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Travel Daily

First with the news

Thursday 27th December 2012

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Brindabella ski flights

BRINDABELLA Airlines has released its Sydney to Snowy Mountains schedules for the 2013 ski season, with the ski service to commence Fri 28 Jun 2013.

Flights will operate daily apart from Tue, including two return services on the peak days of Fri and Sun to make it easy to spend a weekend on the slopes.

The 70 minute flights will utilise 30-seat Jetstream 31 aircraft and operate through until 08 Sep - with a possible extension depending on the snowfalls.

Fares lead in at \$129 one way and are now on sale, with Qantas Frequent Flyer points also available on the services.

CASA pushes Barrier

THE Civil Aviation Safety Authority has moved to extend the extension of Cairns-based Barrier Aviation (**TD** Mon), after the carrier was grounded for an initial five day period over serious safety concerns.

CASA confirmed that it had made an urgent application to the Federal Court, which has the effect of continuing the suspension until at least 15 Feb.

"CASA believes Barrier Aviation has been operating aircraft with serious and known defects," the regulator said in a statement.

EK slashes O/S commission

EMIRATES has issued a formal reminder to the industry that it's eliminating travel agent commission on tickets sold and issued in Australia, for journeys originating overseas (**TD** 03 Oct).

The reduction applies to fares issued on EK (176) stock for trips departing outside of the ticketing point of sale (Australia) effective for any tickets issued on or after 01 Jan 2013.

The only exception is for trans-Tasman fares originating from New Zealand, with the new 0% commission rate also applying to Miscellaneous Charge Orders (MCOs) and Virtual Multi Purpose Documents (VMPDs), where the documents are to be exchanged for air travel commencing outside Australia.

Where MCOs and VMPDs are used for Dubai stopover tours and accommodation the commission will remain at 10%.

Emirates said that all other commissions remain unchanged, including 6% on First and Business, and 5% on Economy class for long haul routes originating from Australia to Asia, Dubai and beyond.

For all trans-Tasman sectors commission remains at 6% for First and Business, and 3% for

Economy class fares.

In the case of mixed fares the class of the international outbound sector will determine the commission payable on the entire routing of the ticket.

These commission levels are also payable on the fuel surcharge (YQ) component of the fares.

An update from the carrier last week confirmed that penalties such as reissue and change fees as well as taxes and charges also remain non-commissionable.

A recent *Fairfax* media report found that strong local demand meant that Australians are paying significantly more for some outbound flights than travellers in other countries buying tickets on the same services and the same dates in the reverse direction.

The report cited a Singapore Airlines fare of \$2795 return from Australia to London - while seats on the same flights originating in the UK were offered for just \$1821.

New AA US routes

AMERICAN Airlines has announced the introduction of two new US domestic routes effective from Apr 2013.

The **oneworld** member's additions include direct service from Los Angeles to Raleigh in North Carolina, as well as from New York JFK to Houston in Texas, with both routes to be flown daily utilising Boeing 737-800 aircraft.

Myanmar air crash

FIVE Australians, including former South Australian Tourism Commission senior PR manager Anna Bartsch, are lucky to have survived a plane crash in Myanmar on Christmas Day.

The Fokker F100 flight was being operated by local carrier Air Bagan with 71 people on board, and crash landed short of the runway at Heho Airport when it tried to land in heavy fog.

Two people died in the accident - a tour guide on the aircraft and a motorcyclist on the ground who was hit by the plane as it landed.

Eight passengers were treated at a nearby hospital, while a further 26 were taken to the capital, Yangon, on a special flight.

Solstice hit by illness

CELEBRITY Cruises' *Celebrity Solstice* reportedly underwent a thorough cleaning earlier this week after returning from a 13 day cruise to New Zealand.

According to reports from those on board there was an increased number of guests suffering gastrointestinal illness, with one citing "many people vomiting in public areas" and passengers urged to "frequently and thoroughly" wash their hands.

Five pages of news

Travel Daily today has five pages of news and photos, plus a full page from: (**click**)

- TMS Asia Pacific

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Beijing 72 hr visas

THE Beijing Tourism Administration has confirmed the 01 Jan commencement of its new 72-hour visa-free stay policy for citizens of 45 countries - including Australia.

Intended to boost the Chinese capital's stopover market, the new system applies to travellers who have outbound air tickets and visas to a third country.

Star Alliance member Air China is set to capitalise on the move by timing its flights to enable pax to undertake sightseeing stopovers, and coordinating with local travel operators to introduce one to three day tours.

The new policy is available to citizens from a range of countries including the US, Canada, the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Singapore, the UAE, Ireland and New Zealand as well as Australia.

Tourism officials in Shanghai announced a similar policy earlier this month (**TD** 11 Dec) allowing visa-free stays for passengers from the same 45 countries who are transiting via Shanghai Pudong or HongQiao Airport, also effective from 01 Jan 2013 - see the official government website at www.meet-in-shanghai.net.

Big year for Starwood

STARWOOD Hotels & Resorts Worldwide says that 2012 was a year of "the most deal signings" since before the 2008 global economic crisis.

By the end of 2012 Starwood will have opened 71 new properties, representing 18,500 rooms in 20 countries.

The year included 125 new hotel management and franchise agreements, up 13% on 2011, showing strong demand for Starwood's nine key brands.

Finnair adds Antalya

FINNISH flag carrier Finnair has announced the addition of seasonal flights between Helsinki and Antalya in Turkey.

The new route will operate twice weekly from 02 Jun 2013.

IASC renews JQ-JAL c'share

JETSTAR and Japan Airlines have been permitted to continue their codeshare arrangements on the Japan route through until 2017, in a decision rendered by the International Air Services Commission on Christmas Eve.

The city pairs currently covered by the pact are Gold Coast to Tokyo Narita and Osaka, and Cairns to Narita and Osaka, with the codeshare agreement first introduced in 2007.

In this latest ruling the IASC says the operating environment has not improved since that time, with traffic on the Australia-Japan route in steady decline since the 1990s and contracting 6.8% annually over the last five years.

Despite recent improvements

traffic remains below 2010 levels, and is still being affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster, according to the IASC ruling.

The Qantas application warns that the Japan route is "unlikely to significantly rebound in the foreseeable future," with inbound Japanese tourism growth forecast to remain "stagnant at worst, anaemic at best".

Under the ruling Jetstar must price and sell its services on the Japan route independently of JAL, and provide a report on its yields.

Egyptair to Manchester

EGYPTAIR has announced the expansion of its UK operations, with the 01 Jun debut of direct flights from Cairo to Manchester.

The five times per week 737 services are now open for booking.

New future for QE2?

CUNARD is downplaying an unconfirmed **UK** media report that its iconic *Queen Elizabeth 2*, which has been moored in Dubai for the last four years, is set to be sold for scrap to a Chinese firm.

The story, which has received wide coverage, claims that a "Chinese crew of about 20" boarded the vessel in Dubai's Port Rashid last Fri.

The QE2 London group, which has been lobbying to have the grand old ship returned to the UK and reconfigured as a floating hotel, told the *Daily Mail* newspaper "We have been told the ship is going to be put into a dry dock before being taken to an unknown destination in the far east...that is a tragedy because it almost certainly means the QE2 is being sold as scrap".

However Cunard issued a statement saying that it remains in close contact with Dubai and reassured the public that "to the very best of our knowledge this story is pure speculation".

And other reports claim that the QE2 will be relocated to Macau in Feb where it will reopen as a casino after refurbishment.

QF8 diverted again

STRONG headwinds encountered by Qantas flight 8 en route from Dallas Fort Worth to Brisbane on Christmas Eve forced the flight to divert to Auckland.

The aircraft continued onto Brisbane and then Sydney after refuelling in New Zealand.

MEANWHILE it's understood that Qantas is considering reconfiguring the SYD-DFW route to operate the return leg via Auckland (rather than Brisbane) on a permanent basis, utilising an A380 superjumbo rather than the current 747-400 service.

Qantas recently confirmed plans to endorse its Auckland-based Jetconnect crew for A380 operations (**TD** 19 Oct), which would facilitate such a rearrangement of routes.

Insiders speculate that A380s could be pulled off the Hong Kong route to instead fly to Texas.

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Office of the year at first go



CUSTOMERS and suppliers of Travelscene Nowra were treated to a special Christmas function as thanks for a year of support in which the office won the coveted Travelscene American Express Office of the Year award for 2012.

In only its first full year as a Travelscene office, agency owners Leonie Clay and Julie Preston said the honour wouldn't have been possible without the support of staff and loyal clients.

Pictured above at the function in the back row from left is Angus Ratcliffe, Driveaway Holidays; Amanda Hillard, Cox and Kings; Laura Cuthbert, Trafalgar; Julie Durovic, Sunlover Holidays and Graham Muldoon, Travelscene.

Front row: Leonie Clay, Meryl Sanchez, Julie Preston, Helen Chilton and Maree Wright from Travelscene Nowra.

Alitalia additions

ITALIAN flag carrier Alitalia has announced a significant expansion of service from its Rome hub, with eight new destinations to be served from late Mar 2013.

The additions include flights to Ankara, Antalya, Bilbao, Krakow, Copenhagen, Ekaterinburg, Montpellier and Podgorica.

Toddler cruise tumble

ROYAL Caribbean International has confirmed the airlifting of an injured one-year-old child who fell from a balcony aboard *Monarch of the Seas* shortly after it departed from Florida this week.

The 14 month old from India fell from deck 11 to deck 10, and after initial treatment on board was taken to shore by helicopter for hospitalisation.

Social seat selection!

CHINESE low cost carrier Spring Airlines (9C) has introduced a new method of seat selection which is fully integrated with the Weibo social networking site.

The so-called "Micro-blog Seat Selection" program allows travellers to link their Weibo account to their reservation - which allows them to "check the information of other Weibo users who have reserved the seats and to select their own seat according to the Weibo information of other passengers".

The carrier said this means pax can ensure they are sitting next to someone with similar interests and hobbies "so that it will make their journey more pleasant and relaxed".

UA SFO 747 hub

UNITED Airlines has announced plans to base almost all of its Boeing 747 aircraft at San Francisco International Airport, with the aim of simplifying fleet maintenance and more effectively utilise downtime.

A staff newsletter confirmed the move, which will result in aircraft changes on some routes - including moving from 777s to 747s on SFO flights to Frankfurt, London, Osaka and Taipei, as well as between Honolulu and Tokyo.

United said it would continue to utilise 747-400s on its flights between Sydney and Los Angeles.

DL seeks flight crew

DELTA Airlines says it's received more than 22,000 applications after advertising for 400 new flight attendants.

According to a message to staff by ceo Richard Anderson, the responses flooded in at a rate of about two every minute.

"We're hunting for foreign language speakers as we continue to expand to all points around the globe," he said, with languages being sought including Hindi, Japanese, Mandarin and Portuguese.



FLYING with budget European carrier Ryanair can be cheaper by taking a butler than checking in a normal-sized bag, according to a report in the UK Sun paper.

In a humorous experiment, a reporter bought two tickets from London Stansted to Maastricht in Holland at £9.99 each, and with two normal sized 15kg bags, found buying the second ticket with the collective carry-on luggage allowance cheaper than paying £15 to check in the bag.

The report noted though that this would only work if indeed you had a butler, (as he would naturally not need to take his own belongings with him).

AUTHORITIES in Shanghai are investigating a major incident at the Dongfang shopping mall, where the complex's drawcard aquarium suddenly shattered without warning yesterday.

Shoppers scattered in panic as the 25cm thick glass gave way, releasing lots of aquatic creatures including three sharks.

15 people were injured by "flying glass and fish," with the flooding apparently flagged by a "loud crack" a few minutes earlier.

HOT on the heels of Boeing's use of potatoes in flight testing (**TD Mon**) comes confirmation that the US military deployed bears during the testing of its first supersonic jet bomber.

The website io9.com details the use of bears to test parts of the Convair 58 Hustler in the 1960s - in particular the plane's ejection seats.

In fact the first creature to successfully eject at supersonic speeds was a two year old female black bear, which was ejected 35,000 feet at a speed of about 1600km/h.

The bears all survived the ejection tests - unlike humans who initially tried the systems.

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Happily stranded in Samoa



SEVEN nights in the island paradise of Samoa were enjoyed by this group of agents, hosted courtesy of Creative Holidays and the Samoa Tourism Authority.

No expense was spared, with every turn seeing a new highlight unfolding before them, with many cultural experiences and the finest of culinary delicacies put before their respective palates.

Favourite moments of the trip were understood to be a visit to the Savalolo Flea Markets to pick up some presents for those back home, enjoying a swim in the fresh Piula Cave Pool and touring the Robert Louis Stevenson museum.

While in Samoa, the group also swam in the giant swimming hole of the Sua trench, went to see the Alofaaga blowholes, and the Afuaa Waterfall before taking a walk in the trees via a canopy platform walk 40 metres above the Falealupo Rainforest Reserve.

Pictured above from left visiting one of the many beaches are Aysha

Kamaledine, Creative Holidays; Sarah Allen, HWT Langwarrin; Vito Romeo, Creative Holidays; Nicole Stefano, HWT Sunbury; Angela Rountos, Croydon Travel; Katherine Jaros, Creative Holidays; Marita Cogle, HWT Ballarat; Sue Dittloff, Jetset Colac; Megan Harris, HWT Taralgon and Della Poppins from Wodonga Travel and Cruise.

New EWR VS lounge

VIRGIN Atlantic has opened a new Clubhouse at Newark Liberty International Airport in the USA.

The new facility in Terminal B includes a "Liquid Lounge", a brasserie, spa facilities and a "Passion Pit" featuring private pods for work or play.

VS also opened a clubhouse at nearby New York JFK earlier this year, as well as introducing a new Upper Class cabin on its A330-300 aircraft fleet.

Crystal kids specials

CRYSTAL Cruises is offering new 'Kids Sail Free' departures in Northern Europe and the Mediterranean for 2013.

The deals apply to four Jun and Jul voyages on both *Crystal Serenity* (northern Europe) and *Crystal Symphony* (Mediterranean), allowing children aged 17 and under to travel for free when sharing a third berth stateroom with two adults.

PR retimes LAX

PHILIPPINE Airlines has announced the addition of two weekly flights between Manila and Los Angeles, lifting frequencies on the route to 11.

The expansion will also see the four times per week PR112/113 service retimed to depart from both Manila and Los Angeles in the mornings.

Record DXB traffic

DUBAI International Airport is now officially the world's fourth busiest hub for international passengers, after recording yet another month of double digit growth in Nov.

The airport expects to surpass its previous projected target of 56.5 million passengers for the year, with forecasts that traffic will grow by another 17% to reach 66 million in 2013.

Australasia is one of the fastest growing source of DXB passengers, up 21% year to date, with strong growth also seen on North and South American routes which EK launched this year.

DXB's new Concourse A will open in early 2013 "providing much needed capacity," according to ceo Paul Griffiths.

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US agency hotel move

US travel agency network Travel Leaders Group - which has over 1250 franchisees turning over more than \$5 billion a year - has launched a new worldwide hotel program offering more than 22,000 hotels and resorts.

The proprietary program is accessible via the Travelport, Sabre and Amadeus GDS, and offers "competitive and commissionable rates" at all participating properties along with amenities such as free wi-fi and breakfast.



Industry Appointments



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THIS week's Industry Appointments column is brought to you by **inPlace Recruitment**. If you have just appointed someone to a new position and would like to update the industry, send us an email at appointments@traveldaily.com.au.

Tabatha Ramsay has been named as the new Director of International at the **South Australian Tourism Commission**. Her career experience includes senior sales, marketing and brand management roles in a range of organisations including InterContinental Hotels, Le Meridien, Starwood, Anantara and Minor International Hotels. Ramsay will join the SATC effective from 21 Jan, replacing **Karyn Kent** who is now Regional General Manager of South East Asia for **Tourism Australia**.

The Langham, Hong Kong has appointed **Sherona Shng** as its new Hotel Manager. She moves from her previous role within the Langham Hospitality Group as Vice President Communications and Public Relations.

Johnny Edmonds has been named as the Chair of ATEC's **National Indigenous Tourism Task Force (NITTF)**. Edmonds is currently ceo of the West Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC) which provides a collective voice for WA Indigenous tourism operators. **Wes Millar**, who's executive chairman of Nitmiluk Tours, has been appointed as vice chair of the NITTF.

TripAdvisor has announced the appointment of **Leslie Chu** as Head of Display Advertising Sales for Greater China. TripAdvisor sites in China currently attract more than 10 million unique visitors per month.

The Pacific Leisure Group joint venture between the AOT Group and Air New Zealand has named **Jonathan Watts** as the new General Manager of **Air New Zealand Holidays**. Watts' 30-year industry career includes senior management roles with Talpacific and House of Travel.

Holly Cooling has been named as the new Western Australia Sales Manager for **Creative Holidays**. She moves from her most recent role with Fiesta Holidays, with her career also including positions in retail and wholesale within the Harvey World Travel group.

The Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre has appointed **Cristina Matisan** as its new Communications Executive. Matisan's most recent role was with timeshare giant RCI Pacific.

Tauk clarification

THE extension of Travel The World's 'Time on Tauk' hotel offer until 15 Feb 2013 (**TD** Mon) covers the tour operator's USA and Europe land only 2013 trips.

Cruise dress shopping

HERE'S a Boxing Day sale with a difference.

Online dress shop MerleDress is offering 40% off on its recently launched 'Cruise Dress' range, which offers evening wear perfect for those onboard formal nights.

Deals are available until 15 Jan, with the special occasion outfits including "sheath column bateau beaded knee-length satin dresses" as well as sexy strapless and short mini taffeta numbers.

See www.merledress.com.

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Cairns mozzie warning

TRAVEL health expert Travelvax has warned of rising incidences of dengue fever in Far North Qld, with five cases diagnosed so far in Cairns this month.

Travellers are being advised to ensure they use insect repellent, while local officials are trialling the release of special mosquitoes which can block the disease.

Mix it up on Princess

A SPECIAL "teen DJ booth" aboard Princess Cruises' new *Royal Princess* will allow teenage cruisers to create their own mix tapes for parties and dancing.

Princess has unveiled further features of the 3600-pax vessel which is set to debut in Jun, including expanded kids facilities such as dedicated outdoor areas with playgrounds and tricycles.

Kids aged 8-12 will have video game stations, a big-screen TV lounge and their own dedicated dining space, while the teenage area includes a powerful music system and a wading pool.

WIN TWO NIGHTS AT FRASER PLACE MELBOURNE!



LEFT: Grand Pacific Tours recently had the opportunity to attend *The Hobbit* red carpet premier at the Rivoli cinemas in Hawthorne East, Melbourne.

Some very prepared staff members took along a copy of *Travel Daily* and took this photo in front of the *Hobbit* poster.

Pictured are Alita Brydon, GPT marketing manager and Rachel Sinclair, marketing coordinator.

"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas."

Travel Daily's popular Christmas photo competition is back!



Fraser Place has arrived in Melbourne with the launch of the brand new studio suite accommodation in a quintessential Melbourne city laneway.

Our good friends at **Fraser Place Melbourne** want to celebrate the festive season with the travel industry, and are asking you to send in your work Christmas party photos throughout December.

At the end of the month, the judges will select their favourite photo and the person who submitted this will win two nights accommodation for two guests in a brand new Studio Deluxe Suite, buffet breakfast for two on both mornings, complimentary internet and midday check-out.

Bonus points will be awarded for photos that include a copy of the *Travel Daily* issue.

So get into the spirit and start snapping, then email your festive photos (including names of the people pictured) to:

masphotos@traveldaily.com.au

Sun and sand set in Vanuatu



SUCCESSFUL completion of the Vanuatu Tourism Office's online training program saw agents put themselves in the running for an exclusive famil to the island.

From eligible candidates, this group were the lucky ones chosen to enjoy a few days of Vanuatu

luxury earlier this month.

While in Port Vila, the group enjoyed a number of special tours around the main island of Efate before splitting into two groups to visit Tanna and Espiritu Santo.

Those in Tanna experienced a close-up look at Mount Yasur, with many remnants of its recent activity visible around its base.

The pristine islands of Santo played host to the other half, who also visited the famous Blue Holes and Champagne Beach.

Santo's Aussie visitors are pictured above on one of the white sand havens, and from left, consisted of Renee Core, Flight Centre The Galleries Sydney; Anne Morris, Vanuatu Tourism Office; Patrick Vurobaravu, Vanuatu Tourism Office Santo; Emma Daniells, Flight Centre Brisbane City; Victoria Gillet, Frontier Travel Management Sydney; Scott Cooper, Flight Centre Cammeray; Aaron Cross, Flight Centre Broadway; Tabitha Barr, Havel Mount Isa; Antonia Criticos Atlas Travel Service Brisbane.

SQ ultra flights ending

SINGAPORE Airlines has confirmed the cessation dates of its ultra-long haul services between Singapore and the USA (TD 25 Oct), with the non-stop SIN-LAX A340-500 flights to be discontinued from 21 Oct 2013.

The New York Newark services will be reduced to four weekly before ceasing on 24 Nov 2013.

Perth body scanner

A NEW body scanner has been introduced at Perth Airport's International Terminal.

The move is part of the federal government's ongoing program to enhance airport security, with the scanner to be used to screen outbound pax in conjunction with walk-through metal detectors.

Passengers will be randomly selected for screening, and anyone who refuses to undergo a body scan without a valid reason will be denied boarding.

An additional two body scanners will be installed at PER in early 2014, once the airport's international departures area is expanded as part of its ongoing redevelopment program.

Eight Australian airports now use the body scanner technology.

 **Supplier Updates**

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