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VA daily to Hong Kong

VIRGIN Australia announced today it will boost frequencies on its sole non-stop flights to Asia, with its current five-weekly Melbourne-Hong Kong service moving to daily from 12 Nov.

The upgauge will be adopted two weeks after VA aligns the service timings on the route, which the carrier said aimed to provide a "consistent departure time" from Melbourne in the middle of the day (**TD** 01 Aug).

VA's acting group executive Rob Sharp said HKG was a key part of Virgin Australia's Asia strategy.

"We're thrilled to be able to offer travellers a daily schedule of flights to Hong Kong," he said.

A spokesperson for VA told **TD** the airline hoped to launch the HKG route with a daily operation in Jul but was held back due to

slot availability in Hong Kong.

Virgin Australia will reposition one of its Airbus A330s currently operating primarily on intercon routes to the MEL-HKG service, the VA spokesperson confirmed.

The two extra weekly services operate on Fri and Sun, pushing back from Melbourne at 1240 and 1130 respectively.

While the times aren't identical to those offered on Mon through Thu and Sat services, due to slot availability they are "as consistent as possible".

Win an iPhone!

CONSOLIDATED Travel and Aircalin have launched a travel agent incentive, offering the Top 2 sellers of flights between today & 03 Oct the chance to win an iPhone - see **page nine** for info.

Today's issue of **TD**

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

- One&Only Wolgan Valley
- AA Appointments jobs
- Consolidated/SB promo
- iVenture product profile pg

iVenture profile

TODAY'S issue of **Travel Daily** features a Product Profile on the iVenture Card which provides a range of savings on must-see attractions around the world - more details on the **back page**.

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WV website update

WORLD Ventures has unveiled an overhauled website, featuring improved functionality and a new 'Adventure Finder' search facility.

The portal showcases over 500 itineraries and has easy-to-find information on travelling as a private group - more info [HERE](#).

SCENIC°

2018/2019 SOUTH EAST ASIA RIVER CRUISING



Out now

USA tips visitor rebound

COMMITTEE members of the Visit USA Organisation (VUSA) will be hoping the Australian Dollar maintains its current five-week high, trading at \$0.80 this morning, tempting an increase in Aussie travel across the Pacific.

The weaker value of the Aussie dollar against the US 'greenback' last year was yesterday flagged as a possible reason for a "blip" in visitor numbers to the USA.

Speaking at Visit USA's mid-year review yesterday in Sydney, US Commercial Service's Monique Roos confirmed there were 2% less Australians travelling to the US in 2016 compared to 2015, but Australia still maintained its Top 10 market source place.

"Nevertheless, Australia had experienced consecutive growth for 12 years, so that is phenomenal," Roos said.

"In 2015 we had double digit growth, so we had been going up, up, up, but unfortunately in 2016 we experienced a bit of a blip. But all signs are good and hopefully we will rebound," an

optimistic Roos commented.

She emphasised that Australia wasn't the only inbound market to have experienced a fall in visitation, with 13 of America's top 20 markets falling in 2016, some in the double digits.

Roos said that the results were late coming out due to hold ups with getting the data from border protection in the United States.

As revealed by **TD** last month, the visitor decline trend from the Oceania region in Jan 2017 was down nearly 6% compared to the corresponding period, while the Australian number fell 8%, at the same time rising to be the USA's ninth largest market (**TD** 03 Aug).

The Jan results coincided with the first month that President Trump took office.

More from Visit USA on [pg 4](#).

MU increases BNE

CHINA Eastern will crank up its nine-month old four times weekly service between Shanghai and Brisbane to daily starting Nov, Brisbane Airport has confirmed.

"New daily flights will help grow this important market, providing benefits for every sector of our economy from business and investment to tourism, trade and education," BNE ceo and md Julianne Alroe said.

The increase comes two months ahead of initial forecasts flagged by MU's Ocean gm Kathy Zhang who tipped a Jan/Feb upgauge to daily 10 months ago (**TD** 25 Nov).

VA airberlin waiver

VIRGIN Australia has issued a waiver code after it has discontinued its partnership with airberlin (**TD** 16 Aug).

Agents can use BW000068 to waive fair, tax and change fees for tickets issued before 06 Sep.

CLICK HERE for more info.



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Build your own Contiki tour



CONTIKI will target the free independent traveller (FIT) market with the launch of Independent Insider for its 2018 Europe program.

Independent Insider will allow young travellers to group destinations together to construct and build their own tour.

Speaking exclusively to **TD** at Contiki Legends, Contiki Australia MD Katrina Barry said the product was designed for flexibility and freedom, which would shake up the youth travel market.

"Strategically we are opening Contiki to a whole new customer and audience, as well as taking a share of the FIT market," she said.

The product follows eight different routes around Europe and offers 35 different combos that can be paired together.

Destinations include London, Paris, Rome, Porto and Budapest.

Barry said travellers would be able to design their itinerary by piecing together three-day building blocks to create a trip ranging from three to 13 days.

"The big highlight will be that every customer will go to a local family and have dinner with

them, which is included on every three-day building block."

The product will feature other experiences most travellers may not experience at a city no matter how many times they've been.

There will also be plenty of free time for travellers.

Contiki has launched another 18 itineraries for its program, including new offerings in Britain, Spain, Portugal and Iceland.

"Pound is down, so Britain is up, so we have a new trip around Britain. Spain is also going to super hot," Barry said.

"Portugal is on the rise for young Australians, which is a destination to watch for in 2018."

Limited Edition tours will return in 2018 and remain mostly the same with food, photography and high end choices all back.

Contiki will kick off an agent roadshow on Fri to break down the new offering to the trade.

"The vast majority of our trips are sold by agents and that is our preferred channel."

Pictured: Contiki Australia MD Katrina Barry with The Travel Corporation CEO John Veitch at the Contiki launch party.

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Philippines fun fam

THE Philippine Department of Tourism has launched the Fun Travel Experts program for top travel agents.

Sixty high scoring Australians will be able to win a place on the mega famil, to be held late 2017.

To enter, agents need to register their details and complete all six modules on the funtravelexperts.com.au training website, which goes live tomorrow at 0001.

Agents will need to be IATA and ATAS accredited and aged over 18.

The competition period runs from 08 Sep until 13 Oct.

Philippines will hold the mega famil for the lucky 60 agents between 10-20 Nov.

3rd Singa Sofitel

ACCORHOTELS will open doors on the Sofitel Singapore City Centre next month.

The hotel has 223 rooms, which have a Singapore and French flair.

Guests also have access to Handy Phone, which provides free local and international calls as well as free wi-fi.

It will be group's 800th hotel in Asia Pacific, 13th in Singapore and third Sofitel in the Lion City.



Window Seat

TOURISTS are flocking to a waterfall in Brazil in where you get "swallowed" by rocks.

Pedra Que Engole, which roughly translates to "Swallow Rock," is a rock formation with a small waterfall above a river in Trindade, about 300km south of Rio de Janeiro.

Thrill seekers slide through a crack between two rocks (**pictured**) and then disappear into a small cave.

Once inside the cave, they keep sliding down the natural water slide until they are spat out into the river below.

Tourists are leaving rave reviews on TripAdvisor, with the site having a 4.5 star rating.



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Irma impact update

HURRICANE Irma is wreaking havoc across the Caribbean as the category five storm with 300kph winds makes its way to Florida.

The hurricane has caused severe damage across the region, with widespread damage reported in Puerto Rico and other islands across the Caribbean, including Richard Branson's Necker Island, which according to reports has been completely destroyed.

The famous Princess Juliana Int'l Airport in St Maarten is closed until at least Fri, but has suffered major damage from Irma.

DFAT is advising tourists in Cuba to keep their passport on them at all times and to monitor local media as well as expect heavy winds, rain and storm surges.

Carnival Cruise Line has cancelled two cruises on *Carnival Liberty* and *Victory*, while it has rerouted five other ships.

Royal Caribbean has cancelled three cruises and modified several other itineraries as well.

SIN T4 opening

SINGAPORE Changi Airport will begin operations at its new Terminal 4 from 31 Oct.

Nine airlines will operate out of the terminal including the Air Asia Group, Cathay Pacific, Cebu Pacific Air, Korean Air, Vietnam Airlines and Spring Airlines.

Airlines will slowly transition into new structure over the first week of operations.

The terminal was built on the site of the old budget terminal.

UA A350 rethink

UNITED Airlines has transferred orders for 35 Airbus A350-1000 aircraft for 45 of the smaller and popular Airbus A350-900XWB.

UA's finance chief said the smaller Airbus was a better fit for the airline's network.

The A350 will be the first Airbus widebodies to join UA's fleet.

The first A350 will be delivered to UA in late 2022 after it deferred orders in Jul.



VISIT USA Organisation Australia will prioritise differentiating itself from Brand USA due to confusion among the trade as the roles and responsibilities of each entity.

Providing clarity between the organisations was a key message delivered to committee members of Visit USA's mid-year market update yesterday (see **page one**).

Visit USA Organisation's pres, Kylee Kay from APTMS, reiterated its mission was to connect suppliers in the USA and sellers of America with buyers in Australia, working in partnership to coordinate and implement marketing efforts to promote travel to the USA.

Whereas Brand USA, created by the Obama Administration in

2009, established an Australia/NZ office four years ago and is headed locally by Matt Fletcher.

Fletcher told members Brand USA's primary role was to promote the country as a "premier tourist destination", including all 50 states, District of Colombia and five overseas territories.

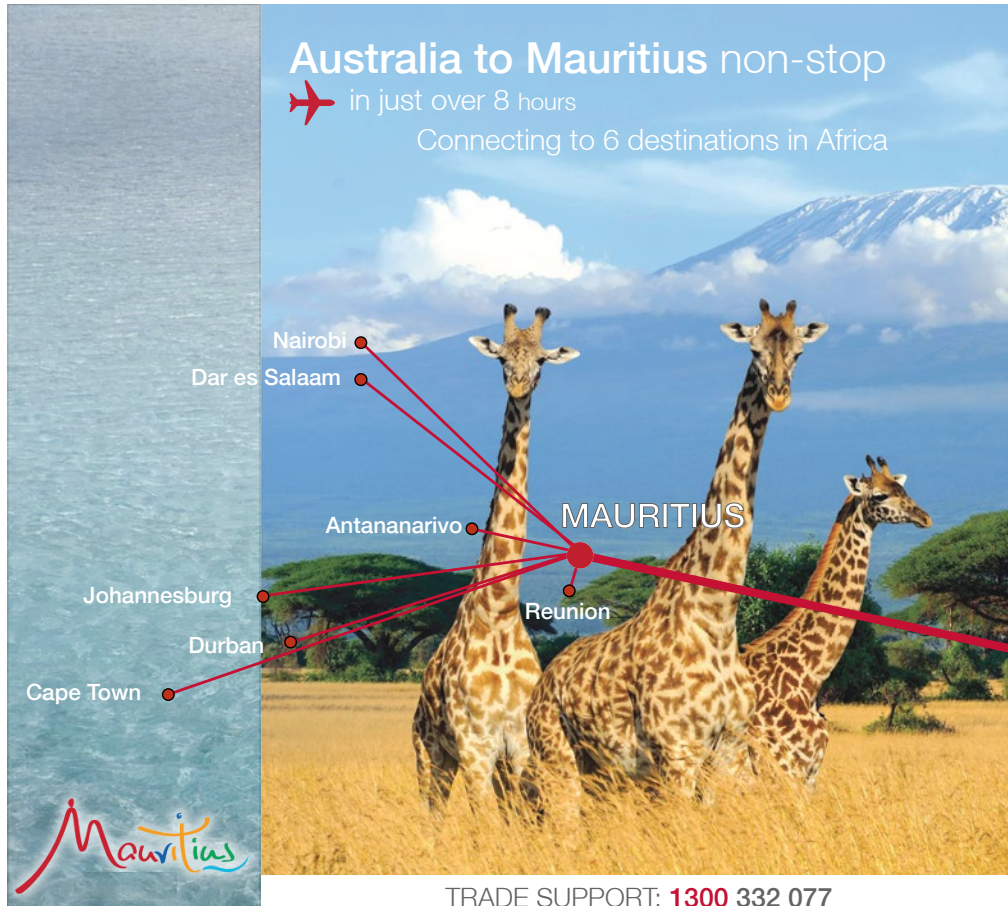
VUSA's subcommittee also said it was revitalising its website to make it more functional, aiming for a roll out by new year.

Pictured at yesterday's event in Sydney from left are Alison Mead, Collette gm Australia; Valerie Fowler, US Consul General for NSW/Queensland; Kylee Kay, VUSA president and Monique Roos, US Commercial Service.

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Travel Daily on location in the air en route to Darwin

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of TravelManagers at its annual conference in Darwin.

TODAY marks the beginning of TravelManagers' 10th Annual Conference for its Australia-wide personal travel manager (PTM) network, National Partnership Office support team and its partner suppliers.

Themed "One", the event at the Darwin Convention Centre will get underway this afternoon when close to 390 delegates touch down in balmy Darwin.

Attendees will get down to business for an afternoon of presentations from Tourism NT, PTMs and suppliers, before a keynote presentation from Benjamin Roberts-Smith - the most decorated serving soldier in the Commonwealth.

Tonight delegates will swap out their conference attire for beachwear to feel the sand between their toes at the Mindil Beach Sunset Market.

ANA ambassador

ALL Nippon Airways (ANA) has announced Australian chef Adam Liaw will be the carrier's culinary ambassador for its Sydney flights.

Liaw has designed menus for Business, Premium and Economy class cabins on flights between Sydney and Tokyo Haneda, from Dec to May.

Amalfi exploration

ALBATROSS Tours will return to the Amalfi Coast in its 2018 program, having added a three night stay in its Italian Grande Tour itinerary.

The 18-day tour also includes the Italian Lakes District, the Dolomites mountain range, Tuscany and Umbria, priced from \$7,149ppts when deposited by 31 Oct.

12-day Pitcairn tour

PITCAIRN Island Tourism has introduced a 12-day tour of the remote Pacific isle, in addition to an existing 19-day option.

The tour includes a stopover in Tahiti, the ocean voyage to Pitcairn and four days on the island with a range of activities and meals included.

A departure from Tahiti is scheduled for 17 Feb with others to be added based on demand.

See www.visitpitcairn.bn.

BW adds two in WA

BEST Western has added two new Western Australia properties to its portfolio.

They are the Best Western Plus The Ranges Karratha in the Pilbara region and the Best Western The Clarence on Melville in the southern city of Albany.

"It's fantastic to see properties of this calibre joining Best Western - it's testament to the exciting brand evolution and repositioning we've undergone over recent years," said Best Western head of commercial Steve Richards.

2-day harbour pass

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises now offers a two-day version of its Hop On Hop Off Sydney Harbour Explorer pass, an extension its 24-hour ticket.

The pass allows travel on any of 80 daily departures to 11 harbour destinations including new routes to Barangaroo and the International Convention Centre Sydney at Darling Harbour.

A two-day pass is priced at \$45 per adult and \$25 per child.

Mt Hutt extension

NEW Zealand's Mount Hutt ski field has extended its season until the end of local school holidays on 15 Oct thanks to weather "not experienced in about a decade".

The resort had been due to close 08 Oct but received 20cm of new snow on Fri.



Industry 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.

Melbourne Convention Bureau chief executive officer **Karen Bolinger** has been elected President of the **Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB)** at the organisation's conference in Hobart. She takes over from Business Events Sydney ceo Lyn Lewis-Smith who has headed the association for the past four years.

Wendy Wu Tours has announced the appointment of **Cameron Pritchard** as Business Development Manager Victoria. He joins with seven years' experience across business development, air charter and group travel roles, most recently with MTA.

James Coleman has joined **Next Hotels** as the General Manager of Sage Hotel Adelaide and Chifley on South Terrace. He has spent 15 years in hospitality, including with TFE Hotels and Far East Hospitality.

Expedia has elevated its CFO **Mark Okerstrom** to the position of Chief Executive Officer, replacing Dara Khosrowshahi who left last month to join the ride-sharing service Uber. Okerstrom had been CFO since 2011 and was previous Expedia's VP of Corporate Development.

Mantra Group CEO **Bob East** has been appointed Chair of **Tourism Australia**, alongside Kerzner International's regional director of sales & marketing **Anna Guillan** who becomes deputy chair. Event Hospitality & Entertainment CEO **David Seargeant** and Australian Hotels Association CEO **Bradley Woods** also join the board.

Classic Holidays COO **Carole Smith** has been re-elected President of the **Australian Timeshare and Holiday Ownership Council (ATHOC)** at the organisation's annual general meeting on the NSW Tweed Coast.

Raffles Hotel Singapore has named **Christian Westbeld** as its General Manager, effective 01 Oct. Westbeld has close to 20 years' hospitality experience, most recently as head of Hospitality Operation at MGM Macau ahead of the opening of MGM Cotai. He will oversee the Raffles Hotel Singapore's extensive renovation and reopening in mid-2018.

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Applications close on Monday 11th September and should be sent to chris.petty@united.com.

Thursday 7th September 2017

DL adds IND/CDG

DELTA Air Lines will launch direct flights from Indianapolis to Paris CDG from 24 May, connecting to Air France KLM partner services to other destinations across Europe.

Flights go on sale 23 Sep and will be operated by Boeing 767-300ER, departing IND at 1820 and arriving 0845 the next day.

Air demand up

WORLD air passenger demand has continued to grow, increasing 7.8% year-on-year in Jun.

Figures from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) show Jun brought a capacity increase of 6.5% and a one point rise in load factor to 81.9%.

For the six months to Jun, traffic growth reached a 12-year high of 7.9% worldwide, while global load factors hit a record average of 80.7%.

AD Louvre opening

THE Middle East will soon boast its own Louvre museum, with Abu Dhabi confirming an opening date of 11 Nov for its long delayed branch of the French institution.

Designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, the Louvre Abu Dhabi will feature almost 700 exhibits, of which half will be from its own collection and the remainder from several French museums, including its famous Paris namesake.

Lion with Travelport

LOW-COST carrier Thai Lion Air has chosen Travelport's Rich Content and Branding product.

The airline is the fourth largest low-cost airline in Thailand with 20 destinations in SE Asia.

Travelport-connected agencies will now view Lion's branded fares and ancillary content in a graphic-rich format.

TIME welcomes new intake



THE Travel Industry Mentor Experience (TIME) held its latest gathering at the Sydney offices of The Travel Corporation yesterday.

Mentees and mentors of TIME's 28th program were welcomed, while graduates of the 25th program were celebrated with a speech by Travel Corporation ceo John Veitch.

Pictured are the 28th intake, (back row) Matthew Forster, Amex GBT; Hayden Foy, Snowscene; Tomas Malmberg, Insight Vacations; and (front row) Amanda Bruce, Virgin Australia; Olga Skerbinsek, Amex GBT; Tracy Erpf, Snowscene; Lisa McFadyen, Spencer Travel Southside; and Belinda Murphy, Helloworld.

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To enter the competition, all you need to do is take a creative photo of yourself with something typically New Caledonian.

Send your entry to aircalin@traveldaily.com.au



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EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief and Publisher – Bruce Piper
Managing Editor – Jon Murrie

Editor – Guy Dundas

Contributors – Jasmine O'Donoghue, Matt Bell, Jenny Piper, Christian Schweitzer
info@traveldaily.com.au

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

Sean Harrigan and Lisa Martin
advertising@traveldaily.com.au

BUSINESS MANAGER

Jenny Piper
accounts@traveldaily.com.au

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia
PO Box 1010 Epping NSW 1710 Australia
Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760)

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- Cash Free Entry – There's no need to carry cash and bulky tickets. Customers simply show their iVenture Card at each attraction they're in!




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