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Travel Daily

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Tuesday 26th August 2014

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GCC plan turnaround

ASF Consortium's proposed Gold Coast Cruise Terminal has been dealt a heavy blow, with the Qld Govt backing down on the infrastructure project at The Spit.

The firm will continue to assess a cruise terminal at Wave Break Island, *Fairfax* reported today.

Specialty Tours collapse

ADMINISTRATORS have been appointed to handle the wind-up of Victorian agent Australian Specialty Tours, the first agent to collapse since the deregulation of the travel industry.

Melbourne-based insolvency specialists PCI Partners were yesterday named as liquidators for the failed company.

The demise will see the Australian Consumer Law put to the test for the first time since 01 Jul, with only clients that had booked & paid for holidays before 30 Jun covered by the now defunct Travel Compensation Fund.

TCF ceo Glen Wells told *Travel Daily* the collapse of Australian Specialty Tours "looks like it is going to be substantial."

As of this morning, 15 claims had been received from consumers seeking \$54,000, of which the TCF has already paid out \$20,000.

Wells said he was aware of up to \$160,000 paid by a group of

pensioners from Queensland who were contacted earlier this month by AST chasing payment, just prior to the company's collapse.

Consumer advocate CHOICE said the downfall of Australian Specialty Tours would "test our new deregulated travel industry."

CHOICE spokesperson Tom Godfrey reiterated customers who had paid for services after 30 Jun would need to "try their luck" with travel insurance or credit card chargeback processes.

Godfrey used the situation to reinforce the need for consumers to "take extra steps to ensure they are protected," such as using accredited (ATAS) agents.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has six pages of news & photos, plus full pages from: (*click*)

- inPlace Recruitment jobs
- South Africa Tourism

Quantum innovations

ROYAL Caribbean has revealed a host of cruise industry firsts for *Quantum of the Seas*, including robot bartenders, "virtual balconies" and RFID wristbands which act as a room key & help with navigating the ship - see today's *Cruise Weekly* for more.

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\$25.1m Cover-More profit

COVER-MORE Travel Insurance has reported its maiden results since last year's public float, a \$25.1m net profit after tax for the year, on total travel insurance sales of \$369.1m, up over 20%.

The company has doubled its dividend payout, with the result boosted by a \$3.4m benefit from an "underwriter profit share" related to the 2012 financial year.

"Cover-More's strong intermediary relationships in the Australian market underpin a full

THL surges 192%

NZ OPERATOR Tourism Holdings Limited has reported a net profit after tax of \$11.1 million, almost triple last year's result.

The strong result comes as the company continues to see the benefits of its 2012 merger with United Vehicle Rentals and Kea Campervans, with directors forecasting further growth.

Every business unit improved profitability including the Britz, Maui and Kea rental operations in Australia and NZ, Road Bear in the US and the Waitomo Group and Kiwi Experience businesses.

year result comfortably ahead of prospectus forecasts," said ceo Peter Edwards.

Achievements during the year included integration of employee assistance into Cover-More's medical assistance operations, as well as continued growth in earnings from e-commerce, intermediary and direct sales.

Cover-More launched the *youGo* direct-sell travel insurance product in collaboration with Flight Centre in Australia, while the company maintained its "leading position in the Australian retail agency channel" through partnerships with Helloworld, Flight Centre, Magellan and Travellers Choice.

QF Taiwan codeshare

QANTAS today announced a new codeshare agreement with China Airlines, allowing customers to travel non-stop under the QF code on China Airlines from Sydney and Brisbane to Taipei.

QF exec mgr international sales Stephen Thompson said the pact strengthens the carrier's position in the Asian region.

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ACCOR has been contracted as the hotel manager of the new ICC (International Convention Centre) Hotel in Sydney, to be branded under its luxury Sofitel collection (**TD** breaking news).

The Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour will form part of the \$2.5 billion transformation of Darling Harbour and sits next door to the

new convention centre that is currently under construction.

It will complement the Schwartz Family Company's portfolio of 12 hotels in three states & territories.

"Sydney has experienced a room drought over the past decade, so this new hotel will significantly enhance the city's ability to host major conferences and events," Dr Schwartz said.

"We will work with all the city and state authorities to ensure that the hotel is a showpiece for luxury accommodation in Sydney."

Features of the 35-storey hotel will include a rooftop club lounge (**pictured**), meeting rooms, an outdoor pool deck and ballroom, as well as bars and restaurants with views over Darling Harbour and to the CBD skyline.

Developers are also planning to establish a helipad on the top of the Sofitel - to offer more direct access to the precinct - and intend to introduce external lighting to the building (**TD** 19 Sep).

"The new Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour will offer exceptional quality accommodation and service, matching the hotel's iconic location and cutting-edge design to become the city's most popular luxury address," Accor chief operating officer Simon McGrath said this morning.

Construction is slated to begin later this year, with the property due for completion in the second quarter of 2017 - a few months after the opening of the new convention centre.

It joins Sofitel Sydney Wentworth in the heart of the city's CBD.

QF, VA gate-2-gate ok

EFFECTIVE today, Qantas and Virgin Australia passengers can use personal electronic devices (PEDs) during all stages of flight on domestic services (**TD** breaking news yesterday) after gaining approval from CASA.

Both carriers said customers will be able to use PEDs (such as smartphones, e-books, tablets & laptops) in 'flight mode' from the moment they board an aircraft.

Phone calls and text messaging will remain off-limits in the air.

QF said it plans to lift restrictions on e-devices across the Qantas Group for regional, domestic and international flights, while Jetstar and QantasLink will shortly apply to CASA seeking the extended use of PEDs on flights.

Virgin Australia will enable the technology on mainline domestic and short-haul int'l flights (excl New Zealand, Cook Islands, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu) on Boeing 737, Embraer 190 and Airbus A330 aircraft.

Oman famil last days

TRAVEL agents are reminded the incentive to win a Trip of a Lifetime to Oman ends in 5 days.

Omar Air, Oman Tourism and Sun Island Tours are offering one agent a chance to win a seven night trip for two to Oman.

The incentive is based on Oman Air tickets sold between 20 May and 31 Aug, with agents needing to submit entries before 15 Sep - **CLICK HERE** for all the specifics.

Window Seat

TOURISM New Zealand is now looking for the world's most devoted fans of *The Hobbit*, kicking off a competition where 75 fans and friends will be flown to New Zealand for a special premiere screening of the next movie in the series.

The first of a series of four challenges is now open on www.thehobbitfancontest.com.

Fans are able to choose from six postcard images and send a message to director Sir Peter Jackson imploring him to select them to join him for the film.

AUSTRALIA'S oldest operating graveyard could be latching on to a new niche growing in popularity - cemetery tourism.

West Terrace Cemetery in Adelaide has reported record visitor numbers for the 2013/14 financial year following the launch of guided tours and self-guided walking trails for guests.

The facility offers five trails that visitors can walk including "Beliefs, Attitudes and Customs", "Stories of the Everyday" and the "Trailblazing Women" walk.

For the truly fearless, a new evening series held on Fri nights which incorporates theatrical lights, sound and period actors in proving especially popular.

If you're "dying" to check it out, visit www.aca.sa.gov.au.

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The Leading Airline from Taiwan

Doha-Dubai upgauge

QATAR Airways is boosting flight frequencies between Doha and Dubai Int'l Airport (DXB) with a new service starting from 26 Oct, taking its daily tally to 14.

The **oneworld** carrier is also jacking up frequencies to Dubai World Central (DWC) from 21 services weekly to 28, or four daily, also in effect from 26 Oct.

New Russian carrier

AEROFLOT will launch a new low-cost carrier to replace its sanction-hit grounded Dobrolet subsidiary before the end of Oct.

The unnamed carrier will initially fly to four destinations in Russia.

Dobrolet was grounded earlier this month (**TD** 04 Aug) due to EU financial sanctions imposed by its operations to disputed Crimea.

New "Jeneration" for Traders

SHANGRI-LA International Hotel Management has revealed it will morph its four-star Traders Hotels brand into a new quasi-futuristic technology driven brand to be known as Hotel Jen.

Ten new Hotel Jens will sprout up across the Asia-Pacific region by Mar next year, with Brisbane's Traders Hotel to become the first Australian property.

Hotel Jen will be rolled out quickly, with the first to open in Singapore later this month.

As part of the first phase of the rollout, Traders properties in Hong Kong, Johor Bahru, Penang, Manila, Maldives, Beijing and Shenyang will also be converted into the Hotel Jen standard.

Targeting the Millennials market, the Hotel Jen concept is designed to appeal to a "New Jeneration" [sic] of business and leisure traveller, with an "intuitive service attitude & relaxed, friendly style".

The Hotel Jen service standard revolves around a virtual persona known as "Jen", who strives to cater to the needs of the modern

traveller in-house while providing hints & tips on the highlights that a destination has to offer.

In-house features include free wi-fi connectivity throughout the property at all times, mobile charging stations in select places, fresh local produce in restaurants & 'grab-and-go' breakfast kiosks.

Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts ceo Greg Dogan said the Traders name had built a loyal customer base in its 30-year history but that it realised the needs of these and other clients were changing.

"Today's guests want more flexibility, as busy non-traditional work hours tend to blend the boundaries between business & leisure," Hotel Jen chief operations officer Lothar Nessmann added.

"We will broaden our range of guests and attract more travellers looking for distinctive experiences of local interest and character, as well as appeal to families and groups who want a more independent, yet friendly and personable stay experience."

Sonoma still open

CALIFORNIA'S Sonoma Wine Country remains "open for business" despite an earthquake which struck the area this week.

Sonoma County Tourism Bureau reported overnight the quake caused minimal damage & most wineries, shops and restaurants were still welcoming visitors.

President & ceo of SCTB Ken Fischang thanked visitors to the region "for patience as the clean up progresses."

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Get whisked off to Scotland



VISITSCOTLAND last night hosted travel agents at an event in Sydney where all things Scottish were celebrated - including several lavish drams of Scotch Whisky supplied courtesy of the Scotch Whisky Society.

Direct flights into Scotland now make travel from Australia much easier, with Qatar Airways partnering in the event to celebrate its new non-stop flights from Doha to Edinburgh.

Participants also included local operators Rabbie's Tours and Mercat Tours, while VisitScotland showcased its variety of product and suggested that Aussies visiting the UK could do it from the "top down."

Mercat Tours specialises in walking tours, offering an extensive insight into Edinburgh's intriguing history.

And Rabbie's Tours has a comprehensive range of trips into the countryside, exploring Scotland's many highways and byways through to remote isles.

Rabbie's product is offered through a number of wholesalers, with Infinity Holidays carrying the most comprehensive range, according to gm Calum Macnee who travelled to Australia for the roadshow, which will also take in Melbourne and Perth.

Emirates also flies directly into Glasgow and next year Etihad has also flagged the addition of non-

stop services from Abu Dhabi to Edinburgh.

The Qatar Airways team highlighted the carrier's direct flights from Melbourne and Perth which connect through the brand new Hamad International Airport in Doha, with a 3-3-3 economy class configuration, 34 inch seat pitch and short connection times.

Pictured above at last night's Sydney showcase are Danielle Moubarak (left) and Marlena Attard from Qatar Airways flanking Sarah Ormerod of VisitScotland.

Bali Indulgence alert

WIDESPREAD mainstream media coverage of the collapse of an operation called "Bali Indulgence" has highlighted the need for consumers to always book through an ATAS accredited agent, according to AFTA ceo Jayson Westbury.

The company is alleged to have taken money from travellers but not passed it on to suppliers.

Fair Trading authorities in Qld and WA have issued alerts about the firm run by Chivonne Betts, which has never operated as a licensed travel agent.

"Website scams have come and gone over the years and it is very unfortunate for those consumers who have been caught up in this situation," Westbury said.

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SYDNEY'S travel agents put their knowledge of America's Golden State to the test last night as Visit California held the first of three annual dedicated roadshow events for the Oceania region.

The show was organised by Visit California's representative in the Australia/NZ market, Gate 7.

Australia remains one of the top long-haul markets for California, with four airlines operating nonstop daily flights to Los Angeles, another direct to San Francisco and others offering

one-stop connections.

Under the marketing line of 'Dream Big', many of the state's hotel groups and luxury resorts, attractions and regions brought out their big marketing guns to show off their latest updates, incentives and promotions.

These included Disneyland Resort, Universal Studios, Sonoma County Tourism, Los Angeles Tourism, Qantas and many more.

Plenty of prizes were up for grabs, with the major prize on the night consisting of a swag of California travel goodies and two airfares, courtesy of Qantas.

Visit California will tonight repeat the performance in Brisbane before closing the show in Auckland on Wednesday.

Pictured above at last night's show from left is Estelle Miller, Hornblower Cruises; Beth Greenup, Gate 7; Sarah Thornton, Gate 7; Corbie Smith, Visit Napa Valley; Stefanie Kaplan, Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach Resort; Alex Vigil, Visit California; Deleyse Langdale, Sonoma County Tourism and Millie Matz, Best Western's of California.

Mark Carter seats

A HANDFUL of seats remain available for a free sales training session to hear from Mark Carter (www.markcarter.co.au) who is conducting a seminar next week in Sydney.

The one-time Contiki tour director turned qualified trainer, emcee and keynote speaker will hold an interactive session specifically for travel leaders & sales managers at Regis, Australia Square Sydney from 10am-12pm, on Fri 05 Sep.

To RSVP, email Lisa Maroun at marounlisa@hotmail.com.

Sheraton Koh Samui

THE 141-room Imperial Samui Beach Resort on the Thai island of Koh Samui will be rebranded as the Sheraton Samui Resort in Dec, under a deal with TCC Land Grp.



AFTA UPDATE

The latest updates from AFTA's Chief Executive, Jayson Westbury

"PACK some peace of mind" is the slogan that has been chosen by the State and Territory consumer affairs agencies to educate consumers about the changes to the travel agent licencing arrangements and to communicate some key messages for consumers to consider when booking a holiday.

This campaign is being funded from TCF reserves & forms an important link in the Travel Industry Transition Plan (TITP) that AFTA has been an important part of since it was announced back in December 2012.

In fact, the funds being used were foreshadowed back then, when the Ministers indicated that a grant would be used to "educate" consumers about the changes. While the campaign has a focus on educating the consumer on the Australian Consumer Law (ACL) and ways consumers can ensure they are dealing with appropriate companies and payment methods, it is very important to note that ATAS does hold an significant element to the message that the campaign is sending.

Over the course of the next two months, there will be a well constructed campaign rolled out and this is why it has been so important to ensure that ATAS is firmly entrenched in the marketplace.

Consumers will start to look for ATAS agents, particularly as the government advertising campaign refers to ATAS travel agents.

As we have said all along this journey, it is important for good agents to use the credentials and differentiation that comes from being an ATAS accredited travel agent in a crowded deregulated environment.

I am really pleased to see so many companies embracing what ATAS is all about as we reach 2,000 locations across the country, and this continues to grow every day. In fact, the applications are across all areas of the industry including retail, corporate and wholesale with a broad range of travel businesses seeing the benefit in being a part of the industry's own accreditation scheme.

So I would strongly recommend to any travel agency owner who is yet to get on board with ATAS to take another look, because when it comes to the key messages and you wish to "Pack a Piece of Mind" yourself, the industry scheme is the bedrock cornerstone for the future of professional travel businesses in the years ahead.



NRL Rd 24 Winner

CONGRATULATIONS Tomas Malmberg from Insight Vacations

Tomas is the top point scorer for Round 24 of *Travel Daily's* NRL footy tipping competition, and has won a \$50 voucher to spend at www.lifeliveitup.com.au, courtesy of Life!®.



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1st Prize: two return flights to Dubai, courtesy of Emirates



2nd Prize: 5-night holiday to Vanuatu, courtesy of Air Vanuatu & The Grand Hotel and Casino Vanuatu



TA signs Chinese agts

TOURISM Australia has signed 31 specialist travel agents in China to participate in a new program to lure more high-yield travellers to Australian shores.

The Key Distribution Network program (*TD* 08 Jul), will utilise the specialised Australian knowledge of the participating agents to develop new itineraries aimed at Chinese middle-class.

Major Tier 1 cities & a selection of rapidly growing Tier 2 cities will be targeted under the program, which TA managing director John O'Sullivan said forms a core component of its China strategy.

Australian tourism operators keen to tap further into Chinese markets will also be engaged.

QF still the preferred

QANTAS remains the carrier of choice for int'l & domestic travel for Aussie travellers, however its grip on the domestic market is narrower than ever, according to a new study into flying habits.

The Enhanced Media Metrics Australia (EMMA) Industry Report on Airlines revealed that 25% of travellers still choose Qantas for overseas trips.

QF's scores was underlined by its unblemished record for safety and service, the report noted.

For domestic travel, QF tied with Virgin Australia as the nation's favoured carrier at 33% each, however 20% said Qantas was their "main carrier", compared to 17% for VA and 16% for Jetstar.

QF LAX, JFK policy

QANTAS has issued a commercial policy for passengers impacted by the schedule change to Qantas flights between Sydney, Los Angeles and New York (**TD** yest.) for departures on or after 01 Feb, ticketed before 25 Aug. See www.qantas.com.au/agents.

Zeavola Aussie reps

COMPLETE Travel Marketing has been assigned the position of official sales, marketing and PR representatives for Thailand's Zeavola Resort in Australia & NZ. The 53 suite/villa luxury diving eco-resort is located on Phi Phi Island, accessed by speed boat from Krabi and Phuket. CTM's partnership with Zeavola takes effect from 01 Sep 2014.

Oman Air clarification

OMAN Air's new routes from Muscat to Manila & Jakarta will launch on 02 Dec and 12 Dec respectively, not Dec 2015 as mentioned in **TD** yesterday.

AKL arrivals, profit up

AUCKLAND Airport reported a 10.5% jump in underlying profit after tax for the financial year ending 30 Jun of NZ\$169.9m. International passenger visits were up 5.1% year-on-year to 8.2 million, while domestic numbers were up 2.2% to 6.9 million.

Langham addition

THE Langham, Sydney has today announced the appointment of Lauren Brown as regional director of public relations - The Pacific. She was previously director of creative & strategy at DG Global and has worked with brands including IHG and Qatar Airways.

New tour for Niue

A BATCH of new touring options have been introduced on the South Pacific island of Niue, offering visitors a greater choice of sightseeing. New options include the 2.5hr Misa's Tour which focuses on Niue's cultural and historical highlights, a fishing charter on the Manutahi pitched at novice and experienced anglers, as well as mini-golf and mountain bike hire - see www.niueisland.com.

Scenic tour lauded

TRAVEL Alberta is heralding the release of Scenic Tours' Best of North America's National Parks itinerary as an escorted touring world first. Commencing in Edmonton, over 26-days the trip traverses the Canadian Rockies, through Jasper, Banff and Waterton Lakes before heading into the US where guests travel to National Parks in Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and Arizona.

"The trip of a lifetime" is priced from \$14,395ppts and will depart on 20 Jul and 03 Aug. The tour is featured in Scenic Tours' latest USA brochure.

Angkor drops Soluxe

CAMBODIAN property Grand Soluxe Angkor Palace Resort & Spa has dropped Soluxe from its title following the completion of a partnership deal with the Soluxe Hospitality Group from 18 Aug. The resort is now known as the Angkor Palace Resort & Spa.

Third strip for Manila

STIFLING congestion at Manila's Ninoy Aquino Airport has seen Philippines President Benigno Aquino order the construction of a third runway at the facility. No timeline has been released for the opening of the new strip, with PHP2.4 billion (AUD\$58.8m) to be spent on its development. A second airport at a former US naval base has also been touted.

Salt on the menu for AA crew



AA APPOINTMENTS held its annual conference on the Gold Coast last week, with staff hosted by Virgin Australia's celebrity chef Luke Mangan at Salt Grill, located at the Hilton Surfers Paradise. **Pictured** with Luke Mangan are half the team, which includes back row from left: Krystle

Egginton, Carmen Pugh, Lee Pownall, Kate Green Ornelas and Sandra Camporeale. Seated in front are Adriana D'Angelis, AA Appointments md, Anna Pell (Veitch) & Karen Stovell. Not pictured are Susanna Boyd, Kate Bouffler, Kendra Cheesman, Nicole Johnson and Emma Smart.

WIN A LUXURY SOUTH OF FRANCE RIVER CRUISE

Throughout August, **Travel Daily** is giving readers the chance to win a luxury all-inclusive river cruise, courtesy of **Scenic Tours**. The all-inclusive prize includes return economy class airfares to Europe, a 13 day South of France Luxury River Cruise for two adults with private butler service, all meals, complimentary beverages all day, all tipping and gratuities and airport transfers. Every day this month **TD** will ask a different question about Scenic Tours France River Cruises. The subscriber with the most correct entries and the most creative response to the final question will win this prize. Email your answers to: scenic tourscomp@traveldaily.com.au.

Q18: How many *Scenic Tailormade* tours are there to choose from in France?

[Click HERE](#) for hints



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SCENIC TOURS

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Sandra Chiles

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