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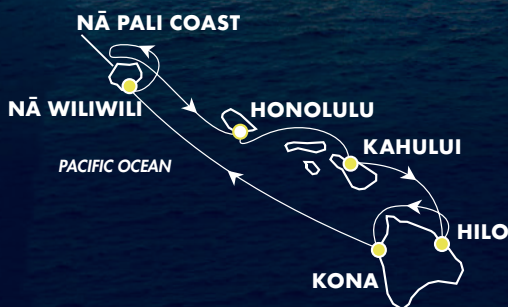


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**MORE INFO**

## NCL feel free deal

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line is today promoting its free at sea offer and seven-day Hawaii cruise, visiting four islands and featuring overnight stays in Maui and Kauai.

For more information, see the [cover page](#).

## TC launches new services

**TRAVELLERS** Choice has entered new “smart and meaningful partnerships” with software developer Wetu Travel Technology and Zenith Payments in a move it says will better support its agents and add value.

The deal gives agents access to Wetu’s Itinerary Builder, which MD Christian Hunter said had “shown to be a highly effective sales tool, helping users convert around 30% more enquiries into bookings.”

“[Wetu] is a practical, no-fuss solution that can within a matter of minutes produce itineraries that are enticing, rich in detail and fully customised with members’ logos, preferred fonts and colours,” Hunter said at the company’s annual Shareholders’ Conference held over the weekend in Cairns.

Additionally, the company has unveiled new payment solutions which include a common-rated

merchant fee, a layby service and a new B2BPay portal.

Hunter said the payment solution, known as TC Pay, would make it easier for members to process business transactions, while safeguarding their businesses from risk.

“Travellers Choice is often referred to as being like a big family, and although it is like that, I think we are going beyond that now by supporting members with meaningful services that can build their businesses to the next level while retaining that same culture - that is truly what makes us different,” Hunter told *TD*.

### Today’s issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today has eight pages of news, a front cover page for **Norwegian Cruise Line**, a photo page for **Creative Cruising** plus full pages from:

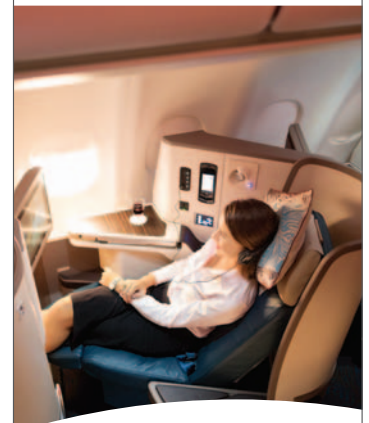
- Viking Cruises
- AA Appointments jobs

## AirAsia X Fukuoka

**AIRASIA X** will launch a four times weekly service on 28 Feb connecting Kuala Lumpur with Fukuoka, Japan.

The direct flight will be the fifth destination in Japan and fourth route from Kuala Lumpur for AirAsia X.

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## Travel Daily on location in Chicago, USA

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Air New Zealand, which last Fri flew its first ever non-stop flight from Auckland to Chicago.

**CHICAGO** has welcomed the inaugural flight delegation with open arms, with guests hosted at the Langham Chicago - last year voted best hotel in the US.

Choose Chicago, the city's marketing organisation, took participants on an exploration of key local attractions including Willis Tower, The Field Museum and the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio.

A visit to the Magnificent Mile shopping precinct was also a must for many, with the group returning home via AKL tonight - more on [page six](#).

## Five US gateways for Air NZ

**AIR** New Zealand is now flying three times per week non-stop from Auckland to Chicago, with the new route meaning it currently offers one-stop flights from Australia to five US destinations.

CEO Christopher Luxon, who was among a host of VIPs on the first flight last Fri, highlighted the connectivity offered by Chicago through NZ's Star Alliance Partner, which serves about 100 destinations from the hub.

"The new service means we can now get New Zealanders and Australians up to Chicago to connect into the US mid-west, east coast and obviously eastern Canada as well," he said.

Luxon knows Chicago well, having lived in the city for six years from 2003 when he was in his former role at Unilever, and said it was his "second favourite place outside of New Zealand".

The inaugural service (see [page](#)

[six](#)) was greeted with a hearty welcome from Chicago tourism officials, including Choose Chicago President and CEO David Whitaker who said the new route would cement the relationship between Chicago and Auckland.

He hailed the ongoing work to train NZ and Australian travel agents on the destination, pledging to "roll up our sleeves and welcome you to this very special part of the world".

Chicago joins Los Angeles, San Francisco, Honolulu and Houston in the NZ USA route network.

The new Chicago flight is the furthest destination served from Auckland at around 15 hrs of flying time, and is the 17th new route that the city has added this year.

Luxon estimated the Chicago flights would contribute about NZ\$70m to the New Zealand economy, further boosting the current 340,000 annual US arrivals into the country.

## Creative Cruising triple celebration

**CREATIVE** Cruising marked a 25 year milestone at an event in Sydney last week, with a harbourside luncheon also commemorating the successful relaunch of the Creative Cruising brand, alongside its innovative booking portal (*TD* 15 Nov).

The result of a year-long investment by the cruise specialist wholesaler's new owners (*TD* 14 Dec 2017), the "Air. Land. Sea." website now allows travel consultants to book wholesale and retail air plus a variety of land content alongside a wide range of cruises.

Creative Cruising's in-house cruise packages are also on offer, with Head of Sales and Marketing Caroline Hitchen detailing the development of the wholesaler's fresh new branding.

More cruise news in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly* - subscribe free at [cruiseweekly.com.au](http://cruiseweekly.com.au).

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## QBT takes SA Government

**HELLOWORLD** Travel's TMC offshoot QBT has been appointed as the sole provider of travel management services to all 43 South Australian Government agencies (**TD** breaking news Fri).

Effective from 01 Feb 2019 QBT will take over from the current arrangements, and will provide end-to-end travel management services, access to the QBT online booking portal, offline booking services, 24/7 in-house traveller support and "state-of-the-art business intelligence reporting".

The win continues QBT's strength in the government TMC space in Australia, with the company currently holding contracts with the Federal Government under its Whole of Australian Government program, as well as the ACT Government and the NT Government.

"We are delighted to add the South Australian Government to the expanding number of significant clients within our QBT business," said Helloworld Travel CEO Andrew Burnes.

"Our service offerings, provided by the outstanding teams we have across Australia including Adelaide, combined with our technology suite provide excellent outcomes for our customers," he said.

QBT Group General Manager, Nick Sutherland, said the SA Government tender was a "rigorous and professional process which allowed QBT to demonstrate our service expertise and the advanced digital and personal service we offer our customers".

The contract is for a minimum term of three years.



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## Webjet ads return

**WEBJET** has renewed its attack on travel agents, bringing back contentious television advertising that asserts travellers can do better by booking online.

Ads that first aired in 2016 have reappeared in the past week on mainstream broadcasters including the Nine and Seven networks, and suggest the online giant can provide more flight options than travel agents.

They involve a woman complaining that her agent offered her only four flights, saying "we could do better than that ourselves, so we did".

Webjet's campaigns have drawn angry reactions from travel agents in the past, and were the subject of an AFTA complaint to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in 2016 over "misleading comparative advertising" (**TD** 16 Aug 2016).

The website appeared to drop its anti-agent ads last year when it mounted a new brand campaign, but it is not known whether the current ads mark a return to the earlier strategy.

Webjet did not respond to **TD's** request for clarification.



## Window Seat

**PEOPLE** in Chicago will need to get used to the Kiwi sense of humour, now that Air New Zealand is operating non-stop flights to the city.

At a ceremony at Chicago O'Hare International Airport to welcome the inaugural flight, a "Kapa Haka" group of Air NZ staff performed some traditional Maori songs to commemorate the new service.

Afterwards during his speech NZ CEO Christopher Luxon explained perhaps why Airport Commissioner Rich Bobbit had seemed a little anxious as he greeted the contingent.

"I suggested to Rich that he should reciprocate by singing *My Kind of Town* as a tribute to Chicago," with Bobbit then hurriedly Googling the words in case he was called to perform.

Luxon quickly put his mind to rest, saying "New Zealanders have a sarcastic and ironic New sense of humour...we weren't quite serious about that".

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### Cruise sustainability

A NEW joint report by Australasia's three leading cruise organisations showcases the work being done by the cruise sector to preserve the world's waterways.

Cruise Lines International Association Australasia, the Australian Cruise Association and the NZ Cruise Association have combined to highlight a range of initiatives including cleaner fuel, reduced emissions, recycling and waste management, destination sustainability and cooperation on a regional and global scale.

The new *Cruise Industry Sustainability Guide* will be distributed to members of each organisation, who will in turn disseminate it to their wider communities and stakeholders to raise awareness of the work being done by the cruise industry as a collaborative effort.

The report is available for download from each organisation including at [cruising.org.au](http://cruising.org.au).

### CWT predictions

CWT SOLUTIONS Group, the consulting division of Carlson Wagonlit Travel, has announced the introduction of so-called "Predictive Analytics" capabilities which it says significantly improves the accuracy of forecasts to provide better visibility over key travel metrics.

The initiative is based on an advanced data model that analyses large historic travel data sets as well as commodity prices, weather, holidays and macro-economic indicators.

"Those data are analysed to identify patterns and correlations, generating robust predictions for a company's future spend - specifically number of trips and cost per trip," said Christophe Renard, Vice President of CWT Solutions Group.

A successful trial with one of CWT's largest clients identified areas with potential savings of up to 10%, the company said.

THIS group of Aussie agents recently experienced a lesser-known side of Northern California, after winning the Undiscovered San Francisco digital scavenger hunt on the California STAR training platform.

San Francisco Travel partnered with Visit California and San Francisco International Airport to host the fam, which saw the group fly direct to SFO with Qantas from Melbourne.

Four nights in the city included an immersive theatre experience at The Speakeasy, a brewery tour through the historic Haight-Ashbury hippie district and a

concert at The Fillmore.

They also travelled farther afield, heading south to *Big Little Lies* territory in Monterey and down the Pacific coast to Big Sur.

The trip ended on a high note at SFO with a visit from Wag Brigade, a program that brings trained dogs to the airport to make travel more enjoyable.

The team are pictured above in their glad rags, back row from left: Ian Carswell, Alexandra Sparr, Kelly Chapman, Emina Hodzic, Melanie Carter, Angela Bowerman & Natalie Blackmore.

Front row: Dana Brown and Rob DiBenedetto.






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## Marriott data breach

**HUNDREDS** of millions of hotel customers are believed to have been impacted by a data breach at Marriott International, with the company confirming someone had made “unauthorised access” to the database which contained

guest information relating to reservations at Starwood properties before 10 Sep 2018.

Marriott said after receiving an internal security alert in Sep this year it engaged security experts, who determined the Starwood network had been accessed by alleged hackers since 2014.

The company said information had been stolen, including details of up to 500 million guests.

For about 327 million of those the data included some combination of name, mailing address, phone number, email address, passport number, Starwood Preferred Guest account info, date of birth, arrival and departure information.

Credit card information was also taken but it was encrypted.

Marriott has established a dedicated website and call centre to address customer concerns - see [info.starwoodhotels.com](http://info.starwoodhotels.com).

## Qantas Asia update

**FROM** 31 Mar, Qantas will re-time one of its two daily Sydney-Hong Kong services to depart Sydney in the evening to offer travellers either a morning or evening departure from the city.

The retimed QF117 service from Sydney will operate overnight and arrive into HK in the morning.

QF has also confirmed its QF71 and QF72 Perth to Singapore services will continue to be operated by the A330 rather than the 737 through until 31 Mar.



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## Travellers Choice electrifies



**THE** Travellers Choice annual Shareholders' Conference held over the weekend at Cairns Convention Centre saw the top 30 performing agencies awarded with Gold, Silver or Bronze Choice Awards, with winners determined by the level of support they provide the network's range of preferred suppliers.

MD Christian Hunter said this year's winners fully deserved their rewards, however, the benefits of the Choice Awards ultimately flowed to all of the group's member shareholders.

“By focusing support on preferred supplier sales, the Choice Awards program plays a key role in helping our network optimise the value of our preferred agreements,” he said.

“All Travellers Choice members, as the Company's sole shareholders, continue to share in the resulting financial rewards.”

This year's 10 Gold Choice Award winners **pictured** above are: Chip Popescu, Select World Travel; Lisa Carter, Capricorn Travel; Deb Long, Weston Cruise & Travel; Gillian Connors, Ucango Travel



& Cruise Centre; Leonie Ivey, Windsong Travel; Sherrilyn Wigg, Discover Travel & Cruise; Mark Brady, Ballina Cruise & Travel; Jack Brandon, Savenio; and Michelle Everson, Jamison Travel; absent - Oliver Travel.

**Pictured** below are: Mark Hastwell, owner of Hastwell Travel and former Travellers Choice Chairman; retiring Chairman Trish Ridsdale; and the newly appointed Chairman Trent Bartlett.

**Inset** is Christian Hunter bidding farewell to Ridsdale.



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## Air NZ Chicago inaugural



**DIGNITARIES** from New Zealand and Chicago gathered at a special reception on Fri night to welcome Air NZ's first ever flight from Auckland to the Windy City.

The Boeing 787-9 flight took about 13 hours to make the trip thanks to strong tailwinds, with Brand USA, Choose Chicago and Air NZ partnering for welcome events at the Langham Chicago and the nearby Revel Motor Row event space, where the airline treated guests to some authentic Kiwi culture -

not to mention outstanding NZ cuisine courtesy of Air NZ consultant chef Peter Gordon.

**Pictured** above from left: Wayne Mitcham, Brand USA Country Manager NZ; Cathy Domenico, Brand USA; Cam Wallace, Air NZ Chief Revenue Officer; and David Whitaker, Choose Chicago President and CEO.

These pics were taken during the weekend festivities, with lots more at [facebook.com/traveldaily](https://facebook.com/traveldaily).

**DAVE** Coombes, Flight Centre NZ; Ryan Montgomery, National Sales Manager Air NZ; David Ballard, NZ Bloom; and Tony Carter, Chairman Air New Zealand.



**MARK** O'Donnell, House of Travel; Andrew Burnes, CEO Helloworld Travel; and Adrian Littlewood, CEO Auckland Airport.



**AIR** New Zealand Chief Revenue Officer Cam Wallace with Julie Reid, United Airlines and First Travel Group CEO Malcolm MacLeod.

## BROCHURES

**WELCOME** to Brochures of the Week, *Travel Daily's* Monday feature. If your firm is releasing a new brochure you'd like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description summarising its features and itineraries, including a PDF of the front cover, and contact details to [brochures@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:brochures@traveldaily.com.au).



### Skimax Holidays - Australia, New Zealand and South America 2019

Skimax Holidays has released its 2019 Southern Hemisphere brochure, which it promised included everything needed to book a ski trip to Australia, New Zealand and South America. The program packs in early bird offers, accommodation, lift passes, car hire and adventure activities. The company offers ski holiday options in Perisher, Falls Creek, Queenstown, Mt Hutt, Portillo and more.



### Scenic - China & Japan 2019/20

Scenic's Oriental Wonders of China and Japan 2019/20 program features a new flagship tour through China, the 27-day Silk Road and Tibet Discovery travelling from Beijing to Chengdu. The new itinerary explores a section of the silk road and features two nights in Dunhuang. Other program highlights include the 19-day Grand China, Beijing to Shanghai, 17-day Essential Japan, Tokyo to Osaka and 17-day Treasures of Japan, Fukuoka to Tokyo. Scenic is also offering fly free deals and a \$200pp early booking discount to mark the launch.

## UAE legacy flight

**EMIRATES**, Etihad, flydubai, Air Arabia and Al Fursan yesterday flew in formation to celebrate the UAE's 47th National Day and commemorate its late founding father, Sheikh Zayed.

The flight formation "reflects the unity, leadership and the forward vision of the UAE," said Group CEO Air Arabia Adel Al Ali.

Watch the video [HERE](#).

## Serko & Troovo

**TRAVEL** and expense technology solution group Serko and Troovo Technologies have partnered to provide a virtualised travel transaction process.

Troovo CEO Kurt Knackstedt said the "partnership enables travel management companies across all markets to scale up their use of new technologies without having to rely on manual mid-office systems or clunky, script-based automation routines to try and support their bookings".

The partnership would also see Serko's booking platform, Zeno leverage Troovo Payments module, offering the "first fully robotic virtual payments capability supporting any booking type or payment provider".

## Hyatt Two roads

**HYATT** Hotels Corporation has completed the previously announced acquisition of lifestyle hotel management company Two Roads Hospitality (**TD** 09 Oct).

"We will leverage the shared expertise of Hyatt and Two Roads across our powerful combined portfolio of 19 brands to bring best-in-class offerings for guests around the globe," said Hyatt Hotels' President and CEO Mark Hoplamazian.

## Qantas Xmas sale

**QANTAS** has launched its "12 Holidays of Christmas Sale", giving customers access to new sale fares until 12 Dec.

Flights to the UK and Europe include Melbourne to London from \$1,249 return and Brisbane to Athens from \$1,492 return.

**CLICK HERE** for more.

## BITRE traffic Sep

**INTERNATIONAL** scheduled passenger traffic in Sep 2018 has increased by 4% from the previous year, with 3.5 million compared to 3.3 million in Sep 2017, according to the latest figures from the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE).

Pax traffic for the year ended Sep 2018 was 41.1m, a 5.1% increase from 2017, with Qantas, Jetstar & Jetstar Asia accounting for 26% of total pax carriage.

## Creative Cruising celebrates 25 years

**CREATIVE** Cruising last week celebrated its 25th birthday, hosting key suppliers and agents at the Andrew (Boy) Charlton Poolside cafe in Sydney. Marking a quarter century of cruise industry innovation, the event also involved the launch of a new brand identity and a booking platform, and was joined by Express Travel Group CEO Tom Manwaring and Executive General Manager Ari Magoutis.

As Creative Cruising approaches a year under new ownership, the company's General Manager Peter Forsyth expressed gratitude for the continued support of suppliers and valued agency partners. Head of Marketing and Sales Caroline Hitchen showcased the new brand identity, while prize giveaways were provided by cruise partners included in Creative Cruising's current campaign running until 15 Feb.

After enjoying a long lunch and networking, Creative Cruising gave away a major prize of a \$1,000 Gift Card won by Sue Paul from Swansea Travel & Cruise.

To participate in Creative Cruising's biggest giveaway visit [creativecruising.com.au](http://creativecruising.com.au) for details on prizes and how to enter.



**CREATIVE** Cruising Qld/ACT BDM Jason Starling, Vic/SA BDM Lara Anderson, Express Travel Group CEO Tom Manwaring and Creative's National Key Accounts Manager Natalie Freeman.



**PETER** Forsyth, Caroline Hitchen & Jorge Castillo of Canvas Group with Creative Cruising's Sales & Marketing Executive Viktoriya Shliazhko.



**CREATIVE** Cruising General Manager Peter Forsyth.



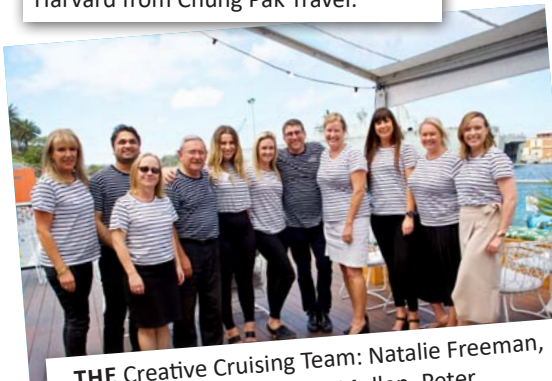
**MARGERITTA** Dai and Carmen Harvard from Chung Pak Travel.



**PETER** Forsyth and Mark van Huisstede of italktravel Maitland with Doug Melhuish from Holiday World.



**CREATIVE** Cruising's 25th birthday cake.



**THE** Creative Cruising Team: Natalie Freeman, Kaivalya Harmalkar, Carina Mullen, Peter Forsyth, Viktoriya Shliazhko, Jade Shaw, Jason Starling, Suzie Goumas, Astrid Maier, Lara Anderson and Caroline Hitchen.



**MSC** Cruises Commercial Manager Donna Anderson.



**VOUCHER** Winner Sue Paul of Swansea Travel.



**MARK** van Huisstede & Jackie Wright of italktravel Maitland with Creative's Jason Starling.



**HEAD** of Marketing & Sales Caroline Hitchen.



## Canada, UK deal

CANADA and the United Kingdom have reached an agreement on a new open skies air deal between the two countries.

The agreement will allow an unlimited number of Canadian and British air carriers to operate between both nations, and gives airlines "full flexibility" on route selection, frequency of service, and pricing.

## WA food & wine

WESTERN Australia has introduced a series of 14 food and wine trails to promote producers and tourism.

The Tourism WA initiative involves brochures and maps for each trail, with details on local produce, tours & accommodation.

Areas covered include the Swan Valley, Blackwood Valley, Margaret River, Albany, Fremantle, Bunbury and the Southern Forests.

## Solomons websites

THE Solomon Islands Government has unveiled two new websites aimed at visitors and industry, building on the destination's new "Solomon's Is" brand identity.

Visitors can find information at [www.visitsolomons.com.sb](http://www.visitsolomons.com.sb), while a corporate and industry site is at [tourismsolomons.com](http://tourismsolomons.com).

## United Prem Econ

UNITED Airlines' new Premium Economy seating, United Premium Plus, will go on sale today for travel on additional international routes from 30 Mar, with 21 routes scheduled to offer the product by May.

The new Premium seating debuted on select Boeing 777-200ER, 300ER and 787-10 aircraft earlier this year.

## Tanzania visa online

BENCH Africa has confirmed visas for Tanzania, including Zanzibar, are now available via an online application process.

Visitors need to complete an online form and make payment - [CLICK HERE](#) for details.



Club Med loves Christmas whether it's in the sun or in the snow! So to celebrate the festive season, they're giving agents the chance to win a stay at the Club Med resort of your choice in Asia or the Indian Ocean.

The all-inclusive prize includes:

- Five nights for two people in a superior room at the Club Med resort of your choice in Asia or the Indian Ocean
- Gourmet meals and all day snacking
- Premium open bar including beer, wine and cocktails
- A wide range of included sports & activities
- Nightly entertainment

To win, tell us in 25 words or less which Club Med resort you'd love to go to for Christmas and why. Send your entry to [clubmed@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:clubmed@traveldaily.com.au)

## VICE, Visit Seattle

VISIT Seattle has teamed up with youth media company VICE to launch a new video feature targeting young travellers.

The *South of Seattle* is hosted by musician Jamie Timony, who explores the city's music scene by meeting with members of the creative community.

The video is live now, to watch it [CLICK HERE](#).

## Aboriginal tours

THE West Australian Government is seeking Aboriginal tourism operators to provide a range of new commercial visitor experiences at Kings Park and Botanic Garden.

The initiative has been prompted by demand from domestic and international visitors for authentic Aboriginal cultural experiences.

Tourism WA data indicates 78% of visitors to WA seek an Aboriginal cultural experience.

Expressions of interest are open and close 14 Jan - [CLICK HERE](#).

## Explore photo trips

EXPLORE Worldwide has introduced six new photography trips led by photographers Renato Granieri and Robert Harvey.

The additions include the nine-day Jordan Photographic Discovery which will capture Petra, the Druze tribes in Azraq and desert scenes in Wadi Rum.

Also new is the 12-day Photographing Sri Lanka, 10-day Photographing Borneo's Wildlife Safari and 12-day Best of the Western US.

For more info, call Adventure World on 1300 439 756.

## China Eastern A350

CHINA Eastern welcomed its first A350-900 jet in Shanghai on Fri, which will tomorrow begin operating between Shanghai Pudong International Airport and Beijing Capital Int'l Airport.

From Jan the carrier will use this aircraft to operate between Shanghai Pudong International Airport and Australia, Europe and North America.

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REWARD POINTS



**THURSDAY 6 DEC**

**WATERWAYS OF THE TSARS**

Fly free and free cabin upgrade within stateroom category

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**\$50**  
REWARD POINTS



**FRIDAY 7 DEC**

**BALTIC JEWELS & MIDNIGHT SUN**

Save \$2,400 per couple

**BONUS**  
**\$50**  
REWARD POINTS



**MONDAY 10 DEC**

**PASSAGE TO EASTERN EUROPE**

Fly for \$995pp + complimentary Silver Spirits Beverage Package

**BONUS**  
**\$50**  
REWARD POINTS



**TUESDAY 11 DEC**

**CITIES OF ANTIQUITY & THE HOLY LAND**

Free 2-night Athens extension

**BONUS**  
**\$50**  
REWARD POINTS



**WEDNESDAY 12 DEC**

**GRAND EUROPEAN TOUR**

Fly free + complimentary Silver Spirits Beverage Package

**BONUS**  
**\$50**  
REWARD POINTS



**THURSDAY 13 DEC**

**SOUTH AMERICA & CHILEAN FJORDS**

Complimentary Silver Spirits Beverage Package

**BONUS**  
**\$100**  
REWARD POINTS



**FRIDAY 14 DEC**

**PORTUGAL'S RIVER OF GOLD**

Fly for \$995pp + \$200 shipboard credit

**BONUS**  
**\$50**  
REWARD POINTS



**MONDAY 17 DEC**

**KOMODO & THE AUSTRALIAN COAST**

Fly free and free cabin upgrade within stateroom category

**BONUS**  
**\$50**  
REWARD POINTS



**TUESDAY 18 DEC**

**MAGNIFICENT MEKONG**

Fly free and free cabin upgrade within stateroom category



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On behalf of Adriana D'Angelis and the AA Team,  
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for your great support in 2018.

We wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a prosperous New Year  
and look forward to assisting you in 2019.



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