

## Stone to leave AY

**GEOFF** Stone has announced his resignation from Finnair, after more than six years leading the airline in the Australasia region.

Originally AY country manager, Stone was promoted to gm for Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia in Sep last year and has presided over a period of significant growth for the airline - not to mention an unprecedented succession of National Travel Industry Award wins.

Stone said he was moving on with a "heavy heart" after key developments including an increase in AY's Asia connecting flights from Australia, the debut of the Finnair A350 fleet and hosting the carrier's 90th birthday celebrations in Australia in 2013.

"I would like to pay special tribute to a wonderful group of professionals and terrific people with whom I have been privileged to work with at Finnair in Australia over these last few years," Stone said.

"They are absolutely dedicated to delivering the best possible service and outcomes for our clients and industry partners and I want to congratulate them on being so integral to Finnair being named Best Offline Carrier for the last five years at the AFTA National Travel Industry Awards."

Stone will take up a new role as Chief Operating Officer of Sydney Harbour-based Australian Cruise Group in Jan 2018.

## AFTA urges TRS reforms

**AUSTRALIA'S** existing system to refund GST to inbound tourists is in urgent need of reform, with AFTA's 2018-19 Pre-Budget submission calling on the government to provide an "open, competitive system operated by private refund providers".

The submission says the current manual paper-based process for the Tourist Refund Scheme (TRS) "results in long queue times, delayed flights, frustration and even accidents at airports."

"Australia is the only G20 country to maintain a paper-based system...allowing private refund providers to operate in the TRS system would streamline administrative processes at international airports and sea terminals," the AFTA paper says.

AFTA cited modelling conducted by accounting firm KPMG which forecast such a reform would deliver an additional \$226 million economic impact, with the extra visitor spending also assisting the government achieve its visitor spending growth targets.

Another recommendation in the

AFTA budget submission urges the government to maintain the current level of the Passenger Movement Charge, which has seen a dip in the growth rate for international travellers to Australia.

"The government should explore the potential for a portion of the revenue generated by the travel and tourism industry to be reinvested back to the industry it was collected from," AFTA said.

The Federation also urged maintenance of funding for Tourism Australia, a freeze on the cost of passports and continuation of investment in the Future Traveller Program to improve the border experience for travellers in and out of Australia.

The full submission can be viewed at [www.afta.com.au](http://www.afta.com.au).

## Chadstone Sofitel

**ACCORHOTELS** today announced it will operate the new Chadstone Hotel Melbourne under its MGallery by Sofitel brand, with construction of the 250-room property to commence early in 2018.

The project is part of a development by Vicinity Centres and Gandel Group, with AccorHotels chief operating officer Simon McGrath saying the company is delighted at the synergies offered by the hotel, "bringing our high-end boutique MGallery by Sofitel brand to Melbourne's most luxurious fashion address".

The Chadstone centre has over 500 stores across the retail, entertainment and dining sectors.

## Xiamen Air to MEL

**MELBOURNE** Airport today welcomed its 12th direct route to China, with the debut of new non-stop flights to Hangzhou operated by Xiamen Air.

MEL chief of aviation Simon Gandy said Hangzhou's status as a Chinese tech hub and home to Alibaba would make the route "pivotal to driving opportunities for Victorian businesses".

This year alone MEL has also added new flights to Shenzhen, Zhengzhou and Chongqing.

## SecurePay to AICS

**THE** AFTA Insolvency Chargeback Scheme (AICS) today announced the addition of SecurePay as its newest payment partner.

SecurePay gm Michael Luddeni said the company had provided online payment processing services in Australia since 1999, with AICS participation offering ATAS-accredited agents easy access to a wider choice of payment methods, improved processing and AICS protection.

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## WA welcomes A380

**THE** West Australian Government has welcomed Qatar Airways' decision to fly an A380 from Doha to Perth from 01 May (TD 15 Dec).

WA Tourism Minister Paul Papalia said the A380 would equate to more than 7,000 available airline seats coming into the State every week.

"Tourism WA is active in several key European markets, including London, and will certainly be taking this announcement by Qatar into account when planning upcoming marketing activity to lure more visitors to our State," Papalia said.

## Library comm up

**THE** Library in Thailand has extended its 15% travel agent commission period through to 30 Apr 2018 for agents booking its new Secret Pool Villas.

The offer applies to guests staying in a new one-bedroom Secret Pool Villa at the Koh Samui resort from 06 Jan-30 Apr inclusive at an introductory rate from THB22,800pnts (AU\$916), including breakfast.

Call 02 9211 6590 to book.

## SQ flags airfare overhaul

**SINGAPORE** Airlines has released details of a new airfare structure coming into effect next month, involving changes to inclusions such as seat selection, frequent flyer accrual and baggage allowances.

Involving both SQ and SilkAir, the new fare types will be introduced 20 Jan for all tickets sold worldwide and are designed "to provide clearer choices to customers to better fit different travel needs", the carrier says.

Economy class fares will be sold in three tiers named Lite, Standard and Flexi, the latter of which will receive a 5kg increase in baggage allowance to 35kg.

## Air NZ Fiji boost

**AIR** New Zealand will lift capacity on its Christchurch to Fiji route by 40% during next year's peak season.

An additional 6,000 seats will be offered aboard Airbus A320 aircraft, with the seasonal flights beginning five weeks earlier on 26 May and increasing from two/three per week to four per week during school holidays.

Advance seat selection will remain free for all fares except Economy Lite, which will now involve a US\$5 fee.

The airlines will offer fares in two tiers in Premium Economy class, Standard and Flexi.

Baggage and seat selection arrangements remain unchanged for the Premium categories, but mileage accrual rates will increase from 110% to 125% for the Flexi fare type and drop to 100% for the Standard fare.

Three fare types will be available in Business class, Lite, Standard and Flexi.

Baggage and seat selection inclusions are unchanged, but accrual will increase to 150% for the new Flexi fare, while Standard and Lite will be set at 125%.

**CLICK HERE** for full SQ details and **HERE** for MI.

## Port Arthur opening

**A NEW** Visitor Centre at Tasmania's Port Arthur historic site was opened this morning by Premier Will Hodgman.

The \$13 million facility includes a new restaurant called 1830 and a Port Arthur Cafe provides additional outdoor dining.

Other facilities include space for walkers to prepare before setting out on the Three Capes Track.

## FJ catering hitch

**FIJI** Airways has warned of limited catering options on its flights from Nadi over coming days due to industrial action.

Passengers are invited to bring their own food, but standard liquid restrictions will apply.

## Trav Choice board

**TRAVELLERS** Choice members have elected travel agent Greg Close from Easy Travel and Cruise to the group's board.

Close joined Travellers Choice in 2011 after acquiring his first agency in Murray Bridge and has since added stores in Gympie and Nambour, Queensland.

He replaces Sue Holmes from Carine Travel Bug in Western Australia, who stepped down after serving on the board for the past seven years.

## Viking world cruise

**VIKING** Cruises has celebrated the beginning of its first world cruise on its newest ocean ship, *Viking Sun*.

Passengers begun their 141-day voyage in Miami and will stop by 35 countries - including Australia - on their way to London.

Along the way guests will explore Cuba and the Caribbean, sail the Panama Canal, the South Pacific and Asia, where the ship will be christened in Shanghai on 08 Mar before continuing on with calls in Asia and then Europe.

## US visa crackdown

**NATIONAL** security and immigration enforcement elements of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) will be tightened, the US Department of Homeland Security has revealed.

Under the changes, VWP countries will be required to use counterterrorism information to better screen travellers, VWP countries will be assessed to ensure they implement safeguards, and certain countries will be required to initiate public campaigns to reduce overstays.



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## Los Cabos summer sessions



**MEXICAN** marketing body Los Cabos Tourism recently hosted a pool-side promotional event in Sydney designed to convince Aussie millennials that Los Cabos has everything they would ever want in a holiday destination.

More than 100 members of the city's youth media and social media influencers were invited to the rooftop of Primus Hotel rooftop bar to sip on Coronas and 1800 Tequila and absorb the tastes and feel of a Mexican getaway in Los Cabos.

"Los Cabos really is a young person's paradise. From pool parties, dune bugging and everything in between, the destination offers so much for the millennial traveller," said Los Cabos Tourism's Australian account director, Sarah Thornton. "We really see an opportunity

to tap into the hordes of young Aussies heading to the US... particularly (those) thinking of Los Cabos as an add-on to a US mainland holiday."

**Pictured** are Laura Evans & Kylie Chapman from American Airlines and Sarah Thornton (centre) from Los Cabos Tourism.

## Greatest NYC show

**NYC & Company** has launched a new marketing campaign called 'The Greatest New York City' to coincide with the release of the American biographical musical *The Greatest Showman*.

The new promotion will highlight NYC holiday attractions such as the decorated Fifth Avenue shop front windows to the world's largest gingerbread display at the NY Hall of Science.

## SQ A380 delivery

**SINGAPORE** Airlines' first Airbus A380 aircraft fitted with all-new cabin products arrived in Singapore on the weekend ahead of its maiden passenger flight to Sydney this evening as SQ221.

The aircraft is the first of five new A380s ordered from Airbus. Singapore Airlines has decked out its new A380s with 471 seats across four cabins.

**MEANWHILE**, SQ will increase London capacity from 01 Jul, with the introduction of a third daily A380 flight from Singapore.

SQ306/305 will operate using an A380 until 31 Aug as one of four daily flights to London.

## DFAT Israel warning

**DFAT** is warning Australians about large protests in Israel in response to the US announcement on shifting its embassy to Jerusalem.

The department's Smartraveller website urges Australians to avoid demonstrations and monitor the media about possible unrest.

## NZ tourism funding

**THE** New Zealand Government has announced NZ\$14.2 million in funding for tourism infrastructure through round one of the Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

Projects include carparks and walkways in preparation for the 250th anniversary of the arrival of James Cook in Gisborne.

A second round of funding will be announced in early 2018.



Find out why Nantucket should be on your bucket list in the December issue of *travelBulletin*.

**CLICK** to read **travelBulletin**



## Window Seat

**TO CELEBRATE** the first Qantas *Dreamliner* flights from Melbourne to Los Angeles, Australia's iconic treat Fantales will be scribed with Qantas-specific trivia as part of a collaboration between the airline and Nestle.

The chance to test your knowledge of the Flying Kangaroo will only be available to pax flying on the *Dreamliner* between either MEL to LAX or from PER to LHR.



## US travel rising

**AMERICANS** travelling to overseas markets totalled 2.95 million in Sep 2017, up 7% from the same period last year according to the latest US Government stats.

The number is up 10% for the year-to-date.

Oceania was the only market that remained flat at 48,000 visitors in Sep, while Europe was up 17% to 1.67 million.

The Caribbean was down 15% to 357,000 visitors due to Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Harvey.



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### Supersonic biz jet

**AERION** and Lockheed Martin have announced a MoU to define a formal and gated process to explore the feasibility of a joint development of the world's first supersonic business jet, the Aerion AS2.

Over the next 12 months, both parties will work together to develop a framework on the program, including engineering, certification and production.

Aerion chairman Robert Bass said the relationship was key to creating a supersonic renaissance.

### Heathrow maps

**HEATHROW** has collaborated with Apple to bring detailed terminal maps to Apple Maps.

The maps will provide pax with a new tool to navigate through the airport and find what they are looking for.

LHR maps are on all iPhone & iPads running iOS 11 and above.

### Staybridge to Asia

**INTERCONTINENTAL** has signed a management agreement with Origin Property Public Company Limited to bring Staybridge Suites to Asia Pacific.

The all-suite extended stay brand will launch in Thailand as the Staybridge Suites Bangkok Thonglor in 2019.

The 303-room Staybridge Suites Bangkok Thonglor will be situated along the Thai capital's main Sukhumvit Soi 55 road.

### Clippers arrive

**THE** Clipper Round the World Yacht Race fleet has made it to the east coast of Australia and has one more race left before it starts heading north to the Whitsundays, in Queensland.

The yachts will race in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race, before sailing from Hobart to the Whitsundays for a two-week Clipper Race carnival in Jan.



**THE** combined Sydney Skäl International Clubs held their annual Christmas charity lunch on Fri at the Four Seasons Hotel, with special guests including an older, fatter Santa Claus.

He's **pictured** helping club vice-president Walter Nand of Avalon Waterways celebrate with Jeanette Lasek of Travel by Design.

Also in attendance (**inset**) were some of the team from the International Institute for Peace



Through Tourism, while the event saw a presentation from Sydney TAFE about a special scholarship being offered by Skäl to help a student study travel, tourism or hospitality - more pics online at [facebook.com/traveldaily](https://facebook.com/traveldaily).



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## Travel Authority celebrates



**THE** Travel Authority held its 13th annual end of year event earlier this month at The Hacienda Bar in Sydney.

Guests celebrated the year with live music, food stations and soaked up fabulous views.

The Travel Authority has held its function annually for as long as the group has been in existence.

**Pictured** are: Sharon Levingston, head of events The Events Authority; Sarah Bush, director

The Travel Authority Group; Andrew Best, national account manager Hawaiian Airlines and Svetlana Jovanovic, joint director and MICE market manager Unique Tourism.

### Tussauds 4D Sing

**MADAME** Tussauds Singapore has launched the Marvel 4D experience, which transports guests into "the heart of an action-packed feature".

A 4D cinema brings a battle set among Singapore's landmarks to life by combining projection with animation while guests also have the opportunity to take photos with Spiderman, try on Iron Man's suit and stand proud with Captain America.

The experience is a permanent exhibition at the attraction.

### FZ to Kilimanjaro

**FLYDUBAI** has become the first UAE airline to provide direct links to Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

The carrier will offer six flights a week to Kilimanjaro, three of which are via Dar es Salaam.

Flydubai offers a total of 14 flights a week to Tanzania.



## Brochures

**WELCOME** to Brochures of the Week, *Travel Daily's* Monday feature. If your firm is releasing a new brochure of which you'd like to make the industry aware, send a brief description summarising its features and itineraries, including a PDF of the front cover, and contact details to [brochures@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:brochures@traveldaily.com.au).



### Scenic - New Zealand 2018/19

Scenic has released a revamped New Zealand offering for 2018/19, introducing a 15-day Royal New Zealand itinerary and a range of new sightseeing options. The fresh addition departs Christchurch en route to Auckland, with visits to Mount Cook, Te Anau, Queenstown, Franz Josef, Wellington and Rotorua. The brochure features six itineraries ranging from six to 24 days in length across the North and South Islands. Among the new sightseeing options are a half day peninsula cruise in Dunedin and an Art Deco Walking tour in Napier.



### Silversea Cruises - The Rarest Pearls 2018

Silversea Cruises has dubbed its latest collection "The Rarest Pearls", offering nine expedition voyages aboard *Silver Discoverer*. The cruises have been designed to "leave the tourist trail far behind", with highlights including Cherry Blossom season in Kobe, Amami Oshima in Japan, the Lakshadweep islands in the Indian Ocean, the Li River in Guilin, China, and cultural experiences in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands or Vanuatu.



### Spain & Portugal Travel Connection - 2018

The 2018 program from Spain & Portugal Travel Connection now includes serviced apartments in Madrid, offering travellers an alternative style of accommodation. Highlights of the 84-page release include full-day guided transfer tours, allowing guests to visit additional cities on the way to their destination, and multi-day coach tours. There's also a barge-style luxury cruise available in Northern Portugal, sailing along the Duoro River on board the *Spirit of Chartwell*.

### Hyatt in Moscow

**MOSCOW'S** first Hyatt Regency hotel and second Hyatt property in the Russian capital, Hyatt Regency Moscow Petrovsky Park, has opened its doors.

The hotel features 298 guestrooms and 39 suites and is located in the VTB Arena Park Project, nearby the VTB Arena - Central Dynamo Stadium.

It offers three restaurants and bars and 3,500m<sup>2</sup> of conference and event facilities.

### PAL's 10th B777

**BOEING** and leasing company Avation has delivered Philippine Airlines' 10th 777-300ER aircraft.

The carrier will utilise the Boeing aircraft on long-haul operations to "enhance the total passenger travel experience and in-flight service delivery," said Jaime Bautista, PAL pres & coo.

PAL took delivery of its ninth 777-300ER earlier in the month & will use them primarily on routes from Manila to North America.

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## Visit Cal sends off Dreamliner



**PASSENGERS** waiting to board the first Qantas *Dreamliner* flight to take off from Melbourne to LA last week (**TD** 15 Dec) were treated to a host of surprises by Qantas and Visit California, including tourist merchandise and selfies with promo staff dressed up as famous Hollywood stars.

"California is synonymous with fun and diversity, so we wanted to inject that spirit into the first *Dreamliner* flight to Los Angeles," said Caroline Beteta,

the president and chief executive officer of Visit California.

Five Visit California partners joined in the celebrations for the send-off, including Visit West Hollywood, Santa Monica Travel and Tourism, Discover Los Angeles / Los Angeles World Airports, Disney Destinations and Simon Shopping Destinations.

**Pictured** are members of the Qantas cabin crew enjoying all of the festivities for the new *Dreamliner* route.

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## Win with Air Canada

With Air Canada now flying to Vancouver non-stop from Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne it's clear Australian travellers have fallen in love with Canada's beautiful west coast city. If you'd like to know what all the fuss is about, then here's your chance.

Air Canada and Travel Daily are giving away two Economy Class tickets to Vancouver - North America's most convenient gateway to Canada and the USA.

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### Cook's Fiji sale

**CAPTAIN** Cook Cruises is offering three nights' free accommodation when a seven- or 11-night cruise is booked.

The "Three Nights Free Sail" special applies to all room types and will go on sale from 26 Dec to 28 Feb with the deal valid for trips until 31 Mar 2019.

All fares include ship accommodation, all meals, guided tours, snorkelling and glass bottom boat excursions.

### Lighthouse plans

**THE** lighthouse keeper's cottages at Smoky Cape and Sugarloaf Point on the NSW Mid North Coast will soon be turned into holiday accommodation.

The Office of Environment and Heritage is currently seeking a party to operate short-term holiday stays at the site.

"This includes the historic heritage lighthouse property precincts consisting of multiple cottages, ancillary buildings and surrounding lands at Sugarloaf Point and Smoky Cape," director assets activation for OEH, Stuart Schramm said.

### Airbnb adds Hawaii

**AIRBNB** has launched Hawaii Experiences, a new feature that brings users activities on the islands, led by locals.

The offerings will be available in Oahu, Maui, Kauai and the island of Hawaii and will suit travellers after a more "bespoke and authentic" trip.

Activities include traditional Hawaiian canoeing, hula lessons, natural history tours and learning to play the ukulele.

### Barge discounts

**BARGE** Travel Connection is offering a 10% off special for six-night, full-board charter cruise for four persons aboard the hotel barge *Saraphina* when booking are made before 31 Dec.

Cruise packages include open bar drinks, French meals, transfers and bicycle hire.

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