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Friday 30th December 2011

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Another 0.02% for LLA

AT THIS rate it's going to be a very very long takeover for Living and Leisure Australia.

Suitor Merlin Entertainments this morning advised the Australian Stock Exchange that its stake in the ski resort operator is now 49.04% - up 0.02% on the figure from yesterday.

The increase is because an investor sold 600,000 shares into the 5.14c per share offer, which values LLA at \$140m.

Payouts for QF A330 drama

AIRBUS, together with US aerospace manufacturer Northrop Grumman, has settled claims with almost all of the passengers who were on board a Qantas A330 flight between Singapore and Perth which dived wildly in 2008 when an airspeed sensor malfunctioned.

Reports today cite payouts of as much as \$400,000 per passenger, with the highest believed to amount to several million dollars. One passenger suffered a brain

injury, while many others had broken bones as well as prolonged psychological impacts from the wild ride which saw those not wearing seatbelts hitting the roof and being thrown around the cabin.

A further 16 passengers still have claims outstanding, with US aviation injury lawyer Floyd Wisner flagging a further multimillion dollar court case.

Last week the Australian Transportation Safety Bureau released its report on the incident, finding that it was due to software which was reacting to faulty readings from the airspeed indicator - with revised systems now in place to prevent a recurrence of this type of issue.

Wisner said that those on board had also been offered round the world airfares by Qantas.

TG cuts Oz capacity

THAI Airways International is set to significantly reduce its Australian capacity on a temporary basis, with cuts on flights to Brisbane, Perth and Sydney due to maintenance impacts related to the recent flooding in Thailand which saw TG unable to perform some checks.

Brisbane flights from Bangkok will reduce from daily to five per week between 05 Feb and 24 Mar, with Tue and Thu departures ex BNE cancelled.

Perth will also see significant changes, with Phuket services to operate as BKK-HKT-PER from 01 Jan-15 Feb three times per week, and the Phuket-Perth services cancelled from 16 Feb-24 Mar.

Perth Bangkok flights will reduce from 4 to 3 weekly on TG481/482 between 01-15 Feb, but from 16 Feb-24 Mar the overall frequency will increase from three to six per week while the Phuket services are cancelled.

TG Sydney flights will reduce from double daily to 11 per week, with TG471/472 cancelled on Tue, Wed and Thu ex SYD.

Final issue for 2011

THE team at *Travel Daily* would like to wish our readers a very happy new year, as 2011 draws to a close this weekend.

Tomorrow is also the final day for entries in our Christmas Competition, with a fabulous Fraser Suites Sydney prize.

Next month we'll have another great competition with WEEKLY PRIZES of trips to Thailand, so keep watching for details.

The next issue of *TD* will be published next Tue 03 Jan 2012 due to the New Year's Day public holiday on Mon.

Four pages of news

Travel Daily today has four pages of news and photos.

ATR route strong

VIRGIN Australia says there's been "particularly robust demand" for flights to the mid-NSW North Coast city of Port Macquarie from Brisbane during the current holiday period.

The *Port Macquarie News* cites a DJ spokesperson saying the daily ATR flight, which launched on 19 Oct, also had strong forward bookings into Jan and "outbound loads are tracking well against forecasts".



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TIME UPDATE

LAST month, Creative Holidays' reservations manager, Julie Rivera, graduated from the Travel Industry Mentoring Experience – TIME – following six months of intensive training with her mentor, Janet Collingwood.

Julie was offered a place in the program as a reward for, and recognition of, the contribution she has made to the Creative Holidays team.

Paul McGrath, Creative Hols md said "Julie is a very valuable member of the Creative Holidays team and we wanted to motivate and reward her even further by offering her a place in TIME in addition to the Creative Star Performers incentive award she received last year.

"Fostering career development is extremely important to Creative Holidays and TIME is the perfect complement to the existing in-house training and development schemes we have in place."

Julie was matched with her mentor Janet after completing a questionnaire that helped align her career objectives with the most appropriate match. Over the course of the six months, the pair ran through a personalised program that was created to help Julie achieve her specific goals.

Julie also had the opportunity to attend networking events and industry seminars.

TIME graduate Julie Rivera and Creative Hols res mgr says she is grateful for the training, opportunities and knowledge she received through the scheme.

"I gained a lot of insight into certain areas that I am interested in as well as the business skills I need to progress my career further in the industry."

To ensure a place in the next program and to grow in your career now is the moment for you to take part in TIME and benefit from years of industry experience provided by TIME Mentors.

To express your interest see travelindustrymentor.com.au.

Google in flight firing line

A COALITION of online travel agencies claims that Google has violated undertakings made to the US Justice Department during its controversial takeover of ITA Software earlier this year.

Fairsearch.org, whose members include Kayak, Expedia and Travelocity, says that Google is putting the results from its own flight search (**TD 14 Sep**) above "organic" search results, which generally include OTA sites.

Another group called the Consumer Travel Alliance (CTA) is also involved in the stoush, backing two US senators who are urging an investigation into what it's calling Google's "uncompetitive behaviour".

"Under the guise of airline search, Google is presenting self-serving results with the intent to put competitors, who once paid them for ads based on search, out of business," CTA said.

Google said it had changed the way it shows the results of flight searches in response to feedback from users who want "to see more options to find flights and prices even more easily and quickly.

"When people come to Google looking for travel information, our goal is to show them the most relevant results as quickly as possible," the company said.

A Fairsearch spokesperson

claimed that Google had designed its flight product for airlines, and to steer traffic away from OTAs.

Interestingly, comments on the Fairsearch website from travel agents remind the OTAs that many of the same arguments had been made by the travel industry when sites such as Expedia were in their infancy - with agents at the time told to "up their game" in order to compete.

All aboard for adventure

IT SEEMS there's still a buoyant market for high-end cruise product, with WA's North Star Cruises just-released Whale Shark Discovery Cruise already half sold out, despite the \$18,495 starting price.

The 10-night Darwin/West Papua/ Darwin cruise aboard the 36-pax luxury vessel *True North* leaves 19 Oct 2012 for Indonesia's

Cendrawasih Bay, an underwater wilderness and home to the Whale Shark, said to be the world's largest fish.

"People come from all over the world to swim and feed these massive creatures," said Gavin Graham, *True North's* Master.

Up to 7 metres long, the sharks are harmless and are more interested in eating the plankton that abound in the waters, he said.

He said guests will also visit villages, dive, snorkel, fish and go on guided jungle walks on this amazing cruise adventure.

The prices include return flights by private jet from Darwin to Sarong, Indonesia and all meals.

Another highlight of the season, an 11-night Sepik Soiree from Cairns to Madang exploring the remote Admiralty Islands is priced from \$15,495pp.

The all-Aussie crew entertained



the industry on board *True North* yesterday on Sydney Harbour to update them on the 2013 program.

The ship is here on a 4-night cruise that takes in the New Year's Eve fireworks, plus three nights on the Hawkesbury.

The luxury vessel is the only Kimberley adventure-cruise ship that travels with a full-time helicopter, and being purpose-built, it can enter shallow coastal waters where bigger ships can't go.

Based in Fremantle, North Star Cruises pioneered luxury adventure cruising 25 years ago with West Coast and Kimberley cruises that allow guests to "go wild in style."

Pictured above at yesterday's event are, from left: Jessica Boston, Territory Discoveries; Sally Miles, Cable Beach Resort; and Victoria Kyngdon, Broome and The Kimberley Holidays.

Supplier Updates

WELCOME to *Supplier Updates*, *Travel Daily's* new regular feature.

Agents can now access the latest special deals and promotions being offered by suppliers, simply by **CLICKING HERE**.

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The legendary Legian



ABOVE: Creative Holidays and New Horizons Holidays recognised their top suppliers in Bali earlier this month, awarding the Legian Beach Hotel with the Gold Achievement Award for its "unsurpassed experiences".

The hotel was also one of the top ten hotels booked in the region according to The Travel Corporation throughout 2011.

Pictured above at the award ceremony from left are: Vicki Gordon, New Horizons Holidays sales manager; Ian Clark, gm supplier relations The Travel Corporation; Putu Yeni Navitarini, sales and marketing manager The Legian; Chris Evens, md New Horizons Holidays; Arif Billah, gm The Legian and Paul McGrath, md Creative Holidays.

New Georgia property

REZIDOR has opened the new Radisson Blu Hotel Batumi, which is its first property in the eastern European country of Georgia.

The 168-room property is located in the central business district of Batumi and also incorporates a casino.

bmi lifts Addis Ababa

BRITISH Midland is set to boost flights to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, with two additional weekly services from London Heathrow, bringing overall frequencies to five per week, operating via Amman in Jordan.

New Seychelles route

AN AIRLINE named Blue Panorama is stepping in to fill the breach left by the withdrawal of Air Seychelles flights to Europe.

Based in Italy, Blue Panorama has announced the debut of a year-round weekly Milan-Rome-Seychelles service, which will utilise a Boeing 767-300ER.

Seychelles flag carrier Air Seychelles recently announced the axing of all of its European routes (**TD** 12 Dec) as well as flights to Singapore, instead planning to focus on its regional and African short-haul network.

Sri Lanka tourist death

THE murder of a British man while on holiday in Sri Lanka is being treated as an isolated incident, with arrests already made in connection with the Christmas Day attack.

32-year-old Khuram Shaikh from Manchester, who works in Gaza with the Red Cross, was staying in the southern tourist resort of Tangalle when he apparently intervened in a brawl between two rival gangs.

Sri Lankan officials say a probe is continuing, pledging to take action against all suspects which include a local politician.

The government says it will launch a series of programs "to get the public involved in looking after the interests of tourists and also safeguarding them".

Behind the Celebrity Cruises scenes

CELEBRITY Cruises is offering new 'behind the scenes' tours of its ships, with passengers able to pay for a range of onboard experiences during their trips.

A three hour 'See How It's Done' tour takes in back room operations such as the bridge, crew gym, engine control room and the galley for the main dining room, and costs US\$150 per person including an exclusive wine-paired lunch.

Celebrity is also offering a US\$75 'Bridge Sail Away Experience' in which passengers join officers on the bridge for an hour as the ship sails away from port - and this also includes taking photos with the captain.

Gold Coast warning

SURFERS Paradise tourists are being told to be on the alert for the so-called "Bumcrack Bandit" who has been allegedly on a festive season crime spree.

Police have released CCTV footage of the female, whose "tendency to wear low-slung jeans" (below) has been the main distinguishing feature.

A crack team of detectives are believed to be on the case, which has seen the woman and a male accomplice so far rob the Coomera Lodge Hotel and the Pacific Pines Hotel.

The pair have also allegedly taken pot shots at passing cars.



The Bumcrack Bandit probably needs to tighten her belt a bit.

Window Seat

SO-CALLED 'Deal of the Day' sites could be going upmarket, if an offer by Groupon in the USA is any indication.

The group buying pioneer has launched a new Epic Deals product, and has managed to sell at least one US\$25,000 package offering a personal encounter with US celebrity chef Todd English.

The deal includes a 90 minute private cooking lesson at one of his two New York restaurants, followed by dinner for two.

There's also a three night stay at the Affinia Manhattan, up to four autographed copies of the chef's new cookbook - and a "double thumbed oven mitt".

HOLIDAY visitors to the Australian Reptile Park on the NSW Central Coast have enjoyed an unusual spectacle this week, after a lawnmower had to be rescued from one of the zoo's inmates.

Elvis the "monster croc" had attacked two staff when they entered his enclosure, and they used their lawnmowers to protect themselves and escaped unharmed.

However Elvis took his revenge on the gardening equipment, dragging one of the mowers underwater.

Heroic Tim Faulkner later stepped in to retrieve the mower from the watery depths.

"Billy distracted him with roo meat and I just dove in," he said.

AN HONEST airline passenger at Las Vegas International Airport has made one of his fellow travellers' day, after handing in US\$10,000 in cash he found in the terminal.

He discovered two unmarked Caesar's Palace envelopes and realised there was money inside when he arrived home, tracking down the owner because "it was the right thing to do".

737 tyre blowout

THE US Federal Aviation Administration has launched an investigation into a double-tyre blowout on a Southwest Airlines 737 aircraft as it landed at Sacramento Airport this week.

The probe is standard procedure, and is believed to have so far eliminated runway debris as a possible cause.

Southwest has grounded the affected plane until it determines why the two left main tyres blew.

New Star Alliance seat

THE Star Alliance has unveiled the final design of a common long-haul economy class seat which will be available for members to install on their fleets.

Manufactured by B/E Aerospace, the seat was launched earlier this month in Addis Ababa during the accession ceremony for Ethiopian Airlines.

It's claimed to be as much as 30% lighter than existing seats, with initial customers including Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines and Air China, all of whom plan to roll out aircraft with the new seats by the end of 2012.

The seats are claimed to offer more personal space, and are intended for a 31" seat pitch.

Does Thailand float your boat?



ABOVE: The Unique Tourism Collection in partnership with Air Australia recently took some top agents to experience some luxury resorts in Thailand.

Pictured above about to experience an exhilarating speedboat ride while at the Rayavadee Resort in Krabi are, from left: Melissa Gartshore, Brigid Avery, Nick Wright, Leanne Godwin, Winnie Manning and Tony Anderson.

Fred Olsen bug lawsuit

FRED.OLSEN Cruise Lines is being sued by a group of passengers who claim they contracted gastrointestinal bug norovirus during a series of voyages in 2009 and 2010.

134 claimants are part of a class action at London's High Court, with details made public available in the last few days.

The claims relate to allegations of nine outbreaks of norovirus onboard the 880-passenger *Boudicca* between Oct 2009 and Apr 2010, with one of the victims saying her husband died as a result of the illness.

Others say they continue to suffer from "post infective irritable bowel syndrome," and the court documents claim the company failed to warn passengers about the illness on board, didn't provide specialist training to cleaning staff and did not "deep clean" the ship properly between voyages.

They're claiming compensation for distress and anxiety due to the illness as well as from watching others fall ill, resulting in the loss of enjoyment of their holidays.

THAI biofuel flight

THAI Airways International says it was the first airline in Asia to fly a commercial passenger jet using biofuels, with the initiative part of its Travel Green scheme.

TG104 on 22 Dec operated from Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport to Chiang Mai, with revenue from the flight going towards the development of renewable energy within Thailand.

THAI is also involved in a range of projects to bring together petroleum producers, researchers, educational institutions, aircraft and engine manufacturers and govt organisations to help develop sustainable production of biofuels for aviation in Thailand.

Farewell to Christmas 2011

Today is the last day that we feature a photo from a selection of the travel industry's 2011 Christmas party photos for entry into our fantastic competition that's been running throughout December.

Thanks to our good friends at Fraser Suites Sydney, we're giving away an overnight's stay in a Two Bedroom Suite,

sparkling wine & a fruit bowl upon arrival and complimentary car parking, for the best party photo entry received.

LEFT: TravelEdge Holidays Team celebrating their "Night Before Christmas" themed party.

Pictured left to right are: Tom Clement, Kathryn Aljagic, Fiona Cameron and Farah Salam.



We've been inundated with entries for the competition, so the judges will spend the next few days going through these snaps and we will announce the lucky winner in Travel Daily next week!

Thanks to everyone who entered, and we look forward to seeing more of your festive photos next Christmas.

If you have any last minute photos you want to submit, you have until tomorrow to email them to: xmasphotos@traveldaily.com.au