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Tuesday 25th February 2014

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Visit USA board shake-up

The Visit USA Organization Australia appears to be set for a changing of the guard, with its annual general meeting yesterday seeing long-time president Geoffrey Hutton not being re-nominated to the committee.

Visit USA Australia is a voluntary organisation which has for many years seen key stakeholders cooperate to promote travel to America, with no support from the US government.

Last year Gate7 was appointed as the inaugural local representative of the new Brand USA body (**TD** 05 Mar 13), leading to speculation about how the US would be promoted by the two groups going forward.

Taking place in Sydney, the

agm saw more nominations than available positions on the committee, reflecting growing interest in the destination.

Hutton remains Visit USA president until the next board meeting, with the changes occurring during the annual Visit USA roadshow and in the lead-up to International Pow Wow in Apr.

Gate 7's Jo Palmer told **TD** that Hutton had "left a wonderful legacy," adding that Brand USA was looking forward to a continued great working relationship with Visit USA.

AF A380s to HKG

HONG Kong is set to welcome more superjumbos, with Air France overnight unveiling HKG as its newest A380 destination.

Effective 27 May, AF will operate four weekly flights from Paris to Hong Kong, with the operation increasing to daily from 09 Jun.

Emirates to Chicago

EMIRATES yesterday announced the launch of daily services between Dubai and Chicago, with the new route to debut 05 Aug.

Chicago will be EK's ninth US gateway, with the expansion following the imminent launch of flights to Boston next month.

Emirates will fly a 777-200LR aircraft on the route, with EK235 departing from DXB at 0945 daily, arriving at 1525 the same day.

The return flight departs ORD at 2035, arriving into Dubai at 1910 the next day.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has six pages of news & photos, plus full pages from:

- AA Appointments jobs
- inPlace Recruitment jobs
- NTIA nominations

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Nominate for NTIA

TRAVEL agents and suppliers are reminded to get nominations in for the 2014 National Travel Industry Awards by 5pm this Fri - including the new Emirates Travel Consultant Scholarship.

For details see the **last page**.



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Travel Daily

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Big jump for sales on rails

AUSTRALASIA remained the strongest source market for Rail Europe rail pass bookings, with €49m in revenue generated for 2013 - a 50% leap since 2010, the firm's ceo Fabrice Morel said.

The company reported more than three million pax worldwide travelled by rail last year, up 6.5%.

Speaking at a lunch in Sydney yesterday, Morel said that despite dips in the global economy, sales of rail passes stayed consistent over the last five years.

"We believe the quality of services provided coupled with the cost and time efficiency factors have greatly contributed to the ongoing success of our operation," Morel commented.

The most popular services were Thalys, Italo and Trenitalia along with traditionally popular lines including Eurostar, French TGV and Swiss passes also posting double-digit growth for the year.

A number of new sales strategies have been put in place by Rail Europe to further develop niche markets including corporate and higher-end travellers, with a forecasted 8% growth in sales now targeted for this year.

Thai protests erupt

BANGKOK-BASED DMC Destination Asia is urging visitors to the city steer clear of major shopping centres including the MBK, Siam Paragon, Central World & more following a flare-up in the ongoing protest rallies.

Two separate grenade blasts in the protest zone in the last week has killed two people including a child and injured dozens more.

Despite the latest developments, transfer and day tour services run by the firm continue as normal, while guides to alternate shopping districts can be obtained in hotels.

Carnival Ponton fit

FITNESS and healthy-living advocate Shannan Ponton has partnered with Carnival Australia to develop fitness & health food programs on two Carnival ships.

Ponton will help to train the onboard fitness instructors on both *Carnival Spirit* and the soon-to arrive *Legend*, develop healthy onboard dining options & design DIY gym programs and routines.

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Brunei ceases local representation

BRUNEI Tourism no longer has full-time representation in the Australian and New Zealand markets, with the Brunei government deciding not to renew its contract.

The Walshe Group was appointed as the country's first ever local Marketing and Public Relations Representative Office in Australasia just over three years ago (*TD* 23 Feb 2011), with the move hailed as a "new milestone for Brunei's tourism industry".

The appointment was followed by Royal Brunei Airlines shifting its Australian hub from Brisbane to Melbourne, with country manager Ross Tutin relocating to Victoria accordingly.

Walshe ceo Jacqui Walshe told *Travel Daily* that her organisation will continue to do ad-hoc work for Brunei Tourism.

"Ross Tutin has been outstanding in his role as our dedicated representative for

Brunei Tourism, including basing himself in Brisbane and then in Melbourne, in line with the primary services of RBA," she said.

The Walshe Group also represents Hawaii and Oman, with Helen Williams recently appointed as Director Tourism Strategy to further develop the group's accounts (*TD* 13 Feb).

Airport decision delay

FEDERAL Cabinet has deferred a final decision on a second Sydney airport, with the *Financial Review* reporting a backlash from MPs over the Badgerys Creek site.

Earlier reports suggested that the airport was set for consideration at a cabinet meeting today but the proposal is no longer on the agenda.

It's also understood that Labor backbenchers have expressed concerns about Badgerys Creek and the ALP's support for the plan.

No QF comment

QANTAS says it is not in a position to comment on a raft of speculation about what it will be announcing later this week at its half year results presentation - but tough decisions will be made "regardless of whether the Federal Government acts on the uneven playing field in the Australian aviation market".

Mainstream media is suggesting that thousands of job cuts, fleet restructures and route changes will be part of the plan.

The carrier isn't confirming any of the speculation at this stage, apart from saying it wants to achieve \$2 billion in cost savings over the next three years due to the "unprecedented set of market conditions now facing Qantas".

Interestingly, Thu's results announcement will take place in the ballroom at the Sydney Westin Hotel - the same large venue where the carrier announced its alliance with Emirates in late 2012.



Window Seat

THERE'S a tourism crisis in north Queensland - the Big Mango has disappeared.

The 10m-high fibreglass structure was simply gone when staff arrived at the Bowen Tourist Information Centre on Mon morning - as shown in the before and after photos below.

Bowen Tourism chairman Paul McLaughlin said CCTV footage showed heavy equipment removing the mango overnight.

However police haven't received an official complaint, with suspicions it could all just be a brilliant publicity stunt.



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UA talks up Australia

UNITED Airlines md for Japan & Pacific Matt Miller says the addition of new aircraft and a new route will position the carrier as “the leading US airline into Australia.”

Miller yesterday said the new 787-9 *Dreamliner* route between Los Angeles and Melbourne, launching in late Oct 2014 (**TD** Fri), along with an aircraft shuffle from ageing 747 jumbos to 777s on two daily Sydney services paves the way for an “exciting” period for United Airlines.

“Having three non-stop routes... is truly the portfolio we want to do,” Miller commented.

QF flts Texas windfall

TOURISM officials in Texas are spruiking a range of new product touring options to take advantage of increasing Australian arrivals on the back of Qantas’ 747-400 Dallas/Fort Worth route.

Speaking with **TD** yesterday at a Visit USA Organisation event in Sydney, Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau’s Estela Martinez-Stuart said the organisation was pitching to tour operators some “new exciting” travelling options.

Among the options is a ‘Cajun & Cowboys’ two-state program that mixes a blend of music, food, history and ranches in Texas and neighbouring state, Louisiana.

Another offering is a ‘Tex-Mex’ itinerary which combines touring in the Lone Star state and into the tourist hubs of Mexico, including Cozumel, Acapulco and Tulum.

The current average stay for Aussies in Texas is eight nights, up from four nights prior to Qantas introducing services from Australia to DFW in May 2011.

The Australian market is now the 5th top source for Texas, only behind the USA, Mexico, the UK & Germany, Martinez-Stuart said.

She told **Travel Daily** a popular route to explore the state was travelling from Fort Worth to Austin, then onto San Antonio, Houston and returning to Dallas.

Next month, Fort Worth will launch its inaugural Food & Wine Festival - **CLICK HERE** for more.

USA’s diversity draws Aussies



NEWLY appointed Sydney-based US Consul General Hugo Llorens says the opportunity for more Australians to travel to the United States is bringing relationships between the two nations closer.

Speaking yesterday at the Visit USA Organisation event in Sydney, Llorens said the influx in visitors between each country “is good for the economy, good for travel agents, good for hotels.. it’s good for everyone.”

Llorens said the USA offers an “amazing amount of diversity” for travellers, making it appealing to first-time and seasoned travellers.

He said the geography, culture, history, outdoor lifestyle (such as national parks) and cruising options out of Florida and to Alaska meant there was a wide variety of things to see and do.

A “new” area that is appealing to Australian travellers is the US

South, as the region bounces-back post Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

In the past decade, Australian visitor arrivals to the USA have nearly doubled, Llorens added.

Pictured at the event is Geoffrey Hutton, Visit USA; Hugo Llorens, US Consul General Sydney and Matt Miller, United Airlines.

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AFTA UPDATE

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

THE 2014 Winter Olympics came to a close over the weekend and while there had been a great deal of media speculation about potential threats and challenges for the host city Sochi, it appears that the Russians managed to deliver a world class event.

As a skier myself, I always enjoy watching the Winter Olympics because we don't get a lot of "winter" sports on our screens so these last couple of weeks have been terrific.

The host nation of Russia took out the medal tally in the number one position with 13 gold, 11 silver and 9 bronze, a total of 33.

In second place Norway with 26 (11 gold) and 3rd Canada, the host nation in 2010 which was held in Whistler with 25 (10 gold).

Australia, in an unusually uninspiring games, managed 24th with 2 silvers and 1 bronze. So I am sure you will have a much better day now that you have this all important update on Sochi.

With Winter Olympics only coming along every 4 years we now look to Pyeongchang, South Korea for 2018.

Let's hope that our Aussie team can look to build on Sochi and do better in South Korea. For Australians the idea of going to South Korea is far more likely as it is within our region so as the momentum builds over the next couple of years we may see South Korea finds its way on to travel plans of more Aussies looking to experience their next adventure.

I am not sure that Sochi has featured on too many itineraries over the past four years and while it will go on my bucket list, Sochi may become just another city on a long list of cities that hosted an Olympics once, but sadly forgotten.

No doubt all the sporting nuts will now turn their attention to Rio De Janeiro as Brazil gets ready to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Let's hope this sparks some interest with Aussies and the travel industry sees a benefit.



New Quest by Apr

QUEST Serviced Apartments says its newest Victorian-based property in Yarra is on track for an Apr launch with "bookings coming in steady."

Quest Abbotsford will feature 93 brand new studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments.

Bookings can be made online at the property starting 28 Apr.

Choice Hotels recruit

AILEEN Cobern has been named as gm distribution & revenue at Choice Hotels Australasia.

The 20+ year hotel veteran has been recruited to drive the franchise group's expansion phase in the coming years.

Cobern was most recently Choice Hotel Australasia's general manager of sales and marketing.

Rocky US expectation

ROCKY Mountaineer has high expectations from the US market for its rail route linking Seattle and Vancouver from 10 May.

The Coastal Passage route will become Rocky Mountaineer's 5th rail route and first into the US.

Guests will have the option of travelling in style aboard a SilverLeaf Service carriage or RM's luxurious GoldLeaf Service.

The journey can also be sold with any two day or more rail itinerary through the Rockies, or an Alaskan cruise with Holland America Line or Norwegian Cruise Line ex Seattle (**TD** 24 Jul).

It will operate as 24 departures on 12 Saturdays from May to Oct.

Sales director for APAC Robert Halfpenny said at a recent CTC function that the Coastal Passage route is expected to account for 20% of the company's business over the next few years.

Premium flights drop

IATA has released its Premium Traffic Monitor figures for Dec, which show a slight slowing in pax numbers in non-economy classes.

While Economy Class passenger numbers grew an average of 3.5% worldwide year-on-year, Premium cabin patronage grew 4.2%, down 0.6% on the 2012 growth rate.

The global aviation body says the rate of growth for premium seats appears to be rebounding in the first six weeks of the year.

Act now for Schoolies

SCHOOL-LEAVER travel firm Unleashed Travel is advising 80% of its supervised 2014 end-of-year Schoolies trips are already sold out, with limited spots remaining.

The company says its new multi-island Fijian experience, including five nights on Beachcomber Island & two nights at Sonaisali Resort is proving popular and is expected to also be sold out by Apr.

New China Marriott

MARRIOTT International has opened its 15th Marriott Hotels branded property in China - the 317-room Shanghai Marriott Hotel Parkview.

Opening its doors yesterday, the hotel is in Shanghai's Multimedia Valley in Zhabei District.

The addition boosts Marriott International's total portfolio in China to 66 hotels.

Tuesday 25th Feb 2014

US/CAN/MEX 'Trusted Traveler' program

A **NEW** 'trusted traveler' scheme is being developed in North America aimed at making it quicker and easier for frequent travellers to commute between Canada, the USA and Mexico.

Announced by the Airports Council International-North America & the Canadian Airports Council, the program is expected to roll out during 2014.

American, Mexican & Canadian citizens will be able to pre-register for the scheme by providing biographic information.

ACI-NA ceo Kevin Burke said the move will position air travel as a "competitive, attractive option for tourists in all three countries."

WIN TICKETS TO 'MANDELA - LONG WALK TO FREEDOM'

This week **TD** and **The Africa Safari Co** want to inspire you with the beauty & history of South Africa. We are giving away 2 x double



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A film based on Nelson Mandela's autobiography, which chronicles his early life, coming of age, education and 27 years in prison before becoming South African President and working to rebuild the country's once segregated society. An inspiring and moving story - a must see for all.

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Club Med ski brox

ALL-INCLUSIVE specialist Club Med has released its 2014/15 Snow Resorts brochure featuring retreats in France, Switzerland, Italy, Japan and China.

Qatar Airways TMC Muscat fam



QATAR Airways recently hosted a corporate TMC famil to Muscat for these lucky Perth agents.

The four-day itinerary included visits to Nizwa & Tiwi - some of Oman's oldest towns - the Jabrin Fort, and the 'must see' natural tourist attraction, Wadi Shab.

They experienced QR's Business class flatbed product to Doha and return, along with the oneworld carrier's Permium Terminal.

Participants are **pictured** with their local guides & included, back row from left: Suzanne Baker, Broadway Travel; Jason Sharpe, Globetrotter Travel; Jennifer Hughes, Corporate Traveller; Iain

Swan, CTM; Olivera Stojkoski, FCm; Craig Webber; Qatar Airways and Judy Gurney, Traveletree.

In front is Autumn Moser, The Travel Authority and Kylie Daff, Motive Travel.

3K engine repair bill

JETSTAR Asia engineers have temporarily grounded one of its Airbus A320 aircraft after it flew through a volcanic ash cloud caused by Indonesia's Mt Kelud.

Airbus engineers have also inspected the aircraft, with the bill for replacing the engines now estimated to top US\$20m.

CCC Seniors savings

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises is offering a 50% discount on Sydney Harbour voyages for seniors during NSW Seniors Week mid next month.

Savings are available on morning & afternoon coffee cruises, High Tea at Sea and Seafood Lunch cruises between 15-24 Mar.

GPT Ultimate dates

GRAND Pacific Tours has rolled out its 2014/15 Ultimate Small Group Tours brochure which features seven New Zealand trips, from 10 to 19 days duration.

Each tour incorporates GPT's 'business class' 20-seat coach.

The NZ specialists confirmed the addition of two new vehicles will also be operational from Sep.

Qld information app

THE Queensland government has launched a new smartphone app which helps users locate the nearest visitor information centre, sightseeing options & more.

The Qld Visitors Information Centre app is free to download & has been built in conjunction with Tourism & Events Queensland.

Users can use the GPS capability of their phone to find attractions, events, tours and restaurants.

Aircalin shelves ICN

ACCORDING to GDS displays, Noumea-based carrier Aircalin is suspending twice weekly services to Seoul Incheon effective 03 Mar.

Air France and Korean Air both codeshare on the service.

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THE WEST IS BEST! RETAIL TRAVEL CONSULTANTS PERTH (CBD) – SALARY PKG UP TO \$60K (DOE)

Calling all travel experts in Perth! We have an exciting NEW opportunity that will see you moving away from the same old itineraries! This well established office now requires a senior travel consultant to join their growing team. You will service a mixture of corporate and leisure enquiries and will work Monday – Friday hours only! With luxury families and a high base salary on offer why wouldn't you apply! If you have a minimum 4 years high end retail experience this role could be yours! Apply today to find out more.

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Love Africa? Love these NEW roles in Melbourne! This well established high end wholesaler now requires 2 new agents to join their expanding team! No other company in Melbourne has seen this much growth over the past 12 months! You will create unforgettable travel experiences for your loyal agents and some direct passengers. Work Monday – Friday hours only and be paid a high base salary while being offered luxury families! If you have travelled to Africa and want to specialise then we want to hear from you!

THE MORE THE MERRIER GROUP RESERVATIONS MELBOURNE – SALARY PACKAGE UP TO \$70K (DOE)

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Inbound Consultant - Syd & Mel

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- ▶ Huge variety of products
- ▶ Salary from \$45K + super

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- ▶ Excellent work/life balance \$46K pkg
- ▶ 2 positions available in Sydney for mid March start

Reputable and expanding Online travel company, servicing clients direct- no face to face! Must have exp in Australia in travel or hotel reservations. Hours are 11pm to 8am

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- ▶ Highly autonomous role
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w www.afta.com.au/AFTANTIA
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