2.5
Top 10 city pairs	11,022,720	11,432,139	30.2	+3.7
Other city pairs	24,121,285	26,425,747	69.8	+9.6
ALL CITY PAIRS	35,144,005	37,857,886	100.0	+7.7

Source: BITRE

SHARE PRICES

at 20 April 2017

Flight Centre (FLT)	\$31.06
Helloworld (HLO)	\$3.82
Webjet (WEB)	\$11.20
Qantas (QAN)	\$3.95
Virgin Australia (VAH)	\$0.195
Ardent Leisure (AAD)	\$1.915
Air New Zealand (AIZ)	\$2.285
Auckland International Airport (AIA)	\$6.30
Sydney Airport (SYD)	\$6.90
Corporate Travel Management (CTD)	\$20.01
Village Roadshow (VRL)	\$3.99
Regional Express (REX)	\$0.96
Sealink (SLK)	\$4.28
Mantra Group Limited (MTR)	\$2.845

ROCKY MOUNTAIN'R DOWN UNDER



SENIOR executives from Rocky Mountaineer visited Australia last month, highlighting the importance of the local market to the Canadian rail operator. In fact Australia is the second biggest export market for Rocky Mountaineer, with president Steve Sammut hailing the support of Australian travel agents, wholesalers and tour operators. Big things are also in the wings for Rocky which will next year roll out four brand new GoldLeaf rail cars along with a significant overhaul of its TRACKS e-learning program for agents. **Pictured** from left are Rocky Mountaineer's Diana Schinella, Rebecca Bussell, Ainsley Ericksen, vice president of global sales Karen Hardie, president Steve Sammutt, Greg McCallum, Helen Hersom and Paula Phillips.

a generation ahead of most airlines around the world.

"On flights between Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, where we have a lot of business travellers, we expect the system to get a real work out with email and browsing," Joyce said.

Each airline has partnered with streaming services like Foxtel, Stan, Netflix and Pandora Plus and has provided the wi-fi without charge during the testing period. But at this stage only Qantas has assured its wi-fi will be free in the longer term.

Travel Daily HEADLINES

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- 22 Mar** JQ/Airbnb pact slammed
- 23 Mar** ATP Voyager restructure
- 23 Mar** CX protest VA/HNA term
- 24 Mar** QF China allocation tick
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- 29 Mar** Tourism spend tops \$100m
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- 06 Apr** Airbnb gains supporters
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- 07 Apr** Helloworld plots relaunch
- 07 Apr** Qantas free wi-fi takes off
- 10 Apr** Constellation takes off
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- 12 Apr** FLT move into Argentina
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- 13 Apr** Princess newbuild for ANZ
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- 19 Apr** Visa changes welcomed
- 19 Apr** Gen Z to change travel

AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS

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

Airport	Passengers YE Jan 16	Passengers YE Jan 17	% of total	% change 17/16
SSydney	14,042,627	15,214,160	40.2	+8.3
Melbourne	8,946,403	9,726,683	25.7	+8.7
Brisbane	5,268,343	5,467,082	14.4	+3.8
Perth	4,203,808	4,381,844	11.6	+4.2
Gold Coast	951,309	1,101,200	2.9	+15.8
Adelaide	864,674	934,029	2.5	+8.0
Cairns	556,731	649,171	1.7	+16.6
Darwin	261,770	276,333	0.7	+5.6
Townsville ^A	14,357	42,092	0.1	193.2
Canberra ^B	n/a	31,839	0.1	n/a
Sunshine Coast [*]	15,786	15,318	0.0	-3.0
Norfolk Island	11,839	10,047	0.0	-15.1
Port Hedland [~]	6,358	8,088	0.0	27.2
All Airports	35,144,005	37,857,886	100.0	+7.7

^AScheduled services recommenced September 2015 ^{*}Seasonal services only

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

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

Got something to say?

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Steve Jones' Say

NO ONE will ever convince me it was right to consign Harvey World Travel to the scrap heap. Established, recognised and respected. It was a terrific brand, if one in need of modernising. But gone it has, dwelling on its passing a worthless, nostalgic exercise.

Yet deep in the recesses of the Helloworld vaults, something is stirring.

Four years after launch, Helloworld has admitted – for the first time – that its brand recognition is not all it should be.

Sure, the financial health of the company has improved markedly, and that's a huge achievement. But chief executive Andrew Burnes has conceded Helloworld's awareness is falling short. More than that, its legacy brands still resonate with a public confused at the disappearance of HWT and the emergence of this entity called Helloworld.

To reaffirm the nature of the business, something not obviously apparent to consumers according to Burnes, the company

has added 'travel' to its name to create Helloworld Travel, an identity that will appear on brochures and point of sale collateral.

But more interesting is the decision to revive the Harvey World Travel tagline of The Travel Professionals, a move designed to "bring back some of the historical value from our legacy brands".

‘Its legacy brands still resonate with a public confused at the disappearance of HWT...’

That is tacit acknowledgment of the enduring appeal of a brand considered superfluous. It's extremely unlikely, bordering on the fanciful, but how tempting must it be, I wonder, to resurrect the brand itself in some capacity?

While welcome, the return of the HWT tagline alone will clearly be insufficient

for Helloworld.

What it needs is marketing cash, and lots of it. Since inception, Helloworld's attempt to establish its presence through high profile campaigns has been fragmented. It has yet to build an identity or communicate what the brand stands for. That needs to change, and a return to The Travel Professionals is a start.

It has also been hampered by the relatively few fully branded stores in the network. A larger high street presence would provide more marketing funds, and of course, increase the brand's exposure.

Andrew Burnes has not shied away from making significant decisions since taking over from Elizabeth Gaines, and he has now been forthright enough to publicly acknowledge there is an awareness problem. What he does next on the marketing front could go a long way to positioning Helloworld as a major travel retail presence, or one that sits on the fringes of public recognition.

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Flight Centre expands in Asia and South America

FLIGHT Centre is continuing its offshore expansion, having announced two new initiatives to expand its footprint globally.

The first is a US\$7 million investment in Argentina where the Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has purchased a 24.1% stake in travel and technology firm Bibam, the country's second-largest travel group and the owner of an e-commerce entity called Avantrip.com.

The move is aimed at strengthening Flight Centre's e-commerce credentials, tapping into Bibam's digital platforms and software development teams while at the same time providing a "low-risk entry" to Argentina.

"We have been impressed with (Bibam's) proprietary technology platform and the level of talent in the organisation," said FCTG president for the Americas Dean Smith.

Meanwhile, Flight Centre last month announced plans to create a worldwide Destination Management Company (DMC) in a joint venture with the Hanoi-based Thien Minh Group.

The move will involve combining several DMC businesses among the two groups with Thien Minh's Vietnam-based operator Buffalo Tours.

Flight Centre will increase its equity in the new venture and plans to acquire or launch similar businesses in other key regions to create a worldwide DMC network.

FCTG managing director Graham Turner said "We believe there are huge opportunities in the in-destination sector and it has become one of our key strategic growth areas for the future".



SWITZERLAND'S Fondation Beyeler modern art museum is marking its 20th anniversary this year with a series of blockbuster exhibitions, drawing from collections across Europe and America.

The Basel landmark has begun showing the first of its big ticket exhibits with 50 masterpieces by Claude Monet on loan from private collections and other renowned museums including the Musee d'Orsay in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the Art Institute in Chicago.

From 28 May to 1 October, the Fondation Beyeler will offer a presentation of works by photographer Wolfgang Tillmans, capturing youth culture from last century to the present day.

Later, from 1 October this year until 21 January, 2018, about 100 pieces by Paul Klee will be shown, including some of his rarely exhibited works.

Apart from the special exhibitions, there will also be three presentations from the museum's permanent collection, allowing visitors to learn about its founder Ernst Beyeler.



AFTA VIEW

Jayson Westbury, chief executive AFTA

IT SEEMS to me that the conversation returning to the industry about online versus offline travel agents is nothing more than a gratuitous self-promotion of different companies' capabilities.

The real question is not about online versus offline. The real question is travel agents - regardless of the medium or channel they choose to be in - versus suppliers selling directly.

Travel agents of all shapes and sizes are here to stay for many more years, in fact in my opinion beyond the next decade.

The fact is, consumers are always going to look for someone else to do the things they don't want to do, and let's be honest, organising a trip can be time consuming and frustrating. For that reason alone, the humble travel agent is not going anywhere.

Perhaps as new technology finds its way into the travel industry, travel agents of different shapes and sizes may look to enhance or change their offer to meet the needs of their customers, but

‘Consumers are always going to be looking for someone else to do the things they don't want to do’

regardless of these changes, the key is keeping the client happy and loyal.

If the customer wants to connect to the travel agent via the internet, they will. If they want to talk to a human, then they will. It is all about

the service and experience the customer has and how to build a value proposition that keeps the customer coming back. And also, from the travel agent's perspective, it is about making sure they have the right products at the right price point and that they are best placed to offer choice.

Choice is in fact the one thing that direct suppliers do not have. They are hardly going to put up offers from their competitors on their website. So the travel agent is once again best placed to offer the customer choice across a range of brands within the particular travel category they are looking for.

Even the metasearch phenomena is about choice. Consumers are going to these search sites which emulate what travel agents have been doing for years - providing choice. But the difference is they don't offer any advice other than price. For some consumers that does the trick. But the minute a question pops into their head they hit a snag.

So from where I sit, the conversation that has been going on within the industry about online travel agents versus offline travel agents is misguided in its inputs and energy.

As a sector, travel agents should be sticking together and working on common goals to ensure they have the tools, technology and regulatory framework to prosper and grow.

AFTA will always support the travel agent channel first, in particular those in the ATAS industry accreditation scheme.

Over the coming months AFTA will be rolling out new initiatives to further promote travel agents to consumers based on the services, experience and knowledge they offer. This year is looking good for outbound travel and I am sure the ongoing supportive marketing efforts of AFTA will help make it a successful one for all ATAS accredited travel agents.

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TRAVEL AGENT AFFILIATE PROGRAM

DEBBIE PROMPTS \$2 MILLION RECOVERY PLAN

QUEENSLAND has embarked on a \$2 million emergency marketing campaign to help lift the tourism industry in the wake of Cyclone Debbie, reinforcing the message that the state is open for business.

Regions outside the disaster zone were quick to point out they were unaffected by last month's category four storm, while the state's Tourism Minister Kate Jones mounted an immediate appeal for visitors to swamp social media with photographs of Queensland's sunny skies using the hashtag #thisisqueensland.

But for areas directly hit by the cyclone including parts of the Whitsundays, the impact will be felt for some time.

Daydream Island Resort & Spa suffered substantial damage, prompting owners to bring forward redevelopment plans, and remains closed until the middle of next year.

One&Only Hayman Island also suffered extensive damage and is likely to be closed for more than a year. Its shut-down follows a similar closure in 2011 when the resort was hit hard by Cyclone Yasi.

On Hamilton Island, luxury resort qualia will be closed until early July, and while other parts of the island are open for business there are restrictions on some rooms while repairs take place.

Other properties in the area were quick to resume business. The Mantra Group said both its properties at Airlie Beach fared well and are operating as usual soon after the storm.

The Queensland and Federal Governments will jointly fund the state's tourism recovery marketing campaign, which features print, television and digital advertising both domestically and in international markets.

"This new campaign builds on our already successful 'I know just the place' branding to encourage travellers to consider taking a Queensland holiday," Jones said.

"The ads use beautiful real-life images taken since Cyclone Debbie passed from around the state, including Whitsundays, Gold Coast, Southern Great Barrier Reef, Townsville and Tropical North Queensland."

Japan's blossoms a sell-out

AS ANOTHER spring cherry blossom season comes to an end in Japan, travellers are already turning their attention to next year's blooms in what is becoming an increasingly popular ritual for international visitors. Bunnik Tours has just completed a sell-out season of cherry blossom itineraries.

"We're already looking at next season and have recently released even more dates for 2018 in anticipation," said the tour operator's managing director Dennis Bunnik.

The peak period for hanami (flower viewing) is from late March into April when Japan is blanketed in blossoms. Another botanical peak follows in October and November when Japanese maple leaves erupt in autumn colour.



CATO VIEW

Dennis Bunnik, chairman
Council of Australian Tour Operators

SUCCESSFUL DESPITE THE POLITICIANS

SUCCESSFUL business owners know not to rely on politicians when it comes to the success of their business. In fact, here in South Australia it is very much the case that businesses that do well do so in spite of the policies inflicted upon us by our state MPs!

But what happens when politics starts to impact on our industry on a much wider, global scale? What happens when politicians start to actively work against our industry by creating the divisions and fears that we work so hard to overcome?

Unfortunately that seems to be the new normal. The jury is still out on exactly how big the Trump Slump will be in terms of international

“What happens when politicians start to actively work against our industry by creating the division and fears we work so hard to overcome?”

travel to the USA however travel agencies are reporting a significant drop in demand.

Outbound travel from the USA is also likely to be impacted if Americans start to feel that they are likely to become bigger terrorist targets due to the policies of their government.

A similar thing

happened with the Russian market in 2014-15. When Russia annexed Crimea, and was blamed when MH17 was shot down there was an immediate drop in demand from Australians wanting to visit Russia. At the same time many Russians, heeding Putin's rhetoric, stopped travelling. This had a significant impact on many tourism economies including in places like Thailand, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Egypt which rely heavily on Russian tourists.

So what's the solution? Unfortunately there is no quick fix. Instead we must continue to do what we do well – creating incredible experiences for our clients that allow them to see the real beauty of this planet and its people. By doing so we help to break down the barriers that politicians build and we help make this world a better place.

For those destinations and operators in the middle of it all this is not an easy task. But the industry is strong and we stick together. A good example of this is Greece which suffered terribly as a result of the financial crisis and European politics. However the Greek tourism industry, including Australian-based Greek specialists, persevered through these challenges and is now seeing strong growth.

On 14 July a senior member of the Greek Ministry of Tourism will be speaking at the CATO AGM Dinner at the National Maritime Museum. They will have an interesting tale to tell and I'm sure there will be learning for us all. The night will be a Greek feast and is being sponsored by visiting Greek wine makers. This is one CATO meeting you won't want to miss. Non-CATO members are also invited and bookings can be made by contacting Gina Dounis at AFTA – gina@afta.com.au

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MTA LOOKS TO GROWTH FROM HOME



Don Beattie, CEO with MTA founder Roy Merricks

The home-based concept brought a seismic shift to the way travel consultants live and work. But to MTA chief executive officer Don Beattie, there's still another evolution to come. Jon Murrie reports.

IN AFRO wigs and psychedelic costumes, the consultants of Mobile Travel Agents (MTA) gathered last month for their first annual conference since Helloworld purchased a 50% stake in the group from its founders, Roy and Karen Merricks.

A 60s & 70s themed dinner on the Gold Coast provided a chance to let down their hair – both real and polyester – but not before an intensive two days in which much of the talk focussed heavily on adapting to change.

In the opening session, Helloworld chief executive officer Andrew Burnes gave an upbeat address that not only dismissed online competition, but also put forward MTA as a key reason to view the future with optimism.

"The business Roy and Karen developed over the past 17 years is unquestionably the best of breed in this model of agency network," Burnes told the MTA members. "Not only within Australia - I've looked at these models all over the world and I don't know of a better one anywhere."

Having driven Helloworld's \$14 million investment in MTA – and with an option to purchase the remaining 50% in five years' time – there's no doubting his conviction.

But to MTA chief executive officer Don Beattie, the introduction of a new shareholder is only one part of a greater evolution that is still to shape the home-based landscape.

With about 360 members, MTA says it has grown with a focus on recruiting only highly experienced, high achieving agents.

"We still turn down about 95% of all people who apply to join us," Beattie said.

Most are aged between 40 and 50 with between 15 and 20 years' experience, attracted by flexible work arrangements as they balance a career with other life pressures like children or caring for older family.

Almost all are individuals, but Beattie expects the next development in home-based travel consultancy will likely be the emergence of larger member entities.

"I think there's a lot of opportunity ahead and it will take a lot of different guises," Beattie told *travelBulletin* at the Gold Coast conference.

"Whereas we've traditionally dealt with sole traders, the MTA model can also deal with partnerships, trusts and incorporated bodies," he said. "We're also able to bring in whole agencies, should we choose to do so."

As individual members grow their businesses, many would seek to form partnerships with spouses or colleagues, or engage additional staff, he said.

"I think what we're going to see in the future is a large number of people saying we want growth within this model," Beattie said. "Today they have the opportunity to be different models that suit whatever lifestyle they've got and I think that's where it's going to go."

"The successful home-based models are going to be the ones that offer the greatest flexibility of choice, that have the greatest support structures that allow people to manage their lives and capabilities and support what they want to do."

The modern scenario is in stark contrast to what Beattie calls the "dressing gown and slippers image" of the past, and vastly different to the home-based models of the US.

"What we have in the US are people who are life changers - today I was a lawyer, tomorrow I'm going to wake up and become a travel expert," he said. "They were looking at it as a means to retirement income or they were looking at it as a sea change."

"Here, we have professional travel experts, and that's right across the models."

For now, Beattie said there was likely to be little change in MTA from the involvement of Helloworld.

"It's business as usual," he said. "This happened in November. Any changes? I haven't seen them."

Instead, the group will focus on introducing new measures to support members, including a Global Fares Search and Booking Tool, ongoing training schemes, a new accreditation program and a mentoring system.

"The people who join us, we want them to stick with us," Beattie said. "We want to make sure we are always creating value for our members."

'I think what we're going to see in the future is a large number of people saying we want growth within this model'

Don Beattie, chief executive officer
Mobile Travel Agents (MTA)



Don Beattie, harking back to the days of plentiful hair.

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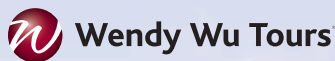
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HELLOWORLD TRAVEL - BACK TO THE FUTURE

HELLOWORLD shareholders last month formally approved the company's name change, with the overall ASX-listed business now known as Helloworld Travel Limited. The move has prompted a significant rebranding exercise including a new logo and the return of the evocative "The Travel Professionals" tag line which defined the former Harvey World Travel brand prior to its 2013 shelving in favour of Helloworld under the company's former CEO Rob Gurney.



The new brand and collateral is expected to take about a year to roll out, with the launch following extensive consumer and market research conducted in consultation with Helloworld Branded and Associate and Helloworld for Business agent councils. Acuity Research has conducted focus groups, while the creative strategy division of consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers has also been involved in the work.

"Part of the research project has been some in-store market testing to strengthen our brand look and feel, looking at ways to augment the current brand to make it more relevant to the travel industry and to bring back some of the historical value from our legacy brands," Helloworld CEO Andrew Burnes told Helloworld members following an extraordinary general meeting to approve the change. A newly opened store in Leopold in regional Victoria (pictured) was used as a test-bed for the new branding, with Burnes saying early indicators are very positive. "At a retail level we will start rolling

out the new logos in July and this will take 12 months to complete," he confirmed.

Further details are expected to be announced this month at the Helloworld for Business Summit and Owner Managers Conference on the Gold Coast, at which Burnes promised a "complete and transparent update".



GENERATION Z: THE BOOM GEN FOR TRAVEL

YOUNG Australians born around 2000 have already made more overseas trips than any previous generation at the same age, prompting companies like Contiki to redefine the way they market to this globetrotting demographic.

Research undertaken by Contiki shows nearly 80% of "Generation Z" have already been overseas by the time they reach an age to travel without family.

As a result, the company's managing director Katrina Barry says Generation Z travellers are prompting a change in what the company delivers.

"It means we need to offer something different than where they went with mum and dad," Barry said.

"Before we used to serve our clients chicken and chips in Paris, now they want a more cultural food experience, such as champagne dinners," she said.

"Your average Contiki traveller is a lot more sophisticated than in the past."

In Contiki's research, food accounted for 35% of young Australians' travel expenses, compared to the overall Aussie average of less than 20%. And while most Australian travellers traditionally spend 50% of their budget on sightseeing, the new generation are only spending 25%.

While the traditional Contiki tour still exists, Barry said the company had seen a big demand from young Aussies wanting to experience a culture more thoroughly by visiting one or two countries in detail.

Last Year Contiki launched Limited Edition itineraries dedicated to food, called Munch, and trips called Snap which focus on photography

and take in Venice and Berlin.

Barry said the Munch tours featured Dan Churchill and Hayden Quinn of MasterChef who join the tour to offer professional culinary advice.

"Travellers will go to markets to buy produce, take a cooking class with the food they've purchased with Hayden and Dan, and learn about the history of food," she said.

Snap tours feature popular Instagram identities who teach trip participants how to develop their photography skills.

"On Snap, travellers will go to photography hot spots, learn how to photograph landmarks, street art and make their images more appealing."

Although Contiki is keeping traditional elements, Barry said the new generation's tastes were driving a new style of travelling.

"While they still want to see the Eiffel Tower, they no longer want to climb it - they would prefer to get lost in Montmartre," she said.





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Tourism and Indigenous culture go hand in hand in many countries around the world. Steve Jones investigates how different companies here in Australia are investing in Aboriginal culture's rich heritage, and how indigenous people are getting involved with showing their homeland and traditions to tourists.

INDIGENOUS OPPORTUNITIES

CHECK into many hotels in Fiji or New Zealand, holiday in France, Vietnam or China – and many other destinations in between – national cultural identity is everywhere. From traditional welcomes by staff to the design of the rooms, from menus to decorations and wall hangings, there are often unmistakable flavours of the country and its heritage. Local culture is integral to the visitor experience.

Not so Australia. Uluru and Kakadu aside, reference to Australia's rich and fascinating Indigenous history is often confined to a

plaque on a wall, at best. And it is a cultural void that AccorHotels wants to fill.

Two years after joining the hotel group as national Indigenous programs manager, Marc Bennie is on a mission to see Indigenous history, culture and tradition permeate AccorHotels' network of more than 200 Australian hotels.

It is, as Bennie acknowledges, a long term vision. But it is one already taking shape. Furthermore, it is another example of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage is starting to play a more prominent role in Australia's suite of tourism products.

"When you visit some countries, take Fiji or New Zealand, the culture is in front of you the moment you walk through the airport and into the hotel. There is a level of culture you want and expect," Bennie said.

"Yet in Australia it is very limited. You have to go to Ayers Rock or Kakadu to get that cultural experience. We want to buck the trend by encouraging our Indigenous employees to share their stories and create a cultural tourism experience within our properties. It is something we are passionate about."

Among the first of AccorHotels' hotels to embrace the initiative has been the five-star Sofitel Gold Coast. Indigenous art adorns the walls and conference rooms, menus contain native ingredients, while in the lobby, guests can try lemon myrtle-infused water as Aboriginal employees explain how the plant has been used for centuries by Indigenous communities for its nourishing and medicinal qualities.

"Our goal is to bring cultural tourism to

life in places where it is unexpected," Bennie said. "We don't want hotel managers saying 'I'm a CBD hotel so this isn't important'. It is."

Behind employment and training, this cultural tourism initiative is the third pillar of AccorHotels' Indigenous program.

The hotel operator's Indigenous engagement strategy dates back to 2001, but it was in 2015 with the launch of the Federal Government's Employment Parity Initiative (EPI) – and the subsequent creation of AccorHotels' Indigenous programs division which Bennie heads – that the hotel group accelerated its employment drive.

The purpose of the EPI is to encourage large companies to have a workforce reflective of the size of the Indigenous population, currently 3%.

"We started at around 3% which equated to 300 Indigenous employees. But given the focus of the program, the full time resourcing of a team and buy-in from the business, we have been able to take that up to 5%, to more than 550 Indigenous staff," Bennie said.

While 80% of AccorHotels' Indigenous recruitment is for entry-level, lower skilled work – job seekers who don't have degrees and are looking for their first job – Bennie stressed it was looking to step up efforts to place existing staff into more senior roles.

Those efforts culminated in March with the appointment of Kristy Stanton as AccorHotels' first Indigenous general manager, taking charge of operations at Ibis Budget Sydney Olympic Park.

Bennie said AccorHotels will use the breakthrough appointment to "encourage and facilitate the next three, five, 10 Indigenous GMs in an ambitious time frame".



Kristy Stanton
from AccorHotels



Stanton herself, who spent seven years rising through the ranks at AccorHotels, told *travelBulletin* that while proud of her achievement, her greatest satisfaction was seeing the impact it has had on fellow Indigenous Australians.

Her progress, which included two years on AccorHotels' executive leadership program, has given a voice to Indigenous staff and generated a confidence previously absent, Stanton explained.

Rather than shying away from communicating their career goals, many now feel empowered to articulate their aspirations and feel more optimistic that those aspirations can be realised.

"There has been a lack of confidence partly because, for many people, they are the first in their family to have these sorts of opportunities," Stanton said. "I was the first member of my family to graduate with a university degree and if no one in your family has gone down this path before there is a tendency to think 'is this something I am capable of?'."

"But people have seen me go forward and seen that it's possible to be Indigenous and become a GM. There is no reason why it can't happen. I have been taken aback by the impact it has had on other Indigenous employees and that has made me particularly happy and proud."

Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia, under the ownership of the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC), is another company that

has invested in the training and employment of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

Soon after ILC acquired the flagship Ayers Rock Resort in 2011, Voyages established the National Indigenous Training Academy as part of its parent company's vision to put not only Indigenous culture at the centre of the property, but its people too.

Until ILC's involvement, Ayers Rock Resort employed scant few Indigenous people. Now, with the academy taking in 100 residential trainees each year – and all guaranteed a job on completion of the year-long course – the resort now employs more than 300, representing 37% of the workforce. The aim is to increase that to 50% by 2018. In addition to tourism and hospitality, the breadth of the training has recently been expanded to include retail and horticulture.

Typically, trainees arrive on the course with very little work experience and very few qualifications, meaning the scheme is initially

aimed at developing skills and establishing people in full time positions.

But Voyages chief executive Andrew Williams said the training does not stop there. "Around 50 of our Indigenous employees are in supervisor and manager level positions and that is a big focus," he said. "They are not confined to entry level positions and we have had quite a number progress fairly quickly through the ranks."

"Interestingly, feedback from our GMs is that employees who come through the academy are typically higher skilled and more productive than those directly recruited from outside, so the program is supporting not only individual career progression but the quality of service and product we are offering."

Williams continued: "Recruitment is critical

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Continues over page



Tess Attie

Running NT Indigenous Tours

"THERE is a lot of work and the hours are long," reflected Tess Attie, owner and tour guide of Northern Territory Indigenous Tours. "But there is a lot of satisfaction when people 'get' what I am talking about."

Tess launched her company in 2009 after spying a gap in the market for a high demand product with little supply.

After navigating "far more red tape than I ever imagined", she now has an established business operating indigenous tours to Litchfield and Kakadu National Parks. But it's not been an easy ride, and continues to throw up significant challenges. It's a journey that many indigenous operators are likely to relate to.

Tess was a participant in Tourism Australia's champions program but left after believing it was "another government program where white people tell indigenous people how they should operate." Nevertheless, she feels it has potential and could be beneficial "with a bit of rejigging and more management involvement from indigenous people themselves".

Then on the touring side there is the wet season to contend with.

"There is significant demand and it is growing steadily but filling wet season tours remains a challenge," Tess said. "Attracting tourists to the Top End in our wonderful wet season is something that government tourism and national park agencies should be putting a lot more effort into."

Challenges around seasonality are not the only issues Tess grapples with. Finding guides is also a problem.

"My husband and I do just about everything, including lead the tours. I do have a few indigenous family members whom I employ from time to time but it's been very hard, even for me, to find indigenous people who are suitably qualified with a 'hire'-endorsed drivers licence, are reliable and comfortable talking about their culture and lives to groups of strange white people day after day.

"I have a conundrum in that I don't have enough bookings to employ someone full-time and don't feel comfortable pushing for more bookings and then possibly having no indigenous guides available."

Nevertheless, the perils of operating a small, indigenous family run business are offset by the wonder expressed by many of her guests. "Around half my guests are Australians, and the other half from overseas who have little knowledge or experience of Aboriginal culture. Most of them, however, do have a lot of interest and this makes it all worthwhile.

"What give me the most joy is when kids come on a tour. They are always so interested in the hands-on stuff. Making string, tasting green ants and digging up the little yam we call meyamakimim."

so we have a one-week program to make sure those we are enrolling understand what they are in for and have the motivation and aptitude to complete the course. We have a completion rate of 70% which has steadily improved and we are quite pleased with that. It compares favourably to any other industry-based training program."

In addition to guaranteeing jobs at Ayers Rock Resort, Voyages works with partners, AccorHotels among them, to find work for those who want or need to move back closer to home.

"Voyages is one of the best hospitality training grounds in Australia for Indigenous candidates," AccorHotels' Marc Bennie said. "We'll take as many as possible. Our relationship with Voyages is a strong and positive one."

But what of Indigenous product itself? What demand is there among domestic and international markets for cultural tourism?

According to Tourism Research Australia, around 16% of international tourists undertook some form of Aboriginal activity in 2016, up from 14% the previous year. Interest levels rise in markets likes the US and Europe, Germany in particular, with Tourism Australia chief executive John O'Sullivan insisting it will continue to market and support Indigenous tourism operators through its major marketing activity and via its Indigenous "champions", a collection of 57 "export ready" businesses, some of whom attend international trade show to spread the word. All are Indigenous owned and operated businesses, with a further 23 close to reaching export ready status, he said.

Apart from delivering quality experiences in their own right, O'Sullivan said the broad range of product helps dispel the myth to the international trade that Indigenous experiences can only be found in remote areas.

"That's just not the case," he said. "One of our champions has walking tours of Sydney's Royal Botanical Gardens while another, Sand Dune Adventures, is based in Port Stephens. Of course there are amazing Indigenous experiences at locations like Uluru but there are plenty in the CBD and metro areas."

O'Sullivan described Indigenous tourism as a unique selling point for the nation, and a "distinguishing feature" of one of Tourism Australia's core marketing premises; people.

"Indigenous culture has featured in the creative in our coastal and aquatic and Restaurant Australia campaigns and we produced an Indigenous film in 2015 that has been viewed 40 million times internationally," he said. "We are continuing to evolve the brand story of Australia and we will make stories somewhat more prominent as we know the product pipeline is starting to back up."

Yet according to Alex De Waal, chief executive of Tourism Tropical North QLD, Australia has not marketed or portrayed Indigenous product effectively enough.

TTNQ's new brand draft logo

China, for example, is nonplussed at the promotion of the "world's oldest culture" because they have so much culture of their own, he told *travelBulletin*. What they seek are unique experiences where they "engage with the natural environment".

Under a new brand and tagline to be launched at Australian Tourism Exchange

– Timeless Experiences: Sharing our Reef and Rainforest Stories – TTNQ will aim to unearth what De Waal believes is "huge demand for Indigenous experiences that has not yet been realised".

"I do not believe Indigenous tourism has been portrayed or



marketed in a manner that makes it attractive and compelling to international markets so the reality is yes, current demand is relatively small," he said. "People want to touch and feel, to be engaged and immersed in the history and what it all means. This desire for interactive interpretation is a global trend."

This taps into TTNQ's new drive to promote Indigenous tourism, said De Waal, who acknowledged the region has a critical mass of Indigenous tourism operators and a high level of Indigenous populations "that we have not been capitalising on".

"The Reef and Rainforest are two powerhouse natural attributes and have taken the tourism limelight for many years. With Timeless Experiences we felt we could demonstrate a third dimension," he said.

Among the proponents of TTNQ's new strategy was Andrew Simpson, a 30-year veteran of Indigenous tourism who in March swapped consultancy work in Mossman, Queensland, to take the role of chief executive of Lirwi Yolngu Tourism Aboriginal Corporation in remote East Arnhem Land.

Lirwi Tourism emerged from special administration last year with Simpson now charged with driving the business forward. International marketing will form a central pillar, he said, while product is likely to be rejigged to make it more appealing.

Simpson said the health of Indigenous owned and operated businesses, and Indigenous tourism generally, has come a long way since he arrived at Jabiru in Kakadu National Park in 1989 to become functions manager at the Gagadju Crocodile Hotel. What

he found left a deep and lasting impression that shaped his career in the sector.

"I was a Melbourne boy who came straight out of the city into the NT and discovered thousands of wonderful Aboriginal people," he recalled. "The Gagadju people owned the properties in Kakadu but weren't employed there. Some of the elders were even begging

‘The market is there and the interest is there. It's now a matter of working hard to get our products polished, reliable and consistent’

outside the hotels for beer money. That had a huge impression on me. Ever since then I set out to try to make a difference."

Much has improved – "the shift in the last 10 years has been fantastic"; Simpson said – but challenges remain. One such challenge surrounds cultural obligations whereby money generated by Indigenous-owned businesses is expected to flow back to extended families, or where vehicles must be shared. All can be damaging to the viability of Indigenous enterprises if not carefully managed.

"Pressures are put on these Indigenous businesses at every angle. That is one of the most significant things I have witnessed over the years," Simpson said.

Operating in Arnhem Land also has unique

challenges for Lirwi Tourism. Apart from requirements not to over-commercialise the region and avoid upsetting cultural sensitivities, its remoteness adds significant cost and time to a visitor experience. To make it potentially more palatable to overseas visitors, Simpson said he is contemplating the introduction of day tours from Nhulunbuy. While still providing the interaction with Yolngu traditional owners and a "cultural immersion" it avoids the high cost and lengthy travel.

"The market is there and the interest is there. It's now a matter of all working hard to get our products polished, reliable and consistent," said Simpson, who added he had been overwhelmed at the level of support of Indigenous tourism from government and non-government agencies.

There is little doubt that the number of Indigenous operators, and the level of expertise and professionalism, has improved immeasurably in recent years, while employment opportunities have also vastly improved. But it's clear there is more to do.

"Indigenous Australia has only had a voice for 50 years or so, so we are on a journey to increase the prominence and desire of Indigenous tourism," AccorHotels' Bennie said. "At the same time, Tourism Australia and the state bodies are working desperately with local tourism operators to get them to a place where they are comfortable doing mass tourism – and that is an interesting debate in itself.

"The way I see it is that AccorHotels needs to be a key driver in that. We need to make it accessible and that is why we want to bring cultural tourism into our properties."

Burnes' view on selling indigenous product

HELLOWORLD executive director Cinzia Burnes pulled no punches when comparing the state of indigenous tourism today to that of the turn of the millennia.

"To be honest, 15 years ago you would be very hesitant to utilise any so-called aboriginal tour operator because the few that were available were very unreliable," she said. "You would never know if the tours would run, whether they would turn up, or whether the company would be there next month.

"Has that improved? Oh absolutely."

Today, Helloworld operates Territory Discoveries, which is sold exclusively in Australia, sells indigenous product through Sunlover Holidays and Qantas Holidays and works with many international wholesalers through its inbound division.

But while the product has improved beyond recognition, demand domestically remains "very limited", Burnes said.

"It's extraordinary that a lot of Australians who have been travelling overseas for years have never been to the Red Centre or Kakadu. There is probably less awareness of aboriginal tourism and accommodation products within the domestic market than internationally," Burnes said.

She listed Voyages Indigenous Tourism products as among the best sellers, along with tours operated by Kakadu Tourism, formerly Gagadju Dreaming, Kakadu Cultural Tours and Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris.

But she questioned whether culture was the main driver.

"They are popular because they offer

great experiences. I'm not suggesting they choose these products because they are aboriginal products," Burnes said.

She estimated that international demand through its inbound operations is "at least double" that of its domestic business, with visitors from France and Germany in particular seeking indigenous product once they arrive in Australia.

Demand from China meanwhile is "non-existent", she said.

"I know the NT has tried to attract the Chinese market but I don't think it's the type of product the current Chinese market is interested in. But I can see this changing over the next few years as the market matures and people make return trips and they travel further afield."

THE EYES HAVE IT FOR EXPEDIA

GLOBAL OTA giant Expedia is taking studying the consumer experience to the next level, with the launch last month of a new “innovation lab” in Singapore which aims to provide deep insights into consumer travel search and booking behaviour. The facility uses eye-tracking technology and “electromyography” to quantify the connection between what a user is seeing and feeling and what actually makes them book.

Electromyography tracks the electrical activity produced by muscles, with the company placing small sensors on the cheek and eyebrow of volunteers to record tiny changes in their facial muscles. An eye-tracking camera links to the data to understand the real-time impact the experience is creating as the user navigates the booking process. Researchers with “unique skills in cognitive psychology” analyse the outcome to figure out where exactly a user was looking and what actions they took as a result of emotional responses to what they were seeing.

The information is then fed into the ongoing development of Expedia’s websites and apps, with the aim of driving incremental

improvements in booking conversions.

The Singapore facility is Expedia’s third Innovation Lab, complementing existing operations in its headquarters in Seattle in the USA and another recently launched lab in London. Basing the new facility in Asia-Pacific means it will particularly look at the experience of travellers in the region, signalling the company’s ongoing strong focus on the Asian market.

The company’s global CEO, Dara Khosrowshahi, who was in Singapore for the launch, said the long-term success of Expedia would depend on its success in the Asian market. “After the US, APAC is second and in time it may come to rival the US in size,” he said. At a press conference to launch the new facility Khosrowshahi also delivered a jibe at US President Donald Trump, saying “travel is a force for good in the world. Despite what our President believes, the more travel there is, the better. The more we realise our commonality, the more we respect each other. We are about making it easier, safer and cheaper for people to get to places - and that’s about changing the world”.



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Amadeus partners Wingify

AMADEUS is now offering its online travel agent customers access to a new ‘Visual Website Optimiser’ (VWO) service in partnership with Wingify, a platform that helps travel providers analyse how customers interact with their websites and make “data-driven decisions” to boost the look-to-book ratio - said to be critical as prospective travellers are faced with an ever-increasing variety of online booking options.

India-based Wingify is claimed to be one of the top three global software providers specialising in A/B testing - a process that compares two versions of a web page to determine which one performs better in terms of a defined conversion goal.

Other companies that have used Wingify to improve their online experience include KPMG, Samsung, Hyundai and Toyota. Wingify spokesman Sparsh Gupta said website testing and optimisation can be a significant differentiator for companies in highly competitive markets - such as the Asia-Pacific travel industry. “By using the insights and proven statistical results to address the leaks and improve their websites, businesses can see returns in the form of higher conversion rates and increased revenue,” he said.

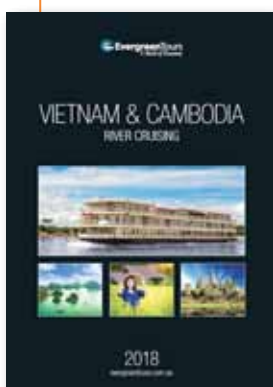
Amadeus’ head of online travel, Sebastien Gibergues, said “we are committed to adding greater business value for our OTA customers, by equipping them with the technology, solutions and services they need to stay ahead of consumer demands. Our focus is to collaborate with the best technology and travel providers in the world to power the travel ecosystem and bring the best travel experience to consumers”.



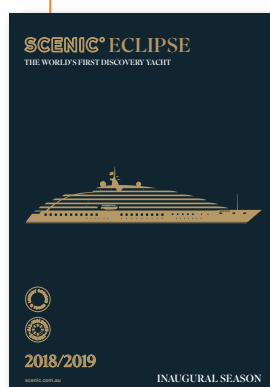
The 100-page American Queen Steamboat Company's 2018 brochure features a range of great American journeys as well as themed cruises. Riverlonians (resident history experts) are onboard every cruise to add a cultural experience. Guests can explore the Columbia and Snake Rivers in the west of the US aboard *American Empress*, witnessing wild frontiers and spectacular landscapes. Or they can travel the mighty Mississippi on board *American Queen* or the new *American Duchess*.



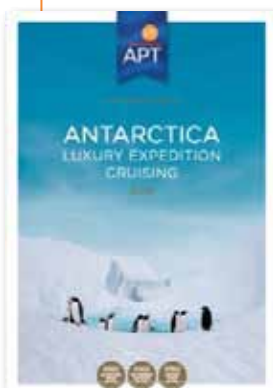
APT's China & Japan brochure for 2018 features a Best of China 13-day package from Beijing to Shanghai. Opportunities include a visit to the Great Wall of China which covers 6,000km, from the Yellow Sea and up into the Gobi Desert. The 14-day Japanese Spring Blossoms Gardens & Culture Cruise takes guests to Hiroshima to visit its Peace Memorial Park. Travellers can also enjoy signature experiences like meeting with a local geisha in Naro, Japan.



DISCOVER Vietnam and Cambodia with Evergreen's 2018 River Cruising guide. There are eight different 19-day cruises available including the Vietnam & Cambodia Explorer and Mekong Cruise that takes travellers from Hanoi to places such as Hoi An, the temples of Angkor and Ho Chi Minh City. For something a bit shorter, eight-day tours are available including the Magnificent Mekong Cruise that takes travellers through the Mekong Delta and through Cai Be's floating market where they can see the locals barter across the river.



SCENIC has released its brochure for *Scenic Eclipse*'s inaugural season in 2018/19 as part of a suite of catalogues dedicated to the new addition. The main brochure details the range of experiences and on board facilities that will debut on the 228-guest ultra-luxury mega yacht. It shows off the luxurious spaces guests will be able to explore when the vessel launches in the Mediterranean on 31 August 2018, including all-veranda accommodation, the 550m² Spa Sanctuary and ten dining experiences.



APT's Antarctica Luxury Expedition Cruising 2018 brochure has recently hit agency shelves and includes unique travel experiences like Zodiac boat excursions to the Antarctic Peninsula, led by an expert team. With only nine other passengers on board, travellers can get up and close to penguins, as well as leopard seals and Antarctic fur seals. Other highlights include visiting an active scientific research station. There are also flexible schedules meaning if guests encounter killer or humpback whales, they can stop and watch.



NATURAL Focus's latest offering covers a broad sweep of South America including Colombia & Guyana, Costa Rica & Panama, Cuba and Ecuador. The 108-page program features a variety of trip options to suit every traveller from hikes through the iconic Torres del Paine National Park to family adventures in the Galapagos Islands or Rail Tours through historical Cusco to Machu Picchu. Nature lovers can also stay in thatched ensuite bungalows and be amongst the wilderness with rainforest eco-lodge packages.



SCENIC'S has released its 2017/18 brochure celebrating Aussie destinations like the mountains of the Kimberley regions, the vineyards of the Margaret River and desert icon of Uluru. New additions include the 11-day Victorian Discovery tour where guests will explore the rugged landscape of the Grampians mountain range and rest in the spas of Daylesford. The 21-day Southern Explorer tour takes travellers through Flinders Range, the Barossa Valley and Kangaroo Island.



WENDY Wu Deluxe Collection 2017-18 brochure features China, Japan, Indochina, India & Sri Lanka. Highlights include hands-on cookery classes with chefs in Vietnam, taking a tour with the curator of one of the most impressive forts in the Indian state of Rajasthan, and ascending the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall of China. Tour options are made for 18 passengers or fewer, giving guests an intimate travel experience, and also include private tour options and tailor-made packages.

CAREER IN FOCUS

JOE KARBO

**Chief operating officer of
Wendy Wu Tours Group**

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

As Group CEO, a core responsibility is leading the company's global operations within all the regional offices in Sydney, Auckland, New York, Xian and head office in London where I'm based. Supporting & working closely with all the regional leaders and global directors ensuring we're all aligned to the company's vision and goals.

I began this newly created role in June 2016, reporting directly to Wendy Wu (founder & chairperson) and the board of directors.

2. How did you start out in your career?

Were you always destined to work in the travel industry?

My first job was with Zurich Insurance as an underwriting executive, and first job in travel was with Flight Centre in Sydney (Darlinghurst) as travel consultant in a retail shop. I probably was destined to work in the travel industry – because it's what I do now.

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

Yes I'm a huge fan of education and personal development. My highest qualification is a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) which was challenging to complete whilst working full-time, but extremely rewarding and important for my day to day life.

4. What do you love about your job?

It's a bit of a cliché, but I love the company, and working with my colleagues first and foremost. Being surrounded with dedicated people all striving for the same goals, is enough for me to feel energised getting up each day. I've always found who your direct



‘Being surrounded with dedicated people all striving for the same goals, is enough for me to feel energised getting up each day’

report line is within the business, is a key factor as well, and working closely with Wendy is always a joy. How Wendy started the business and where it's at today is a testimony of her hard work and resilience over the years.

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

Major ones would be Bali bombings and the GFC. Generic ones would be internal politics and breaking down the barriers of limitations that some people try to enforce upon others.

6. What factors are central to a successful career?

Go the extra mile, be positive, inner strength, work hard, care about your team members, be creative & analytical, do what you say and walk the talk.

7. Is having a mentor an essential part of getting ahead in a career?

Yes definitely. They're usually brutally honest with their assessments, which is important as we can all live in our personal bubbles sometimes. The ability to write things down and review one's progress I have also found to be effective. It helps to be honest in your responses, take criticism when it's delivered, be aware and move on.

8. What are your principals for doing good business?

Excellent communication, transparency (sharing information & knowledge) passionate staff, influential leaders and a good understanding of reports & P&Ls. Building strong relationships with both internal & external stakeholders is a must.

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

Be a stand-out by working hard, be consistent, always be positive, do an MBA and believe in your unique abilities. Think big.

‘We can all live in our personal bubbles sometimes...be honest in your responses, take criticism when it's delivered, be aware and move on’

ATCC CAREERS SUCCESS

THE Australian Travel Careers Council (ATCC) is reporting strong feedback from its National Industry Leaders and Educators Engagement Symposium 2017, held at the New South Wales Parliament House in Sydney in March. At the two-day event several current and strategic issues were presented and discussed between the industry practitioners and educators across the country. The event was emceed by Helloworld group general manager, Colin Hamilton, and saw strong participation from organisations including, Qantas, Travelport, Amadeus, Avis, Uniworld, American Express Business Travel and Bunnik Travel.

According to Rick Myatt from AFTA Education and Training, a key highlight was the 'Graduate's Journey' panel, which saw five travel professionals profiled on stage to explain their journey from the classroom to successful careers in travel. Industry bodies also took part in the event including Tourism Accommodation Australia, the Queensland Travel Industry Council, IATA and PATA, while NSW government officials were present and

two state government ministers, Anthony Roberts and Adam Marshall, were among the presenters.

Myatt said the two-day symposium focused on the travel industry on the first day, with other sectors such as government and industry associations on the second day.

"As said in the theme, 'Connectivity Creates Opportunities', the event promoted a productive and mutually rewarding connection between industry leaders and educators," Myatt said.

"Engagement which we will continue to promote under the Australian Travel Careers Council brand," he added. The event also included dinner and

entertainment on board the Sydney icon Sydney Showboats, where delegates, especially from interstate and regional Australia enjoyed a taste of Sydney Harbour in all its glory.



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ADELAIDE HERALDS A NEW ERA FOR EVENTS

TWENTY years after it became the first Australian city to offer a purpose-built convention centre, Adelaide is preparing to unveil the final stage of a \$400 million redevelopment aimed at cementing its place among the country's top events destinations.

In September, the Adelaide Convention Centre will open its striking new East building, constructed on the site of the original plenary building whose debut in 1987 signaled a new era for conferences in Australia.

Now in the final stages of construction, the East building will be a multi-purpose, state-of-the-art facility with a capacity for up to 3,500 delegates. It is the final piece in a project that began with the development of the centre's new West building which opened two years ago, and completes a dedicated convention zone in Adelaide's wider Riverbank Precinct renewal.

Together with the existing Central building, the new facilities overlook the River Torrens and surrounding parklands from their position on the city's cultural boulevard, North Terrace. They offer a significantly increased capacity and flexibility, and can operate as stand-alone venues or as a single integrated complex.

Among the new building's features are the world's largest rotating seating "drums" – two 18m turntables with seating for 320 people. The drums can revolve 180 degrees in minutes to quickly reconfigure conference and event spaces.

Designed by Adelaide-based international architectural firm Woods Bagot, the East building will also offer a new auditorium with hinged seating that can be lowered from the roof space to convert an exhibition hall into a

lecture theatre. Sliding walls can be used to enclose conference space or opened to allow a full capacity plenary session.

‘The East building... is the final piece in a project that began with the development of the centre's new West building which opened two years ago, and completes a dedicated convention zone in Adelaide's wider Riverbank Precinct renewal’

Fittingly, the first conference to be hosted in the East building will focus on the cutting edge of science and technology. The 68th International Astronautical Congress (IAC) to be held in September is the world's largest and most significant gathering of scientists and space professionals, and will be one of the biggest events held in the South Australian capital this year.

More than 3,000 delegates are expected to attend, including astronauts, heads of space agencies, engineers, scientists, innovators, legal and policy specialists, parliamentarians and students.

The congress will be the first to utilise all three of the Adelaide Convention Centre's interconnected buildings and will coincide with several space milestones including the 60th anniversary of the launch of Sputnik 1 and the 50th anniversary of Australia's first satellite, WRESAT.

The redevelopment of the Adelaide Convention Centre is part of a \$3 billion plan to overhaul Adelaide's Riverbank Precinct, which aims to create a new hub for research, health and medicine, education, sport, arts and entertainment.

It includes a \$300 million expansion of the Adelaide Casino, which will add a new 80-room luxury hotel to its site beside the Convention Centre.

It will also connect to a \$600 million redevelopment of the adjoining Festival Plaza, which will add restaurants, bars, parking, retail and office space to a revitalised arts and entertainment precinct surrounding the Adelaide Festival Theatre.

Due for completion in 2020, the plaza will link Adelaide's main axis, King William Street, with other areas around the Festival Centre, the Casino, Adelaide Railway Station and the Convention Centre.

It will also connect to the riverside Elder Park, a site of large-scale outdoor public events, and to a recently constructed footbridge over the Torrens to the Adelaide Oval.

As well as uniting conference facilities and public venues, the Riverbank Precinct will also link with the University of Adelaide and University of South Australia, and aims to create a new heart within the Adelaide city centre.





Giant Chinese incentive for Adelaide

ADELAIDE is about to host its largest ever incentive event, welcoming 3,000 Chinese delegates to the city in June.

The Perfect China company will bring its top sales representatives to Adelaide in two groups from 17-20 and 24-17 June, the third time the organisation has chosen Australia for its event.

The company is well known in China for its herbal health products, kitchenware and personal care items.

The Adelaide Convention Bureau said the event would inject \$11.2 million into the South Australian economy, coming on top of \$210 million in incentive events secured by the bureau last financial year.

Doltone House adds Tech Park

SYDNEY venue operator Doltone House has taken over management of one of the city's largest events facilities, Australian Technology Park (ATP).

The warehouse-style venue is within the former Eveleigh rail yards and will be operated by Doltone House under a management deal signed with its owner, the Mirvac group.

With a main hall spanning more than 7,000m², it will be the largest venue in the Doltone House portfolio, which also includes facilities at Jones Bay Wharf, Darling Island, Hyde Park and Sylvania Waters.

It can cater to more than 2,000 guests banquet style in the main exhibition hall as well as a further 520 guests in its purpose built theatre and 440 guests in a dining room. The venue also features a large atrium suitable for break-out events.

Sydney to host world leaders

SYDNEY is about to host business leaders from some of the world's most innovative organisations at this month's World Business Forum.

Under the theme 'Be Beta', the event will involve speakers like Huffington Post co-founder Arianna Huffington, Harvard Business School professor of strategy Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales.

Other speakers include emotional intelligence expert Daniel Goleman, former ad agency creative director at Apple Ken Segall and former director of marketing at Facebook Randi Zuckerberg.

The World Business Forum will be held at the Star Sydney on 31 May and 1 June.



ACB VIEW

Damian Kitto, chief executive officer
Adelaide Convention Bureau

THE NEXT BIG THING

ADELAIDE, South Australia has in recent times, enjoyed a relatively small but robust, bespoke incentive industry - sitting largely in the shadow of the more internationally well-known east coast destinations when it came to bigger groups.

However that tide is turning with the announcement of the destination's first large group tour by The Perfect China with a 3,000 passenger group to arrive in Adelaide in June 2017 - and there are more to come.

The challenges faced by Adelaide and other smaller destinations are not that they don't necessarily have the product - the issue is that of awareness. Smaller destinations don't have the 'fame factor' on their side. They're not a Sydney, New York, Shanghai or Paris however they do have benefit of being new, undiscovered and 'somewhere different' - current priority features for many groups.

A further challenge for smaller destinations is first-hand exposure - without an existing large-scale reputation, this is a difficult yet paramount sales strategy. Adelaide has previously hosted smaller famils and received exceptional feedback on its offering. In fact, The Perfect China's original plan was to send just 200 VIP guests to Adelaide however following a site visit, their delegation was suitably impressed to up the group to include 3000 visitors. This was despite the fact that due to The Perfect China's business including a wine distribution service, South Australia's famous wine experiences were not to be included in the itinerary.

Exceptional feedback from smaller groups aside, the challenge for Adelaide (as is the case with smaller or less

well-known cities) in order to expand its reach and reputation as a viable incentive destination was securing first-hand exposure on a larger scale.

Timing was paramount and in this instance, perfect. Direct access into Adelaide by new airlines offered more economical and convenient access. Industry-wide communication to ensure operators and authorities were 'large group ready' has been undertaken and the timing of the completion of Adelaide's investment in infrastructure and development along the city's Riverbank precinct was on track. Adelaide could boast the country's best connected business, events and entertainment precinct with close proximity to hotels to complement its also highly accessible regional offering of amazing food and wine and pristine wilderness.

Tourism Australia's Dreamtime event provided the initial catalyst to take Adelaide's incentive strategy to the next level and it was upon the timing of this event that the incentive strategy was developed. We'd built it - they just needed to come!

Third party endorsements including Lonely Planet listing South Australia as a Top 10 'must see' destination which followed the New York times listing Adelaide as a must see city in 2015 - perfect timing for Dreamtime (held in December) further boosted Adelaide's positioning as a new and exciting place to visit.

For incentive operators consistently seeking new, exciting and untried destinations, Adelaide and other smaller boutique destinations, being large-group ready, offer an alternative to national and international groups for whom Australia remains a highly desirable destination.



business events news

- 23 Mar** Digital event for Brisbane
- 23 Mar** SA wins China visit
- 27 Mar** Big name events to Brisbane
- 30 Mar** Ayers Rock resort upgrade
- 03 Apr** Flight Centre world DMC plan

MARCH TO APRIL 2017 HEADLINES

- 03 Apr** TIE line-up revealed
- 06 Apr** Melb dines on world's best
- 10 Apr** Qld steps up after cyclone
- 10 Apr** Bureau growth up
- 13 Apr** Doltone takes on Tech Park



UNIWORLD STANDS STRONG IN FRANCE

Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection has wholeheartedly committed to the city of light, deploying its newest ship, *S.S. Joie de Vivre* on the River Seine. Jasmine O'Donoghue jumped aboard the inaugural sailing.

STEPPING off a transfer and into the heart of Paris, with the Eiffel Tower looming behind us, the bright floral artwork on the hull of Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection's *S.S. Joie de Vivre* catches the eye.

Touted by the cruise line as "the first of its kind to sail the Seine River", the ship promised to bring the "joy of living" to the rivers of France.

Suspense clung to the brisk spring air as we ascended the gangway and became some of the first Aussies to set foot on board the vessel.

We are met by highly-polished wood finishes reminiscent of a luxury yacht - a first for the line - and led down a majestic marble staircase which wraps around a water feature cascading from the ceiling, making it immediately apparent Uniworld has not skimped on the finer details.

A warm welcome from the crew and we are promptly escorted to our room by an animated staff member, who gushes as he

shows off all the new gadgets in our cabin.

He gleefully flicks a switch and our floor-to-ceiling window drops down into a French balcony, flooding the cabin with light and the buzz of the city outside.

Next he highlights a bedside switch for the curtains, allowing passengers to peek out at the French scenery without leaving the warmth of their beds.

Amidst the excitement and exuberant mood on board, it can be hard to comprehend that this beacon of luxury was nearly a "no go".

Speaking at the vessel's christening ceremony in Paris, The Travel Corporation founder and chairman Stanley Tollman told guests he initially pulled the plug on the ship shortly after the 2015 attacks on the Bataclan Theatre.

Two weeks later, he reversed the decision, reinforcing that France has the company's "full support".

"I honestly believe in a lifetime of businesses and travel-related services, that this is really one of our best achievements,"

‘I honestly believe in a lifetime of businesses and travel-related services, that this is really one of our best achievements’

Stanley Tollman, founder and chairman
The Travel Corporation



Godmother Dame Joan Collins cuts the ribbon at the christening ceremony of *S.S. Joie de Vivre* in Paris. All photos courtesy of Uniworld and Steve Dunlop.



Classic room with its floor to ceiling window which transforms into a French balcony

Tollman told ceremony guests.

"The standard of workmanship, the quality of people working aboard and the enthusiasm that everybody who has seen it has embraced, it is something that has made me seriously proud."

Echoing Tollman, Fiona Dalton, local MD for Uniworld told *travelBulletin* the decision to deploy the vessel in France could have gone one of two ways.

"The courageous thing to do was to continue to deliver this extraordinary initiative and that's what they did," she said, adding "all credit to the owners for having the courage of their conviction to do what they knew was right, not what they knew was easy".

The decision is paying off for the line, with cabins for S.S. *Joie de Vivre* booked at 90% for the remainder of the year, the bulk of which is from past guests.

In line with its aim to make every vessel unique, Uniworld has introduced a number of fresh concepts on S.S. *Joie de Vivre*.

Drawing inspiration from the vessel's roundtrip itinerary from Paris, the ship embraces "all things French".

The design of the shiny new vessel aims to extend the onshore experience on board and weaves in Parisian design spanning from the 1920s through to the 1960s, while the dining offering is dominated by French produce and local wines.

A number of fresh concepts have been introduced on S.S. *Joie de Vivre*, with the cruise line rejigging its approach to a pool and spa.

Located at the back of the middle deck is Club L'Esprit, which during the day is a relaxing spa and wellness centre encasing a resistance pool, massage room, fitness centre and a bar well-stocked with smoothies and snacks.

It's a spot to grab a snack and relax on comfortable seating with a book or take in the French countryside from the balcony.

But just before the sun fades, the sparkling

star-like lights in the ceiling switch on, a hydraulic floor rises over the pool and live music takes over.

The mood changes and the venue transforms into a Supper Club called Claude's, serving as an alternate dining venue with a set menu.

At the opposite end of the deck, overlooking the front of the vessel, is another dining option, Le Bistrot.

Mirrored on a French sidewalk café, it offers a continental breakfast in the morning, traditional bistro cuisine in the afternoon and in pleasant weather the venue's windows can drop down, converting it into an open-air space.

Also new is Le Cave des Vins, a private dining room and "wine cave" downstairs which Uniworld CEO Ellen Bettridge described as an "on-board shore excursion".

Groups can reserve their space in the wine cave for a farm-to-table experience where they prepare a seven-course meal with the chef and settle in to enjoy it with paired wines.

In an increasingly busy river cruise environment, Bettridge told *travelBulletin* that Uniworld had positioned itself in a way she said gave them no competitors.

"We are a floating boutique hotel, we are not a river cruise," she stated.

"No one else can offer this level of service, no one offers this level of food, no one offers this level of style and I just don't think we have any competitors."

The cruise line has experienced a rebound from the Australian market for France over the past 12 months, Dalton said, noting across the board Aussie bookings had been "really strong for the last six months".

Dalton said she was "quietly confident" that the launch of the new ship would be a "foundation for a fantastic 12 to 18 months ahead for Uniworld globally".

S.S. *Joie de Vivre* is operating eight-day itineraries on the Seine, which can be paired with departures of the S.S. *Catherine* on the Rhone and *River Royale* in Bordeaux for longer holidays.



Club L'Esprit



Le Cave des Vins



Le Bistrot

SILVERSEA WRITES A NEW CHAPTER ON LUXURY CRUISING

Silversea Cruises is taking luxury to another level with the launch of its new flagship *Silver Muse*, while at the same time adding a new dimension to the exotic destinations of Asia.

WHEN it came to creating a new flagship for its fleet of high-end vessels, Silversea Cruises looked to some of the greats of literature for inspiration.

The *Silver Muse*, launched last month in Italy and now sailing the Mediterranean, carries with it a carefully curated library that allows guests to indulge their minds as they indulge their taste for luxury.

But its creators didn't simply shop online for a shelf-load of holiday reading. Instead, Silversea engaged Heywood Hill – an 80-year-old London bookshop and literary institution known for its collections of new, old and antiquarian books – to create a private collection.

The result is the Arts Cafe, where Heywood's selection is offered alongside exhibitions of paintings and sculptures from artists around the world.

"The brief was to choose books that Silversea's guests will really enjoy and that will only add to the quality of their experience on board," said Heywood chairman Nicky Dunne. "We have taken a lot of trouble in selecting titles for the Arts Cafe and we can't wait to hear what the passengers think of it."

The process behind the Art Cafe has been repeated throughout *Silver Muse* as Silversea seeks to redefine what luxury cruising is all about.

The 40,700-ton ship is the ninth in the fleet and carries just 596 passengers, maintaining the small-ship intimacy and all-suite accommodation that Silversea has made its hallmarks. It also offers more of the larger suite categories than its sister



The Arts Cafe onboard *Silver Muse*

ships, and more connecting suites for families and friends.

At the top of its suite selection is the Balsorano Owner's Suite, which like the Art Cafe contains an intriguing selection of items that create a distinct character and style.

Each item has been selected by Silversea chairman Manfredi Lefebvre d'Ovidio from his personal collection, which includes books, sculptures, artworks and pieces of furniture from his family residence in Rome, arranged in a suite of more than 90m².

Continuing the literary theme, the Balsorano Suite's bookshelf is adorned with Lefebvre's favourite titles including *The Great Navigators of the Eighteenth Century* by Jules Verne and *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* by David Abulafia.

Lefebvre said the suite encapsulated his family's Italian heritage and taste.

"I hope that guests will find the Balsorano Suite a spectacular home away from home aboard *Silver Muse*," he said.

With a choice of eight different restaurants, *Silver Muse* offers more dining options than any ship in the ultra-luxury range. They include La Dame, a collaboration with boutique hotel and restaurant guild Relais &

Chateaux, which offers a chic contemporary style and white-gloved service.

Other options include the Asian-accented Indochine, an elegant bar and grill called Atlantide, a contemporary Japanese restaurant Kaiseki and an Italian eatery to reflect Silversea's heritage, Spaccanapoli.

Christened in Monte Carlo on April 19, *Silver Muse* will visit 34 countries and 130 ports in 2017. It is now sailing an initial season of Mediterranean cruises among destinations including Barcelona, Rome, Venice, Dubrovnik and Athens, before crossing the Atlantic in September for a series of cruises in the Americas.

‘Silversea engaged Heywood Hill – a literary institution known for its collections of new, old and antiquarian books – to create a private collection. The result is the Arts Cafe’



MILLENNIUM CLASS SHIPS TO EXPLORE ASIA

AS *Silver Muse* makes its debut in Europe, Silversea's Millennium Class ships are set to explore some of the most extraordinary sights of Asia.

Silver Shadow and sister ship *Silver Whisper* will offer a series of departures from Hong Kong and Singapore, visiting some of Asia's rich and bustling cities like Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur as well as extraordinary natural landscapes like the rocky outcrops of Vietnam's Ha Long Bay and the pristine islands of the Philippines.

Silversea's ships offer their signature standards of high luxury in an intimate environment of no more than 382 guests. All suites offer ocean views and more than 85% feature private balconies, with personalised butlers for all suites, complimentary wine, champagne and spirits, and a staff-to-guest ratio of almost one-to-one.

The ships offer a choice of restaurants including Le Champagne, the only restaurant by Relais and Chateaux, as well as full-scale productions in the multi-tiered show lounge.



Business class fly free offer

UNTIL 31 May, 2017, Silversea is offering free business class flights on select Asia voyages aboard *Silver Shadow* and *Silver Whisper*, as well as a selection of free shore excursions at each port of call.

Departures are between October 2017 and April 2018 – contact Silversea for full details and applicable voyages.

GOURMET CRUISE WITH RELAIS & CHATEAUX

WITH 2-starred Michelin chef Dominique Bouchet and in partnership with Relais & Chateaux, Silversea is offering a melting-pot of gala dinners, world famous chefs, cooking shows and gastronomic excellence that will excite and entice the food connoisseur. Budding chefs will no doubt seize the opportunity to participate in the unique cookery school concept, L'Ecole des Chefs by Relais & Chateaux while aboard.

This voyage departs 08 October 2017, travelling from Hong Kong to Singapore over 14 days, and is priced from AU\$10,950pp (Vista Suite), including Business Class Air Roundtrip.

For more information visit silversea.com or call Reservations on 1300 306 872.



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We are pleased to provide our travel partners with a wide variety of display materials including the latest Destination & Lifestyle Poster Collection. New poster collection will be available at tifs.com.au from May.



PRINCESS DEPLOYS ITS FLAGSHIP TO AUSTRALIA

PRINCESS Cruises will deploy its newest ship to Australian waters next year, basing its *Majestic Princess* in Sydney over the 2018-19 summer season.

The 143,000 tonne vessel is now the flagship of the Princess Fleet and will be the largest ship the line has sailed from Australia. Carrying 3,560 guests, it made its maiden voyage from Italy early last month.

In her Australian season, *Majestic Princess* will sail 16 cruises to destinations including Fiji, New Zealand and Tasmania as well as two Asia voyages between Shanghai and Sydney, and Sydney and Hong Kong.

Princess Cruises Vice President Australia

& New Zealand Stuart Allison said the deployment of *Majestic Princess* was testament to Australians' love of cruising.

"We're thrilled to be welcoming our newest, most stylish and most luxurious flagship to our shores," Allison said. "Having just experienced her preview voyage, I know Australian cruisers will love all that she has to offer."

Majestic Princess offers 1,780 staterooms, more than 80% of which have private balconies. The ship has 13 dining options including two restaurants with menus designed by Michelin star chefs – Harmony by Chef Richard Chen and La Mer

by Chef Emmanuel Renaut.

Other features include 1000m² of shopping area and a dramatic over-the-ocean glass walkway, the SeaWalk.

Majestic Princess will join three other ships operating the Princess Cruises 2018-19 Australia and New Zealand program – Golden Princess, Sun Princess and Sea Princess – together offering almost 100 cruises from Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, Fremantle and Auckland.

Fares aboard *Majestic Princess* start from \$1,499 per person twin share for a balcony room on a six-night cruise from Sydney to Tasmania, departing 18 November, 2018.



NEW FORMAT FOR THIS YEAR'S CRUISE360

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia has developed a new format for its Cruise360 conference this year, extending the event into a second day to allow a ship inspection for participants.

To be held in Sydney in August, this year's event will involve international keynote speakers Jan Swartz, the group president of Princess Cruises and Carnival Australia, and Larry Pimentel, the president and chief executive officer of Azamara Club Cruises.

CLIA says its refreshed format will include better networking opportunities and professional development break-out sessions, as well as seminars and analysis into current cruise and travel industry trends. Cruise360's trade show will also give attendees an opportunity to meet cruise line representatives and cruise-related suppliers.

CLIA Australasia managing director Joel Katz said the organisation was excited to have secured Swartz and Pimentel as keynote speakers.

"It's an honour to have two of our industry's top leaders take the stage at this important CLIA event," Mr Katz said.

"Their addresses will be a highlight of Cruise360 so we're thrilled they've agreed to lend their knowledge to our travel agent members."

For the first time, Cruise360 will involve an extra day to allow an inspection of P&O Cruises' newest fleet addition, *Pacific Explorer*.

Cruise360 will take place on August 25 at the Hyatt Regency Sydney, followed by the ship inspection on August 26.

For details and tickets visit www.cruising.org.au.

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Brisbane's 'mega' terminal a step closer

Plans for a new mega-cruise ship terminal near the mouth of the Brisbane River have moved a step closer after key stakeholders reached an in-principle agreement with the Port of Brisbane last month.

The deal covers key commercial and technical issues involving the Queensland Government, Brisbane City Council and Queensland Urban Utilities, and allows work to move forward on the design and engineering of the terminal.

Queensland's Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment, Curtis Pitt, said good progress had been made to overcome hurdles and develop a facility that would bring a welcome economic boost.

"The cruise sector already supports more than 2,700 jobs in Queensland and we want to see this number grow because the cruise industry supports local businesses and sustains our regional communities," Pitt said.

"The proposed new terminal will be able to accommodate the mega-ships now becoming widespread in the cruise industry," he said.

"It's estimated that over 60% of cruise ships in Australia will be longer than 270 metres by 2020."

If approved, the \$100 million project would be completed during the 2019-20 cruise season.



NEW ADDITIONS FOR EVERGREEN

EVERGREEN will boost its fleet of European river cruise vessels by 75% this month, introducing three new ships in addition to its existing four.

The first new 'Star Ship', the *Emerald Liberté*, made its debut last month, becoming Evergreen's first ship to sail in France. It now operates the eight-day Sensations of Southern France itinerary on the Rhone and Saone rivers.

Travelling between Lyon and Arles, it passes through destinations including Chalon-Sur-Saone, Tournon and Avignon where guests are treated to an on-board Provençal-style dinner by local chef Fabien Morreale.

The 138-guests *Liberté* is smaller than Evergreen's Rhine and Danube-based ships which carry 182 guests and features a pool area which turns into a cinema at night as well as drop-down glass balcony windows in all suites.

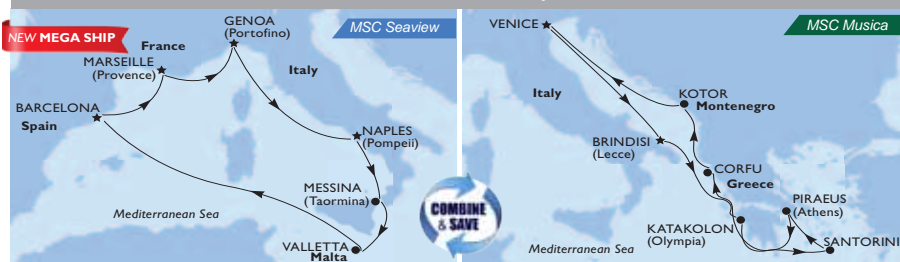
This month, Evergreen will introduce its first 'Star Ship' in Portugal, the *Emerald Radiance*, which is preparing to welcome her first guests on the Douro river.

Also due for launch this month is Evergreen's fifth ship on the Rhine, Main & Danube rivers, the *Emerald Destiny*, giving the line a total European fleet of seven vessels.

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7 NIGHT CRUISE FROM \$647^{PP*}

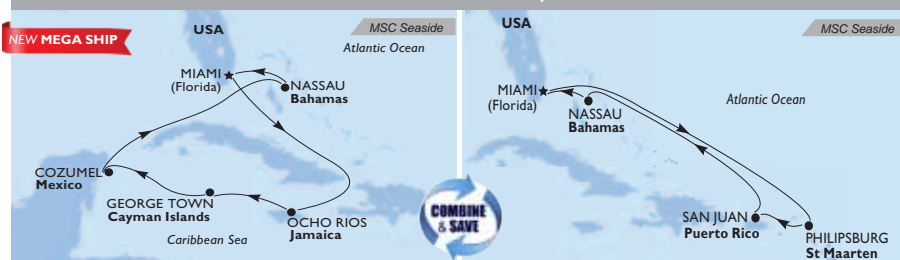


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Latest Antarctica program from Aurora

AURORA Expeditions has launched its 2018/2019 Antarctic program, offering voyages among destinations including the Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia, the wild Weddell Sea and the Falkland Islands.

The program features 11 small-group expeditions aboard the 54-passenger vessel *Polar Pioneer*, departing between November 2018 and March 2019.

Returning next year is the recently introduced Sub-Antarctic Safari, a 15-day expedition to the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. It offers close encounters with wildlife including king penguins, seals and birdlife, and is priced from US\$11,100 per person twin share.

An early bird offer provides savings of up to 15% when booked before 30 June 2017.

Pacific Partnership program to expand

P&O Cruises' Pacific Partnership fundraising program has broken the million-dollar barrier since it was launched in 2013.

The line is now expanding the partnership with two new community programs to assist women and young children in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, working in conjunction with Save the Children Australia.

In PNG, the partnership will help support a project for newborns, encouraging mothers to have their babies delivered at health centres by helping to cover medical fees, while in the Solomon Islands it will support an early childhood development project.

P&O formed its Pacific Partnership with Save the Children in 2013. Since then, P&O passengers have raised \$1 million which has helped construct kindergartens and build health posts in Vanuatu.

Azamara expands Australian program

AZAMARA Club Cruises will expand its range of Australian and New Zealand itineraries in 2019, including the line's first departures from Melbourne and Perth.

Azamara Quest will arrive in late 2018, first offering a 15-night cruise from Perth to Melbourne via Sydney where it will spend three nights docked over New Year's Eve. It will also offer a 16-night voyage from Melbourne, ending in Auckland.

The Australian and New Zealand itineraries are part of Azamara's 2019 worldwide program which will offer a record 250 ports.



CLIA VIEW

Joel Katz, managing director
CLIA Australasia

CRUISE360

TICKETS are selling fast to the Australasian cruise industry's only trade focused conference, Cruise360 which will be held in Sydney on 25 and 26 August.

This year's Cruise360 will have a new format including a speaker line-up featuring global industry leaders. CLIA is very excited and honoured to announce that two of our industry's top leaders will participate at this important CLIA event. Group President Princess Cruises and Carnival Australia Jan Swartz and Azamara Club Cruises President and CEO Larry Pimentel will both deliver keynote addresses. Their addresses will be a highlight of Cruise360 so we're thrilled they've agreed to lend their knowledge to our travel agent members.

The refreshed format will include enhanced networking opportunities and professional development break-out sessions, as well as seminars and analysis into current cruise and travel industry trends. Cruise360's dynamic trade show will give conference attendees the chance to meet with cruise line representatives as well as other significant cruise-related suppliers.

Attendees at Cruise360 include travel agency owners, travel agent members as well as cruise lines, ports and destination representatives, industry suppliers and CLIA executive partners.

Early bird tickets are now available at www.cruising.org.au and online bookings can also be made for the Cruise360 ship inspection, and we urge agents to act quickly.

Master the Dream

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Annual CLIA Australasia Masters Conference. We are very excited to be partnering with Genting's Dream Cruises, who will be hosting this year's Masters onboard the magnificent *Genting Dream* sailing out of Hong Kong in September.

The Masters Conference is a unique learning opportunity specifically developed to focus on the skills that you need to be the most successful cruise salesperson.

We are excited to have once again secured Scott Koepf to run Masters 2017. Scott is a very talented, motivating and inspirational facilitator. Recent Masters graduates have said: "The best days I have ever spent in a conference room in my 30+ years in this industry", "Masters exceeded my expectations! Scott is an exceptional speaker & presenter - direct, engaging, illuminating, funny and energetic".

Achieving your Masters Accreditation will see you joining an elite group. Master Cruise Consultants are officially endorsed by the cruise industry body as the most qualified individuals to be advising about cruise holidays. The skills gained through attending the Masters are uniquely referenced to the cruise industry and will set you apart from your competitors.

Cabins are limited so if you aspire to be the best in your field visit www.cruising.org.au for more info.

CRUISE WEEKLY

21 Mar P&O's Master Class live
21 Mar Sunstone expedition order
23 Mar Crystal's river ship delay
23 Mar CLIA Masters Conference
28 Mar *Joie de Vivre* launched
30 Mar Tollman rules out ocean
04 Apr More on U by Uniworld
04 Apr *Silver Muse* delivered

HEADLINES MARCH AND APRIL 2017

06 Apr NCL Cuba sailings go off
06 Apr U by Uniworld Aus live
11 Apr Bris terminal step closer
13 Apr *Majestic* Sydney homeport
13 Apr ATG suite on *Odysseus*
18 Apr Oceania tropics 2018/19
18 Apr *Andaman's* delay detailed
20 Apr *Scenic Eclipse* brochures

INDUSTRY IN FOCUS



These agents checked out why India is one of the most popular destinations at the moment, on a tailored itinerary which was a version of Wendy Wu's Golden Triangle tour over seven days.



The third annual TravelManagers charity golf day was a roaring success, raising \$10,000 for the charity Love, Your Sister. Pictured here is Samuel Johnson with second place winners Stewart Edgar; Michael Gazal, NPO and Roger Aldons.



APT hosted this year's Travellers Choice Gold Choice Award trip to Cambodia and Vietnam, cruising the Mekong. Pictured here are the winners paying their respects in a Buddhist monastery in Oudong, the former capital of Cambodia.



Travelport recently unveiled its fresh offices in Sydney. Pictured at the office are Mark Meehan, MD APAC; Rose Thomson Chief HR Office; Kaylene Shuttelwood, MD Pacific; Gordon Wilson, President and CEO of Travelport.



These lucky trade and media gathered in Europe to celebrate the christening of Silversea's newest addition, *Silver Muse*. The group travelled on board the luxurious ship.



African Bush Camps' CEO Beks Ndlovu was in Sydney recently to promote the launch of three new safari camps before the end of 2017. Ndlovu is pictured with Belinda Kent and Rob Gurr.



Qantas played host to 150 agents across Australia at its 'Best of Qantas, Emirates & Dubai' experience in Sydney recently, with a tour of a QF A380, and presentations across the day.



Destination Marketing Services has wrapped up its DMS Connect roadshows across Australia and New Zealand. The DMS team are pictured at one of the events.



These Australians were part of the recent Samoa Tourism Exchange where they met with local suppliers and learned about the latest developments.



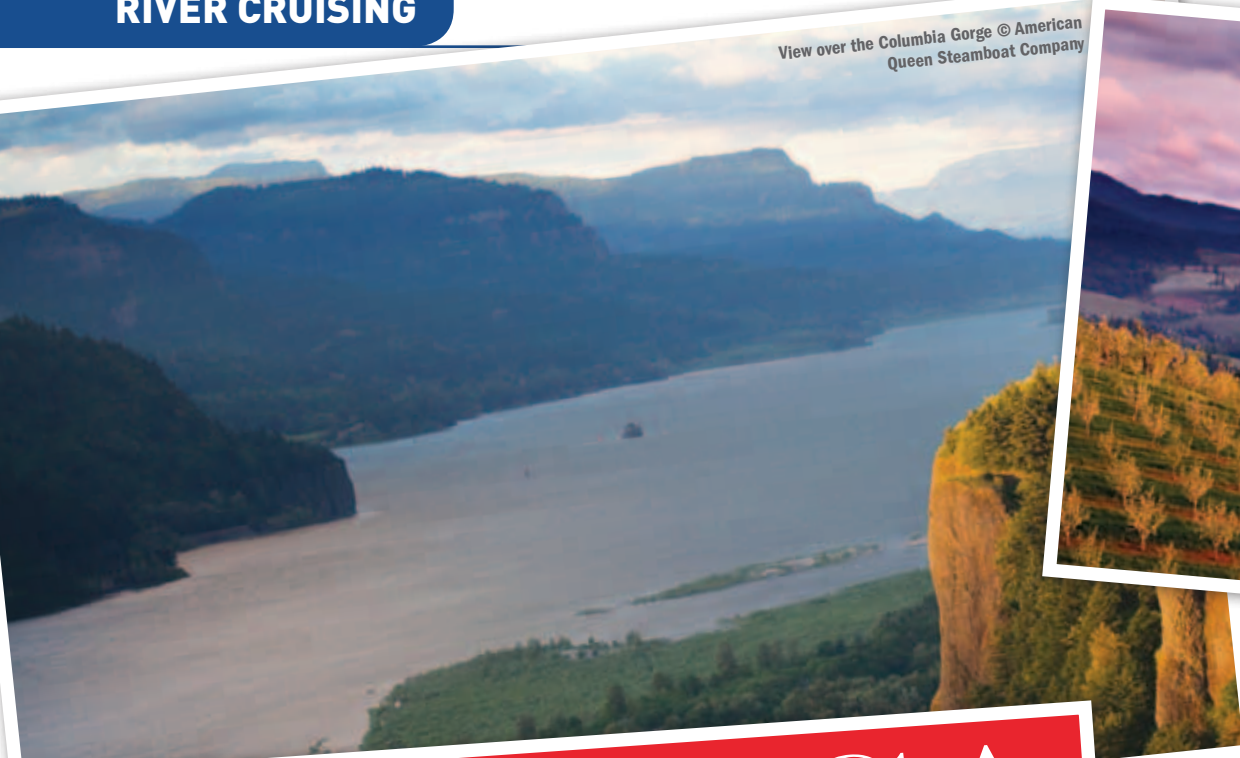
Check out Australia's best travel marketing team - Air New Zealand took out the top award at the inaugural Mumbrella Travel Marketing Awards.

Several incentive winners from italktravel returned from a famil to the Boeing Factory in the USA, and experienced a tour that "you can only experience if you buy a plane!" according to the Boeing Tour guide.



The team from The Africa Safari Co. have just finished their 2017 roadshow around Australia and New Zealand, updating agents on products in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi and Namibia.

View over the Columbia Gorge © American Queen Steamboat Company



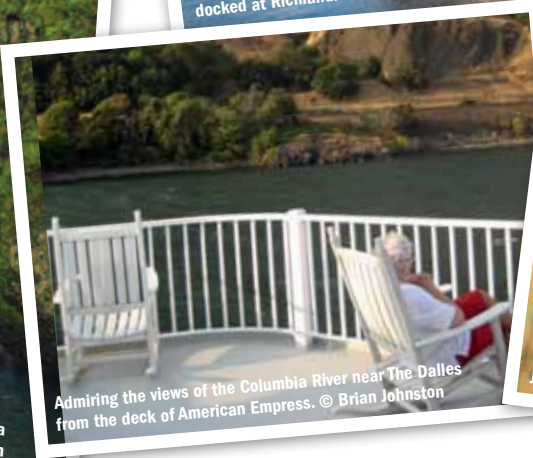
AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL



Multnomah Falls in the Columbia River Gorge. © Travel Oregon



American Empress docked at Richland.



Admiring the views of the Columbia River near The Dalles from the deck of American Empress. © Brian Johnston



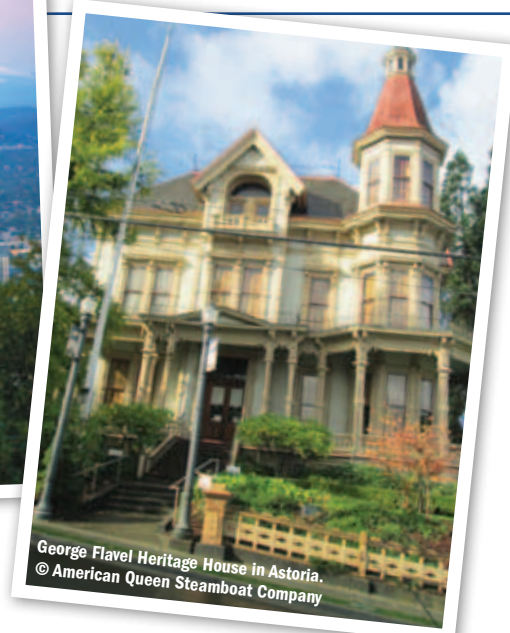
Journey of Lewis and Clark.



Mt Hood and vineyards near The Dalles. © Travel Oregon



Portland with Mt Hood volcano in the background. © Travel Portland



George Flavel Heritage House in Astoria. © American Queen Steamboat Company

Dramatic gorges, snow-capped volcanoes and pioneer history provide plenty of wonders on a river cruise along America's Columbia and Snake rivers, Brian Johnston discovers.

MOST river cruises start on the water, but getting to the upper reaches of the Snake River isn't that simple. My cruise starts on dry land in the Washington State city of Spokane. Then it's onto a coach for a transfer to Clarkston and our first glimpse of river. I grumble over my breakfast pancakes at the thought of a three-hour road transfer, but I'm jumping the gun, as they say in these parts. The landscape of the Palouse region is magnificent, its fertile hills and rolling farmland creating a patchwork of startling colour and shadows that has my forehead glued to the windowpane. If I were a cartoon character, my eyes would be on stalks.

As our coach finally winds down towards the Snake River and into roughhewn Idaho, I feel as if I'm back in the Old West. We're in a land of wide-open spaces, rugged scenery and pioneer adventure. Its river system will take us 700 kilometres almost to the Pacific Ocean. As we sail off through dramatic, arid gorges that glow red in the late afternoon sun, it's also thrilling to be travelling on a paddle-wheeler right out of a movie, operated by American Queen Steamboat Company.

In truth, *American Empress* no longer runs on stream but on diesel, but the paddle-wheeler has chandeliers, rocking chairs, frosted lamps and gilt-framed paintings, and is hung with wonderful old photography depicting the river's pioneer days. Best of all, though,

American Empress has a scarlet paddlewheel that turns and turns, propelling us onwards in a mesmerising glitter of water droplets.

Our starting point is Clarkston, paired with Lewiston across the river. The towns are named for explorers William Clark and Meriwether Lewis, who traversed this region in 1804-06 and effectively opened it up to American settlement. There are numerous sites and interpretive centres along the journey detailing their remarkable achievement, notably in Sacajawea State Park where the Snake and Columbia Rivers meet. The museum here, though small, gives an excellent account of Lewis and Clark's journey, in whose footsteps we're approximately following. On-board lectures give entertaining accounts of the region's history. This is a cruise itinerary that explores the rollicking tales of early exploration, pioneer aspirations and the American dream.

The scenery is extraordinary from the moment the ship sails, and I spend plenty of time striding the decks or sitting on my balcony with a view of the passing riverbanks. Large windows in the main dining room also flaunt passing sights, although the outdoor seating at The Grill is my favourite vantage point as I tuck into steak and lobster tail. There's certainly plenty to ogle, as the Snake River flows through the battered volcanic landscapes and basalt cliffs of semi-desert country. Later, a shore excursion has me spinning in a jet boat through Hell's Canyon, whose flashing red cliffs are sashed with orange. Birds of prey adrift in the tilting sky above.

Views from *American Empress* are magnificent. As the Snake merges into the Columbia River and flows down past The Dalles, a spectacularly abrupt landscape change brings pine forests, greenery and snow-capped Mt Hood volcano. Douglas firs and red cedars soar in wet woods. Fittingly,

the ship tracks back and forth through the gorges several times to showcase its scenery. A shore excursion lets us admire it from another angle too, on the cliff tops at Chanticleer Point and Crown Point.

The river, controlled by a series of dams, is now wide as a lake, on which locals windsurf and passengers take an optional kayaking excursion. The Columbia Gorge Interpretive Centre at The Dalles provides a good account of the river's geology and early European settlement, and also has a raptor centre displaying yellow-eyed owls and injured hawks.

The Dalles, painted in murals that depict its history, is just one of our ports of call. It was founded at the end of the Oregon Trail that funnelled nineteenth-century settlers westwards, and is dense with pioneer-era buildings, breweries and brothels. We stop by an old mill, converted into a winery, for a convivial wine tasting. Just downstream, Stevenson is a raw country town draped in American flags and astride a railway track. It has another magnificent setting in the Columbia Gorges, which funnels wind here to the joy of dozens of kite-surfers.

Astoria, near the river mouth towards journey's end, has a quaint appeal. It was founded by fur trapper and soon-to-be millionaire John Jacob Astor in 1811, and has lovely shingle mansions on a green hillside above lush countryside. Old breweries and canneries turned hipster cafés line the waterfront. A six-kilometre riverside promenade leads along the Columbia River, now impressively wide.

Our final destination, Portland, is another highlight, and well worth an extra hotel-based night or two. Oregon's chief city is a delight of breweries, great eateries and very informal folk always ready for a chat, and a great place to unwind after the excitement of our journey on one of America's most epic rivers.

AVALON WATERWAYS EXPANDS IN ASIA



AVALON Waterways will double its capacity on the Mekong next year with the introduction of a second ship sailing itineraries between Vietnam and Cambodia. *Avalon Saigon*, to debut in September 2018, will join sister ship *Avalon Siem Reap* to offer weekly departures and a choice of different itineraries.

Both ships are just 60m in length and cater to a maximum of 36 guests, making them among the smallest ships on the Mekong and some of the only vessels able to sail all the way to Siem Reap, avoiding hours of travel by road.

The new ship is revealed in Avalon

Waterways' recently released 2018 brochure, which includes two new itineraries on the Mekong, in addition to an existing 13-day cruise between Ho Chi Minh City and Siem Reap.

One is an 18-day option, The Heart of Cambodia & Vietnam, which includes additional stays in Ho Chi Minh City, Siem Reap, Hanoi and Ha Long Bay.

The other is a 21-day itinerary, Ultimate Southeast Asia & the Majestic Mekong, which also adds three nights in Bangkok.

Meanwhile in Myanmar, Avalon will next year introduce a second itinerary option on

the Irrawaddy, the 16-day Spirit of Myanmar & the Untouched Upper Irrawaddy.

To mark the launch of its 2018 program, Avalon Waterways is offering holiday credits of up to \$2,600 per couple on a range of Asian departures, when booked by 6 June, 2017. They include the Spirit of Myanmar & the Untouched Upper Irrawaddy, which is now priced from \$7,496 per person twin share.

Other deals are available across Avalon's 2018 range of European river cruises, including credits of up to \$2,400 per couple.

APT INTRODUCES ANZAC CRUISES

APT has announced two new river cruise itineraries in 2018, including a new option timed with Anzac Day and focusing on the battlefields of France and Belgium. The Western Front Explorer with Anzac Day Dawn Service is a 15-day cruise commemorating the centenary of the Anzac victory at the Second Battle of Villers-Bretonneux.

Travelling in a circuit from Amsterdam, it visits Dutch highlights including Rotterdam, Maastricht, and Kinderjijk before joining the Anzac Day dawn service at Villers-Bretonneux. The cruise departs 14 April, 2018, and is priced from \$11,795 per person, twin share.

APT will also offer a new 15-day Voyage through the Balkans, a springtime cruise of the lower Danube from Budapest, priced from \$10,995 per person, twin share. Travelling on less visited stretches of the Danube, it first sails to Bratislava and Vienna before heading through Serbia and the series of magnificent gorges known as the Iron Gates, to Bulgaria and Romania.

Viking announces new cruises in Ukraine and Egypt

VIKING Cruises has launched its 2018 river cruise brochure featuring new itineraries in Ukraine and Egypt.

The 11-day Kiev to the Black Sea itinerary takes guests to some of Ukraine's most historic cities, including Zaporozhye, the ancestral home of the Cossacks, and Kherson, which was founded in 1778 by order of Catherine the Great. Priced from \$5,395 per person twin share, it travels along the Dnieper River between Kiev and the city of Odessa on the Black Sea coast.

Also new from Viking is the 12-day cruise-tour Pathways of the Pharaohs, which explores Luxor, the Valleys of the Kings and Queens, the Temple of Horus in Edfu and the iconic River Nile, priced from \$6,895 per person twin share.

With the release of its 2018 season, Viking is offering a range of earlybird specials for bookings made by 30 June, including a discount of \$2,000 per couple



on any 2018 river cruise and a fly free deal on itineraries of 13 days or more.

"We're excited to launch our 2018 river brochure and give guests the opportunity to explore the unique Ukrainian itinerary that complements the high demand we're seeing for Russia in both our river and ocean itineraries", said Michelle Black, managing director Viking Australia and New Zealand. "We've also listened to the consumer and have great flexible air deals across all of our river itineraries."



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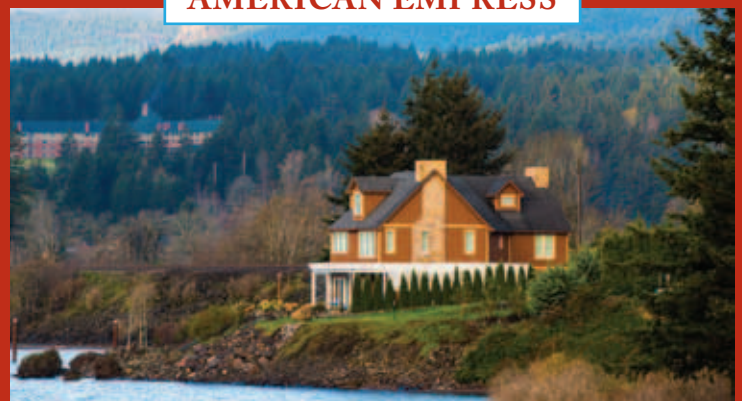
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U BY UNIWORLD'S BIG REVEAL



UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruise Collection has opened sales for its new brand, U by Uniworld, which the line says is “flipping river cruising on its head”.

Targeting the 21 to 45 age range, the brand will begin sailing from 14 April 2018 on two refurbished Uniworld vessels.

Fiona Dalton, Uniworld MD Australia told *travelBulletin* U by Uniworld guests would be exploring destinations “like never before”

and the vessels would be a “multi-purpose, incredibly functional and fun space that becomes the vehicle to see the destinations”.

U by Uniworld offers four eight-day itineraries which sail the Rhine, Main, Danube and Seine rivers, with overnight stops and longer stays in major cities, along with three “super cruise” options combining two or more of the above itineraries in a 15-day or 22-day trip.

Two five-day holiday departures are also available – Dashing Through The Danube and A Merry Little Christmas Cruise – giving guests the chance to experience the festive season in Europe.

Uniworld’s existing *River Baroness* will remain on the Seine and has been renamed “The B”, while the *River Ambassador* will become “The A”.

Both ships will be painted a shiny black, to make them “stand out on the river,” Uniworld CEO Ellen Bettridge told *travelBulletin*.

“We want people to know she’s different,” she explained.

Both vessels will have a black and white colour scheme with “splashes of colour” and *The B* will undergo a much larger makeover than *The A*, which already has a “quite contemporary look”.

Despite vying for a different market, Bettridge said the company decided to keep the Uniworld name in the new brand to denote quality.

“We’re really proud of the Uniworld name, we think that it represents quality,” she said.

“We could have absolutely come up with another nifty name but it’s under my leadership, it’s under my development and we thought it was important that it stayed a Uniworld name for the brand itself.”

Q&A

River cruising has become a perennial favourite for Australian travellers, but how can you make the most of those selling opportunities. Personal Travel Manager Gina Charvet gave *travelBulletin* her top tips.



Is there much interest from Australians to travel on a river cruise?

Absolutely, Australians have taken to river cruising as they have with ocean cruising. It’s the perfect European holiday for Australians as they experience the authentic regions of Europe with small towns and quaint villages that are rarely seen on a fast moving coach tour.

What itinerary do you recommend for first time travellers?

The French river cruise itineraries offer more time for shore activities to know the locals, the lifestyle and cuisine to which the French are so well known for. The Rhine River offers spectacular scenery with ever changing panoramic view of medieval towns, fairy tale castles, and historic cities of Germany. Depending on the amount of time you have, I would recommend the 15-day Amsterdam to Budapest, or the 7-day Rhine cruise.

Which destinations are most popular?

Initially the 15-day Amsterdam to Budapest route was the most popular with all river cruising companies offering this itinerary to their clients, however in recent years the stunning rivers of France have been the flavour as well as other more exotic rivers like the Douro River in Portugal and Spain.

What should an agent consider when selling a river cruise?

Seasonality, product knowledge – river cruises differ in category, price, stateroom design, food and drinks inclusion, routing, daily onshore activities – these are all important factors to consider.

Also knowing the rivers themselves – knowing what your clients want to see when cruising. For example, while the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers are the most popular, they are also very much working rivers so your clients can expect to see a considerable

amount of industry when sailing.

The French rivers, while stunning in their beauty, is more for the on shore experience of the villages & towns that are quintessentially French.

I am not alone in the opinion that the most breathtaking river is the Moselle. From its lush hillsides covered by terraced vineyards and seasoned with majestic castles, it twists and turns its way along one of Germany’s most beautiful river valleys.

What are the challenges that face agents selling river cruises?

Timing and pricing, offering the best for the client. Dispelling the myth that river cruising is for the older market. It truly is for all ages, including families and young couples. River cruising is virtually a floating hotel that takes you through the most enchanting parts of Europe.



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A SEAFOOD

By Ben Groundwater

CONSIDER this a beginner's guide to ensuring your seafood is fresh.

Step one: stare at your seafood as it swims around in a tank. Step two: select the best of said seafood, and watch as it's yanked from its watery home and prepared to be sent upstairs – not in the figurative sense, but the literal one – to one of a series of restaurants on the floor above.

There, you may indulge in step three: the delicious devouring of your very recently prepared fish. How it's cooked is up to you. But the freshness is unquestionable.

This is Jagalchi Market, a bustling commercial seafood centre on the waterfront in Busan, South Korea. There's every seafood

imaginable on sale here: fish, species of which you've never even seen before; octopus trying to make last-gasp dashes for freedom across the tiled floor; abalone, prawns, squid, eels and shellfish, all alive and kicking in plastic tubs filled to overflowing with salty water.

Market vendors yell their specials and shoppers haggle over prices, stepping carefully across the wet tiled floor to pay their bill, watching as their selection is prepared for immediate consumption. Each vendor, it seems, has a relationship with one of the restaurants above, and fresh seafood is sent straight up the stairs to be prepared – either raw, sashimi-style, or cooked and paired with the traditional Korean accompaniments – and served straight away.

This place is popular, extremely popular, which is a measure of how seriously Koreans

take their seafood, and in fact their cuisine in general. There's a lot of good food around here. Just outside Jagalchi there's another open-air seafood market, where fish and eels are grilled over hot coals. A few blocks away there's a bustling night market where all manner of food, from fishcakes on sticks to fried chicken and beer, is dished out to tens of thousands of people every evening.

Koreans love food. Their cuisine might not be as well known as that of neighbouring Japan or China, but this is a serious culture of eating, and it's all good stuff.

While the famed Michelin guide has just honoured Seoul with its first reviews of the city's restaurants, much of what Koreans love in the way of food is simple, honest cuisine that's a far cry from the foams and gels that are usually associated with anything gaining a star. Most Koreans are just as happy huddled





ADVENTURE

around a plastic table in the middle of a bustling fish market as they are dining on haute cuisine.

Busan is a case in point. In this coastal city on the southern tip of Korea, it's all about seafood. Raw seafood, char-grilled seafood, poached seafood and fried seafood. It's all very simply done, served up in markets or on street corners, devoured with intent, but not with ceremony.

Throughout the rest of the country, too, the food is varied and delicious, but always approachable. In the nation's capital, Seoul, you'll find plenty of purveyors of perhaps Korea's most famous culinary export, the barbecue. Just keep an eye out for the telltale exhaust fans hanging over the tables: inside you'll find raucous places where diners cook their own meat over hot coals, usually while drinking beer and soju, the local rice

wine, and chatting loudly across the table.

The food is simple: barbecued slices of beef or pork, paired with kim chi – fermented cabbage – raw garlic, and a soy bean and chilli paste. Delicious. Easy.

This city is also the home of “chimaek”, a combination of the Korean words for chicken and beer, and an obsession in this part of the world. Hole-in-the-wall shops across Seoul dish up only these two items: crispy chicken that's double-fried for extra crunch, and cold beer with which to wash it down. It's perfect on a cold night. Or any night really.

There are also street food markets across the city, stalls that sell all manner of dishes designed to be eaten on the go. Some serve “mayak kimbap”, tubes of carrot, daikon radish and rice that are dipped in a sweet soy sauce, snacks that known to some in Korea's expat community as “crack rolls”, due to their highly

addictive nature. Others sell mung bean pancakes laced with crispy hunks of pork belly.

In the town of Jeonju, meanwhile, the eating scene is tied very closely to the drinking scene. In fact most food here is either designed to be consumed with alcohol, or designed to be consumed as a cure for drinking too much alcohol.

For the former, stop in at a makgeolli den – a shop that specialises in a milky, fermented rice-based beer – and drink and snack until long into the night. For the recovery, roll up at Hyundai-ok, a tiny restaurant that serves the best bean sprout soup in the country from about 6am – perfect for what ails you at that time of the morning.

And then, of course, it's off to look for more food. Simple, unpretentious, but tasty Korean cuisine. You shouldn't have much trouble finding it.



PRINCESS – GRAND ASIA

Princess Cruises' newly launched flagship *Majestic Princess* offers a superb excuse to visit South Korea during its inaugural visit to Asia this year. The 21-day Maiden *Majestic Grand Asia* cruise visits the port of Incheon as the gateway to Seoul, along with other great cities of the region including Tokyo, Taipei and Shanghai. Departs from Singapore 18 June 2017, priced from \$3,539 per person twin share.

A MOUTH FULL OF KOREA

EVERYONE loves food and travelling, so this might explain why demand for food related tours to South Korea is sky high currently.

Erica Kritikides, product manager food for Intrepid Group, said bookings had been strong since the company launched its 'Real Food Adventure' in South Korea in September.

"The first two departures sold out in a couple of months and the rest of the season is booking fast. We also have bookings starting to come in for the 2018 season," she said.

The trips mark the return of the Intrepid brand to South Korea, and so far the company has been surprised by the initial response, especially from Australia. "Based on current bookings, over 40% of our travellers to South Korea are from Australia, closely followed by travellers from the UK," Kritikides told *travelBulletin*.

She suspected the demand for food tours in Korea could be attributed to the global popularity of Korean food, especially by 30-39 year olds who made up 30% of Intrepid's Food Adventures overall.

Intrepid's sister brand Gecko Adventures offers an itinerary that explores the famous Kimchi Festival which, based on feedback, appealed to younger travellers, Kritikides said. As part of the tour, foodies could indulge in as many of Korea's famous fermented pickles as possible.

Intrepid Travel's eight-day Real Food Adventure in South Korea has numerous departures for 2017, with prices from \$2,895 per person twin share.



Sampling Korean rice cakes

Sky is the limit for Seoul



THE world's third highest observation deck opened last month in Seoul, giving visitors a new perspective on the South Korean capital.

Dubbed Seoul Sky, the attraction is located on the upper floors of Seoul's new and now tallest building, Lotte World Tower. At 123 storeys and 554.5 metres in height, it is the fifth tallest building in the world and the tallest building in the OECD.

Records and Seoul Sky seem to go hand in hand, with the observatory breaking three Guinness World Records even before opening. The Sky Deck on the 118th floor will be the 'world's highest glass-floored observation deck' in a building. The Sky Shuttle elevator has been recorded as both the fastest double-deck elevator with a speed of 500 metres per minute and the elevator covering the longest distance.

Seoul Sky will provide a complete view of the entire city through glass walls on all sides. On clear days, visitors will be able to see as far as Songdo, Incheon and the Yellow Sea.

The Seoul Sky is located in Songpa-gu in the southern suburbs of Seoul. A general admission ticket to Seoul Sky costs 27,000 Korean won (approx. A\$31) or 24,000 Korean won (approx. A\$28) for children. It is open from 9.30am to 11.00pm daily.

Hanok stay becoming popular for Aussies

MANY Australians visiting the Republic of Korea are looking for accommodation with a wow factor, which might explain why more travellers are looking to stay in a traditional Korean house, or hanok.

Jennifer Doherty of the Korean Tourism Organisation said hanoks were available all over the country and provided a budget-friendly way to meet the locals and experience the real Korea.

"One of the best places to do this is in a hanok village which gives you a better understanding of the lifestyle of Korean ancestors who valued their sense of community," she said.

Many of Korea's historic villages are listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites, like Andong Hahoe Folk Village, Gyeongju

Yangdong Village and the beautiful Jeonju Hanok Village (pictured above). In Seoul itself there is the Bukchon Hanok Village which is an area of traditional hanok in the northern part of the city.

While you might wave goodbye to a traditional western bed (in a hanok you will sleep on a quilt on the floor), most hanoks have under-floor heating so in cooler months you have your own built-in electric blanket underneath.

The Korea Tourism Organisation offers a free hanok guide, helping visitors select an authentic Korean experience.



KOREA READIES FOR THE WINTER GAMES

WITH the final preparations underway ahead of the 2018 Olympic Winter Games, South Korea is gearing up for a bumper year of winter tourism.

The games will be held in the mountain district of Pyeongchang, 180km east of Seoul, as well as in the eastern coastal city of Gangneung which will host hockey, curling and skating events.

Ahead of the Games, Korea is seeing a strong demand from Australian travellers, with a 6.2% increase in visitors in the first quarter of this year, compared to 2016. In all, 151,979 Australians visited South Korea in 2016.

While skiing in South Korea might not have the same profile among Aussies as destinations like Canada or Japan, Jennifer Doherty, marketing manager for Korea Tourism Organisation said the number of

Australians skiing in Korea was increasing, and it was hoped the Winter Olympics could be used as an opportunity to showcase the country as a winter destination.

"Like Nagano before in Japan and Vancouver in Canada, Korea will benefit from the worldwide publicity and it's expected international skiers will visit Korea before, during and after the Games," she said.

Doherty said apart from catching the action on the slopes at next February's games, there were many other things to entertain visitors.

"One thing that winter and ski visitors to Korea love is the unique culture of Korea," she said. "Koreans are very warm and welcoming and no doubt with the Games there will be great support for visitors."

Pyeongchang is the centre of Korea's winter sports region and features three large ski resorts including the YongPyong Resort,

the Jeongseon Alpine Centre and Alpensia (Pyeongchang's Winter Olympic Park). The Taebaek mountains is another popular destination for alpine activities.

Doherty said Australians travelling to the Winter Olympics would enjoy a similar experience to when South Korea hosted the successful FIFA World Cup in 2002 and the Summer Olympics in 1988.

The Korean Tourist Organisation is anticipating a strong green and gold contingent to make the pilgrimage to Pyeongchang next year, with many of Australia's high profile stars such as Alex Pullin (snowboard cross), Britteny Cox (ski moguls), Scott James (snowboarding) and Lydia Lassila in the womens aericals all in good form after competing in venue test events.

The XXIII Olympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang run from February 9 to 25, 2018.



Best to book early

AUSTRALIANS travelling to next year's Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang need to purchase tickets and packages through the local official provider CoSport, whose president Robert Long said current demand was strong and comparable to previous games in Sochi and Vancouver.

"People need to book early as there is limited accommodation in and around the Gangneung and Alpensia area," he said.

CoSport is offering two all-inclusive packages featuring

accommodation, dining and event tickets. The Flex package starting at \$6,770 per person twin share includes the option to select your own events, while the Premier package includes excursions, ground transport and a guided host.

The all-inclusive packages don't include flights to Korea and run for five days.

"Book now, because there is limited space and limited rooms and transportation," Long said.

quebec calling

By Amanda Woods

I'M QUIETLY terrified but doing my best to hide it as I'm strapped into a double zipline alongside another solo traveller. And in three, two, one we're off.

My brain goes into overload as it takes in the fact that I'm zipping past the length of Canada's Montmorency Falls, a dramatic waterfall 30 metres higher than Niagara Falls.

It looks spectacular and as I fly through the air I'm being misted by water that has crashed over the falls beside me and is rising up from far below. Fortunately there's no time to dwell on just how far as my 300-metre journey is soon over and it's time to stand once again on shaky legs.

By the time I have made the 12km trip back to Quebec City my legs are ready to hit the pavement again, which is good news in a city that is this as lovely to walk around as this one.

A UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the oldest and most beautiful settlements in North America, Quebec's Old Town is a walled city with historic gates, narrow cobblestone streets and 17th and 18th-century houses.

Horse drawn carriages go by as I wander past boutiques and sidewalk cafes, checking out street entertainers and paintings in open-air art galleries.

As I drink in some of the city's history, I find one of my favourite lessons comes from my own hotel.

Once the first hospital on the American continent north of Mexico, Le Monastere des Augustines has been reborn as a boutique hotel with a focus on healing and holistic health.

The hotel is also home to a museum, and art and objects collected by the Augustine Sisters over almost 400 years are on display both in the museum and throughout the hotel itself.

Here guests can choose between staying in one of the fully restored rooms the sisters once lived in, fully restored of course, or in a more modern section of the hotel. Breakfasts must be eaten in silence out of respect for the nuns' heritage, a touch I rather like, as I prefer to



Parc National des Grands-Jardins

start my own days with some peace and quiet.

When it's time to leave Quebec City I head back to Montmorency Falls, where I choose a less adrenalin packed way of getting from A to B.

The Train de Charlevoix carries holidaymakers from the falls to Charlevoix, with stops at seven towns and coastal villages on the way to La Malbaie.

We pass fields of wildflowers and watch the St Lawrence River stretch into the distance to a soundtrack including Enya and Beth Orton. By the time we arrive at my stop of Baie-Saint-Paul I'm feeling very relaxed indeed.

The first thing you see upon arriving is a stylish hotel beside the train station. Le Germain Hotel Charlevoix was created by one of the founders of Cirque du Soleil, Daniel Gauthier. The hotel plays host to a weekend farmers' market through the summer and is home to a top spot for lunch, Restaurant Le Bercaill.

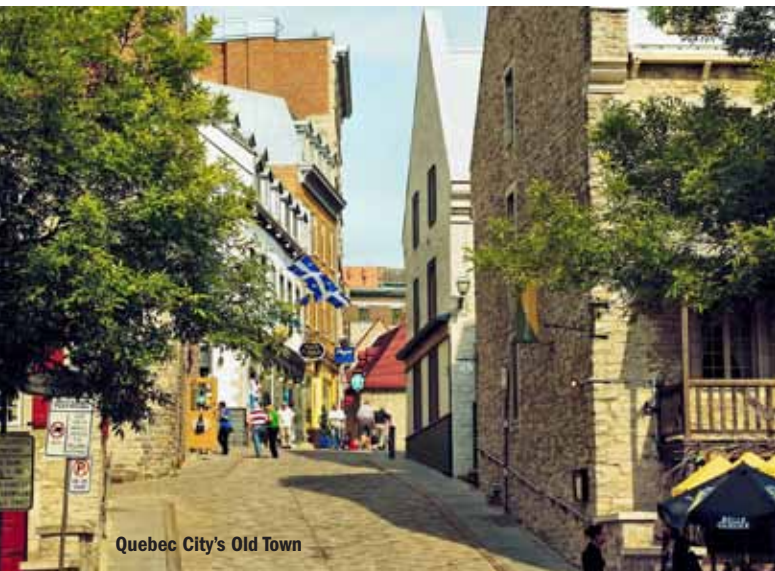
Baie-Saint-Paul may be called a city, but with a population of around 7,000 it feels more like a town. A charming, colourful, bohemian town with lots of art galleries, cafes and boutiques to explore.

Despite knowing French is the official language of Quebec I'm surprised by how many people in town don't speak any English. In Quebec City most of the people I met were bilingual but here I feel like I'm in a small town in France.

When I visit Charlevoix's Observatory, or rather, the Observatoire de l'Astrolème de Charlevoix, the friendly tour guide excitedly tells me that she's so happy to have a chance to practice her English.

The Observatory is the perfect way for visitors to learn all about the massive meteorite that formed the 54km wide crater that Charlevoix now nestles in, while having

‘Quebec's Old Town is a walled city with historic gates, narrow cobblestone streets and 17th and 18th-century houses. Horse drawn carriages go by as I wander past boutiques and sidewalk cafes...’



Quebec City's Old Town



Train de Charlevoix, image Amanda Woods

HAL- CANADA AND NE DISCOVERY

Canada's west coast takes all the attention when it comes to cruising, but there are options in the east that offer a whole different experience. The Saint Lawrence River provides spectacular scenery along the great inland waterways of Quebec and is a great way to take in the French charms of Quebec City and Montreal. Holland America Line offers a seven-day Canada and NE Discovery sailing, priced from \$1649pp for an interior stateroom departing 12 August 2017.

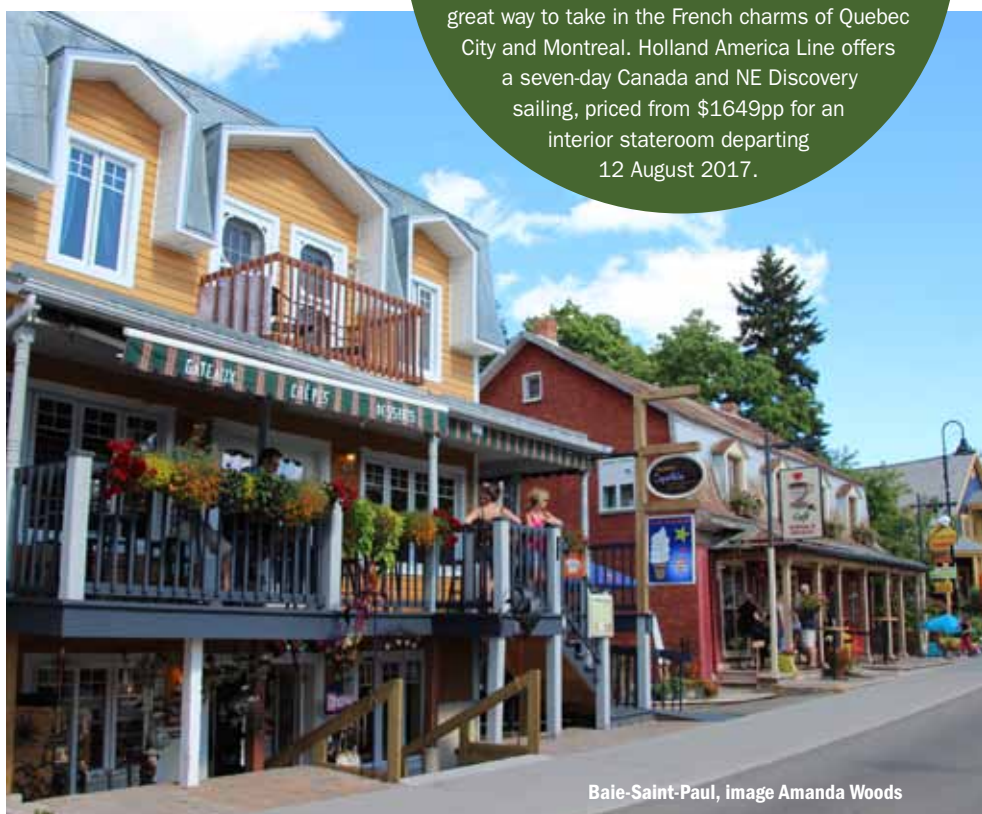
the chance to hold part of a much smaller meteorite in their hands.

The Mont du Lac-des-Cygnets hike in the Parc National des Grands-Jardins provides one of the best views of the crater, with beautiful scenery unfolding all the way up the mountainside.

When I take a break on my hike to have a little picnic on a rock, I startle at something moving beside me, only to discover a cheeky ground squirrel looking for crumbs. It's the first time I've met a squirrel with stripes and I'm in love with my adorable furry friend and life itself as I breathe in the view before me.

During my time in Charlevoix I'll also see my first porcupine when it walks out in front of my car, thankfully far enough ahead for me to stop and allow it to safely pass, and my first Beluga whales on a Croisières AML whale-watching cruise off Baie-Sainte-Catherine.

Between the natural beauty and the charming towns it's easy to see why Charlevoix has been attracting tourists for hundreds of years, and I'm happy to now count myself among them.



Baie-Saint-Paul, image Amanda Woods

AUSTRALIA HOLDS ROCKY MOUNTAINEER ON TRACK

ONE of the most acclaimed scenic rail journeys in the world has pinned its success on the Australian market, president of the Rocky Mountaineer Steve Sammut has remarked.

Heading into its 20th season of operation, the Rocky Mountaineer continues to be a preferred means for Aussies to explore the Canadian Rockies, with Australia the company's second biggest market. Only Canada's nearest neighbour, the USA, generates a larger volume of passengers boarding either its GoldLeaf or SilverLeaf railcars between Vancouver and the towns of Jasper and Banff.

In Sydney to meet with trade partners in late March, Sammut told *travelBulletin* Australia was Rocky Mountaineer's "most consistent market. It just constantly delivers".

Sammut heralded the support from the travel trade, especially when times have been tough.

"Our company probably wouldn't even exist without the Australian market. Especially if you go back to times like the Global Financial Crisis. You know,

for a period of time it was the market that actually sustained us. With all else that was happening in the world, the Australians just kept on coming and we're lucky for that."

‘With all else that was happening in the world, the Australians just kept on coming and we’re lucky for that’

Such is its popularity, Rocky Mountaineer continues to expand its season with earlier and later departures. "August and September are huge months where we sell out early. If we had more cars we would be selling them," Sammut said, adding that April and October were increasingly popular because of the increased wildlife spotting opportunities.

Last year was Rocky Mountaineer's first operating season without the economically priced RedLeaf railcars, a product that was highly favoured by tour operators but was essentially a 1950s product. And while there may have been initial trepidation by some partners at the loss of RedLeaf, the SilverLeaf panoramic 'demi-dome' replacement (and upgrade) has been "enthusiastically embraced," vice president – global sales, Karen Hardie told *travelBulletin*.

"RedLeaf was a product they knew and liked. It had an easy and acceptable price within broader packages, particularly tour operators." Originally offered from Vancouver to Whistler, SilverLeaf was so well received it made sense to evolve the product and utilise it on its primary extended touring routes. "It's so far beyond what RedLeaf was, that we now never hear about it," Hardie said.

On the topic of upgrades, next year will see the roll out of the first GoldLeaf carriages designed and engineered in Switzerland by Stadler after Rocky's previous US-based supplier went bust during the GFC. To be assembled in Switzerland and Germany, four European-built railcars will arrive in 2018 and an additional six at a later stage, Sammut revealed.

Sammut told *travelBulletin* that aesthetically, the new coaches will resemble those of its 16 existing GoldLeaf domes which are mid-way through a refresh of their own. "The differences will be almost indistinguishable with a lot of the improvements internal."

At about CAD\$3.5 million per railcar, the GoldLeaf upgrades include improved air-conditioning systems, sound systems, galley & kitchen refits and modernisation, such as seat heating and USB charging ports for electronic devices.



Render of *National Geographic Quest*



NEW EXPEDITION CRUISE OPTIONS

A NEW purpose-built ship for Alaskan waterways will enter service in 2018. Lindblad Expeditions' 100-pax *National Geographic Quest* is a first-of-its-kind ship that is being entirely built in the US and has a shallow draft depth allowing navigation to the inner realms of Alaska's Inside Passage, including to Frederick Sound, Chatham Strait and the spectacular Tracy Arm Fjords.

National Geographic Quest is equipped with two expedition-craft vessels for exploration, along with kayaks for up close experiences in the Alaskan wilderness. The ship has 22 step-out balcony cabins, a tiered viewing platform on the bow for wildlife spotting and glacier viewing, along with six sets of connecting cabins, perfect for families and groups.

Each departure has either a National Geographic Photographer or Lindblad-National Geographic certified instructor on board who provides tuition, talks, presentations and slide show sharing events.

Lindblad Expeditions will deploy the ship on two 'Last Frontier' itineraries next year, including the 8-day Exploring Alaska's Coastal Wilderness cruise which operates in both directions between Juneau and Sitka from May to September. Prices lead in at \$7,370 per person twin-share.

The vessel will also be utilised on the 13-day Treasures of the Inside Passage: Alaska & British Columbia cruise between Seattle and Sitka (or vice versa) in June and September, currently priced from \$11,740 per person twin share.

Book before 01 June to lock in 2017 rates for 2018 departures.

■ For more information, contact Adventure World.

Scenic C&A pre-release 2018

CUSTOMERS wanting to secure prime spots and the best price on Scenic's Canada & Alaska itineraries in 2018 are being tempted with a 'Fly for \$595' (including taxes) deal as part of the luxury travel companies Pre-Release program.

The bargain fares – which represent a saving of up to \$5,740 per couple – are valid on three popular tours, including

the 32-day Grand Tour of Canada & Alaska, when departing in April. For trips hitting the road in May and September, Scenic also has a 'Fly for \$995' special. Customers wanting to travel in Business class to Canada on flights between April and September can take advantage of a \$5,995 special offer.

Fares are based on departures from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide or Perth.

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TREKKING THROUGH ALASKA

ALASKA'S wilderness isn't just the domain for silver nomads, with youth, small-group adventure touring company Trek America offering three journeys to the 49th US state.

The 10-day Alaskan Denali camping itinerary explores Homer, Kenai Fjords, Denali, Tangle Lakes and Wrangell. Priced from just \$1,889, participants on the tour have a chance to spot bear, caribou, moose and sea otters, take scenic walks and hikes and explore Denali National Park by bus and on foot. There's also plenty of time for optional excursions including ice climbing, mountain biking, white-water rafting and bear viewing, ranging in price from US\$20 to US\$695.

Trips permit a maximum of 13 passengers and require them to bring their own bedding.

Other Trek America options in the state include the 10-day Alaskan BLT and 13-day Alaskan Wonder, all with multiple departures between June and August this year and next.

■ Go to www.trekamerica.com.au for all the details.



Faster ferry options for Vancouver to Victoria

NEW high-speed catamaran services linking downtown Vancouver to downtown Victoria are set to be introduced by Clipper next year, speeding up the commute time between the British Columbia cities.

The Victoria-based company will utilise the 579-passenger Haluder Jet, currently operated by Clipper's parent company FRS in the North Sea between Hamburg and Heligoland, on the popular tourist route.

Clipper will take delivery and retrofit the 52-metre vessel to its specifications later this year, ahead of a deployment in the spring of 2018.

BC Ferries has operated ferry services from Vancouver to Victoria for many years, departing from Tsawwassen (south of Vancouver Airport, 37kms from the city) to Swartz Bay on Vancouver Island (about 32kms from Victoria's CBD).

AGENT KNOW-HOW

Destination Canada let us in on some insider tips on how to sell America's better looking cousin.

How can agents improve their knowledge of Canada?

There are many ways – one could attend Canada Corroboree, our travel agent road show. Attend a wholesaler information evening. Get yourself on a fam – it could be a Destination Canada CSP (Canada Specialist Program) Fam, it could be a fam run by your preferred wholesaler or an incentive fam run by an airline or Canadian product supplier.

What training is available to agents to improve their knowledge?

Join the Canada Specialist Program (CSP) with its eight different training modules including Active Adventure, Cruise & Rail and Wildlife Viewing. There is also the live CSP training webinars hosted by our Canadian partners that are recorded and posted on the CSP website. Self-famil discounts are also available to agents once they have completed the CSP program - csp.canada.travel

Any recommendations for first time travellers?

From Millennials to seniors, first time travellers to Canada are in for the time of their lives! Whether you're mad about wildlife, cuisine, or high octane adventure, make Google your friend and research what's on offer in each region. The Destination Canada website is full of inspiration too. Once you've got some ideas, work with your partners in the travel industry to create the ultimate itinerary.

What makes Canada a unique destination?

It's hard to believe that a single country can contain French-speaking artisan regions and eclectic cities, alongside soaring mountains, ancient glaciers, and meandering polar bears! Canada's 10 provinces and 3 territories offer diverse bucket-list adventures distinct to all four seasons. Check out our list of remarkable Canada Signature Experiences, each one defining just what makes Canada unique.

And finally, how can travel agents join a fam?

By becoming a Canada Specialist agent, agents will automatically go in the draw to be selected for any of the CSP fams we host. In fact, become a CSP agent before 30 June 2017 and you are in with a chance of winning one of 20 spots on our Mega Fam departing late September. Contact your preferred Canadian wholesaler and see if they are running any fams.



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SAMOAN SLUMBERS

Craig Tansley discovers Samoa is the prettiest place in the entire South Pacific for holiday naps...

IF THERE'S a sleepier place on Earth than Samoa it must be so completely comatose as to make itself entirely invisible to the rest of the planet. For Samoa is so sleepy that dogs in the middle of the road don't even bother raising their head from their slumbers as I drive past at 50km/h, just a metre or so away. And as I drive through villages in Samoa (locals still live a simple life of open-walled huts called fales) I feel like some sort of western-world voyeur because I see entire families all asleep together, completely unaware of my presence.

Samoa is Polynesia the way Polynesia used to be, long before the colonial powers took over. I grew up in Polynesia, but I've never seen it look quite so tranquil, or traditional as it does in Samoa. There's barely any traffic at all, in fact, except in Samoa's capital, Apia, you really won't see another car. Locals live simple lives with extended families in villages

ruled by paramount chiefs who hold more sway here than any policeman.

Samoa mightn't receive the plaudits of its more famous Polynesian and Melanesian neighbours, but it should. The entire southern coast of Upolu feels like an uncharted piece of perfect Polynesia, with bays and clear lagoons where forest grows right to the water. There's never really another tourist in sight. Along this coastline, some of the Pacific's best waves break, and in a world overrun by surfers seeking that all-elusive perfect wave, it's possible to still feel like a pioneer. I stay in rooms just a few metres from the waves. In the morning we take small run-arounds out through gaps in the reef and surf till we're sunburnt and sore. Most days I won't surf with another surfer but my guide, and there are still surf breaks that aren't on any map, waiting for someone to find them. Though be warned, there's no sand bottom breaks here so don't consider learning to surf in Samoa.

There are deserted bays all along Samoa's coastline – fringed by blue lagoons and green mountainous hinterland, though I find as many options for swimming away from the coast. Samoa is blessed with the South Pacific's best waterfalls – from 80 metre high cascading falls to gentle, family-friendly swimming holes. I take a 'waterfall crawl' on Upolu's south coast taking in Papapapai-Tai, Togitogipa, Sopoaga and Fuipisia Falls. Though it's on Savaii – 45 minutes from Upolu by ferry – that I find the best waterfall in the entire South Pacific in Afu Aau. Like most tourist attractions in Samoa, Afu Aau is on a local's land, so after I pay a few dollars to visit, I walk around a corner and find a series of cascades falling





into a huge waterhole blocked entirely from the outside world by rainforest.

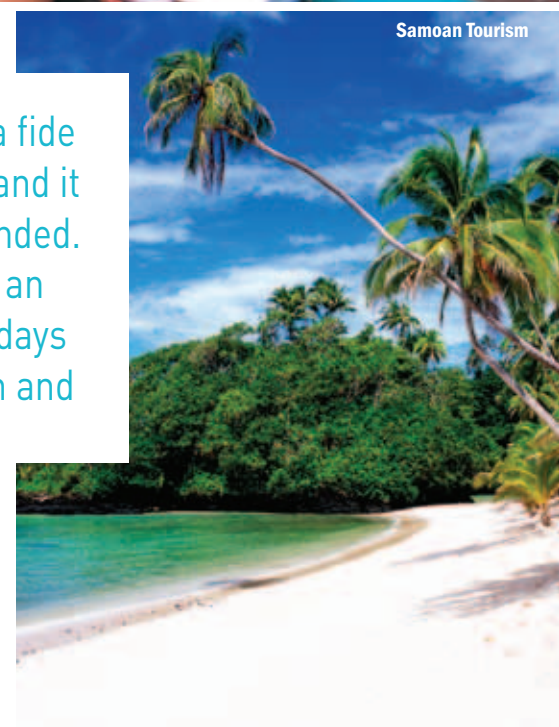
Savaii is my favourite island in Samoa. It's the epitome of that south seas escape Hollywood's tried its darndest for generations to capture; there's more pigs, goats and horses here than people, and there's just one road that circles the island, though you'll find more dogs sleeping on it than cars driving on it. Paw-paw, mango, breadfruit and guava grow right to the lagoon, while extinct volcanoes loom high above me when I swim in the ocean. At night I swim in the lagoon, lying on my back in the water and watching the stars shoot high above in the clear night skies.

Life is gloriously simple here. One Sunday I join locals in preparing a local feast,

‘But doing nothing is a bona fide tourist attraction in Samoa, and it comes very highly recommended. I find myself becoming quite an expert at it, spending entire days between my room, the beach and the lagoon...’

grating coconut to make coconut milk which is the staple of any Polynesian meal, and helping build an underground oven for fish caught by our neighbours last night. Food's so important in Samoa that the entire country shuts down each Sunday just to eat. I go to church with the locals to hear them sing, then spend the rest of the day feasting and napping.

Though there are far more energetic activities on Samoa if you're feeling lively, from swimming with endangered turtles to taking bike rides that circumnavigate both of the main islands of Samoa (Upolu and Savaii). Savaii's also one of the best places in the world to learn to dive because of the range of its beginner dive sites and its great water clarity. And there's golf, kayaking, sailing and deep-sea fishing.



But doing nothing is a bona fide tourist attraction in Samoa, and it comes very highly recommended. I find myself becoming quite an expert at it, spending entire days between my room, the beach and the lagoon; teaching myself slowly to stop planning my days out until I begin to live as the locals do – living each day with the sun and the tide, and being sure to fit in a morning nap, and an afternoon nap, and a nap before bed.



FIJI MARRIOTT RESORT MOMI BAY OPENS ITS DOORS

MARRIOTT Hotels has expanded its global footprint with the debut of its first resort in Fiji, located at Momi Bay on the western coast of Viti Levu.

Opened last month, the Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay is the only property on the Fijian mainland to offer over-water villas, with 22 arranged along a slender pier with direct access to 20 hectares of sheltered man-made lagoons.

The resort also offers 114 Bure Villas and 136 Deluxe Rooms which can be interconnected, making them ideal for families and groups. The interiors reflect the local culture with motifs, colours and materials inspired by Fijian design and updated with a modern twist.

There are three restaurants to choose from, including the Goji Kitchen & Bar where guests can engage with chefs and enjoy Fijian, Asian and international



dishes made to order at open-kitchen cooking stations. There's also a Fish Bar overlooking the Pacific Ocean and a more casual Lagoon House & Bar which offers Mediterranean dishes.

The Fiji Baking Company provides a cafe and delicatessen with freshly made pastries, sandwiches and salads, as well as barista-style coffee.

An on-site Health Club offers activities such as kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding and tennis. For families, the Turtles Kids'

Club provides interactive programs to entertain young guests, while adults can indulge in treatments at the Quan Spa.

There are also three large pools and a whirlpool surrounded by cabanas and lounges, including an adults-only infinity pool and a swim-up bar where guests can enjoy a cocktail and a light bite.

The resort is located 45 minutes from Nadi International Airport and about 30km from Nadi town and Denarau Island.

■ www.marriott.com.au

China to help drive Vanuatu development

VANUATU is looking to begin a major renewal in tourism infrastructure after striking an investment deal with China's HNA Tourism Group, part of the airline conglomerate behind Hainan Airlines and other Chinese carriers.

A strategic cooperation agreement signed recently in Hong Kong aims to boost Chinese tourists to the island nation and pave the way for improvements to tourism facilities.

Vanuatu Prime Minister Charlot Salwai said the number of Chinese tourists to Vanuatu had risen over recent years at a rate of four per cent annually.

"In 2016, there were thousands of Chinese tourists who visited Vanuatu either by plane or cruise," Salwai said. "Through cooperation with HNA Tourism we hope to further develop the tourism resources of Vanuatu and improve the infrastructure to provide a more comfortable tourism experience for Chinese tourists."

HNA Tourism chairman and chief executive officer Xin Di said Vanuatu was a crucial south node for the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road".

"As a subsidiary of HNA Group's largest air travel industry unit, HNA Tourism will use its aviation, hotels, travel agencies, entertainment and other cultural resources to promote the development and upgrading of the tourism industry in Vanuatu," he said.





SOLOMONS TO TACKLE TOURISM CONSTRAINTS

SOLOMON Islands tourism officials are confident the country's fledgling tourism industry is "on track" to become a major economic pillar in coming years, with Australia the dominant force in its growth prospects.

Recently released research conducted on behalf of the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau shows Australians account for more than half of all international tourism to the country, which last year generated almost \$40 million for the local economy.

About 38% of visitors seek rest and relaxation, with another 28% pursuing the Solomons' renowned diving. Other top attractions include swimming and snorkelling, sightseeing, culture, World War

II history, shopping, hiking, fishing, sailing and kayaking.

SIVB chief executive officer Josefa Tuamoto said the research showed the tourism industry was on track, but there were still areas seen to be constraining growth.

"There is a need to address a current accommodation shortfall across the Solomon Islands and in particular in Honiara where we would be well served by an increase in three to four-star accommodation," Mr Tuamoto said.

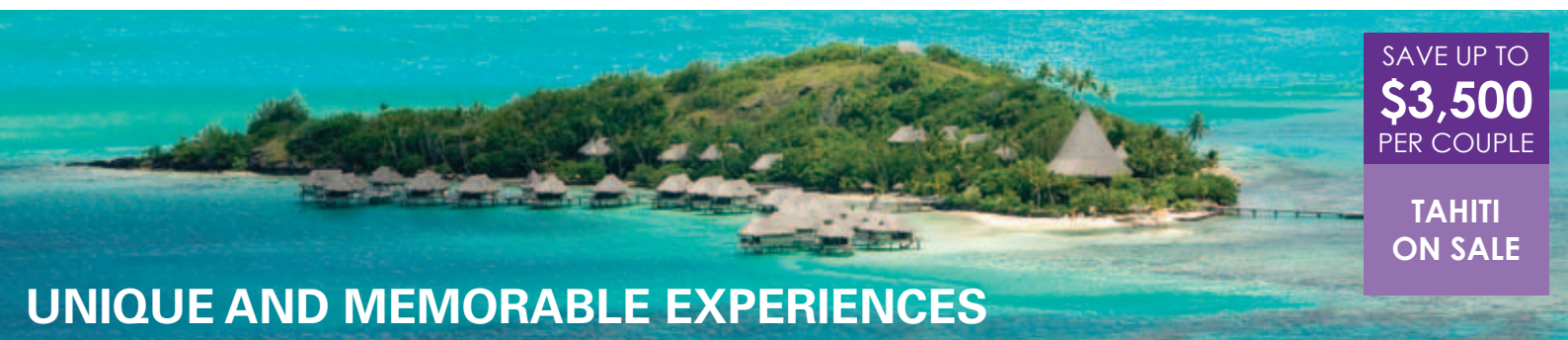
"We are hopeful the Solomon Islands' successful bid to stage the 2023 Pacific Games will have a major flow-on impact, both from the perspective of increased

investment in infrastructure and particularly, hotel accommodation and a dedicated convention facility.

Tuamoto said the SIVB was making inroads with wholesalers and travel agents in visitor source markets, but "we still need to do more to get ourselves on the radar".

"This is something we have to address and with government and local industry support we are working hard to make sure we become top of mind with travel agents, both in our existing visitor source markets and new areas of potential business," he said.

"Our profile is good but we need to back that up with more product and more sales of that product."



UNIQUE AND MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

New Ramada resort opens in Port Vila

VANUATU has boosted its holiday offering with the opening last month of the newly developed Ramada Resort Port Vila.

The property is located just a stone's throw away from central Port Vila and 15 minutes from Bauerfield International Airport. It boasts 80 rooms including studios, junior suites and two-bedroom suites, overlooking palm-fringed Erakor Lagoon.

The \$30 million development features an on-site restaurant and three bars, a swimming pool, a gym and four conference rooms that can hold up to 140 guests.

The resort is the first Ramada property in Vanuatu, joining the group's 850 hotels in 63 countries worldwide.

■ See www.ramadaresort.com.vu

ARANUI 5 – TAHITI

There's no shortage of options when it comes to exploring the Pacific on a cruise, but one of the most unusual is the dual-purpose freighter *Aranui 5* which sails 14-day circuits from Tahiti. The 125m vessel caters to 200 passengers and features a restaurant, several bars and lounges, a swimming pool and a spa. But it also serves as a working cargo ship, island-hopping its way around French Polynesia to places like Bora Bora and the far-flung Marquesas. Priced from \$7,830 per person twin share in 2018 including a 10% discount available on select departures.

TAHITI MARKS AN OVER-WATER ANNIVERSARY

TAHITI is celebrating 50 years since the introduction of the first over-water bungalow, a design trend that has changed the face of tropical resorts around the world.

Now an icon of island luxury from the Maldives to Malaysia, today's lavish over-water bungalows are the modern incarnation of a concept that had humble beginnings among the Society Islands.

Three Americans known as the "Bali Hai Boys" - Don "Muk" McCullum, Jay Carlisle and Hugh Kelley - are credited with building the first over-water bungalows in 1967 on the islands of Raiatea and Moorea, west of Tahiti.

Five decades on, there are now close to 900 over-water bungalows spread across eight of Tahiti's 118 islands, with chains of neatly arranged accommodation becoming a sight as famous as the destination's dazzling lagoons, mountain peaks and azure waters.

What were once traditional stilted homes with thatched roofs and native Polynesian artworks are now decadent suites or villas boasting private terraces, infinity pools, hammocks, spa baths and in-room glass floors for viewing the marine life below (otherwise known as Tahiti TV).

The bungalows are perfect for honeymooners, couples wanting a romantic getaway and canoodling celebrities.

Tahiti Tourisme's director for Australia and New Zealand Robert Thompson said Tahiti's popularity as a high-end destination could be traced back to the introduction of over-water bungalows.

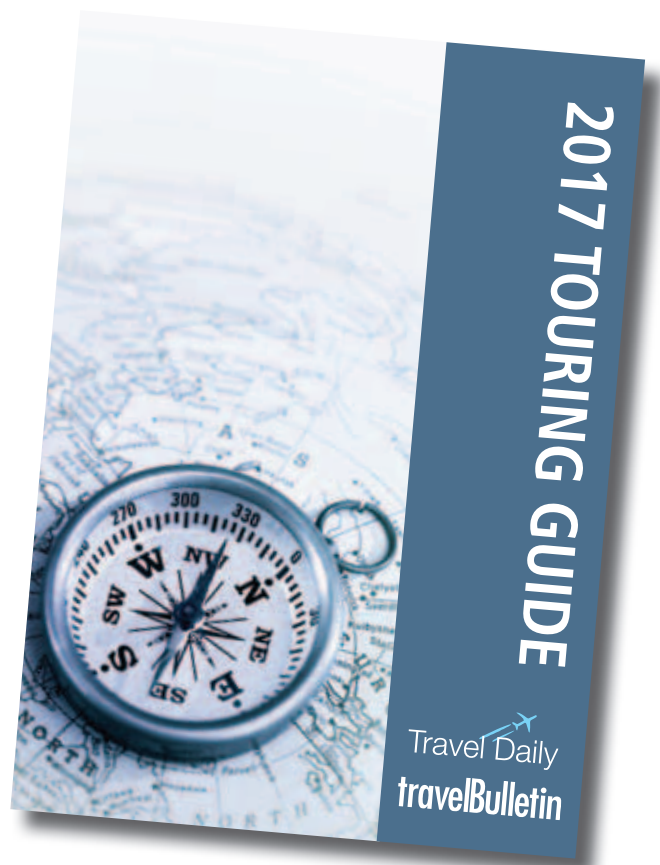
"Nothing compliments Tahiti's striking natural beauty more than her over-water bungalows," Thompson said. "Over-water villas are a huge part of what makes Tahiti so remarkable and why it has been the world's pre-eminent island destination for five decades."

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ABU DHABI'S GRAND DESIGNS



With a pair of major tourism infrastructure elements coming online this year, expect this intriguing destination to continue its leap from that other place you can fly into on the way to Europe to a genuine destination of choice writes Ben Alcock.

FOR centuries, pearls collected from the clean, shallow waters around Abu Dhabi were desired the world over. The local pearl trade declined in the 1930s with the arrival of cultured pearls from Japan sending prices into freefall. Fortuitously, however, international interest in the oil potential of the region was on the rise, and in 1958 a marine drilling platform struck oil, black gold flowed freely, changing Abu Dhabi's fortunes dramatically.

With global energy industries now being disrupted by supply and renewables, it's hardly surprising that tourism here is seen as another jewel of future fortune. Another pivot in Abu Dhabi's economic focus and planning.

Abu Dhabi's tourism masterplan was drawn up years ago now. At its core was the neat idea of leveraging some of Abu Dhabi's best (and most unexpected) assets - its islands, and shaping them into districts and precincts offering specific experiences. A cultural district here, a leisure precinct there, a new CBD nestled in between, a remote eco-retreat down the coast, all making the most of the emirate's 200 natural islands and 700 kilometres of glittering coastline.

Abu Dhabi's approach to tourism has been measured. In part, to ensure that it develops sustainably. But also to ensure that it doesn't run roughshod over its underlying culture and heritage. Yes, there are some remarkable developments afoot, but this is no rush job. After years of anticipation, it's pleasing to see this masterplan emerging thoughtfully from the sea and sands of Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

For a few years now, visitors have had a taste of Abu Dhabi's primary leisure precinct on Yas Island. Located 30 minutes from the city centre, Yas is home to the world-class Yas Marina Circuit and the Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Yas Waterworld - the largest water park in the Middle East, Yas Links Abu Dhabi golf course, and Yas Mall - Abu Dhabi's largest shopping, dining and entertainment destinations.

In 2017 we will see two pieces of crucial tourism infrastructure add to Abu Dhabi's

offering: The Midfield Terminal Building (MTB) at Abu Dhabi Airport, and Louvre Abu Dhabi.

If you've flown through Abu Dhabi, you'll know that its airport offers an eclectic, bursting-at-the-seams mix of old and recent. The opening of the multi-billion-dollar MTB, however, will revolutionise the home of the UAE's flag carrier, Etihad Airways, and deliver an absolutely world class experience for up to 45 million passengers annually.

In town, Saadiyat Island will flex its cultural muscles for the first time with the opening of the Jean Nouvel-designed Louvre Abu Dhabi. Just minutes from downtown Abu Dhabi city, this universal museum will display its treasures in pavilions, plazas, alleyways and canals beneath a low dome, 180 metres across, evoking a floating city. Perforated

‘Abu Dhabi's approach to tourism has been measured. In part, to ensure that it develops sustainably. But also to ensure that it doesn't run roughshod over its underlying culture and heritage’

with intricate patterns, a 'rain of light' will filter through the roof illuminating the gallery spaces beneath.

It will, in time, be joined by Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, and Foster + Partners' Zayed National Museum establishing Saadiyat Island as a cultural destination of global importance.

Constructing a globally significant tourism offering is risky. I don't mind big-shiny attractions when I travel, but on their own they often leave me flat. Snap. Post. Hashtag. Next. Combine them with authentic micro-experiences when I'm with you, however, and you've got me. Hook, line and sinker.

By honouring local traditions and culture through its tourism destination development, Abu Dhabi has deftly created spaces for both the big and the small to thrive. I've gasped stepping into the massive courtyard of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. Likewise, under the immense, red super-structure of Ferrari World Abu Dhabi - one of the world's



All images courtesy of ADTCA

largest indoor theme parks. You could have pushed me over with a feather at the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital, an astonishing local institution. I've been handed dates to sample at the Al Mina Fruit & Vegetable Souk, heard the thump and whump of cleavers through flesh at the Fish Market, and admired the audacity of meals and coffee dusted in 24 karat gold at Emirates Palace hotel. I've enjoyed the attention of a butler, and the flash of smiles from Emirati kids and their kin at weekend picnics in equal measure.

Abu Dhabi's big attractions are rightly gaining global attention. Yas Island already attracts some 25 million visitors annually, and has ambitious plans to be one of the world's top-10 family destinations by 2022. Saadiyat Island's cultural district is taking shape, and the city's astonishing, welcoming Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque was TripAdvisor's second-most popular landmark in the world in 2016, pipped only by Machu Picchu.

There are more landmarks in the pipeline, new desirable pearls gleaming by the waters of the Arabian Gulf. As its tourism masterplan takes shape, the world is Abu Dhabi's oyster.

EDITOR'S CRUISE PICK

SILVERSEA - DUBAI TO MAHE

In a part of the world known for its modernity and wealth, it seems only fitting to travel in style. Silversea has a 15-day departure, Dubai to Mahe, aboard its ultra-luxury *Silver Spirit* that visits Abu Dhabi before setting out to explore other destinations in the Middle East and Indian Ocean including Muscat, Mumbai, Cochin and the Maldives. Departs from Dubai 3 Dec 2017, priced from \$8,950 per person twin share.

THE GLISTENING YAS ISLAND EXPANDS

By Jasmine O'Donoghue

ABU Dhabi's Yas island is set to take a stronger role in the city's tourism industry with developer Aldar Properties planning to inject AED 1.9 billion (AU\$687m) into four projects on Yas and Al Reem Islands.

The company has detailed a program which would add a four-star hotel to Yas Island. Offering 349 keys, of which 70 would be serviced apartments, the Yas Mall Hotel would be attached to the mall and aimed at the family segment.

Under the plan, Yas Island's retail portfolio would also be extended to capture more motor-sport enthusiasts. The development would be dedicated to the consumer segment of the automotive market and contain new car dealerships and food and beverage outlets.

Closer to the CBD on Al Reem Island, Aldar Properties intends to build a 262-key four-star hotel as part of a mixed-use development and 600 mid-market residential units.

Yas Island is already high on the list of Abu Dhabi's key destinations, blending together luxury, opulence and roller coasters. The five-star Yas Viceroy is one of Abu Dhabi's most iconic hotels and a nirvana for rev

heads. It lays claim to being the only hotel to have a race track run right through it and its connecting bridge doubles as a brilliant vantage point during the Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Formula 1 Grand Prix. Fans of the sport who can't afford the premium rate during the event can get lucky out of the peak season, with drivers often conducting training at the track in the off season. But don't let the race track fool you, this hotel is a destination in its own right. It boasts top-class dining, the

largest capacity ballroom for events in the city and oozes Middle Eastern hospitality.

While the track isn't in use, car lovers can get their fix at Ferrari World. Serving up much more than just expensive cars on a pedestal, this theme park packs in driving simulators, go karting and themed shows. For those who prefer to keep their feet planted firmly on the ground, Ferrari world is connected to the Yas Mall, offering 370 stores and more than 60 indoor and outdoor restaurants and cafes.



Heritage Village – a reminder of Abu Dhabi's rich history

IN THE midst of Abu Dhabi's extraordinary skyscrapers and luxurious hotels, it can be hard to picture the emirate prior to its rapid expansion. Located a stone's throw from the Abu Dhabi CBD, Heritage Village is a reconstruction of a traditional oasis village, giving visitors a glimpse into how the locals used to live. The living museum is packed with family-friendly activities and visitors are welcome to wander through the village and watch as craftsmen demonstrate traditional skills, pick up some dried herbs or handmade soap at the little spice shop or admire traditional aspects of the desert way of life on display.

DO AS THE LOCALS DO

TRADITIONAL markets, or Souks (Arabic for marketplace), are still a mainstay in the Abu Dhabi way of life.

While tourists flock to the many air-conditioned, manicured malls in Abu Dhabi, the locals can be found haggling over every imaginable good at the traditional souks. Our guide promised Abu Dhabi has "a souk for everything" and it seems the emirati have covered all bases, with separate spaces for dates, fruit and vegetables, seafood, household items and plants.

Every storefront is piled up with colourful goods and manned by attentive shopkeepers, eager to catch the eye of a potential customer.



Emiratis pick up their supply of seafood at the Fish Souk at Mina Zayed, where fishermen unload their catch each morning.

Visitors can have their selected seafood prepared into a local delicacy in the heart of the market and tuck into it overlooking the harbour. Across the road lies the Al Mina Fruit & Vegetable Souk, where there is an alley dedicated entirely to dates, while nearby is a Souk just for carpet.

A ROYAL EXPERIENCE AT THE PALACE

ABU Dhabi has a thriving hospitality industry, but the locals will assure you the Emirates Palace Hotel is in a league of its own.

A landmark in itself, the gold-adorned structure cost US\$3 billion to construct and the building alone extends 1km from wing to wing.

The hotel stretches across carefully manicured gardens leading visitors to a 1.3km beach which is made up entirely from specially imported soft, white sand.

Simply exploring the hotel is no small feat, with the property packing in 302 rooms and 92 suites, each of which comes with a personal butler service.

The property provides ample opportunity to work up an appetite for its 14 food and beverage options ranging from European, Chinese, Lebanese and local Emirati cuisine.

It features a 6km bike track and bikes for rent, along with two outdoor pools, cricket and football pitches, tennis courts, badminton and a beach volleyball court.

Respectfully dressed tourists (wearing smart casual and refraining from shorts, thongs or exposing garments) are free to zip in and out of the perfectly symmetrical grounds, gawking at the structure's pure magnificence.

Tucked away within the Palace, inside the front doors and through the grand atrium is Le Café, where guests can indulge in the Palace's specialty – cappuccinos dusted with gold.

The sparkly beverage is a go-to attraction for guests and the baristas can be seen constantly churning out perfectly sprinkled cappuccinos. The Palace uses a massive 5kg of pure edible gold per year for decoration, mainly on desserts and drinks.



IN FLIGHT

Etihad Airways - SYD-AUH



The route

Sydney to Abu Dhabi.

The plane

A380-800.

Class

Business class, seat 18E.

The seat

The Etihad Business class seat is lie-flat and allows the passenger to adjust almost everything in the space to their own preferences. For those who are on the clock, the seat offers enough room on the fold out table for a laptop and the pod is equipped with USB charging ports. Wireless internet access is available at an additional cost. Etihad also offers its passengers use of "The Lobby", a hotel-inspired space where small groups can settle in by the on-board bar, or simply enjoy a change of scenery in between naps.

Service

Etihad offers a "Dine Anytime" service, so there's no chance of sleeping through dinner service. Once seated, the Food & Beverage Managers make their way through the cabin, guiding passengers through the menu and taking meals and beverage orders. At the requested time, staff will emerge and set the (tray) table with a white cloth and serve each course promptly after the last is finished. In our experience, meals were flavoursome and satisfying.

Entertainment

Etihad offers extensive inflight entertainment options on a speedy touchscreen, which (with the right seat settings) can be an arms-length away. From the latest blockbusters, live TV channels, music, radio to children's options, the easy-to-navigate touch-screen TVs have enough choice for even the longest flights.



GADGET: TINY STEAM IRON

NO-ONE loves ironing, and for most people travelling is an excuse to not have to do some of your usual home chores. But sometimes there are times where you just desperately need something ironed. Maybe for that important business trip that you are tagging on at the end of your holiday, or else that dinner at the three Michelin-star restaurant that you are treating yourself to. In those situations, there is no way that you can wear that crumpled dress or shirt that didn't really survive very well at the bottom of your suitcase.

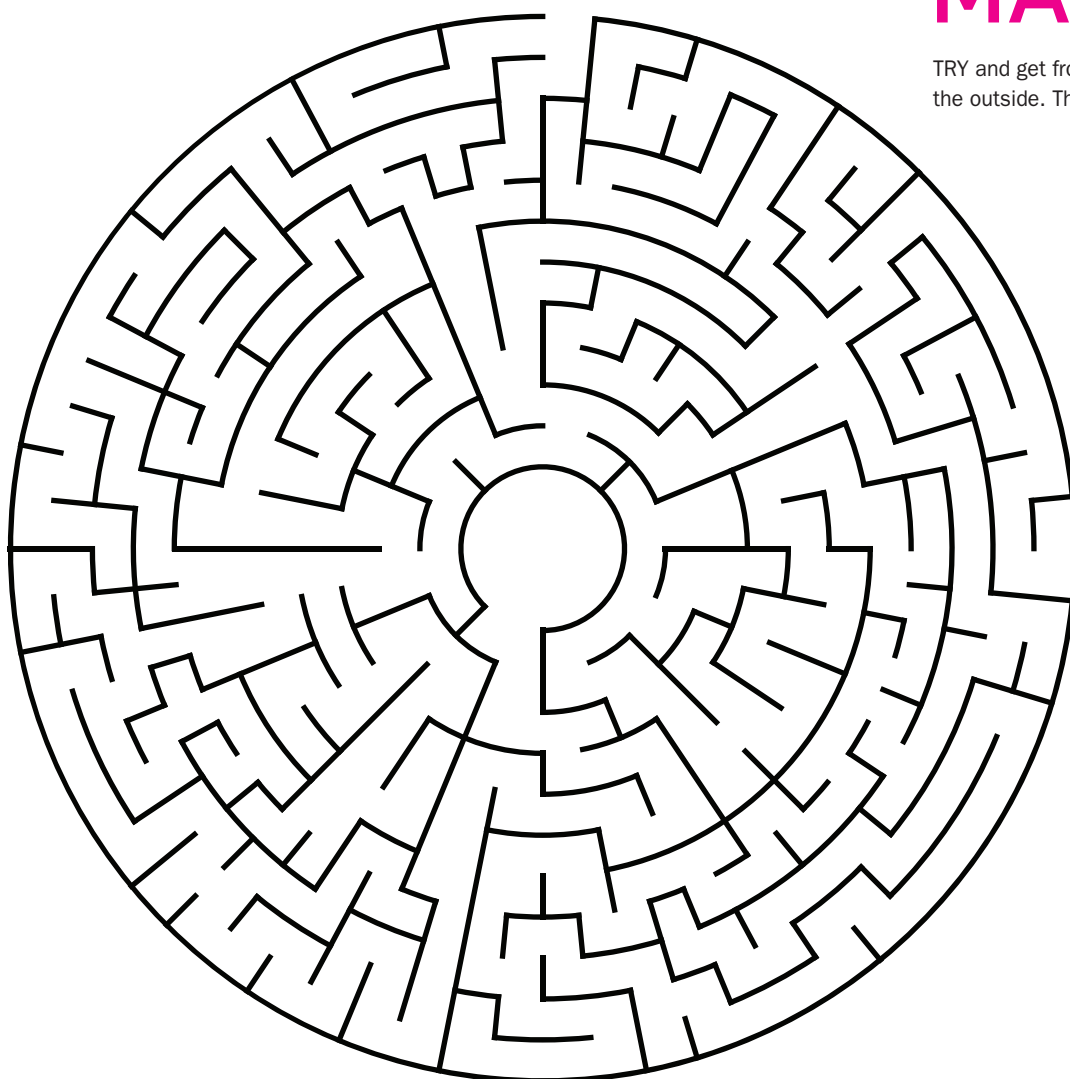
Never fear, because now you can pack a tiny steam iron. The Steamfast Home-and-Away Mini Steam Iron heats up in 15 seconds and has variable temperature settings meaning you can iron almost any fabric. Measuring approximately 13cm x 8cm, this little iron will fit easily in your bag. It also has a non-stick soleplate; 1-touch steam control and dual voltage for travel convenience.

Purchase it from Amazon for only US\$25.



MAZE

TRY and get from the centre of the puzzle to the outside. There is only one solution.



NEW COMFORT ZONES OUR LATEST HOSTED SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS

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Explore the legendary southern reaches of Chilean Patagonia and witness some of the world's widest and most pristine landscapes.
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*Includes international flights from MEL/SYD/BNE



Visit the 'Knit One Change One' project with founder Danielle Chiel and meet inspiring individuals who are making a real difference fighting poverty and empowering women in southern India.
12 Days | From \$7,435 per person twin share



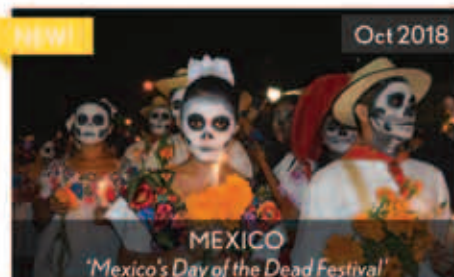
Discover lost tribal worlds guided by ancient spirits on this cultural odyssey that takes travellers to the most remote regions of Ghana, Togo and Benin.
16 Days | From \$12,150 per person twin share



Small and compact, the charming Central American country of Guatemala is a stunning blend of ancient Maya traditions, colonial influences and modern ways.
10 Days | From \$6,950 per person twin share



Georgia and Armenia are filled with a rich cultural heritage of music, art, poetry and dance as well as a wealth of Orthodox Christian churches, cathedrals and monasteries.
13 Days | From \$8,995 per person twin share



Celebrate the departed with colourful pageants, vibrant shrines, street parties, home altars and markets at Mexico's Day of the Dead festival.
10 Days | From \$9,995 per person twin share

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FLYER

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