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FCTG merges DMC brands

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has consolidated two of its destination management companies to create a new "powerhouse" global experience brand called Discova.

The newly created company is the result of a merger between the recently purchased Asian tour specialist Buffalo Tours Asia, and Latin American tour operator Olympus Tours.

Discova Managing Director Greg Kitchen said the restructure was motivated by a desire to "expand our global reach", so that Flight Centre could "remain at the forefront of in-destination travel services".

"This merger is not about changing who we are - it's about underscoring our core values and strengthening the alignment between our businesses," he said.

The repositioning of the Buffalo and Olympus businesses into the

single Discova business also beefs up Flight Centre's credentials in the business to business DMC market, with Discova offering a range of services tailored to companies such as day touring, transportation, extended touring, educational travel and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions).

Flight Centre said the new brand positioning would be completed in the back end of 2019, in time to be showcased at World Travel Mart in London in Nov.

Discova currently operates in 14 countries across Asia, Mexico, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

MH rejigs MEL, SYD

MALAYSIA Airlines has flagged plans to increase flights on its Kuala Lumpur to Melbourne service from 14 to 17 per week between 16 Nov and 29 Feb.

The flights will be operated by Airbus A330-300 aircraft.

MEANWHILE the carrier has scheduled the deployment of new Airbus A350-900XWB aircraft on the KUL-SYD route, operating effective 23 Nov.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has eight pages of news and photos, plus a full page from:

- TMS Talent



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Manila from \$169

CEBU Pacific has launched a "First of Financial Year Seat Sale" allowing Australians to fly to Manila one-way from Melbourne from \$169 and Sydney from \$209.

The deal is for travel between 01 Sep and 30 Nov.

For more info, [CLICK HERE](#).

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On The Go Canada office

GLOBAL tour operator On The Go Tours has revealed it will open a reservations office in Toronto, Canada, on 01 Aug, as it looks to meet the needs of its growing North American client-base.

The specialist in locally-led group tours and tailor-made holidays believes the new office will ensure it can deliver quality service to its North American customers, overcoming the challenge of time zones, while ensuring that both clients and agents are assisted in real time.

On The Go Tours reported it had seen a 20% year-on-year increase in bookings from the region, with indications showing the Canadian market was "even stronger" than the US, with the business forecasting it to grow by a further 40% this year.

The new office will be led by On

The Go Tours GM Mike Quinto, and will be the working base for six reservation consultants, who will join colleagues in London, Brisbane and Johannesburg.

"Our tours to Africa, Egypt, Iceland, Vietnam and Latin America are by far our most popular destinations for the North American Market," Quinto said.

"These regions are complemented by high airline capacity and competitive airfares, which adds to the appeal."

The Canadian team will work closely with travel agents and established trade partners to drive awareness of the UK-based company in North America.

On The Go Tours currently offers tours and tailor-made holidays in 60 countries around the world, including destinations as diverse as Peru, Jordan and Japan, combining authentic cultural experiences with comfortable hotels and transport.

Etihad ups London

ETIHAD Airways has added a fourth year-round daily service to London Heathrow, from 27 Oct.

The airline said it would introduce a two-class 299-seat Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner on one of its four daily London services.

The remaining flights will be operated on 486-seat Airbus A380s, which feature The Residence, nine private First Apartments, 70 Business Studios and 405 Economy Smart Seats.

EY recently boosted frequencies on the route to meet demand at peak times (TD 06 May).

Travel Daily on location near the North Pole

Today's issue of TD is coming to you courtesy of Hurtigruten Cruises, aboard the new MS Roald Amundsen cruising between Svalbard & Greenland.

ROALD Amundsen has arrived in the fjords of northern Greenland, after a scenic transit including views of several polar bears roaming the scattered ice floes.

Each time one of the "kings of the north" was encountered, the sighting was announced by the on-board expedition crew, and the ship's Captain slowed the vessel to provide an ideal vantage point while at the same time not stressing the animals.

We're now poised to explore the Greenland National Park, which was established in 1974 and is larger than all but 29 countries of the world.

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Qantas Passenger Perks

QANTAS has launched a program called Passenger Perks in a bid to entice more international visitors to travel to Australia with the flag carrier.

The program was launched yesterday in partnership with Australia's state tourism organisations and offers exclusive discounts for international travellers on local experiences when they fly with Qantas.

Eligible customers can use their Qantas international flight booking to unlock a range of more than 40 special offers across nature, wildlife and cultural experiences.

Qantas CMO Stephanie Tully said the experiences were designed to encourage more int'l visitors to make Australia their next vacation destination.

"As the national carrier, we're proud to work with our state tourism partners to promote

the best of Australia to travellers around the world," said Tully.

"We've selected some of the most truly Australian experiences for our customers to access at a special rate when they book their flights with Qantas, catering to all different types of travellers.

"Qantas Passenger Perks means customers can unlock even more value when they travel to Australia and at the same time, boost tourism to our cities, towns and regional areas."

Offers available in Sydney include 20% off a Harbour Bridge climb and 30% off a surf lesson at Bondi Beach, while in Queensland passengers can access 25% off Great Barrier Reef tours and 20% off Reef and Island scenic flights.

Int'l customers also have access to Qantas Explorer fares, offering access to special fares for domestic flights when they fly with Qantas internationally.

Explore's growth

EXPLORE Worldwide Managing Director Joe Ponte has flagged enormous growth for his brand, telling *Travel Daily* tour capacity numbers were up 138% in Jun in Australia compared to the same month last year.

Following on from the brand's recent partnership with Adventure World Travel for a renewed push in the Australian market (*TD* 17 Oct), Explore has also seen numbers for capacity down under up 72% in the past two months.

"We've been extraordinarily pleased with how the partnership with Adventure World has gone," Ponte said.

"It's been great getting the Explore Worldwide brand back out to the travel agent community in Australia and New Zealand," he said, adding that the numbers "speak for themselves".

"At the start of the year we were up double-digits in percentage growth."



Window Seat

WHEN you are one of the plebs, tweets of gratitude might get a like, or a friendly response.

When you're a star of a global drama series, tweeting your praise for Air New Zealand, you're likely to become the star of the airline's next safety video - just ask Rick Hoffman, AKA Louis Litt from *Suits*.

After his first visit to NZ in 2017, Hoffman described Air NZ as the "most accomodating" airline in the world.

From 01 Aug he will star in a new pre-flight video alongside Kiwi stars, All Blacks Coach, Steve Hansen; Captain, Kieran Read; former Black Ferns Captain Fiao'o Fa'amasuili and members of the 1987 All Blacks squad, along with retired Wallaby George Gregan.



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More runs with India

THE Federal Government has announced a new \$5 million campaign to position Australia as an attractive tourist destination for Indian cricket fans.

Federal Minister for Tourism Simon Birmingham said the major marketing push would seek to leverage cricket tournaments, such as the ICC T20 World Cup being held in Australia next year, to help broaden the country's destination appeal in India.

"We know from research that major sporting events have far reaching impacts and are significant drivers of visitor demand, with 16% of all int'l visitors attending a sporting event during their trip," he said.

"The Indian tourism market is currently worth \$1.7b and is our fastest growing inbound tourism market, with visitation forecast to grow...to nearly 1.2m by 2035".

Activations kick off in Aug at a Tourism Australia event in India.

PetCloud giveaway

PET sitting platform PetCloud is giving away four \$50 vouchers to **Travel Daily** readers to either use for themselves or pass on to their pet-owning clients as a value add.

The platform promotes itself as being "like Airbnb for pets" and connects travelling pet owners with local pet sitters who look after their fur babies while they are away.

To claim the voucher, be one of the first four **TD** readers to email marketing@petcloud.com.au.

Rex Qld fare scheme

REGIONAL Express (Rex) has introduced its Community Fare scheme to 23 remote communities in outback Qld.

The reduced prices are available across the Rex operated Western one and two routes from Brisbane, the Northern one and two routes from Townsville and the Gulf route from Cairns.

Capella Sydney reduced



SOURCE: Hassell.

PROPERTY developer Pontiac Land Australia has lodged a revised proposal to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment that will see the number of rooms for its Capella Sydney hotel project reduced by 61 to 229.

The primary reason put forward for the modification request was to deliver "significant benefits" from both a heritage and public access perspective.

Under the revised plan, Capella Sydney will change the internal layout of the Lands Building by removing guest rooms in exchange for hotel amenities such as food and beverage spaces,

Business suites, as well as a library and lounge area.

The recalibrated plan also proposes the removal of a previously approved building diagonal framework, and the scrapping of an extension of existing roof style across new internal walkways.

Altered blueprints show plans for new publicly accessible terrace spaces and access into the northern dome, including a new mezzanine level.

The Capella Sydney is scheduled to open to the public in 2021.

Pictured: An aerial view of the revised proposal for The Lands Building roofscape.



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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

Targeting planners

TRAVEL platform TripAdvisor has introduced a new destination sponsorship product for organisations seeking to reach “High-Intent” travellers.

The New Destination Sponsorship Experience offering is designed to help more destination marketing organisations target travellers who are actively searching for new ideas on where to stay or dine in a specific location.

“By using rich media, inclusive of vibrant imagery, video and curated travel experiences, our partners can influence and reach more travellers during the exact moment when they are most open to discovering new places to visit,” said TripAdvisor’s Vice President, Advertising Revenue Christine Maguire.

Features of the new product include destination branding at the top of search feeds, curated image albums, and a carousel of engaging video & photo content.

Alt Accom goes live

TRAVELCLICK, an Amadeus company, has announced the launch of the Alternative Accommodations Solution, the latest addition to its business intelligence product suite that caters to the growing alternative accommodation space.

Available as an add-on to Demand360 and Rate360, the tool delivers users with insights on more than 27 million home-sharing listings across the globe.

“We believe that hoteliers cannot overlook the pressure of alternative accommodations that are competitive on price, location and amenities...our new solution gives our customers relevant, real-time data in an easy-to-use tool,” said TravelClick Senior Vice President Business Intelligence Greg Sheppard.

The world supply of alternative accommodations has grown by a sizable 33% from 2017 to 2018.

To request a demonstration, or for further info, [CLICK HERE](#).

An Element of partying



MARRIOTT International’s new Element Melbourne Richmond hotel was officially launched in style late last week as media and hotel executives gathered to mark the opening in celebration.

The party heralded the debut of the Element by Westin brand in Australia, with the 168-room property focussing on being eco-conscious, as well as catering to the growing wellness space.

Guests at the party were treated to fresh meals by Executive Chef Adam Rondinelli, which were complemented by a range of sustainable wines and a gin station with fresh botanicals.

To keep the health motif going, a bike-pedal-powered photo wall was also available for active selfies, as well as a build-your-own scent pop-up installation.

Playing to the hotel’s pet-



friendly credentials, partygoers with pets were offered special grooming services and a pet buffet to satisfy the appetites of the furrier attendees.

Pictured: Toni Stoeckl, Global Brand Leader, Lifestyle Brands at Marriott International; Harry Singh, GM Element Melbourne Richmond; and Sean Hunt, Area Vice President, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, Marriott International.

Inset: reality TV stars Vanessa Sunshine, Florence Alexandra, Zoe O’Brien and Clare Verrall with their pampered pets.

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Minor purchase

MINOR Hotels has acquired the 74-villa Golden Door Elysia Health Retreat and Spa resort in the Hunter Valley, from Lasseters International Holdings.

From today, the property will operate as Elysia Wellness Retreat, with the resort continuing to offer its existing range of accommodation packages, spa services and wellbeing programs, through to summer 2020, when Minor Hotels will introduce fresh offerings which build on the Golden Door's philosophy.

The group has appointed Shaun O'Bryan as the resort's GM.

Packages at the Elysia Wellness Resort start from \$1,235 for a two-day program.

TC hits \$1.03b TTV

TRAVEL Counsellors has hit a Total Transaction Value (TTV) of \$1.03 billion between Nov 2017-Oct 2018, marking a record for the period and 14% increase on the same time last year.

In the 12 months ending 30 Jun, total accounting turnover for the business also rose to \$469 million, up 21% from the previous year's figure of \$388 million, achieving a 13th consecutive year of double-digit growth.

Last month Travel Counsellors Chief Executive Officer Steve Byrne said the group is expecting its global TTV to reach \$2 billion in the next five years, telling **TD** Travel Counsellors achieved a TTV of \$1.1 billion for the calendar year 2018 (**TD** 18 Jun).

Tikka delivers taste of India



INDIA destination specialist Tikka Tours concluded its inaugural India & Beyond Unearthed roadshow in Sydney last week, hosted in conjunction with TAJ Hotels.

A select group of travel agents were taken on a virtual journey throughout dinner, exploring luxury hotels, palaces and iconic sights, learnt about the wildlife and India's spiritual and traditional wellness experiences.

Boasting 30 years' experience in India and beyond, Tikka Tours founder Claudia Wolf provides a personalised service to agents that are seeking a niche operator who specialises in group tours.

Additionally, Tikka Tours offers private travel options and can create customised itineraries featuring mid- and high-end product.

Wolf told **Travel Daily**, "We've seen an increase in enquiries for experience-based tours such as 'Wild India', where nature loving clients get up close and personal with tigers and leopards, and the 'Mumbai Food & Wine Trail' tour hosted by an award-winning chef

that takes food and wine lovers throughout India's gourmet city and the nearby wine region of Nashik".

Tikka Tours has recently launched a refreshed website (**CLICK HERE**) and is in the process of organising agent famils to Sri Lanka and India, on the back of successful trips earlier this year.

"The support from travel agents has been overwhelming, in particular the interest we received from our events in Newcastle and the Central Coast, and we look forward to continuing to showcase Tikka Tours' unique offering to new agents," said Wolf.

The operator also revealed plans to launch tours to Nepal, Bhutan and Ladakh next year.

Pictured at the Sydney event held at Doltone House are: Claudia Wolf; Mohan Narayanaswamy, Travel Scope India; Vanitha Sinnathamby, Out & About Travel, the winner of the major prize to India; Thushara Liyanarachchi, TAJ Hotels; Shoba Mohan, RARE India and Sanjay Umashankar, Svatma.

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Applications close on Sunday 11 August, 2019. For more information and online application please visit emiratesgroupcareers.com using job reference 190000W2.



Product Executive

This position would suit a self-motivated, enthusiastic and highly organised individual with a strong passion for detail and computer skills. It encompasses the loading, maintenance and accuracy of product information and pricing in our internal reservations system and the generation of reports and competitive analysis.

Monitor and analyse product profitability and growth through close communication and liaison with other departments and staff to build an effective link between reservation teams and the sales and marketing department.

Manage supplier relations to ensure profitability and suitable products are developed and maintained in the region.

Please send your cover letter and resume to: jobs@beyondtravel.com.au

New Crowne Plaza designs



CROWNE Plaza Hotels & Resorts has revealed a new design concept will feature at six new flagship locations in the United States, Europe and China, which are all set to open by early 2020.

The updated designs will also feature in newbuilds in Hobart, Adelaide and Sydney, which are slated to debut next year.

The new locations will underscore the global rollout of the brand's refreshed design across public spaces, guest rooms, food and beverage, technology, service and more.

The new concepts for public

spaces and guestrooms are inspired by continued demand for flexible spaces, which include distinct areas embedded with technology.

Select flagship properties will feature flexible lobby areas with on-demand meeting spaces.

Major enhancements are also underway across Australia, including refurbishments of the locations in Melbourne, Coogee Beach and Terrigal.

Pictured is the workspace at the Crowne Plaza Paris Republique, which was the first to sport the new look for the brand in Europe.

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AFTA UPDATE

from Jayson Westbury



IN JUST two days from today (Thu 01 Aug 2019) what has been a very long road, too many

conferences and working groups to think about, a lot of talk (in some cases dribble) and a lot of hype, NDC will take centre stage as Qantas turns on its Qantas Direct Channel (QDC).

I can't wait. I mean I, and everyone else, have been waiting for something chart topping, amazing, game changing, seismic shifting – because that is what the story tellers of the airline industry have led us to believe.

A free kick for Qantas on this however, as that has not been the airline's rhetoric, but it has been the thrust of the airline public relations machine – IATA.

The stark truth of it all, in real down in the trenches reality, is that for a travel agent in Australia on 01 Aug 2019, what they can book, how they search, what their consultants can see as they look to book to pay for their client, will be exactly the same as it was on 31 July.

So, a little bit of a letdown from my perspective and there is no doubt from the travel agency community a big letdown.

Of all the things that AFTA has been contacted about by members over my short 12 years, this tops the list.

I have had more emails, phone calls, text messages, enquiries, outrageous communications, nudges and pushes than I got when we de-regulated the industry four years ago.

So it would seem to me that this stuff really matters, yet does it?

At the end of the day when all is said and done, my number one question for any airline looking

to migrate to an NDC platform for distribution has been "will we [meaning the airline and agent], sell more tickets and make more money"?

It remains a simple question and unfortunately the lion's share of the responses that I get from across the travel value chain is – "I don't know".

So what are we trying to solve? I'm told it is more about the customer and the experience and access agents will have to content that they can't get easily today – except that will not be the case on the 01 Aug this year, it will be on another day sometime into the future, so we will have to wait and see what that really means.

For all the agents in Australia and across the globe who have taken the leap of faith and signed the agreement, I say to you – congratulations. This was your only path, but it is a path we all hope will bring all the wonderful benefits that we can only imagine at this point in time.

Now some will read this column and get cranky, some will read this column and wonder what it is all about, and some will read this and say – "you're right, let us see", because if we all have faith in the truth it will always prevail, and if we and the airlines are to be in a partnership, then faith and truth must be at the centre of everything we do together.

So best of luck for NDC Day, which will go down in history as sharing the horses' birthday. Perhaps in a year from now when I am bashing out this column, it will start with – wow, it's amazing how things are so much better, easier, efficient and accessible and it's true, we are all selling more tickets and making more money and all will be good in the world.

I sincerely hope that is the outcome for all.

Insight plants trees

INSIGHT Vacations and its partner One Tree Planted celebrated National Tree Day in Tasmania yesterday by beginning to plant one tree on the island for each guest to choose paperless documents.

Since the launch of the partnership one year ago, Insight has reforested 20 hectares of trees in land throughout California and Vietnam.

A&K Sri Lanka

ABERCROMBIE & Kent (A&K) is promoting special offers on its two ready-to-book private journeys in Sri Lanka.

Those who reserve their spot on A&K's nine-day Sri Lanka by Air private journey can save up to \$835 per person, or \$1,550 per person on the 12-day Serendipitous Sri Lanka journey.

Dates and full pricing available on application - **CLICK HERE**.

World Exp leaders

MOUNTAINEERS Andrew Lock and Tim Macartney-Snape will lead two new trips for World Expeditions.

Lock was the first Australian to climb all 14 peaks over 8,000 metres, and will lead the 32-day Mt Himlung itinerary.

Macartney-Snape was the first Aussie to summit Mt Everest, and will take the 12-day Triple Peaks of the Rwenzori journey.

Tours depart 14 Oct and 27 Dec respectively.

Cigarette scandal

A SCANDAL implicating Taiwan's presidential staff has engulfed China Airlines, after the island's largest carrier revealed huge quantities of duty-free cigarettes were routinely sold to presidential bodyguards on visits overseas, *The Japan Times* says.

The carrier, which is majority-owned by the government, often puts on charter flights for presidential trips.

Figures released by the airline last Thu showed unusually high quantities of duty-free cigarettes were often ordered ahead of these trips.

Local laws limits travellers to a maximum five cartons, and only one tax-free.

Malaysia recovery

MALAYSIA Airlines owners Khazanah Nasional has hired US investment bank Morgan Stanley to investigate strategic options for the carrier's recovery plan.

Khazanah, which is the sovereign wealth fund of the Government of Malaysia, is understood to be considering a number of proposals for the recovery of the airline, including an offer from a group led by former AirAsia Chairman Pahamin Abdul Rajab (**TD** 09 Jul).

Harmony building

EVERGREEN is celebrating one month until the debut of *Emerald Harmony* with five images and a time-lapse video of the build.

View the images and video and read more information about *Harmony* **HERE**.

WIN A TRIP TO morocco

This month Gate 1 Travel is joining Travel Daily to give agents the chance to win a trip to Morocco for two. The 11-night Kaleidoscope of Morocco trip takes in ancient wonders such as the UNESCO-listed Roman ruins of Volubilis, the ancient desert city of Ait Benhaddou, the imperial city of Fez and the bustling medina of Marrakesh. Click here for more trip details.

To win you need to correctly answer one question each week in July, and at the end of the month tell us in 25 words or less why you should be the person to win this prize. Send your answers to gate1@traveldaily.com.au.

Q5 - Tell us in 25 words or less why you should win this wonderful prize.

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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US0.690

THE Australian dollar has climbed slightly to 69 US cents after reaching a one-month low against the USD late last week.

Travellers should note expected tension surrounding the AUD in the coming weeks, with the upcoming release of retail sales figures, as well as quarterly CPI data, which shows the change in the price of goods and services purchased by consumers.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.690
UK	£0.565
NZ	\$1.040
Euro	€0.620
Japan	¥75.18
Thailand	฿21.30
China	¥4.759
South Africa	9.779
Canada	\$0.909
Crude oil	US\$63.71

United CLEAR deal

UNITED Airlines has partnered with security and biometrics firm CLEAR, offering the airline's US-based MileagePlus members discounted CLEAR membership.

United will also invest in CLEAR security solutions at its hubs at Newark Liberty International and George Bush Intercontinental, in expansion of CLEAR's offerings at DEN, LAX, SFO and IAD and will support CLEAR's efforts to open screening lanes at ORD.

PPHG's new CEO

UOL Group, parent company of Pan Pacific Hotels Group (PPHG), has appointed Choe Peng Sum as Chief Executive Officer of PPHG, with effect from 01 Sep.

Peng Sum takes over from Lothar Nessmann, who stepped down after two years on 30 Jun.

Sabre appointment

SABRE has appointed Brett Thorstad as Vice President Sales Management, South East Asia and APAC joint ventures.

Thorstad will oversee sales performance and drive the retention and growth of agencies across the region.

Scout purchase

SINGAPOREAN budget airline Scoot is set to add 16 Airbus A321neos to its fleet.

The aircraft will progressively arrive from the last quarter of 2020, and are set to be deployed on routes within six hours of Scoot's hub at Singapore Changi.

The new fleet will enable Scoot to meet its growth plans by the end of FY2020/2021, as the airline prepares to operate out of SIN's Terminal 1 (**TD** 22 Jul).

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EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief and Publisher – Bruce Piper

Editor – Jasmine O'Donoghue

Contributors – Adam Bishop, Sarah Fairburn, Nicholas O'Donoghue, Myles Stedman, Jenny Piper, Christian Schweitzer
info@traveldaily.com.au

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

Sean Harrigan, Hoda Alzubaidi 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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SEARCH JOBS

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Great opportunity to showcase a timeless destination. A varied role involving creating social content for a global audience, strengthening brand awareness, managing the website & more! Exp. in digital marketing & advertising required. [VIEW JOB](#)

Learning & Development Manager - Melbourne \$85K + super

Bring your training & development experience to this newly created role in this global corporate travel management company. Identify training gaps, develop and renew organisational capabilities & drive consistency of service standards. [VIEW JOB](#)

Product Coordinator - Sydney \$50K to \$55K + super

Support the Product Mgr in this growing, reputable travel wholesaler specialising in Europe, the Indian subcontinent, cruising & more. A varied role assisting with product loading, brochure development, database management & more. [VIEW JOB](#),

Online Customer Service Consultant - Melbourne \$50K + super + bonus

A behind the scenes opportunity exists with this successful online travel agency for a Galileo or Sabre trained Travel Consultant. You will assist the customer service team with phone & email enquiries. Great team with excellent bonuses on offer! [VIEW JOB](#)

Luxury Inbound Consultant - Sydney \$65K to \$75K + super

As a senior travel designer, you will tailor-make travel experiences across Australia for the most discerning of travellers. As a leader in luxury travel, our client offers incentives, flexible working conditions & the chance to design your own famil! [VIEW JOB](#)

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Utilise your strong sales ability to create dream holidays for your valued clients. Located in the South West of Sydney, this is a great role for an experienced consultant to join a global organisation with excellent commission and a yearly famil! [VIEW JOB](#)