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Tuesday 24th February 2015

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 **SWISS**

Flight Centre profit slips

A COMBINATION of a slowdown in demand and more investment in its local operations has seen Flight Centre this morning report a \$141 million first half pre-tax profit, down 9% from the previous corresponding period (**TD** breaking news).

Global TTV was up almost 9% to \$8.14 billion, and shop numbers grew 4% to 2,759 globally.

Combined earnings from Flight Centre's international businesses increased 25% to a record \$25.3 million, which helped to partly offset a 10% decline in the Australian profit figure.

MD Graham Turner said the US business achieved its best first half result since its acquisition in 2008, adding that "significant investments were made to improve our offerings across all channels, enhance our

product range and the service we ultimately deliver to our customers".

Turner said the company would aim to improve margins by looking for "further vertical integration and product development opportunities".

Flight Centre will stimulate demand, grow TTV and increase its market share by marketing its offers more effectively as well as "proactively engaging with travellers throughout their customer journey," he added.

"Our challenge is to enhance productivity in our leisure businesses, as we are successfully doing in corporate travel."

More from Flight Centre on **page three** of today's **TD**.

ICC Sydney fly-thru

SYDNEY'S new International Convention Centre this morning unveiled a virtual "fly-through" which gives prospective users of the facility a bird's eye view of what will be on offer.

The video was launched at AIME - click on the logo or see traveldaily.com.au/videos.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has six pages of news & photos, a front cover page from **JITO** plus full pages: (**click**)

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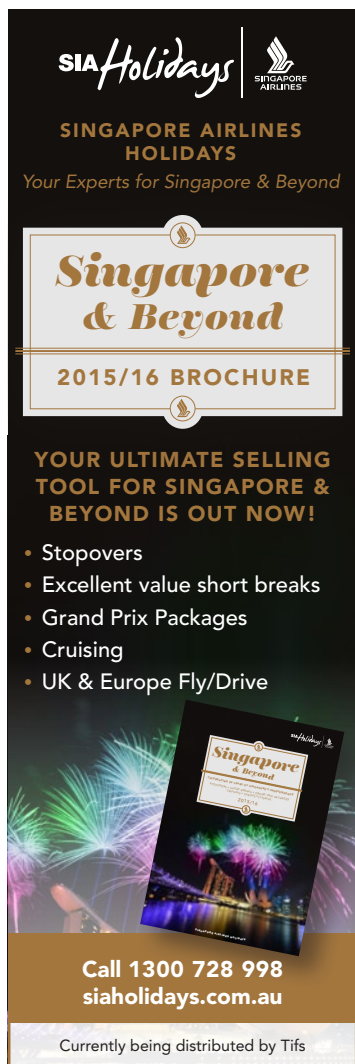


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Rex profit up 10% to \$5.5m

REGIONAL Express has reported a \$5.5 million profit for the six months to 31 Dec, a 10% improvement on the previous corresponding period despite passenger revenue remaining flat.

Lower operating costs were attributed to the repeal of the carbon tax, while lower fuel costs also benefited the carrier.

Chief operating officer Neville Howell said passenger demand was seen to stabilise during the

period, but warned that the sharp fall in oil prices could have a negative impact on the resource industry.

"On the other hand, the new Queensland routes which began on 01 Jan 2015 are expected to perform well," Howell said.

Rex carried 546,668 passengers during the period, down 0.3%.

Strong result for FJ

FORMER Fiji Airways ceo Stefan Pichler has left the carrier with a lovely departing present for staff - most of whom will receive cash bonuses as they share in the carrier's record profit.

The result soared to FJ\$60.8m for the nine months to 31 Dec - more than seven times last year's figure - with all 835 eligible non-management staff to each receive FJD\$3,000 and managers to get a bonus of FJD\$7,000.

Shareholders will also receive a 19c per share dividend, with Pichler saying all international markets performed strongly.

Webjet APT 2-for-1

WEBJET Exclusives is offering a 2-for-1 deal on APT's Magnificent Europe river cruise itinerary on 11 departures if booked by today, representing a massive saving of up to \$13,690 per couple.

Eurostar extension

EUROSTAR has extended its standard six-month booking horizon until 16 Nov, a move Rail Plus chief James Dunne says will provide agents booking earlybird airfares with peace-of-mind.

MEANWHILE, Eurostar has cut prices on Standard and Standard Premier classes by up to 32% for travel before 27 Aug when booked by 20 Mar.



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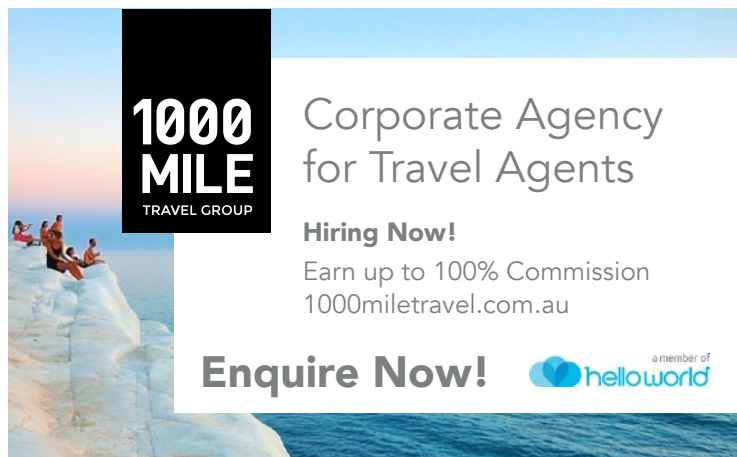


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Low fares to drive recovery

FLIGHT Centre says consumer confidence in Australia is still weak, but expects "some recovery as the year progresses" with demand driven by extremely low international fares.

At the recent FC travel expos, the company offered return QF, VA and NZ fares to Los Angeles for less than \$1,000, "the lowest levels seen for several years".

MD Graham Turner said that in terms of customer enquiry, the group's shops are as busy as ever.

"The challenge is to improve conversion, at a time when consumers are typically cautious, and grow TTV, at a time when international fares are very low".

He said the company sees good growth opportunities for corporate travel in Australia, with plans to expand sales staff.

The flagship Flight Centre brand plans to highlight its "Widest Choice of Airfares" offering including published, private and

"constructed" fares.

Turner also welcomed the recent moves by airlines to eliminate fuel surcharges, saying this will create "cleaner, more transparent fare structures" as well as benefiting members of airline loyalty programs.

FC new openings

FLIGHT Centre is continuing to expand its global footprint, with the company's first half results announcement (see p1) confirming that almost half of its shops and businesses are located outside of Australia.

This financial year, new hyperstores have opened in Los Angeles and Philadelphia in the USA, Delhi and Mumbai in India as well as Darwin.

A new Abu Dhabi hyperstore in the Yas Mall opened last week and Hong Kong's first hyperstore is due to open in the next few months, the company said.

FC corporate strong

FLIGHT Centre's five corporate brands turned over more than \$1.1 billion in the six months to 31 Dec, "consolidating the company's position as Australia's largest business travel retailer," according to MD Graham Turner.

The SME-focused Flight Centre Business Travel recorded 15% EBIT growth, and turned over \$130 million during the half, with other highlights for the corporate business including a record amount of new business won "and an improved strike rate in securing prominent national and multi-national accounts".

The period also included the launch of unique products such as SmartFLY which have proven popular with clients, along with the 4th Dimension consultancy business.

There's also been an office overhaul to create "corporate travel hubs of the future" along with outdoor advertising campaigns for Corporate Traveller.



Window Seat

ASKED to describe in one word what had just unfolded in the opening performance of Robots Unrivalled, Contiki managing director Katrina Barry smiled and said "replicating", clearly proud at Contiki's achievement.

The event had all the unpredictability of a Japanese production, although a few eyebrows were raised when Gangnam Style - which is actually Korean - played.

Barry is pictured right with one of the giant robots - more on page 5.



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LAN Dreaming of big growth



EXCITEMENT is mounting at LATAM Airlines Group with the introduction of LAN Airlines' new Boeing 787-8 services between Chile & Australia in coming weeks.

Effective 16 Apr, the **oneworld** carrier will transition from the currently used Airbus A340s to the Boeing Dash-8 *Dreamliner* on its daily operation from Santiago to Sydney, via Auckland.

The 787-8 has a slightly smaller Business class cabin but overall capacity on the aircraft is around the same as the A340, LATAM Airlines Group marketing and communication manager for Asia Pacific Johanna Raeder told **TD** at a function in Sydney yesterday.

Capacity is set to jump some 27% come late Q3/Q4 when LAN upgauges to the longer body 787-9 variant which will accommodate an extra 66 passengers.

Raeder said the carrier was excited for the future particularly given the Australian Govt's recent decision to double bilateral airline

capacity between Australia and Chile to 4,000 seats per week.

"We are very happy with the announcement last week by the Department of Infrastructure," Raeder said, adding the move is aligned with LATAM's growth strategy for the region.

The group is also focused on its airport product in South America, with new VIP lounges opening last year in Sao Paulo and Bogota, and a revamped facility to be unveiled this year in Santiago.

Accompanying local LATAM reps were a delegation of tour operators from South America who will meet with Australian trade partners in Sydney and Melbourne this week.

Pictured at Pier One Sydney, Autograph Collection from left are Bruno Teixeira, Blumar; Catherine de Giorgio, LATAM, Fernanda Machado, Georeisen; Benjamin Garcia, LATAM; Johanna Raeder, LATAM and Juan Luzio from Transturin.

Kerzner Mexico push

ONE&ONLY Hamilton Island owners Kerzner International will open two new properties on the Pacific Coast of Mexico after entering an agreement with investment firm BK Partners.

Positioned on the beachfront at Riviera Nayarit, One&Only Mandarin will offer approx 145 luxurious villas set in a rainforest location with accommodation to include Ocean Cliff Villas, Tree House Villas & Mountain Villas.

One&Only Santa Maria de Xala will be an authentic hacienda resort with an 8km beachfront.

The property is part of a new 1,200-hectare development and will offer 75 luxury villas and suites with private plunge pools.

Kerzner International ceo Alan Leibman said the new Mexican projects build on the success of the luxury group's existing One&Only Palmilla in Los Cabos.

"The locations truly showcase the best Mexico has to offer, each with a distinctive experience, and I am very confident that One&Only will continue to define ultra-luxury in the region," Leibman said yesterday.

Both properties will be accessed via Puerto Vallarta airport and will feature a residence component.

HotelRooms boost

ONLINE hotel meta-search firm HotelRooms.com has expanded its inventory with the addition of Warwick International and Steingenberg Hotel Group to its global listings.

The site has around 40,000 hotels in 98 countries, with other major chains including Starwood, InterContinental, Best Western and Louvre Hotel Group already featuring on the website.

Hokuriku launch

EAST Japan Railway Company have confirmed its newest bullet train, the Hokuriku Shinkansen (**TD** 09 Feb), will commence services between Toyko, Toyama and Kanazawa on 14 Mar.

Tuesday 24th Feb 2015

Fiji Casino plan axed

AN EXCLUSIVE Casino Licence provided to One Hundred Sands to build and operate a casino and hotel in Fiji has been revoked by the Fijian Government due to its failure to deliver the project.

One Hundred Sands was signed to develop a US\$290m five-star luxury casino resort on Denarau Island after winning the tender in late 2011 (**TD** 22 Dec 11).

The 190-room casino resort and 1,500 seat convention centre was intended to be delivered by 2013.

It is expected the Fiji Govt will launch another casino tender.

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DL develops Seattle

DELTA Air Lines is ramping up its operation from the Pacific Northwest of the USA with a new daily service between Seattle and Kona on the Big Island of Hawaii.

The SkyTeam carrier will launch the route on 19 Dec using Boeing 757-200 aircraft, the same day Delta Connection carrier Skywest commences a seasonal daily frequency between Seattle and Tucson and adds a second daily flight to Palm Springs.

DL is also placing greater focus on Alaska from its Seattle hub, with its existing seasonal flights to Fairbanks and Juneau jacked up to daily year-round frequencies, effective 15 May.

In a further boost for the region, Delta will expand its seasonal service to Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta in Mexico from 03 Oct.

WIN TICKETS TO THE FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL



Celebrating its 26th year in 2015, the Alliance Française French Film Festival will kick off this March, with New Caledonia Tourism as a proud sponsor. The festival is a highly anticipated and popular event on the Australian cultural calendar. Australian audiences will be treated to the finest selection of contemporary French movies, with something to suit everyone's taste. Blockbusters and independent films alike screen over eight weeks in eight cities around the country.

To win a double pass to the French Film Festival, be the first person to send the correct answer to the following question to:
frenchfilmfestival@traveldaily.com.au

It has never been a cheaper time to visit New Caledonia. What is the local currency?

Need a hint? Click here.

Congratulations to yesterday's winner Jessica Geddes from Holidays World Travel!



Anthem float out

ROYAL Caribbean 4,180-pax *Anthem of the Seas* was floated out of dry dock at the Meyer Werft shipyard in Papenburg, Germany last weekend.

Anthem of the Seas is a sister ship of the revolutionary *Quantum of the Seas* which debuted last Nov.

The 168-666-tonne vessel is expected to enter service in Apr.

Cathay hotels online

CATHAY Pacific has evolved its online presence, now enabling customers to book hotels to build travel packages with airfares.

"Our website has just become the one-stop shop for your journey," CX told subscribers of its frequent flyer scheme AsiaMiles.

Sample Mudgee

SYDNEYSIDERS will be able to sample some of Mudgee's best produce and wine as part of the three-day NSW Food & Wine Festival which starts on Fri.

The Sydney Cellar Door features a Mudgee urban vineyard wine bar, showcasing the country charm of the destination, 14 wine stalls and a range of local fare which guests can sample.

Among the exhibiting wineries are Robert Oatley, Moothi Estate, Burrundulla and di Lusso Estate.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more details.

US axes SAA c'share

AMERICAN Airlines has advised the US Dept of Transportation it has terminated the two-year old codeshare agreement between US Airways and South African Airways with immediate effect.

ATSB commissioner

CHRIS Manning has today been named as the new Commissioner for the Australian Transport Safety Bureau for a three-year term, commencing 09 Mar.

LVCVA acquisition

THE Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority has bought the 25-acre site of the Riviera Hotel & Casino for US\$182.5 million to act as the cornerstone of its Global Business District (**TD** 28 Feb 13).

LVCVA plans to convert the site into 750,000sqf of new exhibition space and 187,500sqf of meeting space over coming years.

Contiki + Japanese Robots = Fun



SYDNEY last night saw youth tour operator Contiki deliver a taste of what tour groups on its new Japan itineraries will enjoy at Tokyo's famed Robot Restaurant, putting on a show of its own full of dancing robots.

It had everything! In addition to elaborate Transformers-style robots themselves, the show had a cavalcade of quirky characters including dragons, dancing pandas and chickens, flying eels, pole dancers, drummers & more.

A loosely coordinated fight scenes also included two robots battling it out for the affections of a cyborg-like woman.

Assisting Contiki to put the event together was Japanese beer giant Asahi and computer microchip firm Intel.

'Robots Unrivalled' was a special experience opened only to Contiki's subscriber list, with more than 7,500 signing up just for the chance to buy tickets.

Upon their release, some 500 tickets at three performances over each of three nights were sold out in less than five minutes.

Contiki formally adds Japan to its Asian range from next month, launching with a 13-day 'Japan Unrivalled' itinerary which takes guests to six different cities.

Beginning in Tokyo, guests visit Takayama, Hiroshima, Kyoto, Wakayama and Osaka for a taste of both bustling city life and quiet Japanese villages and towns, immersed in Japanese culture.

Managing director Katrina Barry told **Travel Daily** the tour was selling extremely well and further itineraries were being explored.

Tickets to the Robot Restaurant in Tokyo were extremely difficult to obtain, so she added that travellers will revel in the fact the

experience is included in the tour price, which starts from \$4,347pp.

"We wanted to do something big to mark our new Japan Tours," Barry told the assembled crowd.

Pictured above with what can probably only be best described as a low-budget storm trooper from left is the Contiki team of Amber Gunther, Brett Morgan, Vanessa Stavrou, Katrina Barry and Kate Wickham.

For a photo gallery of all the excitement - [CLICK HERE](#) - and for a short video clip - [CLICK HERE](#).

Travel Daily on location at AIME

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you courtesy of the Melbourne Convention Bureau, which is hosting the Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Expo.

AIME last night kicked off with a difference - rather than the traditional welcome function, individual hotels hosted attendees at cocktail parties in the lead-up to this morning's formal opening of the show.

Many of the exhibitors are showcasing their wares with formal press conferences, with presentations today from Voyages Indigenous Tourism, ICC Sydney, Oman Tourism, P&O Cruises, Brisbane Convention Bureau, Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau, Thailand Convention Bureau and Tourism Tropical North Queensland.

Tonight sees "Australia Speaks" with an array of presenters from the Saxton Speakers Bureau, followed by a "Movers and shakers" party on the show floor.

Tuesday 24th Feb 2015

Creative reminder

CREATIVE Holidays is reminding agents that they have until Sat 28 Feb to win \$100 Coles MYER gift cards from the B2B wholesaler when booking and ticketing four Virgin Australia airfares.

To qualify, bookings must be return airfares purchased in conjunction with three nights accommodation - 131 222.

Belmond tech deal

LUXURY travel firm Belmond Ltd (formerly Orient-Express) has chosen Travel Studio as its new technology platform to increase growth of its rail and cruise distribution to customers.

The arrangement involved a long-term deal with UK tech specialist Open Destinations.

S8 launch JNB/CPT

NEW South African low-cost carrier Skywise will commence operation from 05 Mar between Johannesburg and Cape Town, with two daily return frequencies.

Conchita - complete with dirndl!

EMMA Guthrie from Journeys by Design in Melbourne has gone all out for her entry in this month's **Travel Daily** competition.

The Austrian National Tourist Office in conjunction with Austrian Airlines and the Vienna Tourist Board are offering a space on a once-in-a-lifetime global mega-famil during May, which will take in the 2015 Eurovision Song Contest in Vienna.

The best travel industry transformation into Conchita Wurst - the cross-dressing Austrian winner of last year's contest - will win, with just a few days left to get your entries in before the comp closes at the end of the month.

Emma, whose 'before' picture is shown right, transformed herself from "everyday dirty blonde travel agent to bearded brunette beauty" by dressing in a traditional Austrian dirndl.

She also posed in front of an Austrian flag, to bring some authentic Viennese flavour to her Conchita makeover.

The group will be in Vienna from



20-24 May, when the city will be in the midst of Eurovision fever.

Entries close on 28 Feb so get your glam on - full details in the competition box at **right**.



AFTA UPDATE

The latest updates from AFTA's Chief Executive, Jayson Westbury

THIS time of year always provides a focus for business events as AIME gets underway in Melbourne. As a regular participant of AIME myself, it certainly has become a signature event for Australia and this year is already shaping up to be one of the best.

Yesterday the Business Events Council of Australia (BECA) launched its report on the "Value of Business Events to Australia". You can read the full report at www.busesseventsCouncil.org.au.

Some of the numbers presented in the report are astounding and there is no doubt that those of the travel industry who are enjoying the spoils of business events as a part of their business mix will be doing well.

Top line numbers include such things as: 412,004 business events held in Australia 2013-2014, 37.4 million delegates, \$28 billion expenditure, 179,357 jobs directly employed in the sector.

These are big numbers and for any travel agent thinking about diversification strategies, business events are well worth a look. These are of course the stats for onshore activity in Australia and inbound international business events.

What the report does not include is the value of the outbound business event sector which includes the incentive business ex Australia which also carries some significant numbers to add to the overall pie of business events in the travel industry.

As governments across the country settle into 2015, this report and the focus on business events provides politicians with a confronting reminder of just how important the business events sector is to the visitor economy for the domestic, inbound and outbound travel industry.

AFTA will continue to provide BECA with support as the report is circulated and becomes a part of the fabric of the Australian travel and tourism industry which requires constant and defendable reminders to governments that we are a sector that matters and genuinely contributes to the prosperity of our nation.



Cooks chikungunya

DFAT is advising travellers to the Cook Islands to take precautions against mosquito bites after cases of chikungunya were reported.

New Cicada manager

CICADA Lodge in the Northern Territory has announced the appointment of Joanne Walters as manager, effective 09 Mar.






From

Brad or Janet

To

Conchita –
Can you do it?

Eurovision 2015

Agency competition

Can you transform from Brad or Janet into Conchita? Send us your photo for a chance to win a seat on this mega-famil. The best transformation wins! *Details here.*

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Contributors: Louise Wallace, Jenny Piper, Sarah Piper **Editorial email:** info@traveldaily.com.au
Advertising and Marketing: Sean Harrigan and Lisa Martin - advertising@traveldaily.com.au
Business Manager: Jenny Piper - accounts@traveldaily.com.au

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2 X CORPORATE CONSULTANTS

PERTH – SALARY PACKAGE UP TO \$55K PLUS BONUSES

This well-known national TMC in Perth has seen exceptional growth over the last 6 months and now needs additional consultants to join their already large team of experts. You will work Monday – Friday hours in a great central location. Servicing international and domestic travel requests you will be offered the highest salary in Perth plus amazing bonuses of up to \$20K per year! If you have at least 12 months international corporate experience we can help you secure one of these dream roles! Call us today.

AMAZING NEW ROLE IN ADELAIDE

RETAIL TRAVEL CONSULTANT

ADELAIDE – SALARY PACKAGE UP TO \$55K + (DOE)

We have an exciting upcoming opportunity for an experienced leisure consultant in Adelaide. Due to company growth this successful office is now searching for their next superstar consultant. You will service clients mostly via phone and email enquiry in this office based environment and will construct tailor made holidays. Working Monday – Friday only, you will be paid a high base salary and be offered sensational famils. Be quick Adelaide, roles like this don't last long! Miniumum3 years' experience required.



DISCOVER AMAZING IRELAND

with Tempo Holidays

Book by 31 March
& save 5%

Taste of Ireland

6 days from **\$865*** per person
Departs Dublin

Value inclusions:

- Arrival & departure group transfers
- 5 breakfasts, 1 lunch & 3 dinners
- Dublin's Merry Ploughboy Pub Dinner & Show, Bunratty Castle Medieval Banquet
- Tour of Dublin
- Sheepdog Trials on the Ring of Kerry
- Tea & Scones at Connemara Marble Factory
- Entry to Dublin Castle, Blarney Castle, Blarney Woollen Mills, Skellig Experience & Cliffs of Moher

Irish Adventure

8 days from **\$1137*** per person
Departs Dublin

Value inclusions:

- Arrival & departure group transfers
- 7 breakfasts, 1 lunch & 5 dinners
- Abbey Tavern traditional Irish dinner & show
- Tour of Dublin
- Walking tours of Waterford, Cobh & Derry
- Sheepdog trials on the Ring of Kerry
- Entry to Book of Kells at Trinity College, Glendalough Visitor Centre, Dunbrody Famine Ship, House of Waterford Crystal, Blarney Castle, Blarney Woollen Mills, the Skellig Experience, Cliffs of Moher, Knock Shrine, W.B. Yeats' Grave, Giant's Causeway & Titanic Belfast

Irish Pubs & Folklore

8 days from **\$1299*** per person
Departs Dublin

Value inclusions:

- Arrival & departure transfers
- 7 breakfasts, 2 lunches & 5 dinners
- Kate Kearney's Cottage Irish night, Food Folk & Fairies at the Brazen Head Pub
- Tour of Dublin
- Tour & pint at the Guinness Storehouse
- Walking tour of Kilkenny
- Sheepdog trials on Dingle Peninsula
- Day tour to Achill Island
- Kilbeggan Distillery Experience
- Entry to House of Waterford Crystal, Blarney Castle, Blarney Woollen Mills, Dingle Brewing Company, Cliffs of Moher & Westport

THE TEMPO COACH TOURING DIFFERENCE

- ✓ Unlike many operators, comprehensive sightseeing including entrance fees, walking tours, local banquets and folklore shows are included, eliminating the need for optional tours or unexpected extra costs on your holiday
- ✓ All local taxes, hotel service charges & portage for one suitcase per person
- ✓ Transport by air conditioned coach
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- ✓ Very competitive pricing
- ✓ Services of a professional driver/guide
- ✓ Superior accommodation throughout
- ✓ Huge range of quality tours with multiple departures every month



*Conditions apply. Prices are per person, based on twin share accommodation. Prices are accurate as at 23 Feb 15. Seasonal surcharges and blackout dates apply depending on date of travel. Deals and offers are subject to availability and may change without notice prior to reservation confirmation and due to currency fluctuations. All airfares are excluded. Offers valid for new bookings only and not combinable with any other offers. The following cancellation fees apply prior to ex departure: 70+ days: loss of deposit, 69-15 days: 35% of tour cost, 14 days or less: 100% of tour cost. Full payment is required 70 days prior to departure from Australia/New Zealand. Not valid for group travel and cannot be combined with any other CIE Tours' promotion or discount. Other restrictions may apply. Taste of Ireland (6D/5N) - 5% discount is valid for sale until 31 Mar 15 and travel Mon (02 Mar - 14 Dec 15), Sat (07 Mar - 28 Nov 15) and Thu (09 Apr - 29 Oct 15). Advertised price is valid for departures on 07 & 14 Dec 15. Irish Adventure (8D/7N) - 5% discount is valid for sale until 31 Mar 15 and travel Mon (02 Mar - 14 Dec 15), Sat (07 Mar - 28 Nov 15) and Weds (25 Mar - 04 Nov 15). Advertised price is valid for departure on 7 Dec 15. Irish Pubs & Folklore (8D/7N) - 5% discount is valid for sale until 31 Mar 15 and travel Sat (07 Mar - 21 Nov 15) and Weds (01 Apr - 21 Oct 15). Advertised price is valid for departures on 07, 14, 21 & 28 Mar & 07, 14 & 21 Nov 15. Visit www.tempoholidays.com for our full terms and conditions. Tempo Holidays Pty Ltd ABN 51007331213

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