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## Le Ponant to R&C

**PONANT'S** recently refurbished *Le Ponant* has become the first sailing yacht member of the 580-strong global luxury Relais & Chateaux (R&C) collection of hotels & restaurants.

The 16-stateroom vessel will operate in Cape Verde and the Caribbean in 2023/24, after she finishes her one-season-only Kimberley season this year.

More of the latest cruise news in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

## FCTG's Scott Dunn US push

**SCOTT** Dunn, the luxury travel business acquired by Flight Centre earlier this year in a \$221m deal (*TD* 31 Jan) is undergoing rapid expansion including the opening of a new office in New York next month, and is also mulling plans to distribute its upmarket products via the UK travel trade.

British media reports cite CEO Sonia Davies confirming the US east coast office will complement Scott Dunn's longstanding San Diego operation, which has been in place in California since 2016.

Agency sales are a "significant" portion of Scott Dunn's US market

and the acquisition by FCTG opens up opportunities for UK trade distribution, both in-house and through independent and agency consortia, Davies said.

She noted that Jan sales in the US were up 60% on the same period in 2019, adding "our growth plan is ambitious as we recognise the considerable opportunities".

FCTG's ownership gives Scott Dunn an opportunity to look at "how we want to take the next chapter forward," she added.

## CLIA agent poll

**CRUISE** Lines International Association (CLIA) will invite travel agents across Australia and NZ to share their views on sustainability and responsible travel, as part of a global initiative to help shape future trade resources.

A link to complete the survey will be sent to all CLIA agents this week, with local responses to be collated alongside those of CLIA agents from North America, Europe and Asia.



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## GBT simplification

**AMERICAN** Express Global Business Travel has announced a simplified organisational structure which eliminates an umbrella parent corporation.

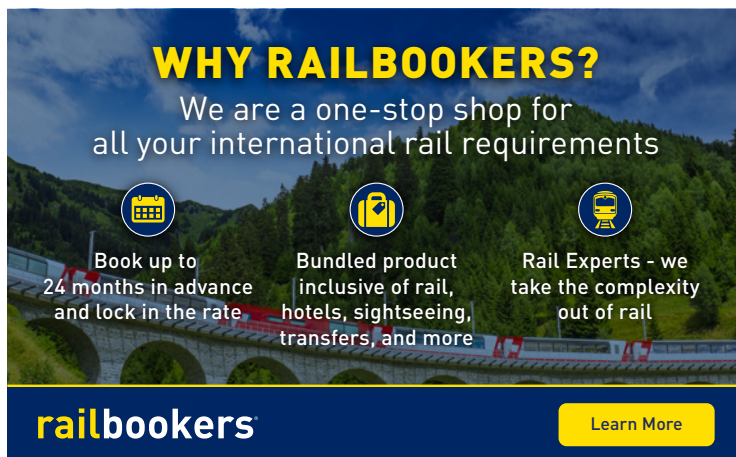
The move means all shareholders in the business hold the same class of common stock, which is anticipated to "improve market integrity" as well as reduce administrative costs and increase Amex GBT's weighting on certain sharemarket indices.

## Coral Coast drive

**THE** Travel Junction's Tourism WA partnership includes a Coral Coast self-drive package priced from \$2,249pp, including 11 days of car hire and accommodation en route from Perth to Exmouth - for details see the **last page**.

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features eight pages of the latest news including our **Luxury** feature page and a special update from **Destination Canada**, plus a full page from **The Travel Junction**.

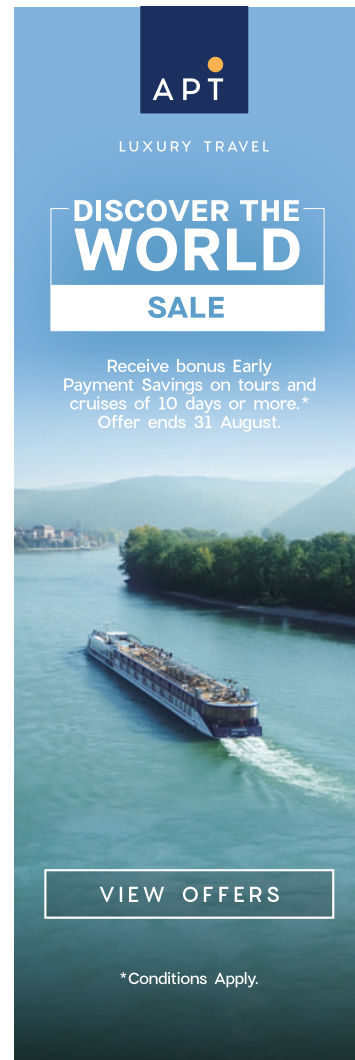


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## Salter snags Sofitel

**SALTER** Brothers has agreed to purchase Sofitel Adelaide Hotel for around \$154 million, boosting the Melbourne-based investment firm's growing portfolio.

The property features 251 rooms housed within a 32-storey mixed use tower in the heart of the CBD, and was the first internationally branded five-star hotel to be built in Adelaide in 30 years.

It marks the Salter Brothers' fifth acquisition in three months, after the company purchased four Blue Mountains properties, including the Hydro Majestic (*TD* 22 May), adding to an Aussie stable which includes Mercure, Hyatt & more.

## AFTA adds policy firepower

**INGRID** Fraser has today been announced as the new Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA), as part of an "ongoing investment in shaping policy development to benefit member businesses".

Fraser was formerly Associate Director - Workforce & Tourism Policy at the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a role in which she covered tourism, migration, employment and workforce participation.

A qualified lawyer, she will bring "extensive expertise in policy development, government

relations and stakeholder engagement at all levels of government," according to AFTA CEO Dean Long.

He said the Federation already has a strong track record in advocacy in a range of areas - such as successfully lobbying the last NSW Government to reconsider unworkable changes to terms and conditions "which would have broken the business model for every travel agent, travel business and tour operator, and left consumers stranded".

"But there's still much to be done at a state and territory level, including securing funding to support the benefit of the Federal Government adding 'travel consultants' to the Skills Priority List," Long noted.

"Ingrid's appointment will strengthen the industry's ability to engage with governments around Australia," he added.

Fraser said after working closely with Long and his team in her most recent role, "I am looking forward to being part of AFTA's ongoing work to ensure the travel sector's success".

## New Atlantic routes

**LOW-COST** transatlantic airline Norse Atlantic Airways has announced the addition of flights from Miami to Paris and Berlin over the northern winter.

The two-class 787 flights will debut in Dec, alongside services to Oslo and London.

## Scenic II the chopper!

**SCENIC** Luxury Cruises & Tours' *Scenic Eclipse II* will be the only ship sailing in the Kimberley with two helicopters on board, when she makes cruises on her inaugural season in the region next year - for more flightseeing programs, **CLICK HERE**.



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## QF A220s on way

**QANTAS** Group has confirmed its first A220 aircraft has started construction at Airbus' production facility in Canada, with the first of 29 jets to arrive in Australia by the end of the year.

The carrier will be the first on our shores to operate an A220, which Qantas will use to gradually phase out the Boeing 717s currently operating QantasLink routes across the country.

The first Qantas service to utilise the A220 will be the Melbourne and Canberra route, with the jet capable of double the range of the existing B717s, opening up the possibility of new and longer domestic routes.

To celebrate the impending integration of the A220 as part of Qantas' fleet renewal program, Aussies now have the chance to nominate up to six names for the new planes, but must be themed around native wildlife.

A shortlist will then be released to the public - nominate [HERE](#).

## Najar blasts QF/EK pact

**VETERAN** Adelaide travel agency owner Max Najar has urged the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to "sincerely address the current spate of justifiable consumer and travel industry complaints" as the regulator continues to ponder the extension of the partnership between Qantas and Emirates.

Najar has lodged a further submission with the ACCC following the recent draft decision to reauthorise the QF/EK pact while imposing conditions, particularly on the Sydney-Christchurch route (**TD** 22 Jun).

The outspoken trade advocate notes that "it is no good having two major carriers providing promises and strategies if they are not held accountable, with zero levels of policing & deterrent fines or rulings in place".

Najar commended the ACCC for monitoring the NZ route, but noted this is just a small part of

what the Commission should be considering, with the ACCC draft ruling lacking any enforceable requirement against the carriers if they do not keep the promises made in their application.

He highlighted previous broken undertakings, including a lack of mutual recognition of lounge access, extra baggage allowances and other benefits promised to both commercial and frequent flyer redemption passengers - issues that travel agents are usually tasked with resolving.

"It is patently unfair that both QF and EK still expect travel agents to waste time to rebook, re-ticket, adjust and assist with legitimate complaints against QF/EK...for no agency revenue or even awareness of what agents are 'forced' to do," Najar fumed.

The full submission is online at [accc.gov.au](http://accc.gov.au), with the ACCC still in public consultation phase ahead of a proposed Aug final ruling.

## Flybuys giveaway

**TO CELEBRATE** hitting nine million members, Australian loyalty program Flybuys is giving away nine million points to nine members through a new social media competition.

To walk away with a massive swag of points, members must post an Instagram reel on how they would spend one million points and why - T&Cs [HERE](#).

## Two new ladies' safari departures

**NEW** dates have been announced by Bench Africa for its escorted ladies safari adventures, added in response to the overwhelming demand of the now sold-out 2023/2024 departures.

The new dates for the 10-day female-led safari in Kenya in 2024 are expected to sell out quickly.

There is also no single supplement for solo travellers - [CLICK HERE](#) for details.

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## AA elevates lounge

**AMERICAN** Airlines has announced plans to “elevate” its Admirals Club lounge experience over the coming months.

The enhancements will include new food offerings and expanded complimentary drink menus featuring sparkling wine, craft beer, spirits and cocktails, which will start rolling out from 23 Jul.

AA is also upgrading lounges in Denver & Newark, while boosting the price of annual Admirals Club memberships to US\$850, while day passes will cost US\$79.

## Albury-ACT flights

**FLYPELICAN** will launch new direct flights between Canberra and Albury on 28 Aug, setting travellers back \$179 one-way for the first six months.

## Lining up for Lindblad



**ADVENTURE** World this week is hosting Lesa Bain from Lindblad Expeditions in Australia, showcasing the huge array of product offered by the pioneering expedition cruise operator.

Bain, who started what became her career at Lindblad after a chance meeting in Darwin with Orion Expeditions founder Sarina Bratton, is an Aussie from country NSW who now lives with her family in Tennessee and is Vice President Agency Sales North America for Lindblad.

After originally representing Orion in the USA, she moved to Lindblad when it acquired the company and has stayed there ever since.

During her visit she’s also thrilled to be experiencing a Kimberley cruise aboard the *National Geographic Orion*, which has returned to Australian waters.

“I’ve known this ship since she first started in Australia, so for me this is a homecoming that is very personal,” she told attendees at an event at the Australian Museum in Sydney yesterday.

Bain also showcased the full National Geographic Lindblad Expeditions product range, which sees company-owned and chartered ships operating across the globe including the Galapagos, North America, Europe, the Arctic and Antarctic and even the rivers of Scotland.

Adventure World MD Neil Rodgers told guests Lindblad

was a long-term partner for the company, with a joint history going back to 2015.

“Both of us share a vision and a commitment to travel with purpose and give back to destinations that we’ve travelled to,” he said, adding that the synergy and support had thrived in “spectacular growth”.

Some of the Adventure World and Lindblad team are pictured above, from left: Lubi Sibikova, Justin Hatcher, Andrea Morgan, Lesa Bain, Neil Rodgers, Andrew Eddy and Cam McDonnell.

## Sakara is sea-ready

**EMERALD** Cruises second luxury yacht, *Emerald Sakara*, has successfully completed her sea trials in Vietnam, putting the new-build on track to operate her debut sailing next month.

The eight-day Ionian Sea Adventure voyage will begin in Athens on 05 Aug and will call on Itea, Greece before transiting the Corinth Canal and sailing to Cephalonia, Sicily, Amalfi, Sorrento and Capri, ending in Rome.

Identical to sister ship *Emerald Azzurra*, *Emerald Sakara* can accommodate 100 guests, and features 50 luxury suites and staterooms, 88% of which have a private balcony or terrace.

The vessel is designed to explore ports and harbours that are only accessible to small yachts.

For more luxury news - see p7.

## DriveAway powers up booking system

**DRIVEAWAY** has teamed up with PowerSuite, a widely trusted mid-office system used by numerous agencies across Australia and New Zealand.

As a result of the strategic partnership, the self-drive holiday provider has now integrated its services with PowerSuite to provide a seamless and efficient booking process, which is designed to make it easier for travel agents to access a wide range of self-drive holiday and car leasing options.

DriveAway National Industry Sales Manager Nathan Baber said the new collaboration helps “ensure that working with DriveAway is as effortless as possible for travel agents”.

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## Holiday Inn Bhutan

SLATED to open in the second half of 2025, IHG Hotels & Resorts has partnered with T&K Construction for its first Holiday Inn hotel in Bhutan.

The 100-key Holiday Inn Thimphu will feature an all-day diner, a bar, and meeting rooms.

## Flight Centre leaders link up



MORE than 400 Flight Centre brand leaders got together on Sat for the first time since the pandemic to celebrate successes and discuss the road ahead.

"There was a huge buzz in the air, not just because we hadn't gathered for so long but because I think there's a lot of excitement about the next chapter that's opening up for the Flight Centre brand," Global Flight Centre brand MD Andrew Stark enthused.

"It's been four years since we've had a leadership gathering of any kind and it's all thanks to our customers that we are back.

"With more air routes opening up and airlines nearing pre-COVID capacity, the Flight Centre brand is eager to soar ahead providing customers with what we're most famous for - flights."

Stark also revealed that customers could expect to see an enhanced omni-channel offering over the next year.

"Flight Centre's shift from old retail to new retail is all about offering customers the convenience of booking flights, holidays and other travel products both online and in-store, while at the same time providing them with our collective years of travel experience and expertise."

## 3K back to Japan

JETSTAR Asia has announced its return to Japan, with services from Singapore to Okinawa and Osaka to resume in time for the end-of-year holiday period.

The carrier will become the only airline to operate direct services between Singapore and Okinawa when the upcoming route launches on 30 Nov.

Jetstar Asia's services from Singapore to Osaka will resume via Manila from 24 Nov, operating five times per week, increasing to daily from 30 Dec to meet the pent-up demand for the service.



## Window Seat

SELLING honeymoon packages is big business, as people often feel compelled to outlay more cash on trips they perceive to be a once-in-a-lifetime occasion with their significant other.

But for king of FM radio, Kyle Sandilands, it was the second-in-a-lifetime honeymoon with model Tegan Kynaston that really racked up the bills.

The eye-watering total cost of the honeymoon came to \$513,430, with radio co-host Jackie O only too happy to trawl through the endless list of receipts this week.

Among the charges was \$165,000 spent on private transport in the air and on the ground, \$205,000 on luxury French villas, and just shy of \$100,000 on food and drinks.

But perhaps most shockingly, was a \$6,000 bill for vapes - double the jetskiing bill!

When questioned about the lavish list of expenses on air, Sandilands blamed the difficulty converting Euros to Aussie dollars as one reason, as well as his propensity to "tip huge" when on trips.



The Chat with Jenny



## Conversations with Women in Travel

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In Alberta, SkiBig3's three-for-one option provides access to Banff Sunshine Village, Lake Louise Ski Resort and Mt Norquay.

Alternatively, unleash your thrill-seeking spirit at Marmot Basin

in Jasper National Park, which is Canada's highest base elevation at 1,698 metres.

Off the slopes, learn to mush your own team of sled dogs, with professional operators offering idyllic dog sledding tours across

the country.

From snowmobiling and ice-skating, to strolling through ancient canyons among nature's icy sculptures, there's no time for hibernation during winter in Canada.



**World's greatest lightshow**

THE inky, star-filled skies of Canada provide the perfect backdrop for outstanding northern lights viewing, particularly between Oct and Mar.

The current solar cycle is set to reach its peak between 2023-26, resulting in heightened northern lights activity here on Earth.

There's never been a better time to witness this enchanting natural phenomenon, with Canada's northern territories offering

an array of autumn and winter aurora viewing opportunities.

Head to Yellowknife's Aurora Village in Canada's Northwest Territories, lined with cosy teepees to keep guests warm as they marvel at the northern lights.

In the Yukon, soak in outdoor hot springs as you watch the neon lights dance across the sky, or stay in a glass-fronted chalet at Northern Lights Resort & Spa and enjoy the spectacle in comfort.

**Quebec Winter Carnival**

THE world's biggest winter festival, the Quebec Winter Carnival, is turning 70 in 2024!

Marvel as dogsled racers speed through the snowy streets of the Old City, check out the giant, fantastical snow sculptures, and

stroll the cobbled lane ways lit by Victorian lamps before dining in a cosy gourmet restaurant on local Quebec cuisine.

The 70th Quebec Winter Carnival takes place from 02-11 Feb 2024.





### Menus are tasty AF

**AIR** France has added new dishes to its French fine dining menu, which is offered in its long-haul La Premiere and Business cabins on flights departing from Paris.

French Michelin-starred Thierry Marx collaborated with the airline for the first time to create eight unique meals for the Business menus.

La Premiere pax can indulge in eight new gourmet dishes dreamed up by triple Michelin-starred chef Regis Marcon, as well as four decadent desserts created by pastry chef Philippe Urraca.

### Silversea upgrades

**SILVERSEA** Cruises is inviting travellers to treat themselves with a suite category upgrade on a wide range of voyages between Nov 2023 and May 2025.

As part of the limited-time offer, guests who book a spot on one of the ultra-luxury cruise line's sailings before 31 Aug will also enjoy 15% reduced deposits.

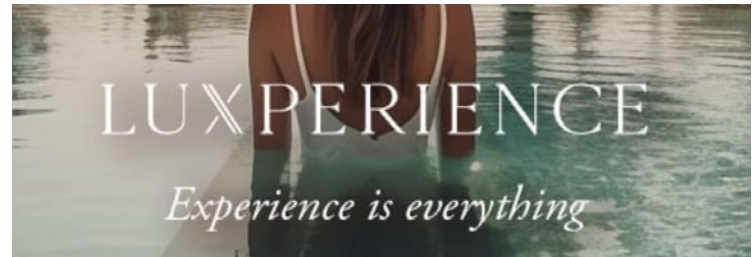
The deal also includes US\$1,000 of shipboard credit per suite, which guests can use on spa treatments, premium wines and spirits, onboard boutique purchases, specialty restaurants, and more - [CLICK HERE](#).

## EOIs OPEN FOR FIRST FC LUXPERIENCE

**EXPRESSIONS** of interest are now open for travel advisors seeking to attend the recently purchased Luxperience event (**TD** 15 May), the first to operate under new owners Flight Centre.

The first in-person gathering since 2019 will take place at the ICC Sydney between 13-16 Nov and connect high-end travel agents to suppliers offering a host of premium travel product, including cruising, hotels, tours, DMCs, wellness spas, cultural experiences, and gastronomical adventures, to name just a few.

To coincide with the upcoming launch, Lauren Dunemann has been appointed as the Guest Experience Manager for Luxperience to spearhead all



guest elements of the event, migrating across from Flight Centre's luxury Travel Associates brand, where she was previously Luxury Product Designer.

"I am delighted to join the Luxperience team & look forward to delivering an exceptional 2023 event," Dunemann said.

The major event on the luxury Aussie travel calendar was sold by Diversified Communications

Australia to Flight Centre earlier this year, with the travel agency now keen to strengthen its luxury leisure offerings to suppliers and travel advisors through the purchase, as well as add further value to the already well-subscribed brand.

Three-, two- and one-day hosted buyer options are available - see further details [HERE](#), while exhibitors can register [HERE](#).

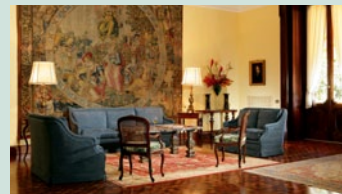
### La Collection brings Italian luxury to Australia

**LA COLLECTION** has been selected to represent Villa Spalletti Trivelli, a boutique luxury villa in the heart of Rome, in the Australia and New Zealand markets.

Once a family home, the property was converted into a luxury residence by the fifth generation of the Spalletti Trivelli family in 2004, offering 15 elegant rooms and suites with genuine antique furniture.

The property also offers an exclusive wellness centre and a rooftop terrace with Jacuzzis, shaded lounges and a bar.

La Collection Director of Sales,



Craig Farrell, said the history of the villa, as well as its location, holds a large appeal to Aussie and New Zealand guests.

"Guests of the villa can sit in the same room, on the same sofa, that Andrea's great, great grandmother sat with the Queen of Italy in the early 1900s," he said.

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

### EK gets exclusive

**EMIRATES** has partnered with Extime to open an exclusive new lounge for premium travellers at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport.

Housed in Terminal 1, the elegant private lounge features 155 seats, indoor and outdoor space, and an array of culinary options, including French favourites and international dishes.

The lounge will serve around 190 customers a day until Emirates' flight operations move to Terminal 2 in Jul 2024 and a newly constructed lounge opens.

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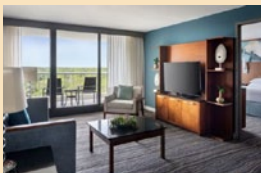
The new flagship restaurant Louis has opened at the Canberra-based **Hotel Realm** in the Barton's Realm Precinct. The new dining space offers a combination of classic South of France and Provencal cuisine with sophisticated cocktails. The previous sous-chef at Aubergine is leading the new kitchen, with the restaurant to feature marble, leathers, textured glass and bronze metals in its dining settings.



Diners can now enjoy lunch and dinner with a tantalising new menu at **AURA Lounge Bar & Event Space** on the top floor of the **Crowne Plaza Hobart**. With views overlooking the Hobart harbour, the new menu offer diners fresh Pittwater Tasmanian oysters, ceviche kingfish, as well as a handpicked wine menu boasting a wide range of premium local wines, gins and whiskies to compliment meals.



The **Avani Palm View Dubai Hotel & Suites** will rebrand as **Avani+**, at the same time adding a host of new facilities as part of the transformation. The 247-key property has unveiled a new restaurant, **La Sirene**, serving diners Middle Eastern meals featuring sea bass sababiya, double-cooked octopus, and more. **Palm 1** and **Palm 2** are the new meeting rooms, hooked up to new technologies, as well as a new **Avani Club** as an exclusive lounge.



The **Marriott Hilton Head Resort & Spa** in South Carolina, USA, has undergone the second phase of its renovation plan as all of its 513 guestrooms and suites complete a makeover. The guestrooms and suites, including four vice presidential and a presidential suite, all have brand-new furnishings, as well as outlets with USB ports, large desks and an in-room coffee bars and large mirrors.



The **Ballygally Castle Hotel** in the UK has recently completed a £100,000 renovation, unveiling a new look for its **Shaw's Lounge**, the newly added **Seaview Suite**, as well as new carpets throughout the entire property. The latest upgrade also includes new windows for the better views of the Irish coast, and new furniture in the lounge for better comfort.



**FOOTBALL** fans can now stay in the first-ever **CommBank Matildas Fan Suite** at the **Star Grand Hotel** in Sydney.

One lucky winner and their

three guests will score a two-day stay in the luxury two-level penthouse ahead of the **Australia v Republic of Ireland** match on 20 Jul - the biggest tournament in the history of women's football.

The suite has been transformed into a football paradise complete with green and gold styling, football-themed ornaments, a giant **Matildas** scarf, autographed jerseys, a foosball table and more.

The winner and their posse also score domestic flights, tix to the match, merch packs, and a meet and greet with former **Matildas** star, **Michelle Heyman**.

For further info on how to win and to learn more, [CLICK HERE](#).

## Military management

**MEXICO'S** President **Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador** has handed control of **Mexico City Benito Juarez International Airport (MEX)** to the military, with the aim of eliminating corruption and mismanagement at the hub.

Along with **MEX**, the Mexican Government also plans to hand over the management of about a dozen more airports in the country, including **Matamoros** and **Playa del Carmen**, to the military in the coming months.

## SIA's boost on PVG

**SINGAPORE Airlines (SIA)** has announced it will increase commercial pax frequencies from **Singapore Changi Airport** to and from **Shanghai Pudong International Airport** in China from 04 Jan next year.

Operating 28 flights to and from **PVG** on board an **Airbus A380**, the Singaporean airline will offer more than 13,000 seats a month.

## Cheaper in the UK

**WYNDHAM Hotels & Resorts** will soon open the United Kingdom's first **Super 8**.

**Super 8** by **Wyndham Chester East** will be comprised of 41 rooms and be located adjacent to the **M56** motorway, offering guests a mix of room options, as well as a bar and restaurant.

The American budget hotel brand is the largest in the world, with the bulk of its network located in the United States.



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