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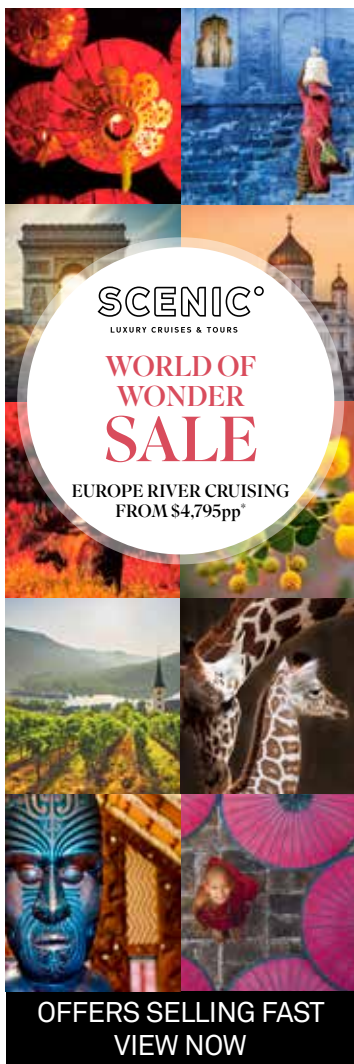
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Infinity SE Asia brox

INFINITY has released its 2017/18 Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines brochure, comprised of a mix of holiday itineraries, extended touring and cruising with Star Cruises and Celebrity Cruises - view it **HERE**.



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Spendless 'scamming' pax

WESTERN Sydney-based travel agent Spendless Travel & Tours is being investigated following a spate of complaints made about the company to NSW Fair Trading.

Spendless promotes itself online as a specialist in int'l and domestic air ticketing, hotel bookings, holiday packages, cruises and "worldwide & Indian Tours".

According to NSW Fair Trading's Complaints Register for Dec, 14 of the Pendle Hill agent's clients registered gripes, many of whom paid for air tickets that were not honoured by airlines over the Christmas period.

Travel Daily understands about 100 of Spendless Travel & Tours' customers have been caught out by director and sole

owner Raymond Bastian's airline ticketing processes.

Sources have told **TD** a number of airlines, including THAI Airways International, denied boarding to some of Spendless Travel's pax whose tickets had not been paid by the travel agent.

Bastian is believed to have gone into hiding, is not returning calls and would not reply to **Travel Daily's** request for comment.

Disgruntled pax have declared Bastian a "big scammer."

Client Harshita Chaurasia posted online: "I had my flight booked by him for 22 Dec Sydney-Bangalore for which he sent me some random itinerary. Now 1 week before my travel, when I called the airline...they mentioned that I have no confirmed seats and my ticket is cancelled".

Another customer, Akshaye Babbar warned: "Do not book tickets with this guy ever. I am stuck because of him. Paid all the money and the tickets are not even confirmed".

Sharad Suri last week urged other customers affected to lodge a "collective complaint".

AFTA chief executive officer Jayson Westbury confirmed to **TD** that Spendless is not part of the ATAS national accreditation scheme for endorsed agents.

Fair Trading's complaints register launched in Jul to make the public aware of businesses which have over 10 grievances made against them in a month.

AMA lands EL AL gsa

AIRLINE Marketing Australia has been appointed as general sale agent for EL AL Israel Airlines in Australia.

The arrangement will see AMA provide all passenger sales and marketing services for the carrier, working closely with industry partners to further develop business across EL AL's vast int'l and European networks.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has four pages of news and photos plus a full page from:

- inPlace Recruitment


Delta IT outage

ABOUT 170 Delta Air Lines' flights were delayed on Sun night in the US following an IT crash over several hours (**TD** yesterday), resulting in approx 80 scheduled services being cancelled on Mon, ceo Ed Bastian has confirmed.

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Le Boat flash sale

A **FOUR-DAY** flash sale on Le Boat's French, Belgian and Irish routes was launched by the firm yesterday, running until Thu.

Prices on all 1- to 4-star boats are discounted by 20% and 5-star boats are now 10% cheaper.

See leboat.com.au/flash-sale/.



APT's Celebration Sale is on now!

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IJ's China small group push

Asian specialist Insider Journeys has outsourced its private travel operations for China to Qantas Holidays in a move designed to allow a focus on small groups.

From tomorrow, all private travel requests for China will be handled by Qantas Holidays, which in turn will feature Insider Journeys (IJ) small group product in its China brochure.

Insider Journeys md Tony Mayell said the move was in response to growth of 32% in small group bookings to China.

"This will provide better value and experiences to our passengers and travel industry partners," he said.

"Rather than trying to be all things to all people, we have made the strategic decision to focus on our strengths, and

deliver our group itineraries."

Mayell said the decision related to China only and that private travel portfolios across Indochina, India, Thailand, Myanmar and Japan would not be affected.

Private travel bookings for China that had already been deposited would be honoured.

Trump reprieve

AUSTRALIAN dual nationals have been given an exemption from US travel bans, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced this morning.

Australia, along with countries including Britain, had been offered preferential treatment by the US, meaning its citizens would not be affected by President Trump's recent executive order, regardless of any dual nationality with banned countries.

Australian dual nationals would now be able to enter the US under previous arrangements.

Rossi, Tramada pact

SYDNEY-BASED luxury travel agent Mary Rossi Travel has extended its contract with Tramada for a further five years.

Mary Rossi Travel was one of Tramada Systems' first clients and has been using the company's technology for the past 14 years.

The Magellan Travel Group and Virtuoso member utilises Tramada's New Standard Reports in the day-to-day operational management of their business.

Amadeus promotion

AMADEUS IT Pacific has promoted head of commercial Justin Montgomery as general manager, Australia.

Montgomery joined Amadeus 12 months ago having held various senior roles in the local travel and aviation industries, including Virgin Australia and the now defunct, Creative Holidays.

As gm, he will be responsible for expanding Amadeus' distribution business, leading the commercial team in Australia.

Amadeus IT Pacific's md Tony Carter said the move reflected the tech company's strategy to "grow our business further" and followed the appointment of Andrew Gay as gm New Zealand & Pacific.

Alliance submissions

TWO new submissions have been received by the Australian Competition & Consumer Comm following its draft determination before Christmas to knock back a charter airline alliance between Virgin Australia Regional Airlines and Alliance Aviation (**TD** 19 Dec).

WA mining firm Newmont Asia Pacific agreed with the ACCC's stance, saying the JV would lead to a further decline in the number of independent major FIFO operators which "would increase their market power".

Meanwhile, Mineral Resources voiced its support for the pact, saying it would place Alliance and Virgin Australia on a stronger footing to compete with Qantas to the advantage of its workers.



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Holiday intention slips

AUSSIES planning on taking a holiday in the year ahead have dropped to 69% from 73% in the last 12 months - its lowest point in almost three years, according to Roy Morgan's latest Holiday Tracking Survey released on Mon.

The downturn has been attributed primarily to declining domestic holiday intention, with just 55% reporting they were planning an Aussie getaway, down from the 58% polled in the Jul-Sep 2015 quarter.

In contrast, international holiday intention is the same as it was a year ago at 11%.

NCAA returns to Syd

THE opening round of the NCAA College Football Championships will return to Sydney this year.

Destination NSW ceo Sandra Chipchase anticipates more than 18,000 domestic and international visitors will flock to the NSW capital for the match.

Travel ban concerns

THERE is fear and uncertainty in the travel industry, following President Trump's US travel ban, according to a survey conducted by the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE).

Of the 260 polled, 25% cite "fear of traveller harassment, fear of reprisals" and "new uncertainty factors" as contributing to those difficulties.

While 39% said the controversial travel ban had the potential to reduce corporate travel.

"These percentages are way out of line for an industry that is constantly under pressure," said ACTE exec director Greely Koch.

"Furthermore, business travel is about people. And people with bona fide visas should be not subject to fear, delays or harassment over their visas."

Koch added, "The travel industry needs policy that eliminates confusion and uncertainty...not policy that fosters it".

View the full results, [HERE](#).

VA staff in the clink

A VIRGIN Australia call centre operator will be placed behind bars for nearly two years for taking advantage of a loophole to book \$225,000 worth of mostly complimentary flights.

Twenty-nine year old Margaret Vaaipu Mose admitted to abusing her position in court yesterday by creating 71 fraudulent travel back accounts to book 134 flights over two and a half years.

The airline cancelled 40 of the flights when Mose was arrested, the *Courier Mail* reported.

Thailand record visits

A RECORD 32.59 million foreign visitors landed in Thailand last year, injecting 2.52 trillion baht into its economy last year - up 11% from 2015.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand is projecting 9.3 million foreign visitors will make their way to Thailand in the first quarter of this year.



Window Seat

A NETIZEN who shared a commercial flight with an unnamed Saudi prince has posted a photo of his unusual encounter with the prince's entourage on Reddit.

The picture (below) depicts unsuspecting travellers surrounded by countless falcons, all napping in their own seats (complete with in flight entertainment systems).

Falconry is popular in the UAE, so much so that Gulf carriers Etihad, Emirates and Qatar Airways will allow a number of the feathered friends in the cabin or in checked luggage.






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Pullman AKL dosm

PULLMAN Auckland has announced the appointment of Natalie Reid as its new director of sales and marketing; she brings 16 years of industry experience.

Travelport's ace new year



AFTA update

From AFTA's chief executive, Jayson Westbury



AS THE first month of the year disappears into the sunset, it would seem that the new President of the United States is determined to make his mark on the promises he made during the campaign and very early on in his term in office. While there have been some mixed messages regarding border access to the USA, for the most part it would appear that people who ONLY hold an Australian passport and subscribe to the ESTA visa waiver program will be able to continue to travel freely to the USA with no change.

Yes, there are some changes being implemented and as would be the usual situation it is best to keep an eye on the www.smartraveller.gov.au website. I am also absolutely sure that if there was any significant change to the arrangements DFAT would be all over it very quickly. But for me, I really don't think Australia is going to be on the top list of countries that President Trump wants to take a closer look at.

There is no doubt that citizens from some countries will be treated differently and in fact they are now, as not every country is a part of the ESTA system. For travel agents, the important thing is to ensure the best outcome for customers and to ensure you know which passport the customer has and check what is needed to the best of your ability.

AFTA will be monitoring things as best we can as some of these changes come into effect and I am sure over the course of the next month or so a much clearer picture of what changes to travel and tourism policy may be made and potentially implemented. Remember some of these things may need to go the US Congress depending on what changes are required and that will take time.

I am sure that the USA will continue to be a fantastic and attractive destination for Aussies to visit and remain confident that Australians will continue to travel there. With political change of the magnitude that has just occurred in the USA there is little doubt that we will see change. AFTA is continuing to monitor policy statements, we have very good links to our sister organisation in the USA (ASTA) and as factual information becomes available we will be sure to do our best to pass it on to everyone in the industry. I am confident that these matters will settle down very soon.

Thailand on Studio 10

ROBBO'S Thailand Adventure, a TV segment arranged in conjunction with Tourism Authority of Thailand Sydney office, THAI Airways International and Insider Journeys, debuts on *Studio 10* tomorrow.

The Thai trip will take Robbo through Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Doi Inthanon National Park before visiting the beaches of Koh Kood, Koh Kham and Koh Rang.

His full journey will be broadcast on the show across three segments between 8:30am and 11:00am on 01, 03, and 07 Feb.

OVER the weekend, Travelport and its customers enjoyed the Australian Open finals in Melbourne where they witnessed top talents in the tennis world including Serena Williams, Venus Williams, Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

The sporting event has become an annual tradition for Travelport and its customers to kick-off the new year together.

Pictured enjoying centre court action are: Kaylene Shuttlewood, Travelport; Kelly Matson, Helloworld; Lynda Wallace, national sales manager, Branded, Jetset Travelworld, Helloworld and Kerrie Ann Kettle, ATPI.

Daydream appoints

JENNIFER Copsey has been announced as the new regional sales manager at Daydream Island Resort and Spa.

She joins from APN Newspapers where she worked in the media sales and the marketing team at the *Whitsunday Times*.

Argentina scrap VAT on accommodation

HOTEL costs in Argentina have been cut by more than a fifth after a govt decision to allow tax refunds for foreign visitors.

The change, effective immediately, allows travellers to claim back VAT of 21% on hotel services in a similar process to that already available to foreigners who purchase goods.

LEGO store opens

AUSTRALIA'S first LEGO Store opened at Dreamworld on Queensland's Gold Coast over the weekend with fans camping overnight to be one of the first through the doors.

The store, located at Dreamworld's front entry, offers one of the largest ranges of LEGO in Australia & is surrounded by 10 life-size LEGO models including Stormtrooper and a seven-foot-tall Incredible Hulk (**pictured**).



FJ Sydney pop-up

FIJI Airways is bringing a new Fijian pop-up bar to The Olympic Hotel in Paddington, Sydney from 03 to 05 Feb.

The Golden Fijian bar will be decked out with island-themed backdrops for photo opportunities, cocktails, Kava-mix and Fijian holiday food.

On the Sat and Sun afternoon there will be prize giveaways to those who turn up in the best Fijian-inspired fancy dress.

The event coincides with the rugby event at Moore Park.

EK/EY shift US crews

EMIRATES and Etihad Airways have been forced to make changes to their pilot and cabin crew rosters following US President Donald Trump's ban on travellers from seven Muslim countries to the US (**TD** yesterday), media are reporting.

An Emirates spokesperson has explained that the airline is also assisting affected passengers from the seven countries by booking them new flights and providing refunds while Etihad is also offering refunds.

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