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# Travel Daily

First with the news

Tuesday 30th December 2014



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## Red Gum consolidated

RED Gum Resources, the WA mining firm reshaping itself into The Australian Travel Group, this morning confirmed the completion of its share capital consolidation (**TD** 18 Dec) on the basis of one new security for each 44 held prior to the restructure.

The move means there are now just under 19 million shares on issue, with notices and holding statements reflecting the change dispatched yesterday.

The company continues the process of finalising its acquisitions of Holiday Planet, Asia Escape Holidays and Motive Travel, and until these are complete trading in Red Gum shares remains suspended.

The takeover and subsequent re-listing as Australian Travel Group Limited - with the ASX code ATL - is expected to take place in early 2015, the firm said.

## Virgin urges law reform

**THE** Federal Court ruling against Flight Centre in the price fixing case brought by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in Nov 2013 has "created significant uncertainty" for the travel industry, according to a Virgin Australia submission to the government's Review of Competition Policy in Australia.

The case saw Flight Centre fined \$11 million over claims that it had attempted to influence carriers including Singapore Airlines over the fares charged to consumers.

VA is one of many firms which have responded to the wide-ranging review, and welcomed a draft recommendation that a prohibition against cartel conduct be simplified - particularly in the light of the Flight Centre ruling which appears to be in conflict with a judgement in a similar case

brought by the ACCC against the ANZ bank.

"As a travel business which utilises dual or multi distribution systems for its products, while also providing distribution services on behalf of other providers such as car hire companies and hotel booking services, Virgin Australia is especially concerned about the implications of the Flight Centre decision," the VA submission says.

"Restrictions such as price parity provisions are very common in these supply agreements, as they encourage and protect the investment that distributors make in distribution platforms and networks, and provide an incentive for distributors to actively promote and sell goods and services in return for commission," the carrier added.

Prior to the Flight Centre case it was "relatively uncontentious" that so-called vertical restraints were permitted under the Competition and Consumer Act, as long as they did not constitute a misuse of market power or substantially lessen competition, Virgin Australia said.

Virgin also warned that a recommendation by the competition panel which would remove cabotage restrictions on foreign airlines carrying domestic passengers would have a "severe impact" on local operators.

## Qld farewells iconic Sunlander

**NEW** Year's Eve celebrations in Queensland will be touched with emotion this year, with the state bidding goodbye to its long-running Sunlander train as it makes its final coastal journey.

Farewell celebrations will take place tomorrow morning at Cairns railway station as the train is sent off into retirement in style.

"The Sunlander has serviced Queenslanders for more than 61 years with more than 3.5 million passenger journeys recorded over her time," said Queensland Rail Executive General Manager Travel & Tourism, Martin Ryan.

The retirement of the Sunlander marks a new era in long distance rail travel in the state, with the third and final *Spirit of Queensland* Tilt Train now in service.

The new product offers everything you could expect from modern travel including a state of the art personal entertainment system with on-demand movies and music, as well as in-seat power and USB ports.

Tilt Train seats can convert into a lie-flat rail bed, and the service offers the freshest local Queensland cuisine sourced within 100km of the track.

The introduction of the new Tilt Train means there are now five journeys per week between Cairns and Brisbane.



**VIVA!** Holidays and Singapore Airlines recently took this group of helloworld agents to experience Singapore.

Over four days they took in a multitude of attractions including the Singapore Flyer, Merlion Park, the world's first Night Safari and the National Orchid Centre.

They also took in Universal Studios where they are **pictured** above from left: Jo Polesel,

Viva! Holidays; Marisa Garcia, Travel on Capri; James Giddens, BYOjet Logan; Audrie Pretty, helloworld Lilydale; Tania Heath, helloworld Waverley Gardens; Alison Watts, helloworld Limited; Sophie Anderson, Destination HQ Beaumaris; Amber Smith, MTA Travel; Lynda Gurd, helloworld Bendigo; and Ross Pelmore, helloworld Coffs Harbour Park Beach Plaza.

## Still no sign of QZ8501

**THE** international search and rescue effort for the missing AirAsia flight from Surabaya to Singapore (**TD** yesterday) is continuing into its third day.

At this stage no trace of the A320 has been sighted, with officials warning the plane is likely at the bottom of the Java Sea.

Searchers from Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and the USA have variously reported false leads of smoke from islands and floating garbage.

## Join up with jito.co

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## Today's issue of TD

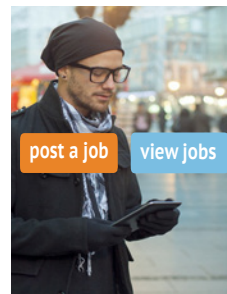
**Travel Daily** today has four pages of news & photos, including a front cover page for **jito**.



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## Viking to offer world first ‘snow grotto’

**VIKING** Cruises has released further details of its upcoming ocean debut, with the line’s first seagoing vessel to feature a unique onboard snow-based spa experience.

Set to launch in May 2015, the reinvented spa will have a Snow Grotto “where snowflakes gently descend from the ceiling through chilled air”.

Passengers using the grotto will find their circulatory system stimulated in the coolness before they then invigorate themselves in the onboard sauna, “drawing upon the holistic wellness philosophy of Nordic culture”.

## SQ to boost Italy

**SINGAPORE** Airlines will lift services to Italy on a seasonal basis in Jul 2015, with Rome flights increasing from 3 to 5 weekly and Milan boosted to daily operations.

## Agent share drifts lower

**TRAVEL** agents in the USA will see their market share decline two percentage points, to 27%, over the next year, at the expense of growth in OTA and supplier direct website bookings which will rise two points to 55%.

The rest of the market - walk-in and phone reservations - will remain stable at 28%.

The forecasts are part of a new report from consulting group PhocusWright, which also confirms the ongoing trend towards mobile devices.

“Offline channels are growing behind the overall market, as travellers get more habituated to online,” the report states, with bookings via smartphones and tablets expected to comprise 8% of the US market (or US\$30.4 billion) by 2016.

In the US “travel agents have been slower to embrace change, and are depending more on a

niche market of affluent travellers who take more complex trips,” the report adds.

Overall US travel spending is forecast to grow 6% annually to a whopping \$367 billion by 2016.

The predictions mirror statements made earlier this month by Expedia ceo Dara Khosrowshahi at the company’s 15th annual Partner Conference in Las Vegas (**TD** 16 Dec).

Expedia, which is the world’s largest OTA and comprises 42% of US online bookings, is investing heavily in mobile, last year spending over US\$650 million in research and development to enhance the smartphone and tablet booking experience.

The PhocusWright report says OTAs and suppliers in each segment - apart from cruise and packages - “are preparing for a future where mobile owns most online bookings”.

## Tassie flight ditches

A **SMALL** aircraft operated by charter carrier Airlines of Tasmania has crashed into waters off the state’s south-eastern coast near Port Arthur.

The Cessna 172 was conducting aerial photography of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race, with a pilot and one passenger aboard.

No trace has been found of the plane at this stage, with a number of yachts joining the search, one of which reportedly witnessed the plane hitting the ocean.

Airlines of Tasmania is part of Hobart-based Par Avion Airlines.

## Hawaii Hampton Inn

**HAWAII’S** first Hampton Inn is set to debut in 2016 in West Oahu, as part of a mall being developed in Kapolei which will also feature 150 shops.

The mid-priced Hilton Worldwide Hampton Inn & Suites brand is offered in more than 2,000 locations globally.

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## Coconuts for the Cooks



**COOK** Islands Tourism recently took this group of key industry marketing managers to experience the destination, with the trip taking in Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Atui islands.

The first stop after the early morning arrival courtesy of Air New Zealand was the Punanga Nui Market in Rarotonga for a reviving coffee - but some participants opted for a refreshing "while you wait" coconut.

**Pictured** above enjoying the respective beverages are, from left: Elina Bishop, Buyinvite;

Kerryn Cook, Cook Islands Tourism Corporation gm; Jason Dutton-Smith, Flight Centre; Adam Townson, Travel Associates; Sophie Cattana, Flight Centre; Tracey Taibe, Flight Centre; and Kim Skilton, Ignite Travel.

### North Bali airport?

**INDONESIAN** officials have confirmed an "acceleration" of plans to construct a new airport in North Bali, including a formal selection of a location and an updated feasibility study in 2015.

According to Indonesia's *Antara* state news agency, the project has been included in the country's National Mid-Term Development Plan.

It's understood that a location in Kubutambahan is favoured for the airport, which is still subject to the development of a master plan and an environmental impact statement.

The creation of a second international gateway for Bali would significantly boost the economy in the island's north, with provincial officials last year inviting a range of concept proposals from investors.

Previously the govt had outlined hopes that the new airport could commence construction in 2018.

### UA facing \$5m suit

**A WOMAN** from New York has lodged a \$5 million lawsuit against United Airlines, after she was taken off a flight and put in prison for three days after attempting to change seats.

68-year-old Jean Mamakos admits that she moved to an empty exit row seat during a layover in Seattle en route to Alaska for a weekend of skiing.

However after being told by a flight attendant she would have to pay for an upgrade the woman went back to her originally assigned seat, according to an interview with *CBS New York*.

However then the captain announced "There is a lady that wants to get off the plane on this flight, so we have to wait.

"I didn't know that was me," Mamakos said.

When she refused to leave the aircraft, Seattle police boarded and she was handcuffed and removed from the plane.

She was put into a Washington county jail and ended up staying there for three days because courts weren't open over the weekend.

Mamakos admitted resisting arrest, but says the incident was an overreaction by United Airlines flight attendants.

### Cruiseco European river charters

**THE** Cruiseco consortium is promoting two exclusive 2015 European river cruises, in partnership with CMV Signature River Cruises.

The range includes a 30 May 14 night Rhine and Danube departure aboard *MS Bellejour* which will journey on the popular Amsterdam to Budapest route, with fares leading in at \$4,999.

There are also two departures of a seven night Rhone cruise on *MS Bellefleur* from Lyon in France, taking place on 05 Jun and 12 Jun 2015 and priced from \$2,499ppts.

See [www.cruising.com.au](http://www.cruising.com.au).

### Window Seat

**SYDNEY'S** annual fireworks spectacular tomorrow night will give Australia huge global attention as it heralds the start of the new year.

But a number of other destinations have also come up with their own unique ways to celebrate 2015 - such as the hardware-focused town of Fairview in Pennsylvania in the USA, which plans to drop a 2.5m long "novelty nail" as the clock ticks over at midnight.

The 25kg nail was constructed out of wood by local artists, and "pays homage to the defunct Harrisburg Nail Works" which formerly employed many residents of the town, according to the *Philadelphia Sentinel*.

Other creative New Year's Eve traditions in nearby localities include the dropping of a gigantic pickle in Dillsburg, as well as a massive "wrench drop" in - where else - Mechanicsburg.

**AND** continuing the New Year's theme, organisers of the huge celebrations in New York's Times Square have also been making their preparations, with an experimental "test drop" of special confetti to be used tomorrow night.

Thousands of pieces of the confetti - each with a person's new year wish or resolution written on it - were tossed into the air to ensure they are suitable for the big moment.

"You've got to make sure it's been properly cut so they all break out separately...you have to make sure they float up as well as down," said Times Square Alliance president Tim Tompkins.

At midnight on New Year's Eve about 1,000kg of confetti will be tossed onto the crowd of expectant revellers in central New York, expected to number around one million people.



## Money

**WELCOME** to *Money Talk*, TD's Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

**\$1AUD = US\$0.81**

**CURRENCY** markets across the globe are seeing thin trading due to the holiday season, however a number of interesting trends are emerging including historic highs for the New Zealand dollar.

Yesterday the A\$ dropped to \$1.046 against the Kiwi and some pundits are prognosticating about the prospects of parity for the first time in 30 years.

Against the US greenback the Aussie has held up above the US80c mark, but ongoing weakness in commodity markets as well as concerns about slowing growth in China continue negative sentiment which has seen the A\$ drop a huge 14c over the last three months.

Concerns are beginning to emerge in Europe which will also impact currency markets - in particular the forthcoming snap election in Greece where an anti-austerity party is threatening to unwind the country's massive bail-out deals with the EU.

This potential instability is in turn leading to negative sentiment for the Euro and the British pound Sterling.

The other major trend affecting the travel and tourism industry is the ongoing decline in the price of oil, which is now approaching levels just half of where it was a few months ago.

Once airline hedging arrangements are unwound this is expected to feed through to improved profitability for carriers - and maybe lower fuel levies.

*Wholesale rates this morning:*

US	\$0.813
UK	£0.524
NZ	\$1.045
Euro	€0.669
Japan	¥98.15
Singapore	\$1.077
China	¥5.053
South Africa	R9.455
Canada	\$0.947
Crude oil	US\$54.73

# Trafalgar on top of the social media world...



**TRAFALGAR'S** recent "Acclaim" trip for top achieving travel agents took participants to Europe in partnership with Etihad Airways, taking in the Christmas Markets of Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

Consultants on the trip were encouraged to share their insider experiences on social media channels, building on the brand's commitment to user generated content (**TD** 10 Sep).

Led by Trafalgar's Australia md

Matthew Cameron-Smith, the group also included an exclusive, personal guided walk through Geneva with the company's global ceo Gavin Tollmann, who became a "Local Expert" for the duration of the visit.

Switzerland Tourism also participated, with a social media driven photo incentive inviting agents to use hashtags such as #Acclaim2014, #TrafalgarInsider and #Switzerland across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

**Pictured** above demonstrating the Trafalgar hashtag are, from left: Karen Vandeven, Rochelle Goldsmith, Diana Chan, Shelley Dennison, Marissa Kyriaco, Andrea Thomasson, Kellie Green, Vanessa Roberts, Cassandra McDonald and Lee Brodie.

## New Xiamen terminal

**CHINA'S** Xiamen Gaoqi International Airport (XMN) last weekend formally opened a new terminal, boosting its capacity above 20 million annual passengers.

Different carriers fly from each terminal, with T3 covering Xiamen Airlines, Hebei Airlines and China Southern Airlines as well as international and regional services, and the new T4 used for a range of domestic carriers operating within China.

## Korea rail discount

**THE** Korea Railroad Corporation has announced a one year extension of its special discount fare on the Airport Railroad Express train between Incheon International Airport and Seoul railway station.

The non-stop service takes 43 minutes to travel between the stations, with officials extending the discount to further encourage growing patronage for the train.

## BHX stake sold

**AUSTRALIAN** investor group Victorian Funds Management Corporation has sold its 19.25% stake in Birmingham Airport in the UK to Canada's Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan.

The Canadian organisation now holds 48.25% of the Midlands facility, which is the UK's seventh busiest airport.

Victorian Funds Management Corporation (VMFC) is a body set up by the Vic government to provide investment services to Victorian public authorities.

It has jointly held the BHX stake with the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan since 2007, when it acquired the shareholding from Macquarie Airports Group.

Tuesday 30th Dec 2014

## AS baggage bonus

**ALASKA** Airlines is waiving its US\$25 baggage fee for the month of Jan - but only for members of its Mileage Plan loyalty scheme.

The program is free to join and it's possible to sign up online or at the airport, with the fee waiver valid for members and their companions who are travelling on the same booking.

Flight miles must also be credited to the Mileage Plan scheme to qualify for the offer.

Alaska Airlines offers a "baggage service guarantee" which promises that if bags don't reach the carousel within 20 minutes of the plane's arrival at the gate customers are entitled to a \$25 discount voucher for a future Alaska Airlines booking.

## Passengers rescued from stricken ferry

**THE** last of around 470 passengers trapped aboard a burning car ferry off the coast of Greece has been plucked to safety by helicopters, as the death toll from the disaster rose to ten fatalities.

The *Norman Atlantic* was en route from the Greek port of Patras to Ancona in Italy when fire broke out on a vehicle deck.

Passengers huddled on the upper decks for more than 24 hours in heavy rain and hail, with rescue efforts hampered by terrible conditions as well as thick smoke from the blaze.

Blow-by-blow descriptions of the ordeal were relayed to Greek and Italian media because the vessel was within mobile coverage.

Eventually helicopters operating through the night managed to remove everyone from the ship, with officials describing the rescue efforts as having "prevented a slaughter at sea".

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**Postal address:** PO Box 1010, Epping, NSW 1710 Australia

**Street address:** 4/41 Rawson St, Epping NSW 2121 Australia

**P:** 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760) **F:** 1300 799 221 (+61 2 8007 6769)

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**Publisher/Managing Editor:** Bruce Piper **Editor:** Guy Dundas **Assistant Editor:** Matt Lennon  
**Contributors:** Louise Wallace, Jenny Piper, Sarah Piper **Editorial email:** [info@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:info@traveldaily.com.au)  
**Advertising and Marketing:** Sean Harrigan and Lisa Martin - [advertising@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:advertising@traveldaily.com.au)  
**Business Manager:** Jenny Piper - [accounts@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:accounts@traveldaily.com.au)

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