

travelbulletin

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Giving agents the edge

USA

New content for off
road adventures from
Visit California



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new ATOL regulations are coming into play so it's time to sit up & take notice says AITO

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discover who's answering our new quick-fire questions



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a round-up of new hotel and self-catering offers

Invites you to a

Luxury Showcase

Agent Networking Evening

Agents, we invite you to join the Travel Bulletin team and leading luxury suppliers at one of our informative and engaging events. With a combination of presentations & networking, we will provide the opportunity to discover the paradise that is luxury holidays. From remarkably unique hotels to once in a lifetime experiences, you will master how to deliver your clients their dreams.

Monday 30th April
Ten Square Hotel, Belfast

Tuesday 1st May
Radisson Blu Hotel & Spa, Cork

Featuring



Registration: 18:00 hours

Networking & Presentations: 18:30 hours

Hot Dinner, Entertainment & Prizes: 20:30 hours

Carriages: 21:30 hours

To confirm your place at one of these amazing events, email the names and contact details of up to 5 staff members by Monday 16th April 2018 to: events@travelbulletin.co.uk or telephone:

020 7834 6661

For more information.



MADE IN MEXICO...

AMRESORTS AND Funway Holidays hosted a joint fam trip to Mexico recently. Activities ranged from riding wave runners in the sea and jungle rides by ATV through grassland and mangrove terrain, to a trip to Isla Mujeres on a luxury catamaran. Accommodation included two nights at Secrets Maroma Beach Riviera Cancun and two nights at Secrets The Vine Cancun, with flights provided by Thomas Cook Airlines. Pictured getting to grips with a cocktail-making class at Secrets Maroma Beach Riviera Cancun are, from the left: Agnes Czekanska, AMResorts; Matthew Butler, Not Just Travel; Alison Owens, TTNG; Audrey Brooks-Wiggins, Funway; Joanne Oxe (Turney), Freedom; Georgina Why, Hays; David Carruthers, Conexo Travel; Victoria Jones, Advantage; and Sharon Confue, Thomas Cook Airlines.

Brits leaving themselves 'dangerously unprotected' when taking gadgets on holiday

UK HOLIDAYMAKERS chasing the sun over the school holidays will be jetting off with on average £2,300 in their luggage, amounting to an average of five gadgets per family. Each family member could be carrying up to two devices in their pockets including popular gadgets such as smartphones, electronic readers, laptops, wearable tech such as smart watches, music players and digital cameras.

The statistics come from Travel Insurance Explained (TIE), which surveyed 5,000 UK travellers and found that 62% will take a device on holiday and will travel with multiple devices. According to the research, younger travellers will take more gadgets on holiday, although the survey found there are no differences between men and women – both genders are keen to have technology at their fingertips.

Regionally there are some distinct differences in tech savvy travellers. The Scottish will take the most possessions on holiday, averaging around six devices, which is higher than those travelling from Northern Ireland, Yorkshire and the East Midlands.

However, as Fiona Macrae, head of TIE asserts, many travel insurance policies do not cover gadgets as standard. She said: "UK travellers are carrying more technology on holiday than ever before, so they need to ensure that there is adequate cover under their policy, as not all insurers provide gadget cover. Many policies specifically exclude mobile phones, whilst others may offer very low levels of cover, often £500 or less, and/or policies with a high excess.

"Customers should also be aware that there may be limitations regarding the age of the gadget and some providers will only cover gadgets up to 24 months old but others cover gadgets up to 48 months old. We always advise customers to check cover limits, exclusions and the excess amount, before buying their policy to ensure they are not disappointed should they have to claim."

THIS WEEK

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Shearings celebrates new partnership with Country Living

HOTEL GROUP Coast & Country (part of the Shearings Leisure Group) and Hearst UK's Country Living magazine have announced a partnership to open two 'Country Living Hotels' over the coming months.

The new partnership sees two of Coast & Country's most iconic properties, The Lansdown Grove in Bath and The St George in Harrogate, undergo an extensive refurbishment before being rebranded as 'Country Living Hotels, exclusively by Coast & Country'.

Created and designed in conjunction with the team behind the magazine, the two hotels aim to bring the Country Living brand, and all that it epitomises, to life. Guests can expect beautifully designed rooms, locally sourced seasonal food and drink, relaxing surroundings and comfy sofas for the chance

to escape from everyday life. The Country Living team have handpicked every detail - from stylish bathrooms to menus inspired by producers and features from the magazine.

The Country Living Lansdown Grove Hotel in Bath (55 bedrooms) is due to reopen in late May and the Country Living St George Hotel in Harrogate (90 rooms) is scheduled to open in early July.

Agents will be able to book Shearings Holidays' self-drive short break packages or bespoke coach breaks that will be tailor-made around the Country Living brand. For example, a coach break at the St George Hotel will include a visit to Harewood House, a guided tour of the RHS Harlow Carr Gardens plus cream tea. Prices are from £379 for a five-day coach break.

For details see shearingsagent.com

Ancillary revenue & technology driving optimism across the travel industry

TRAVEL SECTOR giants are largely confident about the future of the industry thanks to ancillary revenue streams increasing in number and the evolution of digital platforms, according to new insight from Rentalcars Connect.

The B2B ground transportation strand of Booking.com canvassed the views of industry leaders as part of its Q1 Travel Pulse, and found that 88% felt optimistic about the year ahead in travel.

A total of 70% of respondents, including airlines, travel agents, hotels and other travel companies, expected the number of ancillary revenue streams that they offer to increase over the coming year.

Fraser Ellacott, managing director at Rentalcars Connect, said: "The travel industry is thriving, and ancillary revenue streams have become a key enabler of this success. Offering additional services during the booking process is becoming more popular, as it provides a seamless transition between online and offline activity, whether that's before, during, or after a trip."

The results also suggested that advances in technology are, at least in part, a driver for this optimism. Some 58% of respondents stated that they expect driverless vehicles to bring opportunities to their business, while the majority also said that personalisation and mobile optimisation would be one of the most important contributing factors to the success of their digital platforms.



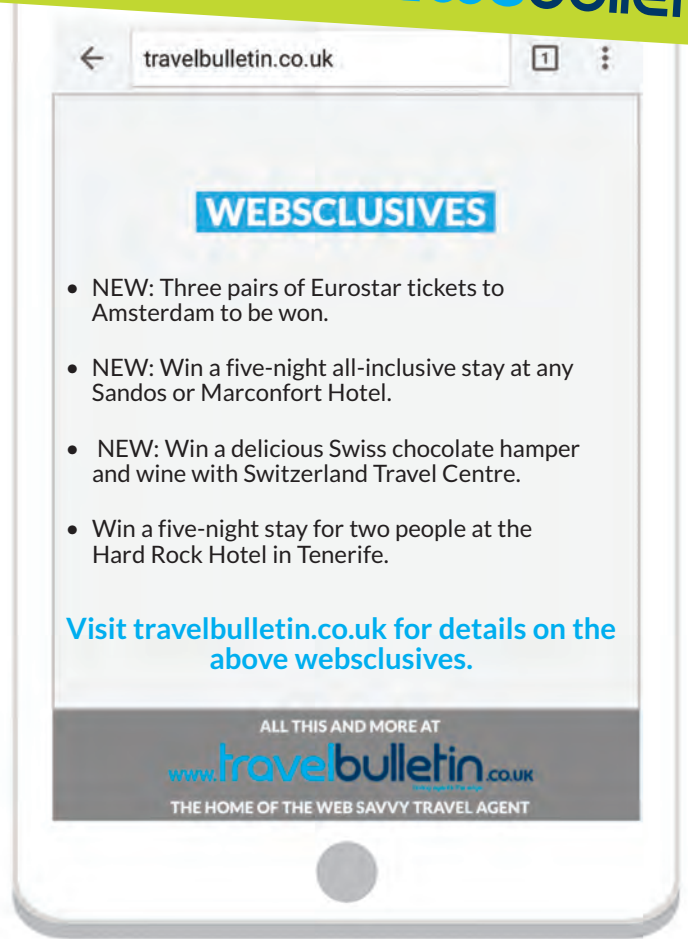
BIRTHDAY BASH...Earlier this month, to mark the first anniversary of the launch of Sandals & Beaches Resorts' tour operation Unique Caribbean Holidays Limited (UChL), business development managers from Sandals Resorts International surprised agents with a selection of birthday treats including cupcakes and cakes. Pictured is the operator's Audrey Singh (left) with travel agents Emma Spooner (middle) and Anne Pronger from Thomas Cook in Hastings.

MOVERS

- SHANNON INGLETON has joined Hard Rock Hotels All Inclusive sales team as UK sales support. She will be visiting agents in the South of England to teach them how their clients can holiday like a Rock Star at the company's four all-inclusive resorts in Mexico and the Dominican Republic.
- SANDALS RESORTS International has appointed Gebhard F. Rainer as CEO.
- MARTINA HINGIS has been appointed ambassador of Switzerland's Grand Resort Bad Ragaz.
- HOPPA GROUP, which consists of trade transfer specialist A2B transfers, has appointed Chris Harrington as sales director with responsibility for growing and developing the business in the UK and globally.
- PONANT HAS appointed cruise expert, Cecilia Abert, as its UK brand ambassador.
- ROSY SIMS has been promoted to director of trade engagement and onboard sales for P&O Cruises.
- VERANDA AND Heritage Resorts (VLH) in Mauritius has appointed Simon McDermott as sales executive in charge of the North of England, Scotland & Ireland.
- ANNA PERROTT has joined Travelbag as head of cruise.
- LATIN ROUTES has appointed Molly Cofman-Nicoresi and Gaynor Atherton as its new business development executives. Molly will focus on the South West, the Midlands, the East and Ireland, while Gaynor will be working with travel agencies in North Wales, the North and Scotland.
- IF ONLY... has expanded its existing team of travel professionals with the appointment of Andy Freeth as the company's CEO, Gordon McCreadie as sales and marketing director, Tracy Docherty as business development director and David Irving as head of specialist business.



BELFAST BESTIES... Wendy Cameron (second from left) from Super Break visited Stewart Travel in Belfast to promote the operator's short break charter programme to Montenegro, Croatia and the Adriatic Coast, which includes a departure from City of Derry Airport this October. Pictured with Wendy are, from the left: Ethan Hollyoak, Kerry Tiernan and Dougie Muir from Stewart Travel.



- WEBSCLUSIVES**
- NEW: Three pairs of Eurostar tickets to Amsterdam to be won.
 - NEW: Win a five-night all-inclusive stay at any Sandos or Marconfort Hotel.
 - NEW: Win a delicious Swiss chocolate hamper and wine with Switzerland Travel Centre.
 - Win a five-night stay for two people at the Hard Rock Hotel in Tenerife.

Visit travelbulletin.co.uk for details on the above websclusives.

ALL THIS AND MORE AT

www.travelbulletin.co.uk

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NEWS BITES

- **TURKISH AIRLINES** has announced that it will be operating with its Airbus A330 aircraft on the Manchester – Istanbul route from June. Three flights a week will be offered between June 4 and September 14. See turkishairlines.com or call 0844-800 6666.
- **TICKETS HAVE** now been released for this year's Festival of Flight at London Biggin Hill Airport, as the celebration of aviation returns to the airfield from August 18-19. Early bird tickets are available at a discounted price until August 5. Tickets must be purchased online and booked in advance. Free entry for children under 16 is offered when accompanied by an adult. Visit lbhacommunity.co.uk for more information.
- **THE GRAND Hotel & Spa, York** has opened its new White Rose Lounge, offering an exclusive home-away-from-home residence with tempting food and drink offerings in collaboration with local producers. The new venue provides guests with exclusivity, modern conveniences and attentive service. It is fully equipped with TV screens, working stations with iMac laptops and printers, complimentary Wi-Fi, as well as newspapers and books, creating an ideal space to relax or catch up with business.
- **ABERDEEN STANDARD Investments** have agreed five new leases as part of its vision for Albert Dock Liverpool, including a diverse mix of independent and national leisure, retail, restaurant and office tenants.

First non-stop flight from UK to Australia departs Heathrow for Perth

THE WORLD'S first non-stop flight from the UK to Australia took off on March 25 on a journey of 14,498km.

The brand new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, carrying up to 236 passengers, spent just under 17 hours in the air, flying at an average speed of 538mph — before landing in Perth, Western Australia, at lunchtime on March 26.

Qantas, Australia's national carrier, will now operate daily non-stop flights from London to Perth. With an enhanced cabin design, the Dreamliner also features turbulence dampening technology, improved air quality to reduce jetlag and 65% larger windows to give passengers an increased sense of space.

The aircraft offers 42 Business Class 'Suites', 28 Premium Economy seats and 166 Economy seats. Return Qantas Economy seats from Perth start from £793 per person.

What used to take four days and seven stops in 1947 now takes a single hop, with the service transporting Brits to Australia's sunniest city in just 17 hours.

Return Economy seats start from £793 per person for travel between October 23 and December 5.

For further information see dreamliner.qantas.com

Saga offers seven-night all-inclusive Marrakech option from £399 per person

CLIENTS CAN now book a seven-night, all-inclusive holiday to Marrakech with Saga from £399 when booking before April 27.

Guests stay at Iberostar Club Palmeraie Marrakech, a 318-bedroom hotel in 11-acre gardens with three outdoor swimming pools, along with a range of sports and activities.

Departures from Gatwick are in September and April 2019, and the price includes flights; accommodation; breakfast, lunches and dinners; a free bar open 15 hours a day; wine and water at lunch and dinner; free Wi-Fi; fruit and water on arrival; a Saga representative; portage at the hotel; tourist visa; optional travel insurance; and transfers.

To book call 0800-092 0803 or visit saga.co.uk/palmeriaie



Necker Island stays with Caribtours

NECKER ISLAND will be open again for holidays from October and Caribtours is offering seven nights from £16,249 per person on an all-inclusive basis, including Virgin Atlantic flights, lounge access and private transfers.

Prices are based on Celebration Week stays between October 20 and November 3.

For details see caribtours.co.uk or call 020-7751 0660.

Prague lights up for 2018 centenary celebrations

WITH PRAGUE celebrating the 100th birthday of the founding of the Czech Republic and 50 years since the Prague Spring, the Czech Republic's capital city will be at the heart of all the major celebratory events to mark the two anniversaries.

Special exhibitions, concerts, shows and parades take place during a full year of events, culminating on October 28 with a grand military parade and the re-opening of the National Museum.

Also celebrating this year is Corinthia Hotel Prague, which is 20 years old as a Corinthia-branded hotel.

To tie in with the double birthdays, the five-star hotel will present a bottle of local wine to each guest staying between June 11-17. It has also extended its Best of Prague package to

include tickets for the major exhibition of the work of world-acclaimed Czech Art Nouveau artist Alfons Mucha. As part of the centenary celebrations, the exhibition runs from June until the end of October at the Municipal House in Old Town.

Guests staying at the hotel on the Best of Prague package can choose a complimentary ticket to an attraction in the city for each day of their stay including the Old Town Hall Tower, Alfons Mucha, Žižkov Tower and the Franz Kafka Museum.

The Best of Prague package costs from 115 euros and includes a stay in a superior room, breakfast, Wi-Fi, VAT and taxes, early check-in and late check-out (subject to availability), and one sightseeing ticket per person, per each night booked.

Fred. Olsen issues 'Around the World 2018/19 with Sydney at New Year' brochure

FRED. OLSEN Cruise Lines' new dedicated 'Around the World 2018/19 with Sydney New Year' brochure details a 107-night itinerary that takes in Sydney's New Year's Eve fireworks, the jungles of Costa Rica and Komodo Dragons in their natural habitat.

The 'World Cruise' in November 2018, on the smaller, more intimate Black Watch, departs Southampton on November 12 and visits a total of 35 ports in 22 countries.

Justin Stanton, the line's sales and marketing director, said: "We are delighted to be offering guests the chance to take a once-in-a-lifetime holiday on board Black Watch, circling the globe from late 2018. Every stop on this unique voyage to the Americas, Oceania, Asia, Arabia and the Mediterranean will be simply unforgettable; topped-off by an extended stay in Sydney, planned to coincide with the city's spectacular New Year celebrations – the first time that we have visited at this fun-packed time of the year."

Black Watch crosses the Atlantic from Funchal in Madeira to St. John's, Antigua. The ship continues to Colombia, before transiting the Panama Canal and exploring the Polynesian islands, and arriving in Sydney on New Year's Eve, for a two-night stay.

The cruise skirts along eastern Australia and the Great Barrier Reef, then onto Komodo Island in Indonesia

– home to the Komodo Dragons – Singapore, Phuket in Thailand, Kerala, Goa and Mumbai in India, for an overnight stay.

Black Watch then calls at Dubai in the UAE, Muscat in Oman and Aqaba in Jordan, for another overnight stay. A transit of the Suez Canal follows, before the ship navigates the Strait of Messina through to Naples en route to Southampton, via Gibraltar and La Coruña in Spain.

Prices lead in at £11,999 per person based on two sharing a twin-bedded Interior room. It includes accommodation, all meals and entertainment on board, plus port taxes.

The line is offering savings of up to £960 per person off the cruise price or free door-to-door transfers for up to 250 mainland UK miles each way for bookings made by April 30.

To book, quote the code W1825MAR when calling 01473-746164 or see fredolsencruises.com/travel-agent-centre



CLIA announces conference speaker programme

CLIA UK & Ireland has announced the programme of speakers for its 12th annual conference, taking place in Southampton from May 23-25.

The focus for the three-day event is the importance of making cruise appealing to all generations, and strategies and techniques to cut through to different age-groups and demographics.

Andy Harmer, the association's UK and Ireland director, said: "The over-arching theme of the conference is #GenerationCruise. Thanks to the incredible amount of new ships being delivered to CLIA cruise lines this year and for the next few years, there is a mind-boggling array of types of cruise and itineraries to choose from; there's a cruise for every generation."

Opening the conference sessions on May 24, is Cindy D'Aoust, CLIA's president and chief executive. Cindy will set the scene for the day's sessions and give an overview of the

latest CLIA figures for 2017.

Dr Paul Redmond will address delegates about the importance of realising the differences between the generations, and the best ways to talk to them, while MSC chief executive, Gianni Onoratu, will talk agents through the innovations the line has planned for its multiple ships on order.

In addition, Chris Austin, Seabourn senior vice president global sales and marketing, will take to the stage to talk to agents about developments from within the dynamic luxury cruise sector, and sales strategies to make the most of these opportunities. Harry Sommer, executive vice president, international business development for Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, will be offering a global view of how the UK sits alongside other divisions.

For further information please visit cruiseexperts.org

Free LotusMiles membership from Vietnam Airlines

VIETNAM AIRLINES is offering complimentary Gold membership of its LotusMiles frequent flyer programme with all return Business Class flights from the UK, France, Germany and Russia to Vietnam.

The second-highest possible level of membership, Gold LotusMiles status offers a selection of premium benefits for passengers - from priority check-in and boarding, increased baggage allowance and lounge access, to special LotusMiles accrual bonuses.

The offer is valid for new Business Class bookings for travel on Vietnam Airlines' operated flights before December 31. To take advantage of the offer, passengers who are not already members need to sign up to the LotusMiles programme before booking their eligible flights.

Existing LotusMiles members can also benefit from a free upgrade to Gold status by entering their LotusMiles number when booking.

Return Business Class fares from Heathrow to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City currently start from £2,317 per person, inclusive of taxes.

For further information visit vietnamairlines.com

James
VILLA HOLIDAYS





Notes from

Normanton...

IS ANYONE watching Indian Summer School on Channel 4? Having spent five years in India as a child I am always fascinated by anything like this. Five young people who failed their GCSEs have been given a second chance and sent out to attend an elite school in India for six months. It has an exam rate of 100% and the experiment is to see if the boys will make the most of the opportunity!

It's all change at If Only... - Andy Freeth, Gordon McCreadie, Tracy Docherty and David Irving joined during the first week of April and it will be interesting to see what changes they will bring to what is already a successful tour operator, popular with the trade. I think their brochures are superb and so well produced - good luck to the new team.

On Facebook, the Skiathos Dog Shelter mentioned if any holidaymakers would like to bring any donated goods out to them. If your flight to Skiathos is with Thomas Cook or Thomson Airlines they may allow you an extra free 10kg charity allowance on behalf of the Dog Shelter. When you have booked your holiday and have your booking details you can apply by messaging Skiathos Dog Shelter with your email address for further details. I will also contact them to find out more as I am interested if this could be done for other Greek Islands. They are desperate for things like Pro Kolin, Yu Digest Probiotic, Ancol Dog collars, strong leads, scalibor collars, Drontal worming tablets and Advantix Flea Treatment. They also have an Amazon Wish List which gives you an idea of what they need and the stuff can be delivered to you to take over or it can be delivered direct to the shelter. I know there are lots of animal lovers in the travel industry and I hope those going to Skiathos will help, meanwhile I'm going to try and find out from TUI and Thomas Cook if they do this to other holiday destinations (or perhaps if they read this they could email me at s.murray922@btinternet.com). It sounds a wonderful idea and I will keep you updated.

Richard Gere said: 'I am old but I am forever young at heart, we are always the same age inside. Know that you are the perfect age, each year is special and precious and you can only live it once. Do not regret growing older; it's a privilege denied to many.'

Sandy

by SANDRA MURRAY
in Normanton, Yorkshire

To respond to any
of Sandy's comments email
lauretta.wright@travelbulletin.co.uk

New itineraries from European Waterways offer personal experiences

SEEKING TO create memorable and more immersive, experiential moments for 2018, European Waterways has announced that it has added new, exclusive and sometimes 'one-of-a-kind' experiences to its cruise itineraries.

The fleet of luxury hotel barges brings guests 'up close and personal' to some of the more unique attractions and personalities in the cruising regions. Opportunities include tours, lunches, entertainment and meet-and-greets with regional personalities that range from local aristocracy, to friendly lock-keepers.

Among the unique experiences on the 12-passenger L'Impressionniste hotel barge, which cruises France's renowned wine-making region of Burgundy, is a private tour of the moat-encircled Château de Commarin, accompanied by Count Bertrand de Vogue, the current resident and 26th generation of the de Vogue family to maintain continuous residence since the 13th century. Count de Vogue will offer insight into the Château's history, after which guests will explore the Château's regal interior, stables and surrounding gardens.

Alternatively, the Champagne flows freely for guests on La Belle Epoque, a deluxe 12-passenger hotel barge. Among the cruise's various excursions is a private tasting at the Alexandre Bonnet Champagne House in Les Riceys, an off-the-beaten path and unspoiled part of the Champagne region that still retains its authenticity and charm.

Following a tasting of an array of Champagnes, guests will take a short drive to Château de Rice-Bas, famed for its 12th century vaulted cellars, where they are treated to an authentic glimpse of family life in a rural château.

For nature lovers and foodies, a 'one-of-a-kind' experience is offered on an October 28 departure of the eight-passenger Anjodi hotel barge. In addition to visiting a local oyster farm, guests will visit the Camargue National Park, renowned for its wild horses, pink flamingos and lush green wetlands. They will enjoy authentic Camargue cuisine at a local restaurant in Aigues Mortes, as well as tour the Palais des Papes - the Palace of the Popes.

Six-night cruise prices start at £2,320 per person, based on double occupancy and include all gourmet meals, fine wines, open bar, daily escorted excursions, admissions and local transfers. There is currently a 20% discount on multiple charter departures.



FINNISH FRIENDS....Regent Holidays sent seven of its top-selling agents to snowy Finnish Lapland where they stayed in Aurora glass igloos and got the chance to snowmobile, ice fish, bathe in an ice-sauna and watch the Northern Lights while they sampled the local Finnish cuisine. Pictured making the most of the sunny weather are, from the left: Jon Hardcastle and Paula Martin, Regent Holidays; Claire Green, Thames Travel; Sarah Williams, Journeys A La Carte; Sharon Pye, Garstang Travel; Amanda Gerrish, Norad Travel; Tracey Murray, Miles Morgan Travel; Suzanne Rowlands, Tailor Made Travel; Marcio Kugelmeier, Finnair; and Julie Croucher, Travel with Jules.

AGENT TRAINING

VISIT ORLANDO, in association with its partners at Walt Disney World Resort, SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment and Universal Orlando Resort, will take to the road for a series of travel agent trainings in ten cities across the UK and Ireland from April 30. Events will provide destination information for agents and give them the opportunity to complete the Orlando Travel Academy course and share tips on how to become an 'Orlando Travel Expert.' Agents are advised to register for the roadshow event by April 23. See <https://bit.ly/2HTQeXZ>

BOOKING INCENTIVES

- UNTIL APRIL 30, agents can earn £20 in Love2Shop vouchers per booking with Shearings Holidays by emailing win@shearings.com with the booking reference and their details by May 6.
- FUNWAY HOLIDAYS is running a MoneyCard incentive with AMResorts for Breathless Resorts throughout this month. Double Rewards for Breathless Resorts bookings are being offered, with agents able to earn up to £200 per booking. See yourmoneycard.co.uk
- FIRST CLASS Holidays is giving agents the chance to earn £200 worth of Love2shop vouchers with a 'Two2Shop' booking incentive. Agents booking any two holidays (with return flights and a minimum of seven nights' accommodation) this month or next are eligible to claim the vouchers. Visit fcholidays.com/two2shop and submit claims by June 30.

AGENT COMPETITION

TO CELEBRATE reaching 5,000 followers on its 'Super Break for Travel Agents' Facebook group the operator is giving agents the chance to win a two-night short break to London for two with theatre tickets and First Class rail included. For the chance to win, agents need to check the Facebook page throughout this month to see the latest offers and 'Theatre Show of the Day', which will be posted daily at 11:00. Once armed with the latest products to promote, agents need to get busy promoting these deals on social media and in shop windows then email sales@superbreak.com with screen grabs or pictures of their promotional activity, plus their ABTA number and name. The incentive closes on April 30.

AGENT OFFER

ISANGO!. A specialist online retailer of global tours, experiences and attraction tickets, has launched its online agent booking platform which provides unique curated travel experiences at competitive market rates. The agent login will allow agents to book tours and activities from around the world, as well as view and manage all bookings and commissions. To sign up send an email to agents@isango.com or see isango.com

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Bring hearts, minds and souls

New Taste Breaks from Riviera Travel

RIVIERA TRAVEL'S new Taste Breaks culinary collection are launching this month to offer tailor-made short holidays to ten of Europe's foodie cities; Berlin, Bologna, Copenhagen, Lisbon, Lyon, Bordeaux, Bilbao, Athens, Rome and Madrid.

With the introduction of Taste Breaks, UK travellers can experience flexible, comfortable and authentic European culinary city-breaks with the choice of any return flights from the UK, private airport transfers and the services of a passionate food-loving local host.

The long weekend packages are designed to provide plenty of freedom for customers to explore their chosen city and its food scene at their own pace, whilst making the most of the local host's first-hand expertise.

The host leads an orientation walk to help navigate the city on the first morning, as well as a special food-themed walk pointing out under-the-radar restaurants, buzzing food markets and historical sites.

Will Sarson, head of Taste Breaks at the company, said: "It's frustrating when you end up eating mediocre food in tourist traps and leave with that feeling that you haven't experienced the city as locals know it.

"By creating Taste Breaks, we want to help people have a more authentic trip and get to the heart of their destination."

Prices for a four-day itinerary including flights, breakfast accommodation, transfers, the services of a local host and a food-themed walk, start from £417 and departures run through to October.

For more information visit tastebreaks.co.uk

Isles of Scilly helicopter tickets on sale

TICKETS FOR the Isles of Scilly Steamship Group's new Island Helicopters service are now on sale, with return flights from Land's End Airport to the Isles of Scilly starting on May 21 this year.

Island Helicopters will offer a year-round service flying to Scilly up to eight times a day, six days a week.

Fares start from £215 return and flights from Land's End Airport to the Isles of Scilly will take approximately 20 minutes.

The Steamship Group announced its new helicopter service in February, and has already seen more than 4,500 people register an interest in using Island Helicopters to travel to and from the islands.

The Island Helicopter service will be operated by Gloucester-based Specialist Aviation Services (SAS) in partnership with the Isles of Scilly Steamship Group, using a new ten-seater AW169 aircraft - one of the most advanced helicopters in the world.

To accompany the launch of Island Helicopters, there will be a new Park and Ride service to chauffeur passengers from Penzance train station or from their accommodation to and from Land's End Airport in just 15 minutes. Alternatively, passengers are able to park at the airport.

The helicopter service will complement the Steamship Group's existing Skybus fixed wing flights from Land's End, Newquay and Exeter Airports, and the seasonal Scillonian III ferry, which has just resumed sailing after its winter break.

Sharon Sandercock, marketing manager at the Isles of Scilly Steamship Group, said: "We're excited that tickets for the Island Helicopters service are now on sale, and that we can offer both visitors and islanders more choice about how they travel to the Isles of Scilly.

"We saw a huge number of people register their interest in using the service since announcing it in February, and there has been demand from thousands of people who have missed the helicopter since it stopped in 2012. Now with our partnership with SAS, we are proud to offer the service they have been waiting for."

For further information see islesofscilly-travel.co.uk or call 01736-334220.

LEARN AND WIN!

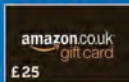


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Finnair offers new promotional fares to Asia from £459 return

FINNAIR IS offering a selection of promotional fares on flights to a range of popular business and leisure destinations across Asia for travel between October 1 and March 31, 2019.

Available in both Business and Economy Class, the fares can be booked through the Finnair website until April 17.

The carrier flies from Heathrow, Manchester and Edinburgh to 19 destinations across Asia via Helsinki. The promotion includes destinations such as Nanjing - the airline's newest route - Bangkok, Goa, Singapore, Delhi, Beijing and Shanghai.

Customers can explore the bustling city of Seoul with fares from £469 return in Economy Class or discover one of China's ancient capitals, Nanjing, with fares from £459 return.

Customers travelling on select routes to Asia will fly on the spacious Finnair Airbus A350, which features large panoramic windows and comfortable seating in both classes, along with Wi-Fi access, LED mood lighting and the latest in touch screen inflight entertainment systems.

For a full list of promotional fares visit finnair.com

Su Doku

Win a £50 M&S voucher in the [travelbulletin](#) Su Doku prize puzzle

Number: 014

A →	2	1					9		5
	7	8				3	4		1
			5	7	2	1		3	
B →						8	2		9
			9	2		5	8		
C →	8		4	3					
		5		1	4	2	3		
	3		2	5				8	4
D →	9		1					6	2

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

Closing date for entries is Thursday, April 19th. Solution and new puzzle will appear next week.

The winner for 23rd March is Sally James, Co-operative Travel in Aberdeen.

March 23rd Solution: A=4 B=6 C=2 D=9

Where Am I?



Holidaymakers might like to board a traditional abra and cross this saltwater creek to take in some of the older parts of the city. As the original centre of this city's commerce, boats still zip up and down plying their trade and cargo with waters extending through to the Persian Gulf.

Crossword

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

1		2		3		4	5	6
					7			
8			9					
	10			11			12	
13								
		14		15		16		
								17
18		19						20
21				22				

Across

- Manchester City's stadium, named for an airline (6)
- Major car hire company (4)
- Medieval East Sussex town (3)
- Country, sounds like a supermarket chain (7)
- Boat excursions depart this city for Robben Island (4,4)
- Roseau is the capital (8)
- German city (7)
- San Francisco International airport code (3)
- Presenter of The One Show, ___ Jones (4)
- P&O cruise ship (6)

Down

- George, who recently topped the albums chart with *Staying at Tamara's* (4)

- Recent winners of the Six Nations Championship (7)

- Lewis Carroll heroine (5)
- By way of (3)
- Kingsford Smith International airport serves this city (6)
- A Windsor theme park is dedicated to these building blocks (4)
- Major travel group (3)
- Capital of Cyprus (7)
- Island in the Bay of Naples (6)
- One of the Hawaiian islands (4)
- The principal river of West Africa (5)
- Capital of Qatar (4)
- Male, Maldives international airport code (3)

For the solution to the Crossword and Where Am I?
Please see page 26

Industry Insight by...



Derek Moore, chair of AITO, says it's time to start preparing for upcoming industry changes if you want to stay ahead of the game...

SO, DESPITE worries over the state of the economy, the state of Brexit negotiations and the state of sterling, a recent survey suggests that our industry is remarkably buoyant, with an increase of around 5% year-on-year to the end of February and little sign of discounting.

However, there are some clouds on the horizon which will mean, without forward planning, that forthcoming new regulations could spoil any euphoria about your sales, as the landscape of your retail world could change markedly, and potentially problematically, if you have not put in place training sessions before July 1. It's time perhaps for a health check at your agency.

In July, as most travel staff are aware, the industry is due to implement several changes in the way we work, as the Package Travel Regulations are set to change and new ATOL regulations will apply.

The problem is of course that the Government is yet to announce exactly what changes we face. Once the ATOL regulations are made clear, our trade will have just a few weeks to understand and prepare to work with them; an almost impossible situation.

The major tour operators and consortia can throw time and resources into quickly understanding, implementing and working within, the framework of the ATOL changes, but what about smaller travel agencies who do not have resources to train their staff? Is your agency up to speed with what might happen?; Are you and your colleagues clear as to

what training you will be given, and by whom, in order to be able to cope with the new regulations? Flight Plus will disappear; instead you'll have to get your head around LTAs. You'll need to be careful when clients ask if their holiday is 'protected' in some way, and if their holiday arrangements constitute a package or not. If you do dynamic packaging then will your business become a Principal, rather than an agent, under the new regulations?

If your business is part of the AITO family then there's help at hand, from our affiliates, our business partners who are there to provide just this sort of advice and training. The major UK travel consortia will doubtless be there to assist if you are a member, but if your agency is independent of any association then it is time to find out who can provide advice and training for life under the changed ATOL regulations.

"It's time perhaps for a health check at your agency"

Of course, if you cut out dynamic packaging and just concentrate on selling the product of AITO operators, life will be somewhat

simpler – you will be the agent and the AITO operator will be the Principal; AITO operators always act as a Principal, and that will not change after July 1.

Whether a part of AITO or not, every retail agency will need a clear plan as to how staff will train for a new landscape after July 2. A little foresight and forward planning will mean staff will feel they understand the new regulations and can enjoy what promises to be a summer of good business.

training

DESTINATION CANADA and its industry partners will be heading out on the road again this June to visit travel agents based in or around Birmingham, Exeter, London and Manchester. Airlines, trains, hotel companies, provincial, territorial and city partners will all be represented alongside the tourism organisation and they will all showcase the best that Canada has to offer clients. Each event will see a Keep Exploring Quiz and one winner from each showcase destination will win a pair of tickets to Canada with runner up prizes too. Interested agents can contact destinationcanada@gmail.com to find out further information.

Win a Hygge hamper with VisitDenmark

DUE TO an increasing interest from the British market for travel to Denmark, the tourism board has developed a new online travel training programme for travel agents.

Agents who wish to further educate themselves on the Danish way of life can explore several segments within the new training course, from gastronomy to nature, Hygge to cycling, architecture and other aspects intrinsic to Danish culture. The programme has also been designed to be user-friendly for travel agents on-the-go, with a new mobile design.

As part of the programme, VisitDenmark has launched a competition, with the chance for agents to win a Danish Hygge Hamper, which includes a Danish candle and Danish treats. Go to visitdenmark.co.uk for more details.

Become a Sandals superstar on travel agent quiz nights

SANDALS AND Beaches Resorts are bolstering its UK trade activity with a series of dedicated travel agent quiz nights taking place throughout this spring, designed to uncover a range of 'Sandals Superstars' up and down the country.

Running from April 17 to June 21, the company will be hosting a programme of evening quizzes leading up to a 'National Final' event taking place this September. Each quiz night runs from 18:30 – 21:30 and offers the chance for agents to win a range of prizes and to learn more about the brand first-hand with informative presentations. Each event will be hosted by one of the company's business development managers at 33 different locations across the country, including Oxford, Bristol, Colchester, Sheffield, Leeds and Edinburgh.

Ahead of each quiz night, participating agents will need to complete the newly revised online Sandals & Beaches training programme as a minimum standard, which can be found at sandalsraining.com/login. The company's business development managers will also ensure that all attending agents have the appropriate tools to learn from ahead of time, including brochures and in house training sessions hosted in the run up to the programme of quiz nights.

To find out more call 020-7590 0210 or visit sellingsandals.co.uk

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Hisham Mahmoud

Agency Sales Manager, UK & Ireland, Kirker Holidays

Which three words would best describe your personality?
Enthusiastic, passionate, honest.

What's the best way to start a holiday?
Get my book out and find the perfect spot in the sun to read in peace - I never get to read when I am home.

On weekends I am most likely to be found...
On the water, be it lake sailing in the winter, or windsurfing in the summer in Poole.

What's your favourite month – and why?
I love autumn. By then the unbearable summer heat is gone and sometimes it can last till late November if we are lucky.

Do you have a nickname?
I never did until I came to the UK. Some of my work colleagues call me Hish, although many moons ago when I was managing a semi pro football team I got called all sorts of names. Some players called me Hamish, others Hashem, although one of the funniest moments was when one of my young players came in to have a serious chat with me and called me Hashish...

Do you have any phobias?
My biggest love is also my biggest phobia: being stranded out at sea. Unfortunately, I was once stranded at sea in severe weather conditions on a windsurfing board (a broken sail) for six hours with no help.

What do you always take on holiday?
I can't go on holiday without my music collection.

The best holiday I've ever been on...
With my children to Rome & Venice. We met some friends who are Romans and Venetians and they took us to the most amazing places. We even spent a day on the beach in both destinations.

What should you win an award for?
Patience.

The top three experiences (or destinations) on your bucket list:
Cuba – cigars and culture. I would love to drive a Formula 1 car and play a football match at Old Trafford.

What are you looking forward to?
Seeing my daughter at her performance of Grease at our local theatre.

At weekends you'll find me...
In the summer sailing, windsurfing or most of the year cycling.

What would you change about the travel industry?
This is a touchy subject – it has to be bribery.

The last picture on my mobile:
A picture of my friend's car - a Regina.

What's the last thing that made you really laugh?
Something my mother said to me and my sisters. All I can say is that she was comparing us to her fruit trees at home in Africa!

I'm super proud of...
My two daughters - they are good girls.

When I retire I'll...
Live in Greece, Spain, Portugal or Italy!

My favourite restaurant:
Solomon's Hut in the Gambia.

My favourite place in the world is...
A small village in France that I call Paradise – La Turbie.

If I could invent a new app it would...
Zap me home. The worst part of travel is always when you want to get home, unless you are travelling back on the Venice Simplon Orient Express.

What I love most about my job:
Meeting genuine honest people who have a desire to build a relationship.

My top travel tip is...
Always have your music collection with you when travelling.

Where's your next holiday to?
La Turbie.



THE GRAND Canyon is considered to be one of America's greatest natural spectacles and 2019 will mark the 100th anniversary from when the Grand Canyon National Park was officially recognised and the land given certain protections in order for visitors to continue to visit the landmark. With this anniversary fast approaching, celebrations will be taking place to welcome the milestone; from unique sunset experiences, to hiking from rim to rim, cruising down the Colorado River and horse trekking. Go to visitarizona.com

Brand USA introduces stand-alone site for the travel trade

BRAND USA has announced the launch of a new travel trade website designed to act as a comprehensive, one-stop gateway for travel industry professionals looking to better sell the USA.

Cathy Domanico, the destination marketing organisation's vice president of global trade development, said: "Brand USA understands the importance of the travel trade and we've taken detailed measures to create a website that truly reflects the industry's needs, interests and desires. The travel trade continues to play a significant role in driving international visitors to, through and beyond America's gateways. This new digital development will enable Brand USA to better connect with, and provide an engaging platform for all travel industry professionals."

VisitTheUSA.com/TravelTrade has been designed to bring together a number of useful trade resources, spread across Brand USA's consumer and corporate websites, into a single space and to help simplify destination decisions. The new trade website has also been optimised for mobile devices so can be used on tablets and smart phones.

Agents can access the Brand USA Trip Kit; a helpful resource for USA travel inspiration and information including suggested itineraries - beginning in key gateway cities and expanding out to explore additional destinations - and destination photos. There are also sections with information and advice on visiting the USA, including an overview of US travel policies, an expanded directory of receptive tour operators, and a new 'USA Trip Planner' tool.

The website can be accessed at visittheusa.com/traveltrade

Visit California showcases the ultimate off-road adventure

VISIT CALIFORNIA has teamed up with actress Anna Friel and British Airways to showcase the ultimate California Road Trip adventure.

The new video content shows Anna reconnecting with her best friend as they embark on a road-trip around SoCal; cycling along Huntington Beach's sandy shores, stand up paddle boarding in Newport Beach, exploring Joshua Tree National Park and even meditating in a desert shamanic Drum Circle. The video aims to show how a holiday in California, with its free spirited and carefree outlook on life, can lead to a transformative experience and British Airways has developed an online California content hub where visitors can follow Anna's itinerary and read about her guide to

exploring the Golden State.

In tandem with this, Visit California has also launched a new web series called 'California 101', which has been designed to help answer visitors' most asked questions about Californian travel. Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of the destination marketing organisation, said: "California 101 allows travellers to see different trip ideas in video format, and then click through to web content for a deeper dive into the details of trip planning. With so much to see and do in California, this series will serve as a great starting point that is as inspirational as it is educational."

Go to visitcalifornia.com/dream365tv/series/california-101

Funway unveils Ed Sheeran packages for US tour

FUNWAY HOLIDAYS has put together some special packages to coincide with Ed Sheeran's North America Tour taking place from August 18 to November 10.

Malcolm Davies, product destination manager for the company, said: "There is a rising-trend in music-related travel, especially this year as we have seen more and more people eager to have new experiences and follow their music idols."

The operator is offering three nights in San Francisco staying at the Fishermans Wharf Holiday Inn with prices from £975 per person including Gatwick flights with Delta Air Lines. Travel is based on two adults sharing and departing on August 19 with concert tickets to see Ed Sheeran in San Francisco (AT&T Park) on August 21 priced from £28 per person.

Go to funway4agents.co.uk for more details.



SNOW WAY... Discover New England's Dominique Kotsias (left) presents Suzanne Grinstead from Adur Travel with a £50 gift voucher for The Snow Centre, located in Hemel Hempsted.

TRAVEL BULLETIN recently welcomed agents to its North America Showcase at the Hilton Cambridge City Centre and The Hilton Metropole in Brighton. Agents were treated to a delectable dinner, had the chance to network with an amazing range of destinations and suppliers and take part in a free prize draw with some great gifts up for grabs!

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#TBSHOWCASES



SHOPPING SPREE... Tim Blostone (left) for Nova Scotia presents raffle winner and Travel Counsellor Jesse Sharp with a £50 Love2Shop voucher.



LUXURY HAMPER... David Sutherland (left) of Explorer Travel was the lucky winner of a Spicers' gift hamper, gifted by Aer Lingus' Giovanni Ciocari.



OH GOODY... Kicki Smith from Independent Travel Experts receives a RCD Hotels goody bag courtesy of Graham Brooks from Nobu Hotel.



WINE WINNINGS... Hayley John Charles (left) of Not Just Travel receives her prize of two bottles of wine presented by Maria Costa Lobo, Sonoma County.



WARM WELCOME... Arriving at the evening's drinks reception are, from the left: Travel Counsellors' Lesley Berry, Clare Davis, Claire Coleman, Jesse Sharpe and Kate Balls.



GET YOUR SKIS ON...Not Just Travel's Hannah Alexander (left) was the winner of a £50 gift voucher for The Snow Centre, located in Hemel Hempsted, gifted by Discover New England's Dominique Kotsias.



EASTER TREAT...Travel Bulletin's Matt Gill (left) presents bingo winner Simon Waldron of Travelserv with a sweet chocolate treat.



AGENT READY...Gearing up the evening's festivities are, from the left: Tim Blostone representing Nova Scotia; Maria Pierce and Jamie-Leigh Platt from Avis; Air Canada's Jeremy Moore; Graham Brooks for Nobu & Eden Roc Miami Beach; Michael Wareham from The Grove Resort & Spa; Natalie Smith, Via Rail Canada; Roger Harris for Destination Canada; Dominique Kotsias from Discover New England; Maria Costa Lobo for Sonoma County; Sarah Hanson for Palm Springs; Vlada Kulmane-Ozolina from Primera Air; and Expedia's Melissa Sanchez.



HOW A-MOOSE-ING...Destination Canada's Roger Harris presents raffle winner Jackie Norfeild of Premier Travel, St Ives with a cuddly moose prize.



CHAMPAGNE WIN...Anna Jerzanova (left) from Light Blue Travel, Cambridge wins a bottle of bubbly from Sarah Hanson of Palm Springs.



ON TRACK...From the left, Natalie Smith from Via Rail Canada chats with Charlotte Lawrence, Amy Green and Debby Hellewell from Co-operative Travel, Beales Department Store.



TRAVEL TALK...From the left, Rachel Roberts, Tracey Fordham, Binod Shrestha, Rachel Garnish and Hannah Alexander, all from Not Just Travel, meet with Vlada Kulmane-Ozolina to learn more about the routes served by Primera Air.

Want to get in on the #TBSHOWCASES action?
Travel Bulletin will be hosting its Luxury Showcase in Belfast on April 30
and Cork on May 1. Join us and secure your spot by emailing
events@travelbulletin.co.uk



Premier Holidays launches April city break campaign

PREMIER HOLIDAYS has unveiled a new campaign promoting North American city breaks from Stansted Airport.

Running until the end of April, the marketing initiative has been launched in conjunction with Primera Air to promote its new routes to New York, Boston and Washington, DC from the Essex airport.

Tactical deals, for travel in November, include four

nights in Boston from £749 per person – saving couples up to £412 – with accommodation at The Midtown Hotel; three nights in New York from £899 per person staying at the Wellington Hotel, with savings of up to £394 per couple; and a nine-night Boston, New York and Washington, DC multi-centre from £1,675 per person, with Amtrak train travel between each city and savings of up to

£560 for couples.

As part of the campaign, the operator is rolling out various trade materials including window posters, flyers, a destination video, promotions in its weekly e-newsletter and social media posts that agents can share. Agents can also earn up to £150 for every US booking, depending on the value.

For further information visit trade.premierholidays.co.uk or call 0844-493 7666.

Discover the US Civil Rights Trail in Alabama

COINCIDING WITH Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, Travel South USA has launched the US Civil Rights Trail featuring some of the most famous landmarks from the Civil Rights era in the 1950s and 60s.

Liz Bittner, Travel South president and CEO, said: "The Travel South member states were at the heart of the civil rights struggle in the 1950s and 60s, a time of triumph and tragedy that redefined America. This multi-state trail will allow visitors to see, touch and experience the places that continue to inspire people across the world."

A key stopping point along the trail is Alabama where international visitors can stop at many historical sights including Selma Bridge, where voting rights demonstrators were attacked by police on 'Bloody Sunday'.

The destination is also reporting a rise in popularity amongst holidaymakers thanks to increasing accessibility and a myriad of visitor sites. Andy Facer, UK & Ireland account director for Alabama Tourism, said: "We are seeing an increase in interest to Alabama and the Deep South and an influx of direct flights from the UK into the region (New Orleans and Nashville) have really helped along with the established routes into Atlanta.

"Alabama is an historically rich and

culturally vibrant state. In the north we have the town of Huntsville, famed for the US Space and Rocket Center, Botanical Gardens and Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment. For a dose of musical history, head 70 miles west to the legendary Muscle Shoals Sound Studio and FAME recording studios, home to iconic recordings by everyone from the Rolling Stones to Aretha Franklin. In the centre of the state we have the cities of Birmingham and Montgomery. Birmingham is the largest city in Alabama and offers award winning dining, fantastic golf on the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail and many historical sites of the Civil Rights Trail. Montgomery is the State Capital, best known for being the site of Rosa Parks' act of defiance, and the subsequent Montgomery Bus Boycott led by Martin Luther King Jr and its museums and sites are a must-see. In the south we have 32 miles of powder white sand on the Gulf of Mexico in the resorts of Orange Beach and Gulf Shores. Also don't forget to recommend a visit to nearby Mobile, a historic port city with antebellum architecture and a historic downtown that lays claim to be the birthplace of the American Mardi Gras."

For more details go to alabama.travel, civilrightstrail.com or deep-south-usa.com

Experience a taster of Vegas with Travel 2's 'Savours of the Strip' foodie tour

TRAVEL 2 has introduced a new foodie adventure for 2018 exploring both the sights and flavours of Las Vegas.

Ross Sinclair, the operator's senior product manager for the US, Caribbean and Canada, said: "New to our USA and Canada brochure is the 'Savours of the Strip' foodie tour. It is a fun and memorable way to explore Vegas' most impressive restaurants. Guests can sample adventurous and luxurious fare all combined with a walking tour of the city."

The operator is offering a five-night package at the five-star Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, on a room only basis, staying in a city room from £819 per person, representing a saving of up to £120.

It includes flights with American Airlines and is valid for travel on May 13. The Savours of the Strip tour starts from £210 per person.

Visit travel2.co.uk or call 0800-022 4182 for more details.

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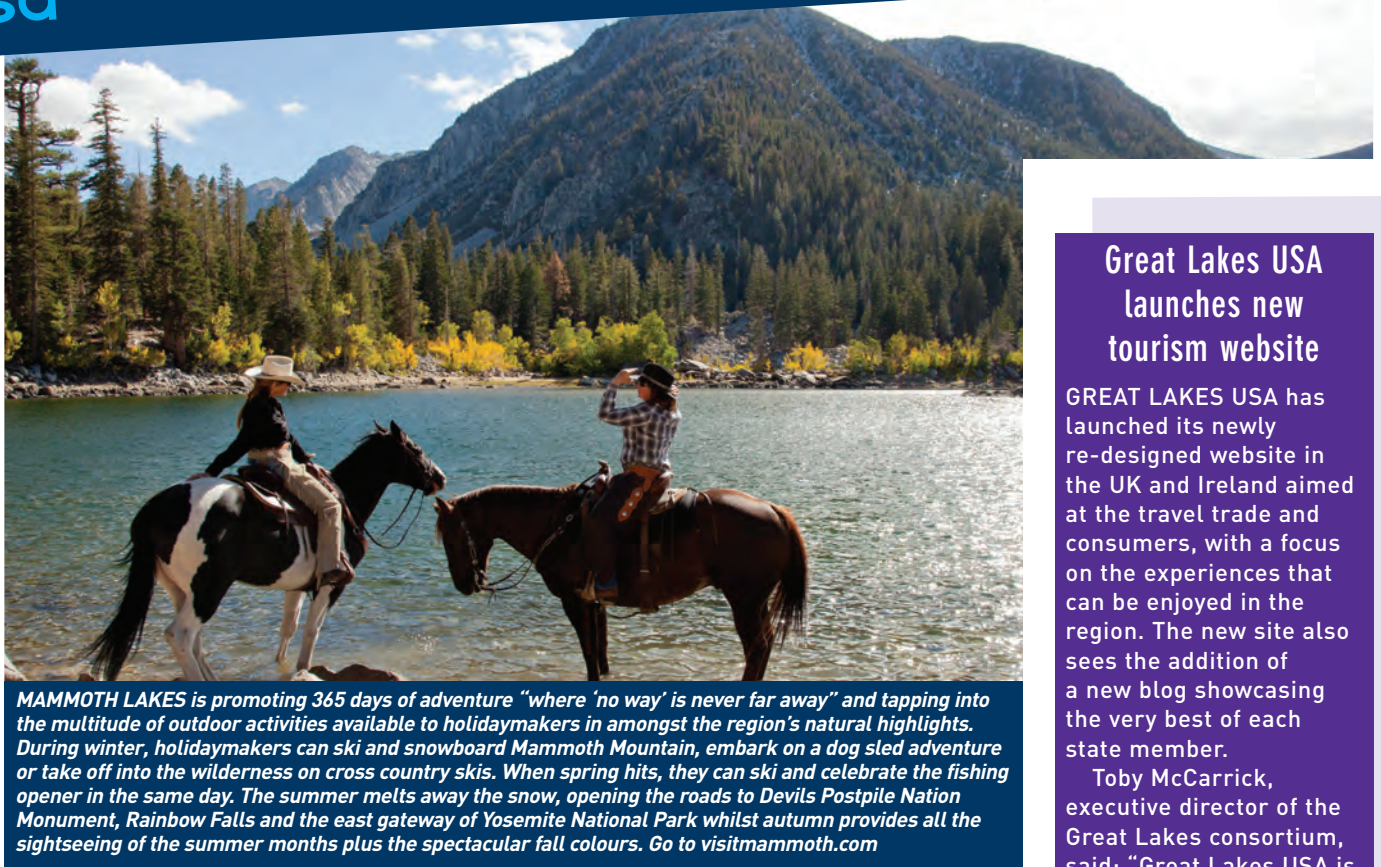
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MAMMOTH LAKES is promoting 365 days of adventure “where ‘no way’ is never far away” and tapping into the multitude of outdoor activities available to holidaymakers in amongst the region’s natural highlights. During winter, holidaymakers can ski and snowboard Mammoth Mountain, embark on a dog sled adventure or take off into the wilderness on cross country skis. When spring hits, they can ski and celebrate the fishing opener in the same day. The summer melts away the snow, opening the roads to Devils Postpile National Monument, Rainbow Falls and the east gateway of Yosemite National Park whilst autumn provides all the sightseeing of the summer months plus the spectacular fall colours. Go to visitmammoth.com

Great Lakes USA launches new tourism website

GREAT LAKES USA has launched its newly re-designed website in the UK and Ireland aimed at the travel trade and consumers, with a focus on the experiences that can be enjoyed in the region. The new site also sees the addition of a new blog showcasing the very best of each state member.

Toby McCarrick, executive director of the Great Lakes consortium, said: “Great Lakes USA is on a roll in 2018 with new flights into the region, new preferred partners and a new website. The site now has information on each state partner, as well as our preferred partner members, suggested itineraries and much stronger imagery showing all that the region has to offer visitors.”

The Great Lakes region and consortium members include Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin.

To access and explore the new platform head over to greatlakesusa.co.uk

Norwegian launches non-stop route to Texas

NORWEGIAN HAS launched the UK’s first low fare route to Texas, with the only non-stop service travelling from Gatwick to Austin. The new route to the US comes two days after the airline launched its long-haul, low fare flights to Chicago on March 25.

The new year-round thrice weekly service from Gatwick to Austin International Airport offers direct flights available from £169 one-way. To celebrate the inaugural flight, passengers experienced the sounds of Austin before they took off from Gatwick with a live acoustic performance from local Austin artist Julian Acosta on the ground and in the skies before landing.

Thomas Ramdahl, the airline’s chief commercial officer, said: “We are excited to offer passengers the only direct route from Gatwick to Austin, the Live Music Capital of the World. Our high-quality flights give both leisure and business travellers the chance to explore this vibrant city. As we expand our high-quality services to the USA from Gatwick, we will continue offering consumers greater choice and affordable fares when flying Norwegian.”

Tom Noonan, president and CEO of Visit Austin, added: “The new service from Gatwick Airport will provide opportunity for additional visitors connecting from throughout the world and from the UK. With year-on-year increases in visitors from the UK and beyond, we anticipate this flight will be very successful. The addition of this route is also a direct reflection of how our city continues to evolve as a premier destination for travellers.”

Visit norwegian.com/uk or call 0330-828 0854 for more details.

Hoteliers respond to demand in St. Pete/Clearwater with new upgrades

AS ST. PETE/Clearwater continues to reach new tourism records, hotel developers are breathing new life into timeless landmarks with numerous renovations and redevelopments for 2018.

In scenic Dunedin, the Fenway Hotel is due to open in the second quarter of 2018 following an \$11million renovation to the 1920s-era icon. The Mediterranean-style waterfront building is being transformed into a member of the Marriot International Autograph Collection, featuring 83 rooms and a rooftop bar, pool and restaurant. Meanwhile, located in the heart of the city’s urban centre, the Hyatt Place St. Petersburg Downtown has opened its doors in what will become St Pete’s tallest building. The 15-storey, 175-room hotel is part of a larger mixed use development called One St. Petersburg, which includes a 41-storey condominium tower and extensive retail options.

It’s not just new hotels improving the destination’s offering for guests; one of downtown St Pete’s most treasured landmarks, The Vinoy, recently unveiled 102 transformed tower rooms, as part of its \$50million multi-year renovation and redevelopment. Over in St. Pete Beach, the Sirata Beach Resort has also announced a \$15million renovation including a redesign of the current 382 rooms and suites, pools and more, set to premier this autumn. In addition, the Hyatt Regency Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa has unveiled an extensive, multi-million-dollar renovation to its guests rooms, meeting and event spaces, bringing a more modernised look to the 287-room resort, while the Bilmar Beach Resort in Treasure Island announced the completion of a full renovation to all 166 studios and suites, as well as a refreshed exterior to match its new ‘beach chic’ design.

New campaign puts the spotlight on Hurghada & Marsa Alam

THIS MONTH sees the launch of the Egyptian State Tourist Authority's new campaign that largely focuses on the destinations of Hurghada and Marsa Alam, reports Lauretta Wright.

According to the tourist authority, 61,481 Brits travelled to Egypt in the first two months of this year - an increase of almost 40% compared to the same period last year - and this has been largely fuelled by the rise of new destinations and developments. The rise is also credited to the increased frequency of airlift to Egypt, with weekly flights from UK departure points growing 38% from a total of 18, to 25 in summer 2018.

The latest figures reflect the broader upward trend for the destination over the past year, with 319,388 UK citizens travelling to Egypt in 2017, an increase of 38%.

Coinciding with a targeted campaign promoting the multitude of other popular locations Egypt has to offer, travellers seeking a true winter-sun getaway have discovered the Red Sea coastal town of Hurghada, a state-of-the-art beach destination catering to sun and sea seekers, with bustling markets and buzzing nightlife alongside world-class resorts and unique diving experiences.

While the Red Sea has boomed, the Nile city of Luxor has also remained a key destination for UK travellers. The region is referred to as 'the world's greatest open-air museum' for its unparalleled cultural offering - stretching from the tomb of Tutankhamen in the Valley of the Kings to the temple complexes of Karnak.

With developments such as the opening of Africa's first Waldorf Astoria, Egypt's first St. Regis property in 2019 and the highly-anticipated Grand Egyptian Museum's initial opening at the end of this year, indications are that tourism to Egypt is to continue to rise as confidence in the North African region continues to rebuild.

And it seems that both operators and hoteliers would agree.

Small ship cruise specialist, Variety Cruises, will be deploying its 25 cabin mega yacht Harmony V at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean this winter, offering two alternative itineraries taking in the cultural highlights of Egypt and Jordan.

The destinations - Cairo, the Necropolis at Giza, Hurghada, Aqaba, Petra, Luxor, Wadi Rum, Port Said and Suez - read like something out of the 1001 Arabian nights or a Hollywood film script. In many respects this is one cruise where time spent at sea is less important than shore-time spent at some of the most legendary sites in history.

Accordingly, there is a two-day land trip and deluxe hotel overnight, on a full-board basis, included from Hurghada to Luxor, on the site of the ancient city of Thebes, the Pharaohs' capital at the height of their powers. Optional excursions are

available to the temples at Luxor and Karnak, and the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens on the West Bank of the Nile.

The company's UK director, Chris Lorenzo, says these are ideal winter short-break cruises: "Most cruise fans look to go long-haul in winter, but if you want to combine good weather with some serious cultural excitement Cairo or Amman are only around five hours away. There are just so many fabulous sights and sites that are within such close proximity, and cruising is by far the easiest way to see them all."

Meanwhile, Marriott Hotels, part of Marriott International, makes a landmark debut steps away from the Great Pyramids of Giza, one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

The company announced the rebranding of Mena House, a historic palace which has played host to Kings and Emperors, Heads of State and celebrities for more than 130 years, further enhancing the company's presence in Egypt.

Alex Kyriakidis, the company's president and managing director, Middle East and Africa, said: "Egypt continues to be a strategic growth market and key to our success in the region. We have consistently pushed the boundaries to create experiences that inspire our guests. We are excited to welcome Mena House into our portfolio and offer guests a unique brand experience in this iconic location."

The hotel, which is set amongst 40 acres of verdant gardens, offers 331 luxury rooms and suites offering views of the mighty Giza Pyramids and the surrounding lush greenery.

Leisure facilities include an outdoor heated pool, a health club and a spa. The hotel also offers more than 1,400sq.m of indoor meeting spaces and more than 8,700sq.m of sprawling outdoor venues, ideal for gala receptions, elaborate weddings as well as intimate gatherings.

It is also anticipated that the focus on the Red Sea will encourage specialist operators to feature the region in their programmes, to further boost visitor numbers to the region. Marsa Alam in particular is gaining momentum according to the tourist authority, and it will welcome a 35% increase in the number of flights serving the region this summer alone.

The campaign will highlight the plethora of watersport activities on offer for all sectors, along with the destination's year-round climate

The UK & Ireland director of ETA, Amr El Ezabi, said: "What we are trying to do now is to revive our cultural brand. We are reminding people that Egypt is a modern society with a fascinating history.

"The British market is already up by 38% for 2017 on the previous year and our overall aim is to attract more tourists to Hurghada as well as Luxor and Aswan as we realise that these are destinations favoured by Brits."



AS PART of Viking's River Cruise programme for 2019, 'Pharaohs & Pyramids' uncovers the ancient secrets of Egypt and helps guests experience the welcoming culture of the country on a 12-day Nile cruise. With 11 guided tours included, visitors will see the pyramids from astride a camel, wander among 140 soaring pillars in the Karnak Temple, and explore Dendera, one of Egypt's best-preserved and less-frequented temples. They can also feel the Nile breeze as they skim its waters by a traditional felucca and delight in the fragrances of Aswan's spice market. Departures run from January to December 2019. Visit vikingcruises.co.uk

King Ramses II moves to new home at Grand Egyptian Museum

THE COLOSSAL 11m high statue of King Ramses II - crafted 3,200 years ago and weighing 75 tonnes - has been moved to its new permanent home in the grand entrance hall of the Grand Egyptian Museum, opening this November.

As the first artefact to be put in position in the long-awaited new museum, the figure of Ramses II will be one of 100,000 relics housed within its walls when it officially opens later this year. Additional facilities will open in the coming years, with the last scheduled to open in 2022.

Designed to be an architectural masterpiece, the founding stone of the museum was laid back in February 2002, with the opening this November to include the grand Atrium, the Grand Staircase and the Tutankhamun Hall.

Hailed as one of the most powerful and influential rulers of ancient Egypt, Ramses II was the third pharaoh of the 19th dynasty. Known for his architectural endeavours, most notably the construction of the Ramesseum and the temples of Abu Simbel, Ramses II's time in power saw the creation of more monuments than any other ancient Egyptian pharaoh.

The Grand Egyptian Museum is sited on 120 acres of land approximately 2km from the Giza pyramids and forms part of a new master plan for the plateau. For more information visit gem.gov.eg

Intrepid helps solo parent families explore ancient Egypt

AS PART of Intrepid Travel's new range of tours specifically designed for solo parents and their children, holidaymakers can head out on a nine-day Egyptian adventure with other like-minded solo parent families.

Guests can marvel at the grandeur of 4,500-year-old Pyramids in Cairo then depart for Aswan to be transported back in time and stand in the same spot known to the ancients as the legendary gateway to the kingdom of Nubia. Younger guests will be encouraged to visit the bazaar and be guided around the treasure trove of exotic spices and goods and take in the sights of donkey carts and locals in traditional dress.

A Nubian sailing crew will then whisk passengers aboard a Felucca - a traditional

wooden boat - on the River Nile which will be lodging for a night under the stars. From here families will then visit the Valley of the Kings, home to ancient tombs, where Tutankhamun was discovered in 1922 and make a stop at the funerary temple of the first female ruler, Queen Hatshepsut. After spending time in the desert, guests will then travel to Hurghada and the waters of the Red Sea with a chance to snorkel and enjoy time to relax together as a family.

Departures are in August and December with prices starting from £725 per person including select meals, accommodation, transport and activities, excluding flights. For more information visit intrepidtravel.com or call 0808-274 5111.

Westin Soma Bay rebrands to The Cascades

CASCADES HOTEL Company Soma Bay, the owners of The Westin Soma Bay Golf Resort and Spa, has announced that the resort will be rebranded as The Cascades Golf Resort, Spa and Thalasso at Soma Bay as of April 30.

The announcement comes after a mutual agreement was reached between Marriott International, who currently manages the property under the Westin brand and Cascades Hotel Company Soma Bay in view of the owner's larger and long term vision for the Soma Bay development.

The year-round resort is situated at the highest point of the Soma Bay peninsula in Egypt's Red Sea Riviera and sits at the centre of an 18-hole championship golf course. With 166 rooms overlooking lush fairways and a rich desert landscape, the resort is well suited to leisure travellers and also houses the Cascades Spa & Thalasso, recognised as one of the best spas in Egypt and one of the region's most expansive. Spanning 80,000sq.ft, the spa features a saltwater lap pool and 65 treatment rooms that provide traditional massages and beauty treatments, as well as the latest technology for aesthetic treatments and hydrotherapy.

The hotel will continue to be managed by Marriott International and operate under the Westin brand until the end of April after which the management of the property will be handed over to the owning company. Marriott International is working with the ownership to ensure a smooth transition and the Cascades Hotel Company Soma Bay will honour all existing bookings and all contracts and agreements entered into by the hotel prior to the rebranding.

accommodation only



ROTANA HAS announced the launch of the new Pearl Rotana Abu Dhabi. Located in the heart of the Capital Centre business district, the new property is close to the National Exhibition Centre and 20 minutes from Abu Dhabi's international airport and offers 315 modern and spacious rooms and suites with scenic views overlooking the Arabian Gulf. Go to rotana.com

Mövenpick Hotels to open 11 new properties for 2018

MÖVENPICK HOTELS & Resorts is gearing up for another year of portfolio expansion with 11 new property openings planned in nine countries by the end of 2018.

The global hospitality firm, which currently operates 83 hotels across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, will make its debut in five new countries – Bangladesh, Iraq, Kenya, Malaysia and the Maldives – while boosting its cluster of hotels in the UAE, Egypt, Tunisia and Thailand. Olivier Chavy, president and CEO of the company, said: "In 2018, our global expansion drive really steps up a gear, with 11 new openings planned, putting us firmly on track to meet our target of 125 properties by 2020 and introducing the Mövenpick brand in some very desirable locations."

Three of the brand's upcoming hotels will open over the next few months: the family-focused Mövenpick Asara Resort & Spa Hua Hin and seventh property in Thailand; Mövenpick Hotel du Lac Tunis, located on the banks of Lac de Tunis and its third hotel in Tunisia; and Mövenpick Hotel & Residences Nairobi in Kenya, marking the company's debut in East Africa with a five-star hotel/conference property.

The remaining eight properties, which will be launched before the end of the year, will see the group enter four additional new markets, with the contemporary Mövenpick

Resort & Spa Kuredhivaru in the Maldives introducing 105 units, including 72 over-water villas, to the island destination; Mövenpick Hotel Basra capitalising on one of Iraq's oil and gas hubs; the Mövenpick Hotel & Convention Centre KLIA conveniently located close to Kuala Lumpur International Airport; and Mövenpick Hotel Sylhet, introducing a mix of business and leisure facilities to the city in north-east Bangladesh.

In the Middle East, the group will be opening two new hotels in the United Arab Emirates: the Mövenpick Hotel Apartments Downtown Dubai and a hotel in Dubai Media City. The firm will also strengthen its presence in Egypt with the addition of Mövenpick Resort El Ein Bay, its second property in the coastal area of El Sokhna. In Asia, the hospitality firm will bolster its cluster strategy in Thailand with the opening of Mövenpick Resort Khao Yai.

With a current pipeline of more than 40 properties, the company will enter several additional new markets over the next few years including Muscat, Oman and Ras Al Khaimah in the Middle East and Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, along with Addis Ababa in Ethiopia and Abuja, Nigeria in Africa, while consolidating its presence in countries with strong development potential.

For more information visit movenpick.com

Opening offer at the Amari Vang Vieng

A NEW addition for the ONYX Hospitality Group, the Amari Vang Vieng has now opened its doors with a special opening offer with room rates starting from £43 per night.

Vang Vieng is located between Vientiane and Luang Prabang in Laos and has grown into a hub for nature lovers and those seeking a holiday off the beaten track. Located in the centre of the city and set along the Nam Song River, the property will provide signature brand services and offers 160 rooms ranging from superior and deluxe categories to various suite configurations, offering a choice of city or mountain views.

To celebrate its official opening, rates start at £43 in a superior city view room, valid for bookings made by June 30.

For more information visit amari.com/vang-vieng/

Only YOU Atocha Madrid launches art & fashion experience

MADRID BOUTIQUE design hotel, Only YOU Hotel Atocha, has launched an exclusive Art and Fashion Experience package to celebrate a major new exhibition; Sorolla and Fashion at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum.

The exhibition examines the influence of the fashion world in the work of the iconic Spanish Impressionist Joaquín Sorolla and the hotel package includes free fast track entry to the exhibition with a complimentary audio-guide, a welcome bottle of Moët & Chandon Champagne, along with VIP access to and 10% off at the fashion retail village, Las Rozas.

Bookings for the package are available until May 27 and a one night, room only stay in a double room at the property is priced from £140.

For more information visit onlyyouhotels.com/en/



FOLLOWING 12 months of renovation work and more than a 40 million euro investment, Iberostar has now opened the Iberostar Sábila, a five-star, adults-only hotel located on southern Tenerife's Costa Adeje. The property offers 472 rooms, including standard and superior doubles, eight junior suites and 33 'Wellness' rooms as well as an option for 'Star Prestige' access; a premium service enabling guests to enjoy superior category rooms, a personalised check-in and check-out and special concierge services. Guests choosing this option are also welcome to use the rooftop Star Prestige Sky Lounge and its facilities, including its own reception, open bar, pool, Jacuzzi and two sun terraces furnished with Bali and sun beds, complete with sea views. Visit iberostar.com

'Rock Om' with Hard Rock Hotels' yoga programme

HARD ROCK Hotels' all-inclusive resorts in Mexico and the Dominican Republic have launched Rock Om, an in-room yoga experience designed to help guests energise the body and soul through music.

Working in collaboration with yoga equipment and apparel brand Manduka, the programme provides guests with complimentary yoga equipment to use during their stay along with a Hard Rock take on in-room yoga classes, combining original tracks by DJ Drez fused with yogi Marti Nikko's video instruction on an On-Demand television channel. For more information go to hrhallinclusive.com

Moxy to expand into more than 40 new cities by 2020

MOXY HOTELS is looking to go forward in its plans to expand into more than 40 new destinations, both in fast-growing and established markets across Europe over the next three years.

Part of Marriott International, the experiential millennial-focused hotel brand debuted in Europe in 2014 with the opening of the Moxy Milan and has since reported strong growth and expansion. With more than 50 signed hotels in the pipeline expected to open in Europe between now and the close of 2020, the brand is sustaining its growth in countries including Germany and the UK, as well as making its entry into key European destinations including France, Portugal and The Netherlands.

John Licence, vice president of premium and select brands at Marriott International, Europe, said: "Moxy was developed to respond to the changing needs of the next generation of travellers and it is this tailored experience that has made it so appealing to both guests and developers alike. Moxy Hotels allow our guests to not take themselves too seriously, providing them with personalised experiences in a well-designed space that is surprisingly affordable, with the latest technology and plenty of social spaces that blend work and play. Giving guests all the fun, comfort and style without the hefty price tags has helped to set the brand up for success in Europe and beyond."

To learn more go to moxyhotels.com

Nobu on target to open 20 hotels by 2020

WITH SEVEN hotels currently open and eight new hotels opening this year and next, Nobu Hospitality is on track to have 20 Nobu Hotels globally by 2020.

Trevor Horwell, CEO of the hospitality group, said: "This is truly an exciting time for Nobu Hotels. Our brand is already well-established globally but staying in tune with our next generation of customer is at the forefront of our brand ethos. Fundamental to the brand is customer content. Content creates memorable experiences and our intention is nothing less than to stir the industry with new and exciting product but more so it's what our customer says about us that matters."

Joining the portfolio this year will be Nobu Hotel Palo Alto, Nobu Hotel Marbella, Nobu Hotel Riyadh, Nobu Hotel Los Cabos, Nobu Hotel Chicago and Nobu Hotel Barcelona. The two years following will see Nobu Hotel openings in Toronto, São Paulo and Atlanta. Visit nobuhotels.com for more details.



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Crossword:

Across: 1. ETIHAD, 4. AVIS, 8. RYE, 9. ICELAND, 10. CAPE TOWN,
 14. DOMINICA, 18. HAMBURG, 20. SFO, 21. ALEX, 22. ORIANA.
 Down: 1. EZRA, 2. IRELAND, 3. ALICE, 5. VIA, 6. SYDNEY, 7. LEGO, 11. TUI,
 12. NICOSIA, 13. ISCHIA, 15. MAUI, 16. NIGER, 17. DOHA, 19. MLE.

Highlighted Word: VIENNA

Where Am I?: Dubai Creek, Dubai, United Arab Emirates



SPANISH HOTEL group, VP Hoteles, has opened a new five-star flagship property called the VP Plaza España Design in the very heart of Madrid. Its 214 rooms are divided into ten different categories and cover 17 floors combining state-of-the-art design and technology with modern functionality and city views. Room features include private terraces, walk-in closets and private gyms. Double standard rooms are priced from 180 euros on a room-only basis. Visit plazaespana-hotel.com

We asked our staff the following question this week:

What movie would be greatly improved if it was made into a musical?



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