

# travelbulletin

February 1 2019 | ISSUE NO 2,094 | [travelbulletin.co.uk](http://travelbulletin.co.uk)

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# travelbulletin

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Giving agents the edge

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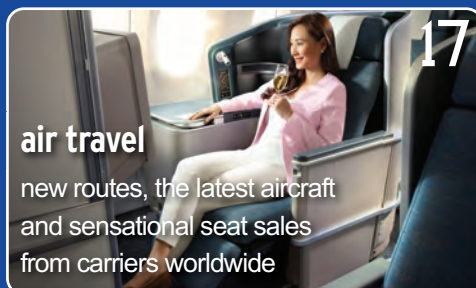
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Elite Travel Group is ready for a bold and busy 2019

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WIN MORE WITH SAGA THIS NEW YEAR!



# MORE

## REWARDS

Every holiday or cruise booked from December 27 to February 28, 2019 will be automatically entered into a prize draw to win one of these amazing prizes. Online bookings will be entered twice!



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- ✓ GHD Max Hair Straighteners
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- ✓ Sony PlayStation 4 Pro
- ✓ 4 x Sparkling Afternoon Tea for 2
- ✓ Sunrise Hot Air Balloon Flight with champagne for 2
- ✓ 5\* London theatre break and top price seats for 2
- ✓ Weekly food shop at M&S or Waitrose
- ✓ Fit Bit Charge 2
- ✓ 5 x Luxury Hampers
- ✓ 5 x £50 Wagamama vouchers
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Terms and Conditions: Every Saga holiday or cruise booked between December 27 to February 28, 2019 will be automatically entered into a weekly prize draw. Entries are unlimited. For full terms and conditions see [sagaagents.co.uk/trade/incentives](http://sagaagents.co.uk/trade/incentives). Saga holidays are for anyone aged 50+. A travel companion may be 40+. NTA-AP5878.



## REPUBLIC OF FUN...

**FUNWAY CONCLUDED 2018's series of fam trips in sunny style by taking agents to the Dominican Republic with AMResorts. The cheerful group posing in the gardens of the all-inclusive Zoetry Aqua Punta Cana represented a range of travel agents from across the UK.**

## Passenger demand to exceed capacity, plus Brexit to impact on airline industry

FINANCIAL SERVICES company, Moody's has published its outlook on fundamental business conditions in the global passenger airline industry over the next 12 to 18 months. Among the main conclusions are a forecast for passenger demand exceeding capacity again, despite an ongoing slowdown in passenger demand. However, the report authors added that the growth differential between demand and capacity is likely to narrow as economic growth slows.

Across different regions, the business challenges faced by the passenger airline industry vary, the report found, with European carriers likely to experience pressure on their margins, although "significant Brexit-related disruption" is not reflected in the report's base case.

To plan for the event of a no-deal Brexit, the European Commission published provisional measures to ensure basic air connectivity and safety are maintained between

the UK and the EU. The report authors anticipate the UK government would make reciprocal provisions, which are a condition of the EU's measures becoming effective. If post-Brexit air services between the UK and Europe are significantly curtailed, operating margins of European airlines will sustain significant hits, as will euro area GDP growth, if not on a wider scale.

Motivated in part by Brexit, Ryanair and easyjet will likely continue to increase intra-European services, particularly to and from Germany, France, Italy and Spain. Norwegian Air Shuttle ASA will also see continued growth, though reportedly at a slower pace as it seeks to improve its financial performance.

A weaker pound against the US dollar and euro would strain demand for international travel from the UK, while a weakening of the euro against the dollar would have a similar effect on European long-haul demand.

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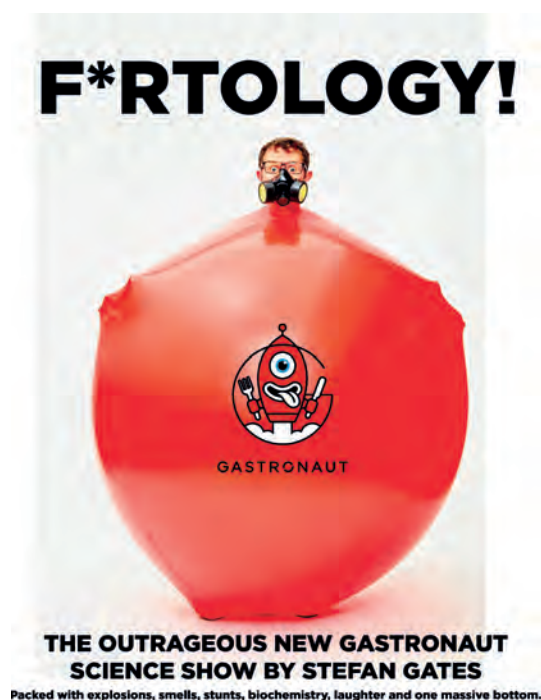
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Speedy Package Pal developments from Jetset boosting agent bookings

## It's going to be a gas at Butlin's during February half-term

STEFAN GATES, best known as the BBC's "Gastronaut", will be joining Butlin's during February half-term 2019, bringing his immersive food science show to the Skyline Pavilion. Exclusive to Butlin's, Gates' show F\*rtology will entertain audiences with stunts and educational games.

Available across all half-term breaks between February 15-25, Gates combines his love of food and science in a hilarious show. Calling for audience participation, Gates helps kids and parents to understand science in a fun way.

Guests can book a Butlin's half-term break in February 2019 to see Stefan Gates from £47 per person. This price is based on four people sharing a Silver suite at Butlin's Minehead Resort, arriving on February 22 for three nights. This price includes the early booking savings of up to 30% and an additional £20 per booking exclusive trade saving. Agents should quote BUTLINSTA20.



## Tipsy travellers could soon be barred

A STUDY by Holiday Extras found that the number of people drinking in airports has increased over the past three years. According to the study, the number of travellers drinking alcohol at the airport increased from 31% in 2015 to 42% by the end of 2018. The number of people consuming between four and eight units of alcohol has doubled, from 5% to 10% in the same time.

The news follows the government launching a consultation on changing the rules for the sale of alcohol at airports in England and Wales. As part of this consultation, the Home Office is exploring the impact of applying the 2003 Licensing Act to airports. This could result in an end to the extended drinking hours available to passengers.

Seamus McCauley of Holiday Extras said: "Following the government's consultation announcement in November, we wanted to revisit some of our past research to explore how airport drinking habits have evolved. As a company, we specialise in helping customers make more of their holidays by minimising hassle. The airport experience can be an incredibly important part in setting the tone for any trip, so we were keen to know more. A rise in the number of people drinking at airports needn't be an issue if those drinks are enjoyed responsibly. However, it is concerning to see excessive airport drinking becoming a more common issue in just three years."

## Club Med unveils Alpe d'Huez for 2019/2020 season

CLUB MED has unveiled details of Club Med Alpe d'Huez following a full renovation and upgrade, offering holiday-makers and ski enthusiasts a chance to rediscover the resort.

Now bookable, the 4T ski resort in the French Alps, has been completely rebuilt and benefits from a location which sees 300 days of sunshine per year. The ski-in, ski-out resort offers direct access to Alpe D'Huez Grand Domaine's 250km of slopes (access through lift pass included in the all-inclusive package) and is suited for every skill level.

The property offers four kids clubs with dedicated areas from four months to 17 years old, a new Spa by Payot, indoor and outdoor pools with paddling areas for children, a new restaurant and gourmet lounge offering all day dining options as well as a wine cellar and a lounge bar. The property now comes with a family-fun area, including new playgrounds for kids, as well as walls to draw on, modular furniture, board games and climbing walls. The resort offers an adults-only wellness room complete with an area for yoga and meditation. Both additions are brand new concepts for the all-inclusive holiday provider. Club Med Alpe d'Huez will open its doors for the winter 2019/2020 season on December 15.



**FEEL THE BURNS...** Manchester Airport celebrated Burns Night on January 25 with an exhibition of paintings of Scottish destinations by artist Rob Pointon, such as this painting of St Margaret's Hope. The Scottish-themed night was held at the airport's Platform Airport City. On the last Friday of each month, Platform Airport City hosts a networking session for visitors and airport employees which showcases cuisines from the destinations served by Manchester Airport.

## Cyprus arrivals are on the up

THE DEPUTY Ministry of Tourism in Cyprus has released 2018 tourism figures, which reveal that the number of global visitors has increased by 7.8% compared with 2017.

From January to December 2018, Cyprus' global tourist arrivals reached 3,938,625. Of these, there were 1,327,805 UK arrivals; a 5.9% increase on 2017 (1,253,839).

The UK and Russia constitute the main sources of tourism for Cyprus, with visitor proportions at 33.7% and 19.9% respectively, while arrivals from Greece comprise 4.7% and Israel 5.9% of total arrivals in 2018.

## Well-named lovers can be wowed for Valentine's Day

WOW AIR is offering any passenger with the first name or surname 'Valentine' free air travel for their plus-one on flights to New York this Valentine's Day.

The offer is valid on bookings made by February 7, for travel to the Big Apple between February 10-17. Passengers named Valentine will need to provide agents with a picture of their passport to redeem the offer.

The ultra-low-cost airline runs flights to New York departing daily from Gatwick to Newark Liberty International via Reykjavik with prices starting from £149.99 per person one way.

For more information about the terms and conditions of the offer, visit [www.wowair.co.uk](http://www.wowair.co.uk)

**Wow Air is looking after people named for St Valentine this year.**



## Getting to the heart of the UK's most romantic destinations

RESEARCH BY HomeToGo was conducted to select the UK's top destinations for romantic staycations. Coming out on top was Norfolk for its combination of seaside landscapes, quaint cottage accommodation and romantic restaurants.

Dorset was chosen as the top choice for literature lovers with the highest number of classic romance novels set in the county.

Researchers recommended Cornwall and the Peak District for foodies thanks to the large concentration of top restaurants in these regions. For more information, go to [www.hometogo.co.uk/inspiration/romantic-getaway/#valentines-day-weekend](http://www.hometogo.co.uk/inspiration/romantic-getaway/#valentines-day-weekend)

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Prices are based on per property, per week, on selected dates in May 2019, they are subject to availability and Terms of Rental apply.



## European Waterways barges ahead with £400,000 fleet-wide upgrade

EUROPEAN WATERWAYS is investing more than £400,000 in a fleet-wide upgrade programme which will include cabin re-designs, improved onboard amenities, enhanced deck areas and modernised bathrooms on a range of vessels across the fleet. The upgrades are taking place ahead of the 2019 hotel barging season and the aim of the renovations is to maintain a five-star standard across the fleet.

Among the barges to benefit from upgraded en suite bathrooms are the Spirit of Scotland and Scottish Highlander, which cruise the Calendonian Canal, and the Finesse, which is based in southern Burgundy. Finesse, as well as La Belle Epoque, which sails in northern Burgundy, will receive new sun canopies. The 20-passenger La Bella Vita, which cruises through Venice, will receive a new spa pool on the deck.

As well as offering 10% commission to agents, the company is offering up to 20% off on charters and cabin prices on spring cruises throughout Europe and waiving the single supplement on selected vessels.

For more information and a complete list of deals, visit [www.europeanwaterways.com/special-offers/?y=2019](http://www.europeanwaterways.com/special-offers/?y=2019)

## Reach for the sky with commission on ICON Orlando 360 packages

AGENTS CAN earn commission on bookings for the Fly and Dine package at ICON Orlando 360.

Now available for pre-booking in the UK, the package allows guests to enjoy a meal at one of the venue's fast casual or full-service restaurants and a ride on the ICON Orlando, a 400-foot ferris wheel. The package tickets are valid for a single ride, which lasts approximately 23 minutes, and are priced from £35.10.

The ICON Orlando 360 dining and entertainment complex is located in the middle of the Florida city's International Drive tourist district. As well as the big wheel, ICON Orlando features SEA LIFE Orlando Aquarium, Madame Tussauds Orlando, SKELETONS: Museum of Osteology, and the StarFlyer, which is the world's tallest swing ride.



**SAY CHEESE!** The Fly and Dine package offers a choice of restaurants.

Sales are fully commissionable through Travel Trade Tickets and

Tours. For more information and to book clients, go to [www.tttandt.com](http://www.tttandt.com)



**VRROOM, VRROOM!** Shearings Holidays has launched a seven-day tour of Singapore, including the chance to experience the city's street circuit grand prix with a Bay Grandstand ticket for qualifying days and race day. Prices start from £1,749 per person departing on September 18 from Heathrow, based on two people sharing. For more information, go to [www.shearingsagent.com](http://www.shearingsagent.com)

## Spring and summer fun in Switzerland

SWITZERLAND TOURISM has launched an early campaign for 2019 highlighting a range of special events to attract visitors to the country particularly from April onwards.

From April 9-13, Zermatt Unplugged will be on – this is a music festival held in Zermatt, a town better known for winter sports. Performers will include Tom Odell, Boy George and Passenger, with 80 concerts across 13 different locations in the village and three in the mountains.

The Zurich Festival will be held from July 5-7 with the area around the River Limmat and the lake basin taken over by music acts, as well as food stands serving cuisine from around the world.

Foodies might also be interested in the once-in-a-generation Fête des Vignerons, which runs from July 18 until August 11. This takes place in Vevey in the Lake Geneva region and attracts wine and music lovers. One of the highlights is a show about the story of the region's wine growers which will be performed 20 times by around 5,000 actors, singers and dancers.

The Kunstmuseum Lucerne is hosting a Turner exhibition in collaboration with the Tate from July 6 until October 13 in Lucerne, showcasing the British artist's paintings of Switzerland. For a change of pace, the Swiss Mountain Wrestling Festival will be held in Zug from August 23-25. Go to [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) for more details.

## IHG brings Kimpton to a score of new global destinations

INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS Group (IHG) will be opening more than 25 new Kimpton hotels across 20 new destinations, including Mexico City, Paris, Barcelona, Bali and Shanghai, over the next three to five years.

Among the 2019 openings are properties in Taipei and Edinburgh. The Kimpton Da An Hotel is scheduled to open in Taipei this spring and the design is a mix of modern and traditional. A special feature will be The Tavernist, a restaurant led by former Noma chef, James Sharman.

In Edinburgh, the Kimpton Charlotte Square Hotel will also be opening in spring, consisting of seven inter-connected Georgian-style townhouses overlooking a private garden square in a central location.

In early 2020, the Kimpton Kawana Bay Resort in Grenada is expected to open. It is the second Kimpton property in the Caribbean. It will be a 220-room hillside retreat located between tropical rainforest cliffs and Grand Anse Beach. All rooms will have ocean views. The name of the resort is a homage to the area's native leatherback turtles, known locally as "kawana".

Another 2020 opening is the Kimpton Balu, located on the Nusa Dua coastline amid volcanic hillsides. It is being marketed as a lifestyle sanctuary which embraces Balinese culture and the accommodation will be luxury villas.

To stay up to date on the group's hotel openings, go to [www.ihg.com/kimptonhotels/](http://www.ihg.com/kimptonhotels/)

## Travel Counsellors sees spike in bookings

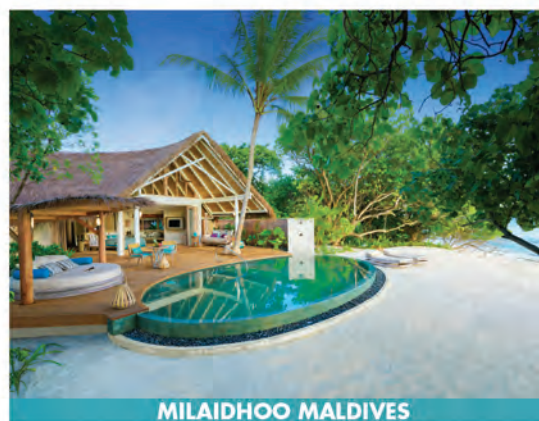
TRAVEL COUNSELLORS has reported a big increase in bookings as travellers look to escape the winter weather.

The independent travel company saw a 20% increase in customer enquiries for destinations that offer physical or mental wellbeing activities, since the beginning of December and culminating in a bumper sales day on 'Blue Monday' (January 21, believed by some to be the most depressing day of the year). Travel Counsellors reported £3.3m in sales, a 17% increase on the same time last year. Holidaymakers' recent interest in travel experiences designed to boost mind, body and soul follows the company's 'winter wellness' initiative highlighting worldwide locations, resorts and accommodation that offer a host of physical activities, or a focus on mindfulness, meditation and self-care.

The most popular experiences noted were golfing getaways and beach-side resorts with high-adrenaline water sports, horse riding, hiking or cycling. Spa treatments, yoga retreats and cookery classes also proved popular, representing more than 50% of the activities booked at destinations across the globe.

Long-haul holidays to the Indian Ocean topped the company's sales chart on January 21, with Mauritius and Sri Lanka among the top ten destinations booked, as well as Dubai and Barbados offering popular beach escapes.

Steve Byrne, chief executive at Travel Counsellors, said: "We've seen a real uplift in bookings to wellness destinations as travellers opt for healthier, more active holidays, or experiences that offer the ultimate feeling of getting away from it all. In fact, the Global Wellness Institute states that 830 million wellness trips were taken in 2017, which is 139 million more than in 2015. With the trend set to continue, the number of wellness trips taken worldwide this year could reach one billion."



**MILAI DHOO MALDIVES**

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All above offers are subject to availability. Terms & Conditions Apply



**HURTIGRUTEN IS expanding its eco-friendly expedition cruise programme with new destinations. From 2020, Hurtigruten guests can explore Alaska on the hybrid-powered MS Roald Amundsen.**

## Shortlisted start-ups for travel tech

TECH ENTREPRENEURS who have developed innovations to help travel professionals have been shortlisted for the Travel Technology Europe Disrupt Launchpad and Awards.

Among the finalists whose technology could find its way into travel agents' offices around the UK are TripXtech, which enables businesses to offer add-on custom made tours, activities and extras through mobile selling platforms, and Hopper Video, a software platform that enables users to create personalised and data-driven video content and email prospective clients.

VIP YOU (Upgrade), meanwhile, is a marketplace for outbound travel agents to make extra commission with exclusive, in-destination products and services. It seeks to solve the problem of OTAs impacting travel agents' ability to earn commission on in-destination products and services with a single online B2B platform. It can be seen in its beta stage at <http://beta.upgrade.voyage>

Travtab is a mobile payment solution for travel providers, giving them the ability to accept installment payments against holiday bookings on mobile. Customers can pay off holidays bit by bit, and travel providers generate more revenue and cashflow.

Of the shortlisted start-ups, five will go through to the Disrupt Award finals where they will take part in a Dragons' Den-style pitch to a panel of judges on February 20 at Travel Technology Europe, which will be held in London. For free tickets to the event, go to [www.traveltechnologyeurope.com](http://www.traveltechnologyeurope.com)

## AGENT INSIGHT

WITH  
HAYLEY WALKER

FROM  
HOLIDAY HAMSTER



**I** FIRST volunteered for Caudwell Children back in 2012. Each year, the Stoke-on-Trent-based charity takes 25 children with life-limiting conditions, as well as their families, to Florida for a week to make memories in the Orlando theme parks and winter sunshine.

My role on the trip is to assist the families with whatever they need, whether it's advice on suitable shows and attractions within the parks, getting them from point A to point B, or simply pushing a wheelchair so that the parent can walk beside their child, holding hands as they experience this holiday together – away from the never-ending doctors appointments and stresses back at home in the UK.

Luckily, during moments like these, the sunglasses help to hide the odd tear shed by me as I am there to witness such special moments. For many of the families, it is their first holiday together out of the UK – or even at all – and after speaking to them on my most recent trip with the charity, it seems that the perception of booking a holiday or short break with a disabled passenger is that it is a very difficult process and that they wouldn't be catered for.

Even though this is not the case, it got me thinking about how we as a travel industry as a whole could be doing more for the nearly 14 million disabled people in the UK. Do we as agencies do enough to promote what is possible or even make ourselves accessible enough?

Here are some simple things every agent can do to encourage bookings and improve the customer experience:

- Advertise that you can help book accessible holidays. Let local support groups and doctors know what you offer.
  - Ask the customer about their needs. Be specific and ensure you find out everything that would be required, including any medical equipment that will be travelling with them or needed to be rented.
  - Know the product. Pay special attention to ensure that the transfers and accommodation tick all the boxes. If you're unsure or the information you have is ambiguous, pick up the phone and speak to the supplier – or use one of the specialist accessible holiday providers who deal with this day in and day out.
  - Be flexible with how you provide the information. The customer may need it in a particular format such as by email or in large print. A wealth of information and literature on accessible travel is available from the many disability groups and organisations. ABTA has a useful section on its website for customers and agents, which includes a checklist to ensure you ask the right questions.
- Whatever you do, never assume anything about what a disabled person can and can't do – you'll likely be wrong. If there's one thing I've learnt from the families on the charity trips, it's that each has their own individual needs and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to accessible travel.



## AGENT TRAINING

TO SUPPORT its Year of Culture campaign, Gibraltar has relaunched its training site. It is packed with information on this unique Mediterranean destination, which is located just 2.5 hours from home. British Gibraltar is packed with history, international events and activities for all ages. To be in the running to win one of two £100 Love2Shop vouchers each quarter, log on to [www.travelbulletin.co.uk/travelgym](http://www.travelbulletin.co.uk/travelgym) to complete the online training course.

## AGENT INCENTIVES

- AGENTS WILL be in the running to bag an all-expenses paid trip to Ibiza with Carnival Cruise Line's latest booking incentive. Throughout February, every booking through the company's Loyalty Rocks Club will earn 10 points/£10 with the top 20 bookers earning the trip to Ibiza, which will take place in June. The top agents will stay at the Ibiza Rocks Hotel and attend the Travel Agents Rock Awards ceremony and after-party. To register, go to [www.LoyaltyRocksClub.com](http://www.LoyaltyRocksClub.com)
- GOLD MEDAL and Thailand Tourism are giving three agents the chance to win a multi-centre holiday to Thailand, taking in Bangkok, Hua Hin, Koh Samui, Chiang Mai and Phuket. One holiday will be awarded to the agency with the highest sales of Thailand packages, the second will be awarded to the agency with highest sales increase of Thailand packages year on year, and the third will be awarded via a prize draw from all of the Thailand package bookings made throughout the campaign, which lasts all February. For more details, go to [www.goldmedal.com](http://www.goldmedal.com)

## WIN WIN WIN!!! with **travelbulletin** COMPETITIONS!

- Win a four-night all inclusive stay for two at the Palladium Hotel Costa del Sol
- An Austrian hamper and a bottle of wine to be won with Visit Austria
- Win a seven-night all inclusive stay for two adults at UNICO 20°87° with Sunset Faraway Holidays
- Win a seven-night stay for two adults at the Luxury Bahia Principe Ambar

FOR ALL COMPETITIONS ON THE SITE VISIT  
[travelbulletin.co.uk/competitions](http://travelbulletin.co.uk/competitions)

## Tourism Ireland encourages visitors to follow their hearts

TOURISM IRELAND has launched its first major global campaign since 2011 in the shape of "Fill your heart with Ireland"; an industry-first initiative created by the heart-rate data of two of its visitors.

The tourism board invited a real married couple who had never visited Ireland before to take a trip on the island, wearing custom-made technology that monitored their heart rates and tracked their physiological responses to their holiday experiences along the way. The result is a campaign that demonstrates the heart-pounding effect that the destination has on its visitors, whether they are kayaking in Achill Island on the west coast, exploring Devenish Island's monastic sites in Northern Ireland, or climbing the highest sea cliffs in Europe at Slieve League on the north west coast.

Niall Gibbons, the tourism board's CEO, said: "Our new campaign, 'Fill Your Heart

with Ireland', presents Tourism Ireland with a great opportunity to drive continued growth to the regions next year and to encourage visitors to travel off-peak. It will feature locations that have been less visited by overseas visitors and will also highlight outdoor activities like cycling, walking and kayaking. We are confident that our new campaign will set the island of Ireland apart from our competitor destinations and help deliver another record year for overseas tourism in 2019." *You can check out the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dAkMZjxv9A>*



## Taxing times for agents who miss the self-assessment deadline

TRAVEL AGENTS who self-assess for their tax returns and have missed the January 31 HMRC deadline may be able to avoid penalties or have the penalties quashed if they have a reasonable excuse for filing late.

David Redfern, managing director of DSR Tax Claims, has issued guidance to taxpayers who may have a reasonable excuse for a delayed tax return. He advised that HMRC do acknowledge that there will be occasions when taxpayers fail to submit their tax return on time or make payment on their tax return by the deadline with a reasonable excuse.

"HMRC do recognise that sometimes, for reasons out of the control of the taxpayer, the deadline will be missed so they will accept certain excuses as reasonable grounds to appeal a penalty. If, for example, you were hospitalised or had a serious, life-threatening illness which prevented you from attending to your tax return, you wouldn't be penalised for not meeting the deadline. Similarly, if a close relative died shortly before the deadline, your failure to meet the deadline would be treated sympathetically," he said.

He added that other reasons relating would be considered by HMRC, such as service failures for HMRC's online services or delays caused by a disability. However, he cautioned: "These excuses do not relieve the taxpayer of their tax responsibilities and they will still be expected to file their Self Assessment tax return and pay their tax bill as soon as they are able after the issue had been resolved."

Every year, HMRC issues a list of the most unreasonable excuses for late filing. Excuses this year include blaming a broken boiler for them being too cold to type out their return, and a taxpayer claiming they had been cursed by a "witchy" mother-in-law.

## Golfing holidaymakers can hit club carriage charges into the long grass

AGENTS BOOKING golfing holidays for clients should be aware of golf club carriage charges imposed by many airlines. For example, Aer Lingus charges a maximum of 50 euros each way; BMI – maximum 114 euros each way; easyJet – maximum £55 each way; Flybe – maximum 40 euros each way; Jet2.com – from 37 euros each way; Lufthansa – 80 euros (within Europe) each way; and Ryanair – maximum €65 each way.

An alternative to paying golf club carriage charges is to hire clubs at the destination, and companies such as Clubs to Hire aim to make it easy for golfers to hire clubs at prices that are below airline charges. The company launched in 2010 and is now recruiting partner businesses and entrepreneurial individuals, to act as agents. It currently serves golfing destinations in Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Morocco, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, the UK, Ireland, the US and Australia. Most recently, the Robinson Club Agadir, a four-star golf resort in Morocco, was added to the company's partners in September last year.

*For more details about hiring clubs, go to [www.clubstohire.com](http://www.clubstohire.com)*

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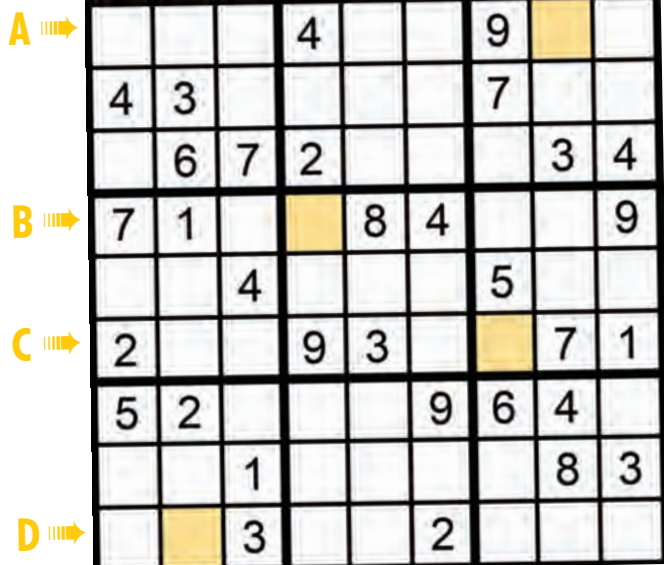
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# Su Doku

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Number: 005



Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, column and each of the 3 x 3 squares contains the digits 1-9.

Once you have completed the puzzle, simply identify the numbers that relate to the letters, A, B, C and D then e-mail the solution, with your name, company name, and full postal address plus phone and ABTA number if applicable to:

[competition@travelbulletin.co.uk](mailto:competition@travelbulletin.co.uk)

Closing date for entries is Thursday, February 7th. Solution and new puzzle will appear next week.

**The winner for 18th January is Suzy Sheardown, Thomas Cook in Cambridge.**

**January 18th Solution: A=3 B=9 C=8 D=6**

## Where Am I?



With a name derived from the striking turquoise colour of the river that flows along this 15-mile canyon, this is a popular spot for hikers, rock climbers and kayaking due to its close proximity to the French Riviera.

## Crossword



Fill in the crossword to reveal the mystery location highlighted by the green squares.

Across

1. All-inclusive resorts operator in the Caribbean (7)
5. Flag-carrier of Lebanon (3)
7. Historic Cumbrian town (7)
8. Airport serving Paris (4)
9. Tess Daly's presenter husband, \_\_\_ Kay (6)
11. The Liffey flows through this city (6)
13. Association for independent tour operators, initially (4)
16. East African capital city (7)
17. Currency of Japan (3)
18. Lakes and Mountains specialist (7)

Down

1. David Beckham joins his former team mates with a share in this football club (7,4)
2. Himalayan country (5)
3. The Ponte Vecchio spans this river (4)
4. Resort, home of the Cornish Tate (2,4)
5. Capital of Menorca (5)
6. Theme Park, part of Merlin Entertainments Group (5,6)
10. Large Italian beach resort on the Adriatic (6)
12. Porto-Novo is the capital (5)
14. Popular Spanish island (5)
15. California home of the Queen Mary, \_\_\_ Beach (4)

For the solution to the Crossword and Where Am I?  
Please see page 24



## Melia Hotels relaunched InSide brand with Spanish style

MELIÁ HOTELS International, Spain's largest hotel brand, announced the evolution of its INNSiDE by Meliá portfolio at FITUR, Spain's International Tourism Trade Fair, which was held in Madrid last month.

2019 will see INNSiDE by Meliá expand to include resort destinations, to bring a stronger leisure and wellness offering to its portfolio. With the reinvention of INNSiDE, the hotel brand is adapting its business strategy to attract the younger generation of business and leisure travellers, taking the brand from urban into resort destinations. The brand will focus its strategy on sustainability, holistic "bleisure" (business and leisure travel), music and local culture, to target the millennial market.

To help meet sustainability goals, the brand will use recyclable materials throughout, work with hyper-local suppliers wherever possible, and guarantee no single-use plastic.

INNSiDE will have 22 hotels, with plans to expand into resort locations in Europe and Indonesia, including Fuerteventura, Mallorca and Bali, as well as urban locations in Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

## Faroe Islands tour booking made easy online

A PLATFORM for booking more than 100 tours and activities in the Faroe Islands has been launched. Guide To Faore Islands is a joint booking platform for all Faroese tour operators and agents can use it to book a range of experiences for visitors to the self-governing archipelago which is part of Denmark. The platform acts as an aggregator for travel agencies around the world to distribute and sell tours.

The experiences on offer via the platform include puffin-watching

tours, private hiking tours, ocean kayaking underneath the Drangarnir sea stacks and trips to photogenic Instagram favourites, such as Múlafossur and Trælanípan.

The Faroe Islands have no plans for mass tourism, but are taking a more sustainable route to growth. Guide to Faroe Islands has been endorsed by government body Visit Faroe Islands as a welcomed enabler of sustainable tourism promoting geographically dispersed activities. *For more info, see [www.guidetofaroeislands.fo](http://www.guidetofaroeislands.fo)*

## York upbeat about increased tourism

FIGURES REVEALED at the Visit York conference showed that visits to attractions were up by 8% year on year – with a total of 3.4 million visits made to attractions in 2018 compared to 3.1 million visits in 2017.

Average hotel occupancy rates dipped by 3% year on year (2018 v 2017) – from 80.5% to 77.5% but 250 more rooms were added to York's hotel bed stock last year and an additional 20,000 extra room nights were sold, year on year.

Room rates for York held strong at an average of £106 per night, which was on a par with the previous year. High street footfall, measured by footfall monitors showed an increase of 2% year on year, at a total of 26 million.

The theme for the conference was 'Only in York', York's tourism marketing campaign for 2019, which aims to showcase the experiences which are unique to the city. By focusing on promoting 'Only in York' experiences such as afternoon tea aboard the National Railway Museum's Countess of York carriage, or evensong at York Minster, Visit York hopes to inspire new visitors to York in 2019.

Paul Whiting, head of Visit York, said: "The new tourism figures are really encouraging and show that York is continuing to perform well. We're especially delighted to see such a big increase in visits to attractions. Our strategy is to inspire our visitors to explore more of the city, stay longer and crucially keep coming back."



**WHAT A LIFESAVER...** Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines celebrated its relationship with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) with the naming ceremony and service of dedication of the fifth RNLI lifeboat, B-913 Pride of Fred. Olsen, funded by guests across the Fred. Olsen fleet.

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# Spotlight on... Australia



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# Industry Insight by...



**John Escott, general manager of Elite Travel Group, talks about challenges and opportunities for the travel industry in 2019...**

**H**ERE WE are again, another year and another post-Christmas set of campaigns to encourage potential holidaymakers to book their summer holiday.

The feedback I am receiving from Elite Travel Group members is that, after a slow start, business is now strong, especially for long haul and tailor-made holidays, the very markets within which good independent agents flourish. Fingers crossed that this consumer confidence and strong start to the year continues over the coming months.

We, of course, have hurdles to overcome in 2019 with a lot of political uncertainty. It is crucial as an industry that we all pull together to ensure we reassure customers and protect the travel industry we all love.

There are two significant events for all agents to be aware of in 2019. Firstly, Brexit, and new rules that will come into force for travellers on or after March 29, including the requirement for passports to be valid for at least six months upon return from holiday. It is so important that we ensure customers are aware of this and don't get caught out.

The other applies more to independent agents with the requirement from April 1 for businesses to keep their VAT records digitally and provide their VAT return information to HMRC through Making Tax Digital-compatible software. This will involve a lot of work and expense for many independent travel agents and Elite has been working closely with its members to ensure they are ready for this change.

2019 will see the cruise market strengthen significantly with the addition of 24 ocean ships and 11 river vessels. This shows significant investment and confidence that the cruise market will continue to go from strength to strength. The number of UK customers taking a cruise in 2019 should surpass the two million mark. There are a number of events planned to launch these new ships, and I know the Elite members will enjoy

and benefit from visiting some of these fantastic vessels.

One concern – which is also an opportunity – is my understanding that On the Beach and Easyjet Holidays will be launching through the trade in the near future. This will bring a significant increase in capacity and I feel they will need the trade to help feed their significant growth plans. The downside for the trade will be that this capacity has to be filled somehow and it could lead to a weakening of prices and hence commissions. Up until now, Jet2holidays have been the ones enjoying rapid growth, so it will be interesting to see the effect these two new players will have – and if Jet2holidays will halt any further expansion plans into the south.

## **"There are two significant events for travel agents – Brexit and VAT record changes"**

At this time of year, with winter well and truly upon us, my heart goes out to the sales teams out on the road working tirelessly to promote the product they represent. Early mornings for training sessions, visiting important agents in all weathers, working weekends to support holiday shows up and down the country all help support the travel agents. Please give them a warm welcome and make them a brew no matter how busy you are. They will really appreciate it – it is all part of ensuring we support the operators who support the retail agents.

Our industry has faced many challenges over the years at home and abroad. Time after time, it has proved its resilience and gone from strength to strength. 2019 is positioning itself to be an interesting year but, no doubt, one we will learn from, and in which we become stronger and move on together.

## Jet2's fleet hits 100

JET2.COM AND Jet2holidays has taken formal delivery of the last of 34 new 737-800 aircraft from Boeing, taking the number of aircraft in its fleet to 100.

The new aircraft, which seats 189 passengers, was handed over to Jet2.com and Jet2holidays at a ceremony at Boeing's Seattle Delivery Centre in the United States. The aircraft are now in the UK, to be fitted with finishing touches, including bespoke seating, before coming into operation in the next few weeks.

At the ceremony, Steve Heapy, CEO of the holiday brand said: "The arrival of the 100th aircraft into our fleet is a momentous occasion and demonstrates the confidence we have in our growing business. Operating a fleet on this scale means we can continue to increase capacity, offering holidaymakers more choice and flexibility than ever before when it comes to getting to Europe, the Canary Islands and the Mediterranean.

"Our brand new aircraft mean we continue to build on this success, providing more comfort in an enhanced cabin interior for customers on their well-deserved holidays."



**TRADITIONAL CHARM...** New Delhi-based Vesna Tours is offering an 11-day tour of southern India, taking in Bangalore and Mysore as well as forests and wildlife sanctuaries. Guests will travel by coach, boat, train and jeep. It is priced from £932 (twin share) per person and is available from October 1, 2019 until March 31, 2020. Call 01452 500663 or go to [www.vesnatours.com](http://www.vesnatours.com) for more information.

## ANA launches new routes for 2019

ALL NIPPON Airways (ANA) has announced its 2019 flight schedule with new destinations including Perth in Western Australia and Chennai in Southern India. The decisions on which new routes to launch were based on ANA Group's Mid-Term Corporate Strategy for financial years 2018-2022 and aim to properly utilise Tokyo's Narita and Haneda airports.

The Haneda-Vienna route will be launched on February 17, and the daily Narita-Perth route will become available from September 1 and the Narita-Chennai route will open up for the 2019 winter schedule period.

The Japanese airline also announced new aircraft, including using the Airbus A380, the world's largest passenger plane, for the new Narita-Honolulu route from May 24. The route will start with three round trips per week and expand to ten round trips per week from July 1.

A 294 seat Boeing 787-10 will serve the Narita-Singapore route from April 26, and Narita-Bangkok starting July 1, to capture the increasing demand for connection traffic via Japan.

Domestically, ANA plans to continue its internal flights from Haneda to Ishigaki, Okinawa and Hiroshima to keep up with significant demand for travel between these destinations. Additionally, ANA will increase the number of flights between Narita and Nagoya to meet demand for international connections for visitors to the Nagoya region.

## Solomon Islands aims to boost bed numbers for tourism growth

THE SOLOMON Islands government has set a target of attracting 60,000 visitors annually by 2025, but the country's tourism board leader has called for more accommodation if this goal is to be met.

Tourism Solomons CEO, Josefa Tuamoto said the Solomon Islands needs to address the current accommodation situation.

"If this goal is to become a reality we need to be able to provide international wholesalers with access to a minimum of 700 new quality rooms – without this development the Solomon Islands will struggle to reach its objectives," Tuamoto told the 2019 'Measure What Matters' tourism conference held last month in Honiara. "In the case of the Solomon Islands the reality is we only have some 360 quality rooms for them to sell on a daily basis and this is a constraining factor."

For more information on the Solomon Islands, go to [www.visitsolomons.com.sb](http://www.visitsolomons.com.sb)

## Over-50s are getting more adventurous on holiday

RESEARCH RELEASED by Saga, revealed that over-50s are seeking out adventurous holidays, such as Uzbekistan or Kyrgyzstan when booking their annual holiday in 2019.

Exploring the Eurasian states and seeing the Northern Lights in Scandinavia, all featured within the top 10 experiences that over-50s wanted to have on their next holiday, according to the study.

While the traditional package holiday destinations of Spain, Portugal and Greece still remain popular with many travellers in this age group, more travellers are prioritising exploration and adventure, above sun loungers and sangria.

Respondents to the survey of 12,623 over-50s from across the UK revealed that weather, natural wonders, historical sites, culture and wildlife were the most important factors when choosing which country to visit, said Maria Whiteman, managing director of Saga Travel.

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## Make the most of Philippine Airlines' Mega Seat Sale

PHILIPPINE AIRLINES (PAL) has ramped up its operations in Southeast Asia by launching new routes to Hanoi in Vietnam, and Phnom Penh in Cambodia from its Manila hub.

This latest expansion by the carrier creates the first direct air link between the Philippines and the capital of Cambodia and expands PAL's existing Vietnam network. It also connects with PAL's non-stop London to Manila flight.

Flights between Manila and Hanoi will operate four times weekly – on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday – starting March 31 with PR 595 departing at 22:25 and arriving at Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport at 00:45 the following day. Return flights via PR 596 leave Hanoi every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 01:45 and touch down in Manila at 05:30.

Flights between Manila and Phnom Penh will operate five times weekly – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday – starting April 1 with PR 521 departing at 22:10 and arriving at Phnom Penh International Airport at 23:45.

Return flights via PR 522 leave Phnom Penh every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 00:45 and touch down in Manila at 04:20.

The Hanoi and Phnom Penh flights have been timed to connect in both directions with PAL's non-stop Manila to Heathrow services. Operated by an Airbus A350, the aircraft features Business Class seats adjusting into fully flat beds, while in Economy, passengers can enjoy touch-screen personal TVs and built-in USB ports to enjoy in-flight entertainment throughout their flight. Philippine Airlines' new Premium Economy Class includes priority check-in and an upgraded onboard experience with seats that provide extra space and bigger screens for inflight entertainment.

In tandem, the airline has also launched its Mega Seat Sale with fares starting from £429 in Economy, £879 in Premium Economy and £1,699 in Business Class but must be booked before February 28 for travel from March 1-December 6.

Go to [www.philippineairlines.com](http://www.philippineairlines.com) to find out more.

## New routes to Argentina as Air Europa flies into second phase of investment programme

AIR EUROPA will be launching new flights to Panama and Puerto Iguazu, Argentina, in 2019, taking its route network to 21 Latin American destinations in fourteen countries.

The new flight to Panama, operated by the Dreamliner aircraft, will commence this month on February 25, with five flights a week between Madrid's Barajas International Airport and Tocumen International Airport. The connections have been timed to feed in from flights all over Europe, including Gatwick.

In addition, a twice-weekly flight to Puerto Iguazu, Argentina will commence in June; the third destination in the country for the airline, after Buenos Aires and Córdoba. This will be the first international service for the airport, with the region a popular tourist destination well known for Iguazu Falls.

This year, Air Europa has entered phase two of its major \$3.5 billion fleet investment programme which will see 27 Dreamliner 787 aircrafts delivered by 2022 and the team will be promoting the aircraft's superior level of passenger comfort and onboard services.

## EL AL presents new ways to fly to Far East & South Africa

THE NEW model for purchasing Economy Class tickets on EL AL's routes to and from Europe is being expanded to destinations in the Far East and South Africa.

For the first time, for flights out of Israel, the airline will offer tickets in three fare tiers - Lite, Classic and Flex – enabling customers to opt for the flight packages that best suit their needs and paying accordingly.

Michael Strassburger, the airline's vice president of Commercial and Industry Affairs, said: "For the first time in Israel, EL AL will offer family fares to long-range destinations. The new model offers attractive fares for one-way flights to destinations such as Bangkok and Johannesburg.

"This is good news for our passengers as we continue to offer them additional options. Unlike low-cost flights, our flights will offer passengers the full service of a legacy airline, but regardless of the fare, they can choose to pay for additional services. We anticipate that our new pricing method will increase the number of customers on the routes to the Far East and South Africa but more importantly increase their satisfaction."

Sales of tickets to destinations served by the airline in the Far East and South Africa based on the new model have already begun for departures as of April 1.

Go to [www.elal.co.uk](http://www.elal.co.uk) for more details.

## Best Bar None to launch pilot scheme with Manchester Airports Group

THE HOME Office-backed Best Bar None (BBN) programme has launched a pilot scheme with Manchester Airports Group (MAG) – encompassing Manchester, London Stansted and East Midlands airports – in order to further improve standards of airside alcohol retailing and improve the travel experience of passengers.

Since the creation of an industry Code of Practice two years ago, the aviation sector has been working together to help reduce the number of alcohol-related incidents of disruptive behaviour. In November, the Home Office announced that it was launching a call for evidence to seek views on whether introducing alcohol licensing laws at airports in England and Wales could help tackle drunk and disruptive passengers on planes. Aviation Minister, Liz Sugg, said: “Everyone should be able to enjoy their journeys through airports, which is why drunk and disruptive behaviour will not be tolerated and offenders face up to two years in prison or an unlimited fine. We continue to work with airports and airlines to tackle disorderly passengers and I am pleased to see MAG and Best Bar None working together to help make sure air travel is a positive experience for everyone.”

Best Bar None spent considerable time preparing a scheme that would be compatible with the practicalities of airside alcohol retailing, before agreeing to work with MAG to deliver the pilot throughout 2019.

All outlets offering alcoholic drinks in MAG Airports currently operate to standards and procedures that are either equivalent to, or higher than is required, under licensing arrangements on high streets. In the pilot, which will be rolled out in the next few weeks, around fifty venues across the three airports will be evaluated by Best Bar None qualified assessors with a view to gaining accreditation. Ongoing participation in the scheme is then expected to become a condition of trading in the airports.

Graeme Elliott, MAG’s group corporate affairs director, said: “We are proud to be the first airport group in England to sign up to Best Bar None. As an airport operator we believe our passengers have a right to buy alcohol in duty free or enjoy a drink in a bar or restaurant at the start of their holiday before their flight departs. But we are also clear that passengers drinking alcohol must always be responsible and should never impact on the enjoyment or safety of any other passenger.

“This scheme will help provide further assurance that MAG and our partners are doing our bit by demonstrating the highest standards of responsible alcohol sales, and we take every opportunity to remind passengers that if they are drunk they will not be able to fly. This partnership with Best Bar None is the latest example of MAG leading the industry in finding ways to further reduce the small number of incidents of alcohol-related disruptive behaviour and to create a safe and welcoming environment for all of the 60 million passengers that pass through our airports each year.”

## Bangkok Airways pioneers direct service from Bangkok to Cam Ranh

BANGKOK AIRWAYS has successfully made its maiden flight from Bangkok to Cam Ranh, Vietnam’s up-and-coming luxury beach destination. The airline now operates four non-stop return flights weekly between Bangkok’s Suvarnabhumi Airport and Cam Ranh International Airport on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday with a 144-seat Airbus 319.

Varong Israsena Na Ayudhya, vice president of sales for Bangkok Airways, said: “We are pleased to offer this new service to and from Bangkok to Cam Ranh, Vietnam. Cam Ranh is situated on the South-eastern coast of Vietnam and has been one of the most desired beach holiday destinations for up-scale Vietnamese and European tourists. Cam Ranh has experienced rapid growth in the number of visitors every year, as well as constant support from the Vietnamese government in putting this city on the world map, by offering the 15-day visa free policy for

tourists from England, France, Spain, Italy, Germany and the 14-90-day visa free for tourists from Japan, South Korea, Philippines and Chile. In addition, Cam Ranh is very close to Nha Trang, known as the ‘Riviera of South China Sea’ and has been one of the most popular tourism destinations for European and Vietnamese travelers.”

“We consider this to be another milestone, as this will make Bangkok Airways the only scheduled airline to fly direct to this popular beach holiday destination from Thailand. The aim of this new launch is not only to enhance Bangkok Airways’ network to cover the Indochina region, but also to provide better flight connections for European, Thai and Vietnamese customers as well as offering regional connecting routes to Cam Ranh for our long-haul codeshare partners.”

Visit [www.bangkokair.com](http://www.bangkokair.com) for more information.



PICTURED MARKING the inauguration with crew is, from the left: Dang Duc Hoan, CEO of Aviation Ground Services; Le Thi Hong Minh, general director of Cam Ranh International Terminal; Varong Israsena Na Ayudhya, vice president of sales for Bangkok Airways; Varapote Chensavasdiyai, Minister-Counsellor of the Thai Embassy to Vietnam; Nguyen Thi Le Thanh, deputy director of Khanh Hoa Department of Tourism; and Nguyen Van Quan, director of immigration at Cam Ranh International Airport.

## All Access Akureyri

### Travel Bulletin's news editor, Hiriyti Bairu, travels to Akureyri with Super Break to discover Northern Iceland's hidden gems...

WHILE REYKJAVIK, the capital of Iceland, is the obvious tourist choice for visitors to this fascinating Scandinavian country, very few know or have explored Akureyri; a city at the base of Eyjafjörður Fjord, which is home to the lesser-known but impressive Myvatn Nature Baths. The Blue Lagoon geothermal spa may be just a 30-minute drive from Reykjavik but Akureyri is worth adding to any Icelandic itinerary.

A jam-packed itinerary, provided by Super Break, gave me a real taste of what was on offer in the 'Capital of the North', with the opportunity to stay at three different hotels, each located in a different part of the region: Sigló hotel built into the harbour in Siglufjörður; Sel-Hotel Mývatn, ideally located so guests can explore the wonders of Mývatn and its surroundings; and Icelandic Akureyri, a stone's throw from a popular geothermal pool. Akureyri is also home to Björböðin, Iceland's first ever beer spa. Visitors can immerse themselves in a bathtub filled with beer, water, hops and yeast – and the draughts that are on the side of each tub means they can do so with a beer in hand. Following the experience, which lasts 25 minutes, guests will be taken to a relaxation room where they can lie down and let their skin soak up the benefits of the beer bath.

One of the main selling points for the destination is the famous Aurora Borealis, also commonly referred to as the Northern Lights. In perfect conditions, this natural phenomenon – a collision of particles in the atmosphere, displaying a fluorescent shimmer in the night sky described as a 'light dance' – can be seen in the surrounding area from September to April. Complementing the scenes in the sky, Northern Iceland's list of natural wonders is long: Akureyri is home to Dettifoss, the largest waterfall in Europe standing at 45m high and 100m wide; the region also boasts other waterfalls, such as Vatnajökull National Park, where visitors can discover a variety of volcanic pools and mountains. Lake Myvatn is on the famed sightseeing route known as The

Diamond Circle, home to geothermal areas of bubbling hot springs, mossy mounds, volcanic craters and misty caves filled with water. Visitors to the area can take a dip in one of Mother Nature's bathtubs and soak up the surrounding landscape. Birdlife by the lake is abundant boasting the Barrow's goldeneye and harlequin duck, among other species, but by far the best way to take in Lake Myvatn's breathtaking scenery is by going on a snowmobiling tour.

It's easy to be charmed by Iceland's fourth largest municipality. Akureyri has an interesting history behind it. The city's vibrant arts and culture scene paints a picture of how inhabitants lived in centuries past and at the Foteviken Museum, holidaymakers can find a living and breathing Viking town inhabited by locals. In Husavik, The Whale Museum informs on the species and their habitat, while in Akureyri there's its long-celebrated Art Museum.

Agents can offer their clients a trip to Akureyri with Super Break's 'original' Incredible Iceland break. The itinerary includes three nights' accommodation in a choice of hotels, plus experiences to many of the region's top attractions such as Lake Myvatn, Godafoss Waterfall, the boiling mud pools of Namafjall and a stop at Vogafjós working farm. Also included in the break is an excursion to see the Northern Lights to make your clients' Icelandic escape even more memorable, but do suggest that they take advantage of the opportunity to visit the Myvatn Nature Baths – the 'Blue Lagoon of the North' – or take part in a Snowmobiling Experience, Whale Watching or Fishing Experience (extra charges apply).

Prices start from £499 per person including three-nights' accommodation at the Hotel Akureyri Skjaldborg, 'Lake Myvatn Adventure – Land of Fire and Ice' full-day escorted excursion, 'Search for the Northern Lights' escorted evening excursion, return airport transfers and flights from a choice of 16 UK airports departing until March 15.



**AGENTS CAN** extend a Valentines Day with a difference to clients, whisking them away to the beauty of Lapland with a special 'buy one get one half price' offer on a Transun short break. Departing on February 14, this three-night break will have couples travelling to the secluded village of Karesuando and take part in activities such as husky sledding, snowmobiling and a hunt for the Northern lights. As an example of prices with the special offer; two adults departing from East Midlands' airport will see the first adult pay £899 and the second £449.50. Visit [transun.co.uk](http://transun.co.uk)

## Sweden 'The Edible Country' is good enough to eat

ONE FOR gastronomes and travellers looking to get a real taste for their destination, 'The Edible Country' is a new initiative from Sweden that highlights the abundance of natural foods and healthy pantry that Swedish nature has to offer.

The Edible Country consists of a nine-course menu that visitors can prepare and cook themselves – in the wild. Created by four of Sweden's top chefs, a menu designed around Sweden's natural produce has been made available in the shape of a 100 million-acre DIY gourmet restaurant. Seven handmade wooden tables have been placed across the country with ready-to-use kitchen kits and cooking tools. The concept is free of charge and tables are open for reservations between May and September through [Bookatable.com](http://Bookatable.com).

Along with the menu come instructions on where visitors can find the ingredients and how to cook them properly, with the menu varying depending on the season. This means the ingredients can be found in nature almost all year round and, as an example, visitors can whip up a forest broth with poached perch and broiled herb butter, and freshly smoked char with chanterelles and wood sorrel. Niklas Ekstedt, one of the Swedish Michelin-starred chefs who co-created the menu alongside Titti Qvarnström, Jacob Holmström and Anton Bjuhr, said: "For me, Swedish nature has always been my biggest source of inspiration when cooking. The hours I have spent in the forest have turned into the realisation that cooking outdoors, with the ingredients right in front of me, is the core of Swedish cuisine. The Edible Country is a symbol of how easy, close and uncomplicated food can and should be."

The initiative is representative of the whole country of Sweden, with its varied landscapes and beautiful scenery. The seven tables are placed in Skåne, West Sweden, Swedish Lapland, Jämtland, Småland, Stockholm archipelago and Värmland. Jennie Skogsborn Missuna, chief experience officer at Visit Sweden, said: "Sweden is 96% uninhabited and yet easily accessible for everyone. Our nature is filled with edible ingredients and we want to invite the world to enjoy them, and at the same time wind down in nature like us Swedes do. By using our star chefs' menu, this new and innovative DIY culinary experience makes it possible for visitors to explore and transform nature into gourmet food themselves."

More information can be found at [visitsweden.com/ediblecountry](http://visitsweden.com/ediblecountry)

## Get familiar with Denmark's capital of cool

COPENHAGEN HAS always been a Nordic hotspot but with new city developments, numerous hotel openings and a booming food scene, the capital has been acknowledged by Lonely Planet as the world's top city to visit in the 2019 'Best in Travel' campaign.

In tandem with Denmark's second city of Aarhus receiving the prestigious accolade of the European Capital of Culture in 2017, it means now is a great opportunity for agents to brush up on their knowledge and sell the destination to potential clients.

VisitDenmark offers five free modules covering everything from Danish regions to Danish lifestyle as well its unique bike culture and the concept of 'hygge', which has turned into a world-wide phenomenon. Agents will learn about the diversity of the country; from its historical roots and home to one of the world's oldest monarchies, to its innovative culture which has seen the destination manoeuvre to be at the forefront of sustainability and modern gastronomy.

For companies wanting to further educate their agents on Denmark as a travel destination, VisitDenmark also offers individual presentations by its travel trade project manager, Johanne Atkins. Go to [www.visitdenmark.com](http://www.visitdenmark.com) to find out more.



**KIRKER HOLIDAYS** has introduced a new 'Handel in Sweden' escorted tour, offering its guests the chance to explore the narrow mediaeval streets, fascinating museums and elegant palaces of Stockholm. During this specially created five-night cultural break clients will also get to enjoy the performances of two Handel operas – 'Acis and Galatea' and 'Ariodante' – in the city's historic 18th century theatres and prices start from £2,287 per person. Visit [www.kirkerholidays.com](http://www.kirkerholidays.com)

## A fishy business: Hurtigruten to power cruise ships with dead fish

WITH A growing fleet of ships and after making significant investments in green technology, Hurtigruten has announced that the next step is to power its ships with liquefied biogas (LBG) – fossil free, renewable gas produced from dead fish and other organic waste.

The expedition cruise line's CEO, Daniel Skjeldam, said: "What others see as a problem, we see as a resource and a solution. By introducing biogas as fuel for cruise ships, Hurtigruten will be the first cruise company to power ships with fossil-free fuel. While competitors are running on heavy fuel oil, our ships will literally be powered by nature. Biogas is the greenest fuel in shipping and will be a huge advantage for the environment. We would love other cruise companies to follow."

This year will mark two green milestones for the cruise line: the introduction of the world's first battery-hybrid powered cruise ship, the MS Roald Amundsen; and a large-scale green upgrade project, replacing traditional diesel propulsion with battery packs and gas engines on several of its ships. By 2021, the line plans to operate at least six of its ships using biogas and batteries, combined with liquified natural gas.

## Finnair increases capacity to London for summer 2019

IN LINE with its growth strategy, Finnair is adding capacity on its route between Helsinki and Heathrow for the summer 2019 season, starting from March 31.

The airline will add a daily frequency to and from Heathrow, operated with an A320 family aircraft. Providing good connection opportunities from London with Finnair's oneworld partners, the new flight will leave Helsinki at 11:40 and the return flight from London will depart at 13:50.

In addition, the carrier will further increase its capacity on the London route by upgrading the 16:00 flight between Helsinki and London, as well as the 18:10 flight from London to Helsinki, with an Airbus A330 wide-body aircraft. The change will provide more than 50 additional seats per flight compared to the current A321 narrow-body aircraft.

Christian Lesjak, the company's senior vice president for Network and Resource Management, said: "Finnair's presence in London and in the UK has been growing steadily over the past few years and we are pleased to add capacity on this important route. By adding the new midday frequency and flying an additional wide-body aircraft on the route, we will be able to offer even more flexibility and network connections for our customers." For further details go to [www.finnair.com](http://www.finnair.com)

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## Visit Finland shows how to find your F-inner happiness

BRITS ARE sacrificing their happiness by not spending enough time connecting with the great outdoors or going 'au naturel' in the sauna, according to a new YouGov survey commissioned by Visit Finland.

Finland was ranked the happiest nation of the 156 countries studied in the UN 2018 World Happiness Report, while Britain lags behind as the 19th happiest. The survey revealed that while 67% of Brits would like to spend more time outdoors in nature, to directly benefit mental health and well-being, our prioritisation of wellness has slipped with as many as 24% saying they hadn't spent any time connecting with nature at all in the past month. For Londoners, this figure increased to 29% but for those in the South it was just 19%.

Men and women were split when it came to ways of improving their mental health and wellbeing with 14% of men believing more time spent playing video games was the way to go, with just 6% of women agreeing. For women, spending time with the family (48% versus 36% for men), socialising with friends (47% women versus 41% men), cooking (29% versus 22%) and reading (51% versus 42%) were more important.

64% of Brits also believe that the diminishing hours of daylight through winter negatively impacts their happiness. But happy Finns are seemingly able to remain cheerful despite the sun not rising above the horizon for the two-month polar night period in the heart of winter in Northern Finland.

Joonas Halla, PR manager for Visit Finland, said: "The world might know Finland for Nokia phones, Angry Birds and heavy metal music, but our connection with nature, locally foraged foods and obsession with the sauna appear to be some of our better kept secrets. We don't have to make

the time to do activities that make us happy; it is simply a part of our daily lifestyle. Nature is close by even in the capital of Helsinki where a cross-country skiing path awaits just around the corner."

Only one in ten Brits say that they would use a sauna every day if it was freely available to them, with nearly 28% saying that they would never use one. For Finns, the sauna is an integral part of their culture, to relax, cleanse and socialise with friends and family. Saunas are said to encourage weight loss as well as reducing stress by improving circulation and even strengthening the immune system. Finns reckon that relaxing in a sauna after a hard day's work strengthens business relationships as well as friendships and there are reported to be more saunas than cars in the country.

Only 5% of Brits claim to be willing to put on their swimwear and take a dip in wild waters during winter. However the Finns are used to stripping off and taking the plunge whatever the weather as they believe that swimming in wild waters is good for physical and mental wellbeing as well as improving cardiovascular health.

Jaime Thurston, Happiness Expert and Founder of 52 Lives, said: "As a society we are more aware than ever of the impact our busy schedules and urban lifestyles have on health and happiness and we clearly have some lessons to learn from the happy Finns. This research shows that while we are aware of the benefits of connecting with the great outdoors, and connecting with our friends and family, not enough of us are prioritising these things - to the detriment of our wellbeing. Perhaps it is time ditch the screens and take some invigorating walks in the woods."

To find out more go to [www.visitfinland.com](http://www.visitfinland.com)

## See spectacular Scandinavia with Sunvil

WITH ITS unspoiled scenery and pristine wilderness, Northern Lights in winter and the midnight sun in summer, Sunvil is recommending Scandinavia as a destination that can be enjoyed year round. The specialist operator has added a number of new itineraries, unique experiences and accommodation options to its Scandinavia programme for 2019, with particular highlights in Swedish Lapland and Northern Norway.

New in Sweden for 2019, are the seven-night itineraries 'A Tour of the Swedish Lake District' which explores the lakes, forests and expansive Store Mosse National Park; and the slow-paced 'A journey from Gothenburg to Malmö' embodying the Swedish lifestyle trend of 'Lagom'. New accommodation includes the Arctic Retreat and Fjellborg Arctic Lodge in Swedish Lapland and the Arctic Bath, Harads in northern Lapland.

As an example of new trips in Norway, clients can opt to embark on a journey to 'Ålesund and the Geirangerfjord by public transport', travelling by ship, ferry and bus to discover three distinct locations.

Call 020-8758 4722 or visit [www.sunvil.co.uk](http://www.sunvil.co.uk)

# technology



**PRINCESS CRUISES** has announced that three more of its ships are to be fully Princess Medallion-activated; meaning a total of five in its fleet will feature the award-winning technology. The Medallion will be available on Crown Princess in July as she sails the British Isles from Southampton and will be followed by Royal Princess in April as she departs for her maiden Alaska season. Sky Princess, which joins the fleet in October, will be Medallion-ready when she embarks on her maiden season in the Mediterranean before heading to the Caribbean. The Medallion, which is the same size as a 10p piece, is fully-automated and provides technological benefits such as keyless stateroom access, enhanced interaction with crew members, a smoother embarkation and disembarkation process, and 'OceanCompass' which provides interactive directions throughout the ship and allows guests to easily locate friends, family and their children. Visit [www.princess.com](http://www.princess.com)

## New Farecast service from Advantage Travel

ADVANTAGE TRAVEL Partnership has signed an agreement with travel data systems specialists, Travelogix, to develop the world's first custom, travel, data collection platform for the group's Focus members.

Launching in April, the platform will collect GDS data in real time, directly from the 60 Focus members. Known as 'Farecast', the service will provide users with up to date air booking trends, volumes and revenues to track and aid airfare negotiations with airlines. The platform will allow the consortium to provide Focus partners with tangible data and insights, negotiate the best possible deals, and help Focus partners to source new corporate business.

Abby Penston, head of Focus at the consortia, said: "As we move into 2019 and look at data solutions and innovation to strengthen our Focus Partnership services, we couldn't be more delighted to partner with Travelogix. The Focus exclusive solution will provide both our central team and our Focus partners a platform to utilise and control their individual data, as well as demonstrating our collective strength as a Partnership when negotiating with suppliers, ensuring that our Focus Partners are always competitive."

The collection of data from Focus members began this year from January 1 with reporting capabilities being launched in April. Focus members will have exclusive use of the platform for its first year. Override tracking intelligence and member contribution analysis will be delivered later in 2019.

Go to [www.advantagemembers.com](http://www.advantagemembers.com) to find out more.

## Watch this space as Jetset makes further improvements to Package Pal

2018 WAS a big year for Jetset. In recognition of its 50th year of trading and the seventh year of its dynamic Package Pal system, the company built on the fully flexible and fully ATOL protected tool by boosting its functionality and giving it a contemporary makeover.

Daniela Oliveira, from the company's sales support team, said: "Jetset are constantly taking on board feedback and requests from the trade and this is what drives us to improve our system more and more. 2018 was also a year where we said goodbye to small talk with the Q4 development to drastically quicken the system and make their favourite Pal super-speedy like Usain Bolt! It isn't just the feedback that suggests this has truly helped agents, the percentage of bookings being made online in January has

reached new records with an overall percentage across the month standing at 84%"

For 2019, the company has also added a small helpful touch to the system to make agents' lives easier: on both Package Pal and Flight-only agents will now find a new 'Baggage filter'. This filter will allow agents to quickly distinguish between a 'No Baggage' fare, 'Baggage included' fare and a 'Paid Baggage' fare.

Oliveira added: "An additional development for Q1 of 2019 is already being worked on and promises to transform agent's lives. The exact details are being kept under wraps but as a clue I can tell you that enquiries will never be the same again – and you can QUOTE me on that."

Visit [www.jetsetflights.co.uk](http://www.jetsetflights.co.uk) to find out more

## Hurtigruten introduces tallest screen at sea

TECHNOLOGY WILL take the guest experience on Hurtigruten's first hybrid powered expedition cruise ship, MS Roald Amundsen, to a new level with the tallest LED screen at sea.

Spanning seven decks and 17.5m, the screen will give the guests a unique welcome when they step on board and will also have lectures and transmissions from outside the ship broadcast live.

Daniel Skjeldam, CEO for the line, said: "Our focus on state-of-the-art design, innovation and technology is not limited to the exterior. It also includes the interior and will take the guest experience to a whole new level. By introducing the tallest LED-screen at sea, we will bring - and magnify - the splendid beauty of the passing nature, to the guests inside."

The expedition cruise company currently has two next-generation expedition ships under construction at Norway's Kleven yard with MS Roald Amundsen and MS Fridtjof Nansen to launch in 2019 and 2020 and plans announced for a third yet-to-be-named hybrid powered sister ship arriving for 2021.

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## puzzlesolutions

### Crossword:

Across: 1. SANDALS, 5. MEA, 7. PENRITH, 8. ORLY, 9. VERNON,  
11. DUBLIN, 13. AITO, 16. NAIROBI, 17. YEN, 18. INGHAMS.  
Down: 1. SALFORD CITY, 2. NEPAL, 3. ARNO, 4. ST IVES, 5. MAHON,  
6. ALTON TOWERS, 10. RIMINI, 12. BENIN, 14. IBIZA, 15. LONG.

Highlighted Word: MILAN

Where Am I?: Verdon Gorge, Provence, Southeastern France.

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We asked our staff the following question this week:

**If you could become a member of any TV-sitcom social group or family, which would you choose?**



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*I'd become part of the Shakespeare family in Upstart Crow*



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*Big Bang Theory – I'll be with my geek peeps.*



### Georgia Lewis

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*Seinfeld - I am basically Elaine. We're even the same height.*



### Hiriya Bairu

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*Friends because I'll be cracking up all the time*



### Lauretta Wright

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*I would be Jack Bauer's wife - not the dead one...his new one*



### Paul Scudamore

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*Fawlty Towers.*



### Simon Eddolls

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*Cheers!*



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*Dukes Of Hazard, Daisy in those denims!*



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*Emmerdale - get some southern attitude about them!!*



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*Only Fools and Horses as I'm in stitches every time I watch it!*



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*Will and Grace.*



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*Gilmore Girls because their lives look like so much fun!*



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*Devious Maids.*



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*The Office (I can always explain myself to the camera)*



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*The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air - for that 90s nostalgia.*



### Eugenia Nelly Mendes

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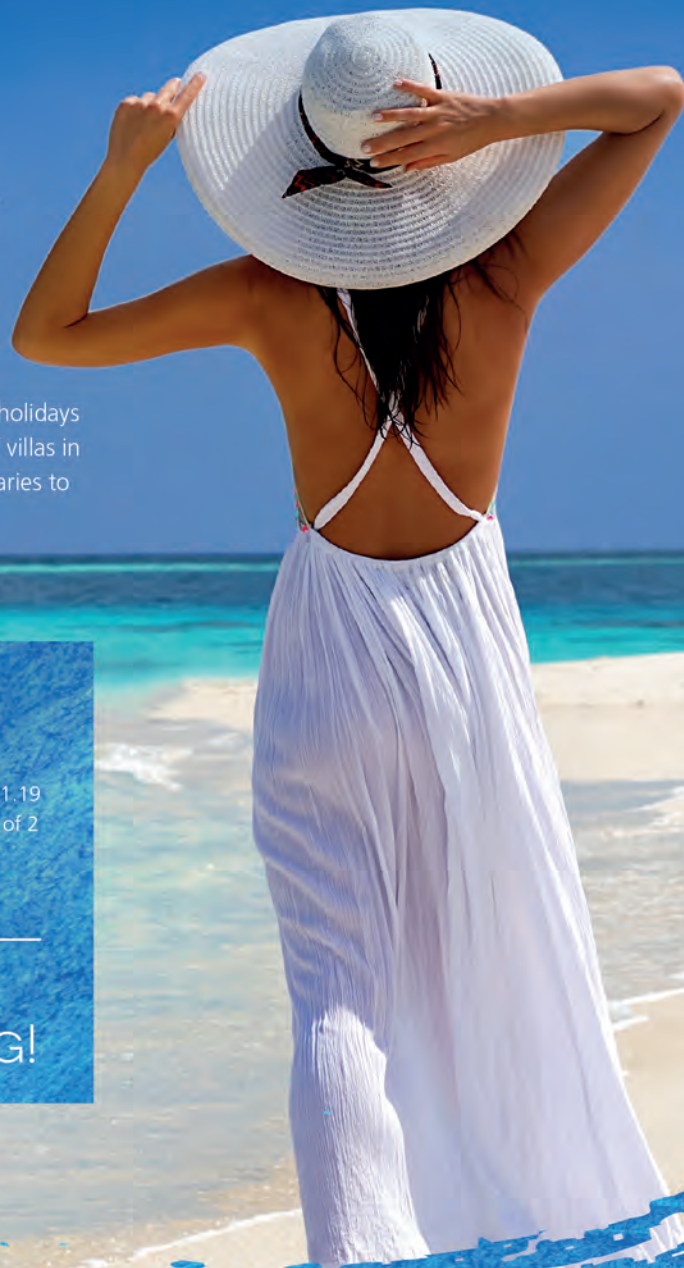
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