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Travel Daily en route to Bangkok

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of the Express Travel Group, which is hosting its ETG Exchange 2019 in Bangkok this week.

THE Express Travel Group is for the first time this year combining its Select Travel Group, Independent Travel Group and italktravel agencies in a single mega-conference.

Tomorrow the formalities kick off with a full business update from CEO Tom Manwaring, along with presentations from major sponsors including Thai Airways and Sabre.

A series of panel discussions are also scheduled, along with a Travel Corporation-sponsored welcome function, a supplier "product exchange" and a gala awards dinner on Sat night.

Europcar defends charge

EUROPCAR Australia has released a statement asserting a system limitation was behind its overcharging of Visa and Mastercard debit and credit card fees in 2017, with the company yesterday ordered by the Federal Court to pay a \$350,000 penalty for the surcharges (*TD* yesterday).

The car rental firm said it unintentionally overcharged the fees, adding "although Europcar in Australia had received relevant data from its financial services provider in mid-Jul 2017, a system limitation delayed implementation of the new rules".

It acknowledged that between 19 Jul-05 Nov 2017, some

customers were overcharged an average of \$1.07 per customer.

"We have accepted a penalty of \$350,000 as part of the settlement with the ACCC in recognition of the limitations in our rental system during this period," the company said.

"At every step we have sought to be open and transparent with the ACCC to identify and correct this issue and to ensure the best possible outcome for all of our customers and provide the high-quality service they can rely on."

Europcar Australia said all 63,012 customers affected were fully refunded the amount overcharged, resulting in a total payment of \$67,215.59.

Today's issue of *TD*

Travel Daily today has five pages of news and photos, plus full pages from:

- One&Only Reethi Rah
- AA Appointments jobs

Dream sells 35%

GENTING Hong Kong has entered into a \$US489m deal to sell up to a 35% equity interest in Dream Cruises to TPG Capital Asia, TPG Growth and Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan.

The purchase will be made in two tranches, with the first guaranteed tranche of at least 24.5% for US\$342 million expected in Sep, and the second expected by Dec.

Genting Hong Kong Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Tan Sri KT Lim said the investment would "help Dream Cruises to have the youngest and technologically most advanced fleet of quality German built cruise ships with legendary Asian service".

One&Only Maldives

ONE&ONLY is today promoting its idyllic Reethi Rah Maldives property, located on a private island fringed with 12 beaches.

The company is promising "a million enchanting moments between you and endless blue" - see **page six**.



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New TTNQ CEO

TOURISM Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) has appointed Mark Olsen as CEO.

Currently head of Tourism and Property Investment at Brisbane Marketing, Olsen will arrive in Cairns in Sep for a handover.

More appointments on **page 5**.



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Lux Escapes' Experience

LUXURY Escapes has launched its Experiences program, featuring a slate of in-destination cultural, food, VIP and outdoor add-ons for travellers.

Highlights of the program include cooking classes in Bali, skydiving over Lake Taupo, meeting local villagers in Fiji and enjoying airport lounge perks, the full launch comes after a beta testing period over the past few months, during which customer purchases grew by 220%.

"Projected global spending on the experiences economy is set to hit \$8 trillion by 2030, travellers are increasingly choosing to spend much less on material goods and are...prioritising experiences," Luxury Escapes Chief Executive Officer Cameron

HKG resumes ops

HONG Kong International resumed operations yesterday following a Hong Kong High Court order against protests.

Demonstrations have caused hundreds of flight disruptions and cancellations over the past few weeks (**TD** 13 Aug).

The High Court edict means anyone who neglects to obey may be held in contempt of court, and may be sent to prison or fined.

The airport's website noted it had obtained an interim injunction to restrain those "unlawfully and wilfully obstructing or interfering with the proper use" of HKG.

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Holland told **Travel Daily**.

Holland also said Luxury Escapes' take on the experiential tourism market differs from similar products.

"We don't have a long list of experiences for every place... we've outsourced and searched for speciality providers in each area, so we're not going through aggregators, we're not going through big chains, we're going to the locals who we know personally through our tours business."

Touching on the future of the concept, Holland referenced the potential for the incorporation of seasonal and cultural events or festivals, saying "it's crucial that over time we expand our list of curated, bespoke 'money can't buy' experiences".

CLICK HERE to see more.

Club Med famil

CLUB Med and Singapore Airlines is offering a chance to win a spot on an all-inclusive famil to the Maldives.

Four agents can win their place on the trip and their own GoPro by being one of the top sellers of Club Med and Singapore Airlines Air and Land Packages for Club Med's Kani, Finolhu Villas, Bintan Island and Phuket locations, with five other agents who make at least one booking randomly selected for a place.

The famil will travel from 13 to 18 Nov.

Contiki micro adv

CONTIKI has introduced five new micro-adventures across India, Japan and Nepal, ranging from five to 10 days in length.

On sale today for departures in 2020-21, prices lead in at \$1,055 twin share for the five-day Nepal Trek & Temples tour.

For more info, **CLICK HERE**.

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SYD deliver solid results

SYDNEY Airport has reported a total revenue of \$797.1 million for the six months to Jun 2019, a 3.4% increase on the previous corresponding period.

Australia's largest air hub saw revenue gains made in most areas of its business, including property and car rentals which increased by 1.8%, a 4% rise in retail, and a 4.7% spike in aeronautical revenue for the period.

Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation, and Amortisation (EBITDA) was also up on last year, rising by 4.2% to \$649.2 million.

"Sydney Airport is a business that continues to perform well across the cycle and this half is no exception," said Sydney Airport CEO Geoff Culbert.

"We see ongoing opportunities for growth in our aeronautical and non-aeronautical businesses and our investment program will continue to deliver capacity

and great experiences for our customers," he added.

Contributing to the upswing of the bottom line was also a reduction in service and utility expenses for the period, which was slashed by 5.2% to \$40.3m.

Despite this, most other operating expenses rose slightly, such as property and maintenance, which was up by 2.7%, as well as security recovery costs which climbed by 4.7%.

Meanwhile, the airport saw a spike in international passengers processed for the six months to Jun, with 8.3 million travellers logged, representing a 1.9% bump on H1 2018.

The same could not be said for domestic passengers however, which shrank by 1.5% to 13.3m.

H1 also saw a number of sustainability projects progressed such as organic waste recycling and waste reduction initiatives.

Viking Seine fleet

VIKING Cruises has announced it will expand its French river cruise fleet by introducing four new Viking Seine ships in 2020.

The 168-passenger vessels *Viking Kari*, *Viking Radgrid*, *Viking Skaga* and *Viking Fjorgyn* will be used to exclusively service the line's eight-day Paris & The Heart of Normandy itinerary.

Boasting customised hulls and engines specifically built to navigate the Seine River, the ships will be able to take guests deeper into Paris by docking at Port de Grenelle in the heart of the city, close to major attractions including the Eiffel Tower and Tour Montparnasse.

"Every detail of Viking's Seine Ships is designed to enhance and enrich the travel experience, so that guests can explore all that makes France so compelling," said Viking Cruises Managing Director ANZ Michelle Black.

More info on the ships [HERE](#).

Window Seat

MANY airlines are now using in-flight safety presentation videos as a forum to inject some facetiousness - some even bringing in big name celebrities to spice them up a bit - but one aviation expert has gone public to scorn the emerging trend.

"When an aircraft is having an emergency landing and passengers are told they will need to evacuate...all they can remember is someone laughing, someone joking, someone being sarcastic and Mr Bean dancing around at the end," aviation analyst Alex Macheras told *The Times* this week.

His comments follow the actions of a passenger last week who evacuated a BA flight by wheeling his suitcases down the plane's emergency slides.

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50 Degrees hits the road



NORDIC destination specialist 50 Degrees North has been highlighting its expertise in the region this week with a series of sold-out agent and consumer roadshows across the country.

Kicking off in Newcastle on Tue, the event moved to Sydney last night, with sessions also planned for Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

The events feature Dom Barrington, an expedition leader aboard the newly-minted *MS Roald Amundsen* just launched by Hurtigruten, who has flown in specially to participate.

Pictured at last night's seminar in Sydney are 50 Degrees North Chief Executive Officer Tietse Stelma, the company's polar specialist Jill Blunsom, and Hurtigruten's Dominic Barrington.

Avani Aus openings

AVANI Hotels and Resorts has revealed more details about its expansion in Australia with its upcoming openings, Avani Adelaide Residences and Avani Melbourne Box Hill Residences.

Avani Adelaide Residences comprises 76 studios and suites with fully-equipped kitchen and laundry facilities, located in close proximity to Rundle Mall, Adelaide Central Market, the Art Gallery of South Australia, and the South Australia Museum.

Avani's second Melbourne location, Box Hill Residences, will feature 75 one- and two-bedroom suites with kitchen facilities and an on-site sauna.

The two new openings follow the brand's recent entry into Australia (**TD** 20 Apr 2015).

Discover thrills at sea

Read the Autumn edition of *Travel & Cruise Weekly*



©Carnival

VA Nervous Flyers

VIRGIN Australia has launched a new Nervous Flyers program designed to support the health and wellbeing of its passengers and team members.

Travellers who self-identify with the airline prior to travelling will be sent a personalised email with wellness research and a behind-the-scenes look at some of the technical aspects of the airline.

They will also receive a positive affirmation text from the airline on the day of travel and dedicated wellness and meditation on their inflight entertainment.

The crew will also monitor them during the flight.

The program is available on all VA-operated flights when booked at least seven days before travel.

MEANWHILE, VA has become the first Australian airline to allocate infants with a dedicated checked baggage allowance.

Parents travelling with a child under 23-months-old can check in one additional 23kg bag free of charge, as well as two infant items, such as a pram, cot, car seat or baby capsule.

They can also bring an additional 7kg carry-on bag for essential baby products.

Virtuoso top spots

VIRTUOSO has named Italy, the UK, Japan, US and Canada as the top destinations for Australian luxury travellers for the spring and New Year period.

The travel agency network revealed the figures at its annual Virtuoso Travel Week in Las Vegas overnight (**TD** 13 Aug), with the figures compiled from a survey of its 1,200-strong network of Australian-based travel advisors.

The top domestic destinations were Tasmania, Noosa, Melbourne, Hamilton Island and Byron Bay, while this year's list also highlighted the top unusual destinations as Antarctica, Bhutan, Mexico, Latvia and Scandinavia.



TRAVEL WITH PURPOSE

This feature is brought to you by Intrepid Travel



Wildlife tourism is one of the pillars that kickstarted Intrepid's purpose-led business model.

I am in China this week with WWF to discuss that very topic. World Elephant Day was on Monday, and it wasn't just CEO James Thornton that confessed to riding an elephant years ago, when we didn't know any better.

So what can we do to further protect wildlife? That's why I'm here with WWF, to find out.

Alternative streams of income is a solution. Intrepid has a community based tourism project in Madi Valley of Nepal in conjunction with WWF and AusAID. In the buffer zone of Chitwan National Park, the aim is to mitigate human-wildlife conflict by generating tourism income. Locals in the community have become Wildlife Viewing Guides and study the behaviour of wildlife susceptible to Human Wildlife Conflict, such as rhinos and elephants.

There's potential to do more, much more. We have seen, from the elephant initiative and the subsequent almost industry wide riding ban that followed, that when we collaborate we make change. Moreover, it ensures for a relevant tourism industry.

*Brett Mitchell, Managing Director
APAC, Intrepid Travel*



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Thursday 15th August 2019

Hilton Canberra

A CONSORTIUM involving Hilton, M20 and Ledrae Hotels has lodged an unsolicited proposal with the ACT Govt to build and operate a Hilton Canberra, as well as a World Technology and Trade Centre.

The project is estimated to cost over \$200 million, and will include the 253-room Hilton Canberra, which will feature a restaurant and bar, luxury retail outlets, a fitness centre, pool, spa facilities and meeting space.

The property would be Canberra's first international, full-service hotel brand for both business and leisure travellers.

An International Hotel School and Child Care & Learning Centre will also be attached to the hotel.

Jabiru applauded

PLANS to transform the mining town of Jabiru into a gateway to Kakadu National Park (TD yesterday), are being lauded by tourism industry stakeholders.

As part of a new Kakadu Tourism Master Plan the Federal Govt will invest \$51 million to boost infrastructure and tourism, a move welcomed by Tourism and Transport Forum Chief Executive Officer Margy Osmond, who said "it is fantastic to see this significant commitment".

"It is critical that we work together to make sure the region thrives as a regional services and tourism hub for the park," she said.

Qantas also praised the move, calling it "bold".

APPOINTMENTS

WELCOME to Industry Appointments, *Travel Daily's* Thursday feature which has the latest job appointments from across the industry. If you have just appointed someone to a new position and would like to update the industry email appointments@traveldaily.com.au.

Lindblad Expeditions has appointed Cherie Bowman as Industry Account Manager for NSW, Qld and New Zealand. Bringing more than 15 years' experience to the role, including seven years in the cruise industry, Bowman will be tasked with assisting Lindblad with its continued growth across the Australian and NZ market.

Mauritis de Graeff has been named as the new General Manager of The Playford Adelaide - MGallery by Sofitel. De Graeff was the GM at Mantra Macarthur, and has previously held GM roles at Hotel Realm Canberra, Burbury Hotel Canberra and Diamant Hotel Canberra.

Brisbane Airport Corporation has announced Carl Jones as its new Head of Aviation Development. Jones will assume the position in mid-Sep, bringing 13 years' experience in airport management specialising in air service development, destination marketing, strategy and stakeholder management.

Siva Govindasamy has been appointed as Vice President Public with Singapore Airlines. Govindasamy will take over the airline's corporate communications portfolio from Nicholas Ionides, who has been with Singapore Airlines for more than a decade. Govindasamy will join the company from Airbus, where he has been Senior Communications Manager Asia-Pacific since Oct 2016.



The countdown is on until Dream Cruises' *Explorer Dream* arrives in Sydney on 27 October.

To celebrate the Australian deployment for the newest member of its fleet, Dream Cruises has partnered with *Travel Daily* this month to give one lucky reader the chance to win a 7-night Queensland coastal cruise in a balcony stateroom on board *Explorer Dream*.

To enter, all you need to do is share with us what dream feature you would include if you were involved in the design of a Dream cruise ship.

Perhaps liquid chocolate on tap in your cabin, or someone to hold your shade umbrella as you lie by the pool?

We're after creative entries in the form of a poem, photo, jingle, video or something else. Use your imagination!

Explorer Dream...Discover a New Dream!

Send your answers to
dreamcruises@traveldaily.com.au



DREAM CRUISES

Princess program

PRINCESS Cruises has released its 2021 European season, which will see a fleet of five OceanMedallion-enabled ships offer a total of 180 departures on 63 itineraries

The program will see *Enchanted Princess*, *Sky Princess*, *Crown Princess*, *Island Princess* and *Grand Princess* visit destinations in the Mediterranean, British Isles, Scandinavia & Russia, Norway, Iceland and embark on Transatlantic crossings.

"Europe is our top long-haul fly-cruise destination for Australians and in 2021 we're pleased to announce that guests will enjoy an elevated experience onboard with our highly-rated Princess MedallionClass holidays offered on every ship for the season," said Princess Cruises Sales and Marketing Director Australia and New Zealand Nick Ferguson.

A 13-night Mediterranean cruise starts at \$4,029ppts.

Stayz goes global

AUSTRALIAN holiday rental website Stayz has made its int'l debut, introducing holiday homes in 190 locations across the world.

The company will initially focus on destinations "close to home" such as Indonesia and New Zealand in a bid to cater to demand for Aussies travelling together as families or in groups.

Stayz will also offer rentals in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Europe.

Stayz's Head of Public Relations Simone Scoppa said the debut of its international offering has been in the pipeline since Stayz became part of Expedia Group.

"We have been building ourselves as a strong domestic brand specialising in Australian holiday homes for nearly two decades," she said.

As part of a special offer all Bali villas and holiday homes booked by 30 Sep will have a free pool inflatable for guests to use.

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Having just won a significant account our client are in need of a Senior Account Manager to take the lead of this large Account. We are looking for someone extremely polished who has worked on large market accounts and is confident presenting to board rooms, liaising and negotiating at the CEO level. Ideally someone from a corporate background who has had experience within the banking or insurance industry would be an advantage.

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