

# travelbulletin

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Giving agents the edge



Merry  
CHRISTMAS

AND  
HAPPY

NEW YEAR

FROM THE TRAVEL BULLETIN TEAM

## this week

### at home with eileen

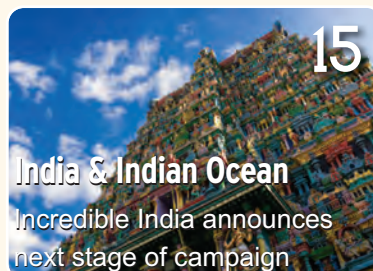
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# Inspiring new holidays for 2018

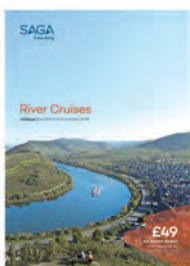
We're always on the look out for inspiring new experiences to share with our customers, and our new collection of holidays for 2018 will not disappoint.

- Explore the treasures of Thailand
- Discover the unspoilt beauty of Albania
- Take a tour of cultural Japan
- Cruise the Amazon River
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All our overseas holidays include optional travel insurance provided by Cigna Insurance Services (Europe) Limited and additional cancellation rights, unless your customers have your own insurance in which case a reduction is available. Cover is subject to medical questions. Please call for details. Saga holidays and cruises are exclusively for the over 50s (but a travelling companion can be 40+). \*You'll receive £20 shopping vouchers for every holiday or river cruise booking you make, or £50 for every ocean cruise. Plus, the chance to win tickets to see Ed Sheeran in either London or Manchester in 2018. To claim your vouchers and enter the draw for Ed Sheeran tickets, simply email [incentives@saga.co.uk](mailto:incentives@saga.co.uk) with booking details. Applicable to bookings confirmed December 1-27, 2017. NHA-GH7966.





## BALI BREAK...

**BALI'S BACK...**Anand collection hosted a fam trip on behalf of Furama Hotels and Puri Mas Boutique Resort Lombok with Thai Airways for a group of agents. Pictured enjoying tours of the temples in Bali are, from the left: Mark Dowdle, STA; Peter Young, Holiday Place; Jas Anand, Anand Collection; Ruth White, Brightsun; Amy Sullivan, Gold Medal; and Robyn Anderson, Hayes and Jarvis.

## New report reveals how airports can harness digital transformation to create value

A NEW report, Strengthening the Airport Value Proposition, developed by Frost & Sullivan, and commissioned by Amadeus, looks at how airports can balance the often-misaligned interests of different customers and stakeholders by focussing on the passenger. By doing so, airports and airlines are able to identify shared value and incentives for greater collaboration and co-operation.

According to the report, the digital transformation of processes, well executed data analytics and insight sharing can allow airports to differentiate their offer to airline customers. For example, by using modern technology to deliver an improved traveller experience through smoother passenger processing and enhanced baggage reconciliation, airports can support airlines to deliver on their commitment to travellers. At the same time, the power of the cloud can improve how airports do business with airlines, delivering greater operational efficiency, flexibility and agility.

The report presents a set of recommendations for airports seeking to strengthen their value proposition, including:

- Make IT a strategic driver of value for airlines in key areas such as passenger experience
- Harness the potential of technology to secure competitive differentiation by improving operational efficiency
- Focus on the needs of the passenger as the ultimate (and shared) customer to identify areas for improvement for all stakeholders
- Use technology to enable new revenue streams and process innovation
- Support airlines and increase airline satisfaction by using technology to increase agility, and remove complexity, in the airport environment.

John Jarrell, head of airport IT at Amadeus, said: "Without a doubt, route economics is fundamental to airlines when selecting airports. By incorporating IT into its value proposition, an airport can strengthen its positioning and points of differentiation in both the passenger experience and operational efficiency. Cost savings for customers may emerge as well as enhanced business models, which will strengthen the relationship between airports, airlines, other tenants and passengers. In the face of growing competition, IT spend at airports is increasing and fast becoming a strategic priority but, as this report demonstrates, airports could be moving faster."

To download a copy of the report visit [amadeus.com/building-airport-value](http://amadeus.com/building-airport-value)

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## Park Plaza London Riverbank unveils revamped look & teams up with graphologist

PARK PLAZA Hotels & Resorts has re-launched its South Bank London hotel, Park Plaza London Riverbank.

Following a £35million refurbishment programme, the hotel now offers six new floors and 498 rooms, including Executive Rooms and Junior Suites.

The contemporary guest rooms offer panoramic views of Battersea Power Station, the Houses of Parliament and the London Eye, while the meeting facilities have also received a transformation with the addition of three new meeting rooms, the City Suites.

The new vibrant guestrooms offer a modern feel, while the hotel's Pan-Asian inspired Chino Latino Restaurant & Bar has undergone a refurbishment, offering panoramic views of the Houses of Parliament on the first floor of the hotel.

Located on the 12th floor, the new Executive Lounge is available for exclusive hire for private events and receptions. It comes with a fully-

functioning boardroom showcasing some of the best river and skyline views in London while catching up on emails and enjoying inclusive afternoon tea, cocktails or canapés.

Rob Flinter, the hotel's general manager, said: "We are delighted to announce this major transformation and we truly feel the additional six floors add to the wow factor of the hotel. With the addition of 100 new rooms, the improved meetings facilities and the vast refurbished ballroom, Park Plaza London Riverbank is now one of the best locations in the city for a residential conference. It is not only an exciting time for the hotel but also the South Bank area and we are thrilled to be a part of London's continued expansion along London's riverside."

To mark the launch of the new, improved offerings for business travellers, the hotel is working with handwriting expert and consultant graphologist and member of Institute of Graphologists, Tracey Trussell, to

analyse the doodles gathered from meetings held at Park Plaza London Riverbank. Tracey will provide a detailed analysis on what their doodle says about them and their personality and how this can impact a future meeting of theirs.

Delegates attending meetings in January 2018 will be offered the chance to win the opportunity to have their doodles analysed by booking a meeting at Park Plaza London Riverbank and leaving their business card with the team.



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## Carnival unveils name of new Vista-class ship

CARNIVAL PANORAMA has been chosen as the name of Carnival Cruise Line's new 133,500-ton ship, scheduled to debut in autumn 2019.

Panorama is the third in the line's Vista-class series, which are all named to reflect the connection between the vessels and the sea and highlighted by indoor/outdoor spaces that create a unique holiday experience.

The ship will join its sister ships – Carnival Vista, which entered service in 2016, and Carnival Horizon, set to debut on April 2, 2018, and will offer venues with both indoor and al fresco experiences, including the Fahrenheit 555 steakhouse, Library Bar and Bonsai Sushi, along with open-air attractions such as the ground-breaking bike-ride-in-the-sky attraction, SkyRide, a WaterWorks aqua park and the SportSquare recreation area.

Also featured will be a vibrant Havana section with tropics-inspired staterooms and its own Cuban-themed bar and pool, Family Harbor, featuring extra-roomy accommodation, the Family Harbor Lounge, a luxurious Cloud 9 Spa and Ocean Plaza, a spacious dining and entertainment venue with indoor and outdoor seating.

For details see [carnival.com](http://carnival.com)



**FLYING THE FLAG...***If Only...has announced the launch of its US programme, the first of its many new destinations in the western hemisphere. The 132-page brochure is now being delivered to agents and the company has also announced a dedicated (and well-travelled) USA team, ready to produce ideas and quotes for agents who have clients planning their 2018 holiday. Pictured is the new team - from the left: Jo Mackintosh, Rachel McAneny, Alison Murphy, Barry Robertson and Craig McAlliste.*

## Christmas deal from Paul Gauguin Cruises offers up to \$500 credits

PAUL GAUGUIN Cruises is offering a Christmas bonus of up to US\$500 shipboard credit on balcony staterooms on 2018 and 2019 voyages when booked by December 31. As an additional Christmas gift, deposits have been reduced to £200 per person.

Shipboard credits can be used for spa treatments, for purchases in La Boutique, shore excursions and more, and varies by itinerary and by balcony stateroom category.

For example, a \$250 shipboard credit is available per balcony stateroom for categories C and D, on seven-night 'Tahiti & the Society Islands' and seven-night 'Society Islands & Tahiti Iti' voyages, while a \$500 shipboard credit is offered for categories B and above on a ten-night 'Society Islands & Tuamotus' voyages, 11-night 'Cook Islands & Society Islands' and 14-night 'Marquesas, Tuamotus & Society Islands' voyages.

The line is also offering included airfare from Los Angeles. To book or for more information call 020-7399 7691 or visit [pgcruises.com](http://pgcruises.com)

## Debut sustainable hotel from Melia

MELIÁ HOTELS International has a total of 56 openings scheduled for 2018 and 2019, including the group's first state-of-the-art sustainable hotel, Meliá Serengeti Lodge in Tanzania.

Located on the southern slopes of Nyamuma, the hotel will offer 50 rooms, communal lounge areas and restaurants with views of the infinity pool and Serengeti National Park. Situated in the oldest and most popular National Park in Tanzania and on the western border of Lake Victoria, a World Heritage Site, the lodge will offer an ideal viewpoint for the annual migration of one million blue wildebeest, lions, leopards and 250,000 zebras, which pass through the valley every year in search of water and cooler pastures. It will be the first hotel designed to operate self-sufficiently without the need to obtain power or water from third-party companies.

## Fly now, pay later from new booking system, Flymble

A NEW flight booking platform, Flymble, allows instant booking without having to have a lump sum of cash before clients fly.

With a small percentage payable up front, travellers then have the opportunity to choose to spread the cost of flights across three-, six- and up to ten-month installments.

The company's fly now, pay later model allows travellers to lock in prices as early as possible rather than waiting for months to save and then the possibility of facing price hikes. The company also offers peace of mind with its Kiwi guarantee which

protects against flight delays, cancellations and schedule changes.

Vincent Hus, the company's co-founder, said: "We live in an instant society where everything is quicker and faster and we don't see why the approach to booking travel should be any different. We are at the heart of the emerging on-demand industry and we believe in a more transparent form of financing which offers ordinary people the opportunity to explore the world."

For more information see [flymble.com](http://flymble.com)

## Finnair adds Nordic touch to its cabins

FINNAIR HAS announced the launch of a new Business Class service concept, Marimekko design elements and chef collaborations for dining menus for both cabin classes. The new concepts will celebrate the carrier's Nordic roots and have been launched to offer customers a unique Nordic experience.

Inspired by Nordic design, the airline's new service concept will offer a wider range of dining and wine options, served on-demand at a customer's preferred time, just as if they were in a restaurant.

The airline's senior vice president of customer experience, Piia Karhu, said: "More than ever, our Business Class customers enjoy the opportunity to customise their travel and dining experience.

"We have a dedicated cabin crew for Business Class passengers, providing a more individual service, with the aim of setting new standards for comfort and overall well-being onboard Finnair flights."

As part of its new concept, the airline is also introducing the classic Finnish tradition "Kahvikutsut" — a coffee serving with seven different treats — for Business Class long-haul flights departing Asia in the morning. The exclusive coffee service will allow customers to enjoy traditional Finnish treats like Karelian pies, cinnamon buns, coffee cake and traditional Finnish chocolates between the two meal services.

The new Business Class service concept will commence on February 7, 2018 on flights to Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai, with a gradual roll-out of the remaining long-haul destinations during the spring and summer.

Meanwhile, the airline is investing in its food offering by introducing its first Nordic collaboration with top Swedish chef Tommy Myllymäki, the creative director for five Stockholm restaurants.

Myllymäki will design signature menus for Business Class passengers, and his winter menu will be served on all long-haul flights departing from Helsinki from February 7, 2018. A new menu designed by Culinary Team of Finland for Economy Class passengers will also be unveiled on the same date.

## New destination wedding service from Sandals & Beaches

SANDALS RESORTS and Beaches Resorts have announced the launch of Aisle to Isle, a new destination wedding experience.

According to the companies' director of romance, Marsha-Ann Brown, Aisle to Isle was designed in response to a study that revealed that millennial brides and grooms seek inspiration and information above all else when planning their wedding celebration. Featuring eight new inspirations, enhanced options for food and beverage and new ceremony and reception venues, Aisle to Isle was created to give brides endless choice.

Brown said: "No bride wants a replica of another couples' wedding day festivities. The ability to customise every facet of the experience, so that it truly reflects the unique personality of the individual couple and their style is paramount.

"Aisle to Isle gives brides what they want most — inspiring ideas and the information and professional expertise they need to create a celebration that is singularly theirs."

For more information see [sellingsandals.co.uk](http://sellingsandals.co.uk)



**WARNER LEISURE Hotels is getting into the festive spirit by offering guests a guaranteed £50 off January and February 2018 breaks when they book before December 22. The offer is available on selected breaks and room types across the company's portfolio, and guests can also save up to £30 off when bookings for March and onwards are made before December 22. Prices for a three-night weekend break at Corton in Suffolk start from £137 per person based on a February 2, 2018 arrival and two adults sharing standard accommodation including the Simply Dine package.**

## New Danube cruise from CroisiEurope takes in 2020 Passion Play

CROISIEUROPE HAS announced details of an exclusive Danube cruise that includes two nights in Oberammergau plus the best seats for the world-famous 2020 Passion Play.

From May 16 to October 4, 2020, the villagers of Oberammergau in Bavaria will once again perform their renowned Passion Play, a tradition which goes back to 1634. The performance, which involves more than 2,000 villagers, a full orchestra and a vast stage, takes place every ten years and commemorates Christ's journey into Jerusalem, his death and resurrection.

The eight-day itinerary starts with a six-day Danube cruise from Budapest to Passau visiting Bratislava, Vienna and Melk. Guests will then transfer to Oberammergau for a two-night stay during which they'll see a performance of the Passion Play and have a meal during the interval. There are three departures falling on June 17, July 17 and August 26, 2020.

The itinerary is also available in reverse, starting with two nights in Oberammergau followed by a six-day cruise from Passau to Budapest, with departures on July 20 and August 19, 2020.

The cruise takes place on MS Symphonie, with cruise-only prices starting from £2,055 per person including the six-day Danube cruise with all meals, drinks and port fees, two nights in Oberammergau and orchestra seat tickets to the Passion Play.

To book or for more information call 020-8328 1281 or visit [croisieurope.co.uk](http://croisieurope.co.uk)





**PERFECT PARTNERSHIP...** Shearings Leisure Group has announced a new partnership with the Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer's Scotland, the UK's leading Dementia support charities. A programme of customer, staff and agent fundraising activities is being created to drive greater awareness of Dementia and help the company achieve its aim of raising £100,000 in the first year. Pictured celebrating the new partnership are, from the left: Jane Atkins, Shearings Holidays; Victoria Colman and Lucy Polling, Dementia Friends, part of the Alzheimer's Society; and Richard Calvert, Shearings Leisure Group. For more information see [shearings.com/alzheimers](http://shearings.com/alzheimers)

## Air Canada debuts Signature Suite

AIR CANADA has unveiled its Signature Suite for its top International Business customers at its Toronto Pearson global hub.

The new suite is an exclusive airport retreat where eligible premium customers can dine à la carte at a complimentary, full-service restaurant or enjoy hors d'œuvres, Champagne, fine wine and cocktails in an intimate, Canadian-designed and decorated setting.

The line's president, passenger airlines, Benjamin Smith, said: "This unique airport enclave will serve as a welcome preliminary to boarding their international flights, where the premium experience will continue with our industry leading international Business Class products and services, including lie flat suites."

For more information see [aircanada.com](http://aircanada.com)

## MSC Seaside to be named in Miami on December 21

MSC CRUISES is celebrating the coming into service of MSC Seaside, the new flagship for the line, as she prepares to welcome the first guests and cross the Atlantic to her new home in Miami.

The new vessel is the company's 14th addition to the fleet and the second ship to come into service this year under the company's investment plan.

MSC Seaside is a new prototype, designed specifically for sun lovers. The ship features generous outdoor public spaces so that guests can make the most of the sunshine; world-class entertainment; a host of new international dining concept; facilities for families; and the MSC Yacht Club.

The ship also offers flexible modular cabins for groups of up to ten guests, exclusive aft corner suites with sea views, terraced balcony cabins with extended private terraces overlooking the waterfront boardwalk and luxurious suites with their own outdoor whirlpool bath.

MSC Seaside will arrive in Port Miami, her new home on December 21, and will be officially named in a glittering ceremony by Godmother, Sophia Loren.

The ship will sail year-round from Miami to the Caribbean offering seven-night eastern and western Caribbean itineraries starting from December 23.

For details see [msccruises.co.uk](http://msccruises.co.uk)

## New brochure from Castaways

CASTAWAYS HAS issued its new 2018 brochure featuring a range of destinations to stay in Mallorca, Spain, Madeira, Portugal and The Canary Islands, as well as new programmes to Cyprus and France.

Featuring specialist tailor-made holidays, the company offers a range of hotels - from Agroturismo to five-star grand luxe, including all Paradores and Pousadas.

As an example of prices, a luxury stay at Castell Son Claret in Mallorca next May leads in at £1,469 per person for seven nights' breakfast stay, based on two adults sharing and including flights from any UK airport and private transfers.

Meanwhile, the company has increased its minimum commission level for agents to 12.5%.

## January sale from Intrepid Travel offers 20% savings off range of experiences

CLIENTS BOOKING a trip with Intrepid Travel between January 1-9, 2018 are eligible for 20% off thousands of travel experiences.

There are now more than 1,000 itineraries in 120 countries to choose from across food, adventure, local culture, cycling and wildlife.

As examples, clients travelling on the 'Nepal: Hike, Bike and Raft' tour, which takes in some of Nepal's greatest icons along

the way including the Pashupatinath Temple, the fishtail peak of Machhapuchhare and the Annapurna range, are offered £189 savings per person, taking the cost of the tour to £756 per person excluding flights, with departures from May 2018.

Alternatively, a 'Jordan Real Food Adventure' tour leads in at £732, offering a saving of £183.

For more information or to book visit [intrepidtravel.com](http://intrepidtravel.com) or call 0808-274 5111.



## At home with Eileen...

What has homemaker Eileen  
been up to this month?

**W**HERE DOES time go? It seems unbelievable that it's ten years ago this month since my first column appeared in Travel Bulletin.

I'm often asked how I came to write the column in the first place. The offer came about as a direct result of a conversation I'd had while on a fam trip in Spain. I'd won the trip in a Travel Bulletin competition and the lovely Jill Sayles (who was assistant editor at the time) was also on the trip. Following a small glass of wine or two, we naturally got chatting. I recall waffling on about how much I loved writing and how when I was younger I had always wanted to be a journalist. Some months later and to my utmost surprise, Jill contacted me and reminded me of this conversation. She asked me if I'd like to write a regular column in the magazine - how could I refuse?

I have to admit I do often find it difficult thinking about what to write about each month. I've always tried hard to vary the content of my column and make it interesting but it's not always easy. Looking back, I've written about so many different things over the last ten years. A constant has been the many challenges faced by the industry including natural disasters, terrorist attacks, strikes, company collapses and the amazing way we always come together to deal with these.

The Olympics, award evenings, conferences and training events are just a few of the other topics that I've included in my column. I've also highlighted travel related subjects that concern me - like the plight of dolphins in captivity, the treatment of donkeys in Egypt and the Sherpas in Nepal; as well as more light-hearted subjects like the problems encountered by the 'vegetarian traveller'.

Along the way, I have also shared some personal memories and anecdotes and often when I meet people these are the things they seem to remember most. Like that I have a son who lives in Australia, that I'm a vegetarian and they ask if I really did get locked in at that hotel spa. (Yes, I really did!)

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who takes the time to read my column and special thanks to those of you who have told me how much you enjoy reading it.

I'll be back again in January but in the meantime I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!

*Eileen*

by EILEEN SAUNDERS of Travel Counsellors  
To respond to any of Eileen's comments email  
lauretta.wright@travelbulletin.co.uk

## NEWS BITES

- ALL NIPPON Airways (ANA) has announced its second phase of the hugely successful Tastes of JAPAN series with the new 'Tastes of JAPAN by ANA - Explore the Regions'. The airline will showcase eight different regions of Japan through renewed in-flight meals and lounge services, a newly designated section in its in-flight magazine and through a new in-flight video series, 'SELECTRAVEL'.
- MELIÁ HOTELS International has just launched a new online shopping experience to earn and redeem MeliáRewards points worldwide. The new Redemption eStore gives MeliáRewards members access to more than 4,000 reward items across different categories, including electronics, health, beauty and travel, with delivery capabilities to more than 140 regions globally. Members can also earn points on any joint cash and points redemption payments.
- ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES has been awarded SKYTRAX 4 STAR certification, joining the likes of British Airways, Qantas & Emirates as a global four-star player in the international airline arena.
- INTERNATIONAL GOLF Travel Market (IGTM) has announced that its 2018 edition will be hosted in Slovenia's capital city, the 2016 European Green Capital, Ljubljana.

### Air India to launch new route from BHX

AIR INDIA, which operates a daily service to Delhi, plans to introduce two non-stop flights per week to Amritsar from Birmingham Airport.

The new route to Amritsar, home to the Golden Temple, will be served twice a week direct from Birmingham, the only UK airport to operate non-stop services on the route.

William Pearson, aviation director at Birmingham Airport, said: "It is great news that we will have non-stop connections to two Indian cities. With more than 200,000 British-Indian people who travel to India to visit friends and relatives, and for tourism and business interests, this additional destination shows the large demand within the region for non-stop Amritsar services from the Midlands.

"Air India has been a successful partner for over four years and offers great connections to India with services operated by the new Boeing 787-8 'Dreamliner' aircraft."

The Boeing 787-8 series aircraft has 256 seats in a split cabin, consisting of 18 Business Class and 238 Economy seats. (Indian & Indian Ocean - page 15)



Pictured marking the launch of the new route are William Pearson (left) from Birmingham Airport and Pankaj Srivastava, Air India.



## BOOKING INCENTIVES

- **THROUGHOUT DECEMBER**, agents can earn **15 points** per booking with Carnival Cruise Line's latest Loyalty Rocks Club incentive. The **15 points** have the equivalent value of **£15** and can be exchanged for a variety of treats. Agents making a booking this month will also have the chance to win one of **12 places** at the CLIA Selling Cruise Conference which takes place in Southampton in May 2018. See [loyaltyrocksclub.redpoints.co.uk](http://loyaltyrocksclub.redpoints.co.uk)
- **CRYSTAL CRUISES** is offering agents a **£200 Lifestyle voucher** when they book any **2018 or 2019 Full World Cruise** and **£100 Lifestyle voucher** to agents booking any **2018 or 2019 World Cruise** sector. Bookings must be made before the end of December to qualify.

## AGENT TRAINING

- **CARNIVAL CRUISE** Line's online training programme, *Carnival Cruise Line University (CCLU)*, has moved to its new home on the Loyalty Rocks Club website at [loyaltyrocksclub.com](http://loyaltyrocksclub.com)
- **AGENTS WHO** successfully complete Bourne's 'Train with Brainz' online courses by December 31 will be automatically entered into a prize draw to win a break at either Butlin's, Haven or Warner Leisure Hotels.
- **AGENTS HAVE** the chance to head off on their very own UK boating break as part of a new online training initiative with Hoseasons, when they complete all the updated training modules and a quiz by December 31. See [hoseasons.co.uk/agents](http://hoseasons.co.uk/agents)



**WINTER WARMERS.** Staff from Shearings Holidays in Wigan visited the Wigan Royal Albert Edward Infirmary to donate winter woollies to the neonatal unit recently. More than 100 pieces of knitted clothing including booties, hats and cardigans were handed over to the Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust's neonatal unit, all knitted by customers whilst on river cruises during the summer months. Pictured are, from the left: Kathryn Ashton, Infant Feeding Coordinator; Patricia Parry, Shearings Holidays; Sister Karen Glover; and Julie Armstrong, Neonatal Unit Manager.



2018 promises to be a great year for the SeaWorld Parks with three new attractions opening across our Florida and California Parks. And two lucky winners will also be in for a great start to the year with the new Apple Watch Series 3.

To enter, register at [seaworldagents.co.uk](http://seaworldagents.co.uk) and complete the training to become a SeaWorld Parks Expert before 31st December.

Already a SeaWorld Parks Expert? Visit our Expert of the Month page and you could win a £30 Cineworld gift card.

SEAWORLD PARKS  
& ENTERTAINMENT.







## HAL celebrates milestone for newbuild Nieuw Statendam

IN ANTICIPATION of the upcoming float-out of MS Nieuw Statendam in November next year, Holland America Line held the ship's coin ceremony earlier this month at Fincantieri's Marghera shipyard in Italy.

Following Italian shipbuilding tradition, Anne Marie Bartels, a member of the line's President's Club, served as the ship's Madrina and participated in the festivities.

Orlando Ashford, the company's president, said: "The coin ceremony is one of the most time-honoured traditions in the building of a ship, and having Anne Marie, one of our most valued guests, serve as Madrina makes the celebration all the more special.

"Nieuw Statendam reflects the next generation in our brand evolution while maintaining the classic hallmarks we are known for. By placing an authentic Dutch guildier in the hull from the year our first ship named Statendam came into service is a meaningful way to build that bridge from our past to our future."

Bartels first sailed with Holland America Line on the s.s. Nieuw Amsterdam from Rotterdam, the Netherlands to New York

when she was 21 years old. She has since been on 79 cruises with the company, including 12 Grand Voyages. Bartels has more than 2,500 cruising days with the line, which gives her elite President's Club status for guests with more than 2,500 days on board.

During the festivities a drydock gate was opened briefly and water touched Nieuw Statendam's hull for the first time as is tradition during the coin ceremony. On December 21, the ship will be fully floated out and move to an outfitting pier. Nieuw Statendam is the second Pinnacle Class ship for the cruise line, joining MS Koningsdam, which launched in April 2016 from the same shipyard in Marghera. A third Pinnacle Class ship will set sail for the cruise line in 2021.

The 99,500-ton ship will carry 2,660 guests and feature all of the hallmarks of Pinnacle-class design: grand light-filled spaces; visual drama; and sumptuous interiors inspired by the fluid curves of musical instruments.

For more information visit [hollandamerica.com](http://hollandamerica.com)

## New training programme from James Villa Holidays

JAMES VILLA Holidays has launched a new online training programme for agents to become villa experts.

The company's trade and partnerships manager, Kelly Walker, said: "We've had great support from agents but know that there are still lots more agents who want to learn about our product. After months of planning we're excited to be giving the trade this tool so they can better support their customers."

To support the launch, agents have the chance to win Love2Shop vouchers when they complete the training.

For details see [jamesvillas-training.co.uk](http://jamesvillas-training.co.uk) or call 0800-074 0377. (Training - page 13)

## AirPortr teams with American Airlines to offer doorstep luggage service

LONDON'S NEW travel technology startup, AirPortr, has partnered with American Airlines to offer mobile luggage check-in and delivery service on all American Airlines flights to the US from Heathrow.

Following a recent £2million investment from Stobart Group and a successful launch with British Airways, the delivery service will now be available on 300 daily flights out of London.

The partnership invites customers flying on any of American Airlines' 20 daily flights from Heathrow to the US to have their luggage securely checked-in from any London address, removing the stresses of transporting their bags across the capital and checking-in at the airport.

The company's CEO, Randel Darby, said: "Partnering with the world's largest airline, American Airlines, means we can serve more customers and takes us one step further in establishing mobile luggage check-in as a new standard in the air travel experience.

"American Airlines opens our service up to more passengers travelling from London to the United States and helps us better serve customers booking with American's

transatlantic joint business partner British Airways."

The airline's passengers flying into Heathrow can also have their luggage delivered to and from their central London hotels, allowing them to enjoy more luggage-free time in the city, regardless of their check-out or flight times.

Following an upgrade to the digital experience, customers can now instantly approve any excess luggage charges for overweight baggage via the AirPortr service on their doorstep.

Randel Darby said: "With more than 50,000 bags safely and securely delivered, AirPortr has been truly embraced by Londoners. From families juggling oversized luggage and leisure travellers flying with sports equipment, to young professionals not wanting to be that person with luggage during rush-hour, we've struck a chord with people wanting to take the hassle out of getting their bags to and through the airport."

Luggage check-in and deliveries start at £30 per item for the first item and £10 thereafter.

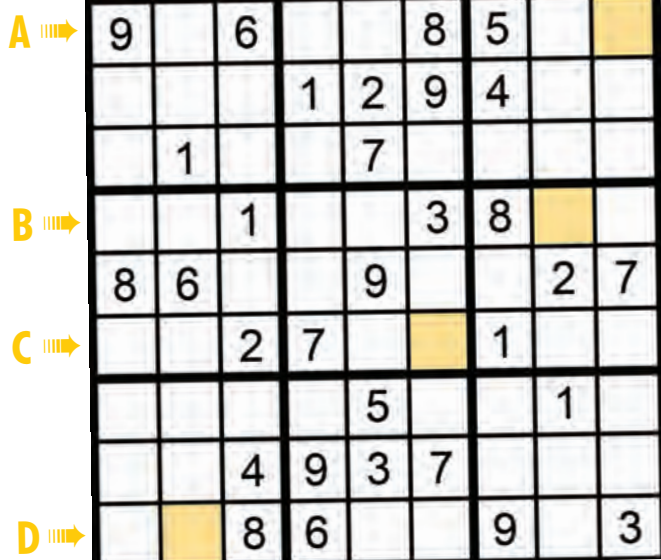
For more information about AirPortr visit [airportr.com](http://airportr.com)



# Su Doku

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

Number: 048



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, December 21st. Solution and new puzzle will appear next week.

**The winner for 1st December is Jasmine Payne, Wroxham Travel in Norfolk.**

**December 1st Solution: A=7 B=2 C=3 D=5**

# Where Am I?



Always a popular installment to this complex of 19 highrise commercial buildings which span between 48th and 51st Streets, this tree is a famous symbol of the holidays and is viewed by thousands of festive tourists.

# Crossword

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

Across

1. Ferry operator offering Christmas Market Breaks (4)
3. America's 50th state (6)
7. Join the line for this popular party dance (5)
8. Jacqueline Wilson's children's book, \_\_\_\_\_ Feather's Christmas (5)
10. One of Santa's little helpers (3)
12. An animated donkey and friends follow this object at a cinema near you (3,4)
15. Queensland resort, sounds like Paradise (7)
16. Sleepy Yorkshire hamlet, The Land of \_\_\_\_\_ (3)
17. Capital of Menorca (5)
19. London exhibitions and convention centre (5)
21. Calendar which counts down the days to Christmas (6)
22. Strictly bandleader, Dave \_\_\_\_\_ (4)

Down

1. Author featured in the movie, The Man Who Invented Christmas (7)
2. First name of actor who plays the lead in 1 Down (3)
4. Athens International airport code (3)
5. Christmas carol, The Holly and the \_\_\_\_\_ (3)
6. Ed Sheeran hit song, \_\_\_\_\_ on the Hill (6)
9. Redhill-based operator specialising in escorted tours (5)
11. English actor Colin, seen recently in Kingsman: The Golden Circle (5)
13. Polynesian island, famed for its Moai statues (6)
14. Fabled cervid with a red nose (7)
17. National flag-carrier of Lebanon (3)
18. The lead in Sister Act assumes this guise (3)
20. Canberra International airport code (3)

For the solution to the Crossword and Where Am I?  
Please see page 22



# Industry Insight by...



## There's plenty to be cheerful about according to Derek Moore, chair of AITO...

**J**UST BACK from the AITO Overseas Conference in Evora, in Portugal's Alentejo region, where the theme was 'Reasons to Be Cheerful'.

The theme was based on the 1980s hit by Ian Dury, a performer (if you weren't born then, just Google him), who was noted for being somewhat out of the ordinary, a bit of a character, and a singer who carved out his own path and did his own thing – a bit like most AITO operators and agents, really. We chose the theme since, after a year of negative headlines and issues, we wanted to tease out some positives and end the year feeling good about our industry.

So – Reasons to be Cheerful (RTBC)...let's start with the AITO conference. Although the Alentejo is a lesser-known region of Portugal, that didn't detract from its appeal to AITO delegates. Indeed, we had more people at conference than since it was first billed as not solely for agents or operators but, instead, simply for people who manage AITO travel businesses. Lots of discussions about the big issues of the day, plenty of networking and sharing of ideas; hard work in the business sessions and the bar – a very successful conference, and that in itself is a reason to be cheerful.

But let's look beyond the conference, at the state of our members' businesses after an interesting year. AITO members have a loyal customer base – clients who are determined to travel no matter what the economic situation. They may book shorter duration trips, but they seem willing to spend more to get what they want. Despite the Brexit scenario, 2017 bookings have shown none of the gloom prophesised by many. RTBC.

Monarch was a downer, although at least it sparked a greater interest in opting for the security of booking a package. But elsewhere in the aviation business new routes are opening up and the rise of the long-haul low-cost model, exemplified by Norwegian, suggests

major growth in travel to destinations previously considered too far and too expensive for many. RTBC!

Next year is plagued with acrimonious acronyms. PSD2, GDPR, LTA, and a revised PTD have all worried many. But it became clear at conference that, if you plan ahead, call on help from business partners qualified to help, and implement the measures required by these changes, then they do not have to be traumatic. RTBC!

Our industry is seen by many as interested only in milking destinations for money. Operators pile in capacity to favourite honeypots, irrespective of whether or not such tourist traffic causes problems for the destination and its people. Take Venice as just one example of many. But in 2017 the term 'over-tourism' appeared, and the topic was discussed at several panel debates at WTM, as well as at the AITO conference. It is heartening to see a debate on this issue coming to prominence. RTBC!

Next year might see progress on Brexit. We may not get what the travel industry wants, but at least the politicians are crawling towards some clarity. And since it is uncertainty that, more than anything, affects the economy and thus the state of our industry we are at least, and at last, seeing progress over Brexit. RTBC!

Next year might also see the continuing death of the fake illness claims. The determination of the major players in our industry to fight these claims is to be applauded and, although this issue has not hit AITO operators to any degree, it's one more plague on our industry being dealt with. RTBC! 2018 also sees the AITO Domestic Conference taking place, where we'll be recognising success in the new AITO Excellence scheme – RTBC.

So all in all, as 2017 comes to an end, there are plenty of reasons to be cheerful – here's to 2018!



## Become a destination expert with Premier Holidays' online training

PREMIER HOLIDAYS is tasking agents to become experts in its core destinations with a series of new online training courses.

The new manuals are being rolled out on the operator's trade website throughout December to get agents ready for the peak booking season in January. The training will cover the operator's most popular long and short-haul destinations (with the first destinations launched being Myanmar and Borneo), with new areas becoming available each week.

Debbie Goffin, head of sales and marketing for the company, said: "We've just started releasing our new training courses which are designed to prepare agents for peaks, when we will be launching a number of tactical offers in our core areas. In the past, our online training manuals have proved very popular and it's a good opportunity for agents to brush up on their knowledge, learn something new or complete training in a destination they've never sold before." To take part visit [trade.premierholidays.co.uk](http://trade.premierholidays.co.uk)



**A TOTAL of 20 travel agents recently took part in a Tourism Nova Scotia and Tourism New Brunswick training event in central London. The event was hosted by Prestige Holidays and involved a training session and quiz about the provinces before a fish 'n' chip dinner. Prizes were also up for grabs during the event and pictured are the winners: Sarah Watson (centre) from Travel Impressions collected the first prize of £50 in Love2Shop vouchers; a second prize of a New Brunswick goodie bag went to Anna Davis (left) of Travelmania; and a bottle of Champagne was presented to third prize winner, Emma Meakins of Beaver Travel.**

## Bourne Leisure encourages agents to 'Train with Brainz'

BOURNE LEISURE is calling on agents to 'Train with Brainz' in 2018 by launching a new set of interactive online training courses.

Going live next week, the courses will include modules relating to all three of Bourne Leisure's brands - Butlin's, Haven and Warner Leisure Hotels - whilst agents train with the company's mascot, Brainz, and learn more about the latest developments and product news, along with the chance to win prizes.

Agents who complete the training course can receive a free day pass to experience one of the properties, and those who successfully complete it by December 31 will automatically be entered into a prize draw to win a break at either Butlin's, Haven or Warner Leisure Hotels. In addition, should agents make a booking after completing the course they can be in with the chance of winning a three-month gym membership, £50 sports voucher or spa vouchers. There will also be other bonus prizes throughout the year.

Erman Housein, sales and marketing manager for the holiday operator, said: "Offering an engaging and meaningful training programme to agents is extremely important to us. We strive to keep 'Train with Brainz' fresh and fun, with the aim of arming agents with the tools and knowledge they need to successfully sell all of our products. We have a lot happening in 2018 across all three brands so these new training modules will update agent knowledge as well as offer plenty of fun and useful rewards."

Visit [bourneexpert.co.uk](http://bourneexpert.co.uk) for more details.

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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM





# Audrey Brooks-Wiggins

Head of Trade Sales, Funway Holidays

## On the weekends I like to...

Spend time with my two boys aged four and nine. Every weekend it's crazy covering parties, going to the cinema, bounce, playdates, ice-skating etc..they are very active always on the go! Next trip is Somerset House in London for our annual Christmas skate, then a shopping trip to Harrods and Hamleys.

## How do you relax?

I love nothing more than turning my mobile off and having a spa treatment. For the last couple of years I have made an effort to take semi regular spa-days in order to de-stress and find some calm!

## What's your favourite gadget?

Definitely my iPhone. I recently left my phone at home on a work day and I genuinely felt panicked without it. My phone is now my email device, camera, games console (for my kids!) and social network controller – all rolled into one.

## What's your favourite TV programme or movie?

I can't remember how many times I've watched the movie, 'The Holiday'. It's just the best! I have a secret crush on Jude Law who plays one of the lead roles, but the main reason is because its set in two of my

favourite places to go on holiday – LA and Shere, the pretty, idyllic village in Guildford, Surrey.

## What's the last picture you took on your phone?

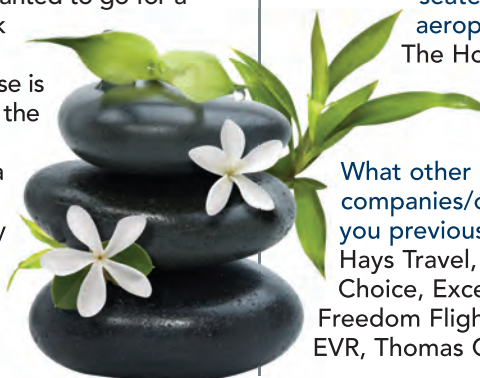
My boy's first day at school looking all grown up.

## What has been your most extravagant purchase?

Working from home/office meant I needed more work space at home. One day I was shopping in Homebase and I saw a log cabin. I only went in to buy some spare bulbs and walked away having also placed an order for a log cabin! And turns out I'm not alone as Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates, Muhammad Ali and our Queen all own log homes too!

## What's been your latest DIY project?

Decorating the interior of my log cabin. I really wanted to go for a cosey, girly look but although its main purchase is as my office, at the weekends it doubles up as a great den for my boys to play in. Therefore, the colour scheme is pretty neutral.



## What's your most embarrassing moment?

A Marilyn Monroe moment on the streets of Paris! I somehow kept my dignity but my son thought it was hilarious!

## My greatest strength is...

Resilience – people remark on how resilient I am, which is especially important in an ever changing and evolving market. I get this trait from my mother, as I come from a family where the women are strong.

## What's your favorite quote?

Life's for living .....so live it!

## What skill would you like to master?

I've always had an interest in languages and this year's New Year Resolution is to learn one.

## Who would you most like to be seated with on an aeroplane?

The Hollywood heart-throb that is Brad Pitt.

## What other companies/organizations have you previously worked for?

Hays Travel, Unijet/First Choice, Excel Leisure Group – Freedom Flights, Wyndham – EVR, Thomas Cook & Medhotels.





## A Maritim Hole in One

THE FIVE-star Maritim Resort & Spa Mauritius has expanded its golf offer by signing an exclusive partnership with Mont Choisy Le Golf, the new championship golf course which opened last month on the North of the island.

Guests at the resort can not only benefit from unlimited green fees at its nine-hole Par 29 Maritim Golf Course, but also a complimentary green fee per adult guest (for a minimum three-night stay) at the 18-hole Par 72 Mont Choisy Le Golf.

The course is located within a 12-minute drive and will be accessible to hotel guests via a free shuttle service. Additionally, resort residents can take advantage of preferential rates for any additional green fees and enjoy unique perks, ranging from a personalised welcome and individual lockers to store their golf equipment throughout their stay at the club-house, to priority advance booking for the best tee time slots.

For more information see [maritim.com](http://maritim.com)

**TRAVEL 2 is adding a 13-day 'Royal Retreats of South India' tour to its 2018 touring programme. The tour offers the chance to explore south India, which is very different to the north, and discover everything from the Pondicherry (known as the Riviera of the East) to the towering Sri Meenakshi temple in Madurai. It is priced from £1,569 per person including London flights for a departure on May 7, 2018. Visit [travel2.com](http://travel2.com)**

## Incredible India advances to next stage of tourism campaign

WITH AN upswing in tourist arrivals, new practical and technological initiatives in place, plus a diverse portfolio of experiential offerings for travellers, Incredible India is to press forward to the next stage of its campaign – Incredible India 2.0.

In line with the increasing focus on experiential and wellness travel in the UK market, the Indian government is keen to build on this growth with new initiatives and investment. Identifying itself as one of the most spiritually rich and diverse destinations worldwide, wellness and spiritual tourism will be a key pillar of the new campaign.

The tourist board will be looking to further develop wellness tourism outside of the main spiritual centres of Varanasi, Pune and Ajmer. In 2018 spiritual and wellness tourists will be encouraged to explore new destinations off the beaten path, including far flung monasteries in Lahaul Spiti, Araku and Ananthagiri villages, Gorakhpur the hometown of Yogi Adityanath and Ayodhya, the location of the Ram temple-Babri Masjid.

In tandem with this the Ministry of Tourism has also taken the initiative of developing and promoting niche tourism products with an aim to promote India as a year-round destination, to attract tourists with specific interests and to ensure repeat visits. Sports and adventure tourism has been identified as particularly

promising and so the ministry is to celebrate 2018 as the 'Year of Adventure Tourism in India'. International golfer, Carley Booth will be helping to promote India as a golfing and sports destination, highlighting courses across the country from Jammu and Kashmir to the Deep South. Additionally, adventure tourism is spreading beyond the traditional realm of the Himalayas, with Kerala aiming to rebrand itself as 'the land of adventure'.

In 2016, 8.80 million foreign tourist arrivals were recorded, representing a growth rate of 9.7%. The target is to continue recording 10% growth rate in international tourist arrivals over the next three years and, to help achieve this, the e-tourist visa facility has now been extended to 162 countries.

The safety and security of tourists travelling in India has also been noted as one of the priorities of the Government of India and several measures have been taken into regard with the launch of a 24/7 toll free tourist helpline. It is available on the existing toll free number 1800111363 or on a short code 1363 for dialling in India.

The Ministry of Tourism has also initiated a move to develop a new website and has partnered with Google, through its arts and culture initiative, to enrich the site with 360-degree videos and museum views. For further information visit [incredibleindia.org](http://incredibleindia.org)





**ROBINSON REWARD...** George Morris from Robinson Club presents lucky prize winner Katrina Atkinson from Topkattravel, Not Just Travel with a stay for two people at the Robinson Club Maldives.



**OFF TO MAURITIUS...** Faye Gallacher from Attitude Hotels presents Glyn Stead from Getaway Travel, Whitby with his raffle prize of a four-night stay for two at The Ravenala Attitude in Mauritius.



**TRAVEL EARLES...** we welcome, from the left, Charlotte Dallee, Shelley Pettit, Lisa Leak and Alistair Hart all from Andrew Earles, to our showcase reception.



**SUNNY STA...** from the left, Tara Wood and Lucy Grey of Sun Resorts deliver the unique selling points of the hotel collection to: Nicola Staff, Evie Tennant and Rebecca Lowes, Sonal Hussein and Matthew Stubbs, all from STA Travel, York.

THE TRAVEL Bulletin team recently travelled to York and to Cambridge, welcoming local agents to our exotic Indian Ocean Showcases. Taking place at the Hilton hotel, attendees were in for a fun-filled evening, with presentations and networking sessions direct from exciting operators, high flying airlines and luxurious resorts, before being wined and dined and finishing the night with a chance to win some great holiday prizes!

## #TBSHOWCASES

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**TRIP TO MALDIVES...** Travel Counsellor Alison Marden (right) was the winner of Sun Siyam Resorts' holiday prize of three nights at Olhuvveli Beach & Spa Maldives, presented by the company's Katharine Wood.



**IF ONLY...** Learning more about some of the luxury Indian Ocean products offered through If Only... is, from the left: Jessica Ross and Glyn Stead of Getaway Travel, Whitby; from the operator's Richard Hey; with Kirsty Weatherill, Michele Taylor and Anne Stead also from Getaway Travel.



**VERANDA CIRCLE...** from the bottom left, going anticlockwise: Melanie Ellwood, Anna Godlewska, Samantha Hyland, Phillip Franks and Christine Nattrass all from Thomas Cook, York discover more about Veranda Leisure & Hospitality (Heritage Resorts) from the company's Stephanie Robertson.

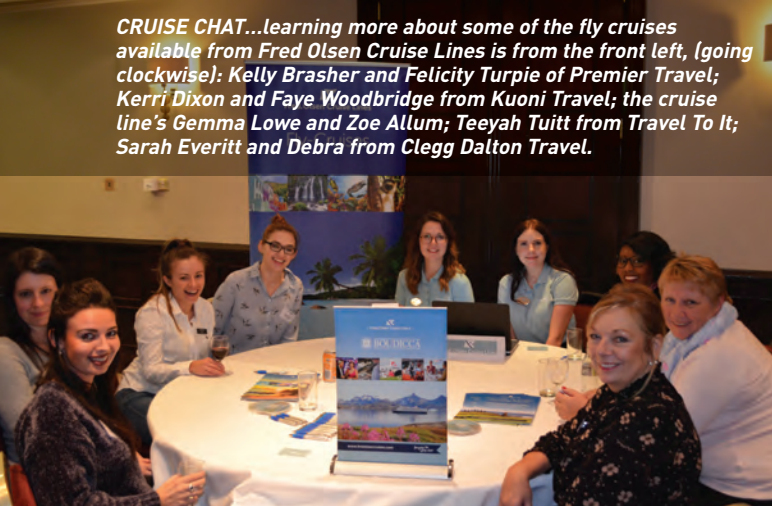




**HAPPY HOLIDAYS...** Andrea Hogg (left) from Outrigger Hotels & Resorts presents prize winner Clare Dudley from Ponders Travel with a Christmas hamper full of festive treats.



**FESTIVE AGENTS...** we welcome Richard Abern and Anne Butler from Spitfire Travel to our showcase event.



**CRUISE CHAT...** learning more about some of the fly cruises available from Fred Olsen Cruise Lines is from the front left, (going clockwise): Kelly Brasher and Felicity Turpie of Premier Travel; Kerri Dixon and Faye Woodbridge from Kuoni Travel; the cruise line's Gemma Lowe and Zoe Allum; Teeyah Tuitt from Travel To It; Sarah Everitt and Debra from Clegg Dalton Travel.



**KUONI CATCH-UP...** chatting all things Kuoni is, from the left (going clockwise): Victoria Bottrill and Siobhan Lane both Independent Travel Experts; Ruth Noble and Thom Kernott of Trailfinders; with Kuoni's Amy Clark; Amoushka Ramdeen from Trailfinders; and Sarah Bennett of Independent Travel Experts.

**AMARI AWARD...** Rebecca Allen (left) of Ponders Travel was the lucky winner of a holiday to an Amari resort, presented by Maria Popova from Amari, Havodda Maldives.



**WELCOME!**...pictured during the evenings drinks reception are Mary Rule, Suzy Sheardown, Janice Bloomfield, all from Thomas Cook St Andrews Street.

**FLYING HIGH...** Dean Sheriff of Qatar Airways gifts Rachel Garnish of Not Just Travel with an exclusive scale model of the airline's Airbus 350.

Want to get in on the #TBSHOWCASES action?

Join in the fun at our Airline showcase in Norwich on January 22 and Canary Islands Showcase in Manchester on January 29. Reserve your place now by emailing

[hannah.carter@travelbulletin.co.uk](mailto:hannah.carter@travelbulletin.co.uk)





**LOCATED IN** the south-western atoll of Dhaalu, Niyama Private Islands is now offering a new Surf Seaplane Transfer. Unique to the Maldivian resort, the transfer offers guests the chance to experience surf points away from the island, with the seaplane transferring them directly to nearby wave points and picking them up a few hours later. The island is the only one in the Maldives with surf-able waves that break directly onto the beach and the new Surf Seaplane Transfer has been designed to further cement the hotel's reputation as a surfer's paradise.

## Major renovations at the Heritage Le Telfair in Mauritius

HERITAGE LE Telfair in Mauritius has recently undergone a three-month renovation and reopened as the Heritage Le Telfair Golf & Wellness Resort.

With freshly redesigned and redecorated rooms, suites and common areas, all rooms now include a dedicated butler and new personal beach attendants will be present for sun worshippers.

Jacques Charles, chief operating officer for Heritage Resorts, said: "Improving the luxury experience for guests is our main focus. We have refined everything from the food and the interior design to the facilities and service on offer. We want Heritage Resorts to be a symbol of high-quality service, creating the perfect balance between indulgent luxury and heart-felt authenticity. The introduction of a dedicated butler for each room is an added extra we want all guests to enjoy. Allowing families and loved ones to share more time together and creating memorable holiday experiences for visitors is our number one priority."

Overlooking Heritage Golf Club is the 19th Century Chateau de Bel Ombre, where guests are invited to dine during their stay. The Chateau has been given a fresh new look, channelling an Anglo-Indian interior design along with a new wine cellar and wooden deck, providing an alfresco dining space with panoramic views of a newly created French-style landscaped garden. For the first time, couples are able to stay the night at the adult-only location.

A new wellness pavilion for yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, Qigong and meditation sessions is now available along with three- or five-day wellness packages. A garden room suite starts from £102 per person, per night based on two sharing. The rates include breakfast, unlimited free golf, complimentary baby club and kids club and free Wi-Fi.

For more information visit [heritageresorts.mu/mauritius-hotels/le-telfair-resort](http://heritageresorts.mu/mauritius-hotels/le-telfair-resort)

## Refresh & reset at the Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas

IN BETWEEN the festive celebrations this season, the Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas is inviting holidaymakers to pursue their wellness goals and refresh themselves to begin the New Year anew.

The resort offers a tailor made wellness programme, beginning with a personal consultation and detailed body composition analysis with the resident wellness coach, in tandem with a holistic chef who can prepare customised menus with a focus on raw plant-based cuisine, healthy grains and superfoods. Wellness guests can also tap into their inner strength with one-on-one training with the resort's resident yogi and practice meditation and yoga overlooking the ocean.

The property is also preparing for the

opening of a new observatory later this month at its over-the-water Sky Bar, complete with an astronomy programme, where guests can partake in a private stargazing experience with the resort's resident 'Sky Guru'.

These developments and more have all been undertaken to keep "Anantara top of mind for agents and for their clients" according to Dylan Counsel, general manager for Anantara Kihavah Villas. Recently visiting the UK with Karl Webster, cluster director of communications at Anantara Hotels, Resorts and Spas Maldives, Counsel expressed the company's continued commitment to the travel trade whilst meeting with travel agents and key operators.

For more information visit [anantara.com](http://anantara.com)

## Sri Lanka unveils Tourism Vision 2020

SRI LANKA has unveiled its three-year strategic plan for tourism to position the country as a place for "memorable, authentic and diverse tourism experiences".

In 2016, 2.1million tourists visited Sri Lanka, with 154,000 UK visitors recorded this year to date and up 7.4% from 2016.

John Amaratunga, minister of tourism development for the destination, said: "Some of the main reasons for this positive growth are that British tourists have come to realise that due to our historical connections, Sri Lanka is a home away from home. This includes our British era buildings, English signage, English spoken as one of our three official languages and Westminster style of governance".

The minister also advised that since the end of civil war in 2009 tourist arrivals have increased by 400% to the country, adding: "A changing political landscape based on good governance, respect for human rights, upholding of democratic values and a vibrant, engaging foreign policy have ensured that the bi-lateral relations between the UK and Sri Lanka are the closest they have ever been."

The new tourism plan sets out a roadmap to raise service levels, offer new products, open up new destinations and create a vibrant events calendar to attract a global audience. Britain is the only country in Europe with direct flights by SriLankan Airlines, and now enjoys online visa facilities.

## Contiki adds Southern India trip to Asia 2018 programme

FOLLOWING THE success of Contiki's Eternal India trip which launched in 2016, the youth travel operator has expanded its offering in India with a new 11-day In-Depth Explorer style trip, called 'Southern Spice'.

During their trip, travellers will journey south from Chennai to Pondicherry, through to Kumbakonam, Madurai, Periyar, Kumbakonam, Kerala Backwaters and finally Cochin. Highlights include a special overnight stay on a house boat on the Keralan Backwaters, a martial arts performance in Kalaripayattu and a visit to Auroville, a spiritual township dedicated to peace. Visits to a spice plantation, tea factory, silk weaver's home and bronze casting school have been included so travellers can fully embrace the colourful Indian culture. Free time optional activities will also give travellers the opportunity to enjoy a sunset boat cruise in Cochin, dress up in Sarees or Dhotis in Kumbakonam, and take part in a local family cooking demonstration and dinner in Periyar.

Prices start from £1,589 per person and include 15 meals, twin-share accommodation, on-trip transport and sightseeing highlights. Departures will begin in January 2018.

Several departures of the new trip can also be linked with the existing 'Eternal India' itinerary, to form one epic India adventure. For more information check out [contiki.com](http://contiki.com)



**NESTLED ON the west coast of Mauritius, MARADIVA Villas Resort and Spa is home to 65 villas, each offering views of the ocean or gardens, and with their own plunge pool. The outdoor living areas of the villas have undergone a complete redesign, and bedrooms in the first three categories of villas upgraded with Hermès feature wall panels and Hermès decorations in the Exclusive and the Presidential Suite Pool Villas. The latest technology has also been incorporated with fast Wi-Fi access, video inter-com and Voip phones. The starting price for Luxury Suite Pool Villas is 1,025 euros per night on a half-board basis. Visit [maradiva.com](http://maradiva.com)**

## The Maldives announces major transformation projects

THE MALDIVES is to welcome several new tourism developments during 2018, including expansion plans at the recently rebranded Velana International Airport and the opening of the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge in July 2018.

The China-Maldives Friendship Bridge, set to be completed and inaugurated in July 2018, will span from Malé's eastern edge to the western corner of the island of Hulhulé, where Velana International Airport is located. The bridge project is the first of its kind in the Maldives and will help provide a reliable land connection for holidaymakers between the capital and the airport.

In tandem with this news and following a rebranding earlier this year, Velana International Airport will be welcoming a new terminal and runway to help handle an increasing number of visitors to the Maldives. The new passenger terminal is expected to be completed in 2020. In mid-2018, the airport will also open a new 3,400m long, 60m wide Code-F runway which will allow the airport to accommodate the world's largest passenger airliner, the Airbus A380, with the aim to cater for seven million passengers per year.

These new developments have been made to help support the increasing demand for tourism to the island nation. The UK continues to be an important inbound market with 68,007 UK tourists visiting the country from January – August 2017. This figure accounts for 7.6% of all tourists visiting and is the second highest share across all inbound markets for this period.

Moosa Zameer, minister of tourism for the Maldives, said: "This is a very exciting time for the Maldives with a number of key infrastructure developments taking place during 2018 and beyond, which will benefit both tourists and the local community. Our tourism industry is continuing to expand and with ten new hotel resorts opening during the next few years, we look forward to being able to accommodate even more visitors from overseas."

For more information go to [visitmaldives.com](http://visitmaldives.com)

## Baros Maldives unveils resort updates for 2018

BAROS MALDIVES has recently completed a series of resort updates ahead of the New Year.

The resort has just finished upgrading its 24 deluxe villas, each of which have private beach access and now feature bright new décor. A key new feature is the partially open-air bathrooms, complete with waterfall shower in a sandstone-walled flower garden and freestanding oval bathtub. Each villa comes complete with a Villa Host, available 24 hours a day, and features flat screen TVs on a contemporary easel, king size bed, sofa sea views, and polished wooden furniture in a neo art-deco style. Sliding French doors open onto a white sandstone deck, widened to accommodate a large day bed and table for

two for alfresco dining or cocktails at sunset.

Alongside fine-dining restaurant, The Lighthouse, and an all-day dining eatery, Lime Restaurant, Cayenne Grill has just re-launched following renovations alongside a new menu.

The resort's rebranded 'Serenity Spa' has also launched a new range of environmentally-sourced products alongside a new treatment menu, focusing on holistic treatments and incorporating the natural powers of plants combined with healing traditions from Africa.

Rates start from approximately £464 per night in a deluxe villa on a bed-and-breakfast basis, excluding taxes.

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



# iceland



**INTREPID TRAVEL** has just launched a 'Cruising Iceland's Wild West Coast' tour, allowing travellers to cruise the rugged coast of the Westfjords. The carbon offsetting of the trip makes the new adventure cruise sustainable. Along the way travellers can spot puffins, nesting birds and whales amongst the waves and with only a fraction of visitors venturing to this remote western region, its seclusion makes its landscapes and villages a real adventure to explore. The eight-day cruise has two departures in July 2018. Visit [intrepidtravel.com](http://intrepidtravel.com)

## Hotel Húsafell launches luxury hiking adventure

TUCKED AWAY in the highlands in West Iceland, Húsafell Nature Reserve's lava-lands, glaciers, hot springs and waterfalls are now easily accessible to visitors.

The eco-chic Hotel Húsafell has introduced a Luxury Hiking Adventure package including glacier ice caves, lava tubes and hiking amid natural scenery on ten new area trails. The new routes lead hikers along marked trails through landscapes inside Húsafell Nature Reserve and feature different levels of difficulty suitable for all experience levels. Travellers can choose from escorted hikes or self-guided exploration using a new Húsafell Hiking Map. Visit [hotelhusafell.com](http://hotelhusafell.com) for more details.

## Icelandair launches more services, stopovers and new fare options for passengers

ICELANDAIR HAS increased its Glasgow service by more than 2,000 extra seats.

From the beginning of November through to the end of December, four flights a week from Glasgow to Reykjavik will have increased in capacity by 39 seats per leg, jumping from 183 seats per flight to 222 seats. The Glasgow to Keflavik route will also remain as a daily flight allowing for smooth connections to the airline's 18 trans-Atlantic North American gateways.

In tandem with the news, the airline has also announced the launch of a year-round service from Dublin, scheduled to commence on May 8, 2018. The non-stop flights will run six days a week with connections to North America.

In 2017 the airline celebrated its 80th year with a new

form of in-flight entertainment; an immersive theatre production at 30,000ft from London to NYC, launching the Stopover Pass, whereby passengers who opt for a stopover in Iceland can enter a draw to win various 'money can't buy' experiences until March 2018.

The carrier has also released a new pricing structure giving more fare options when booking travel. The newest fare level, Economy Light, will reward passengers who travel with less, while providing the same on-board service and amenities. Economy Light passengers will be able to pre-select their seats in the same Economy Cabin as other passengers, with an allowance of up to 10kg of carry-on luggage included.

Visit [icelandair.co.uk](http://icelandair.co.uk) for more details.

## Travel from Reykjavik & chase the Northern Lights with Kirker Holidays

HOLIDAYMAKERS CAN combine Iceland's dramatic scenery and natural wonders with aurora hunting as Kirker Holidays and its guides escort travellers away from Reykjavik's city lights in search of the Northern Lights.

The 'Reykjavik and the Golden Circle' itinerary includes a full-day tour of Iceland's famous Golden Circle, with its geysers and waterfalls, and a drive on the Langjökull glacier in a custom-designed 4x4 'super jeep'.

The price starts from £1,522 per person based on two sharing including London flights, private car transfers, three nights' accommodation with breakfast at the four-star superior Hotel Borg in Reykjavik, an evening Northern Lights excursion and full-day 'super jeep' excursion to the Golden Circle, both with local guides.

There is also the option to add on a two-night extension in the rural south of Iceland at the four-star Hotel Ranga, where open-air Jacuzzis offer a luxurious spot from which to view the Northern Lights. The price for a five-night holiday, combining three nights at the Hotel Borg (package as above) with two nights at Hotel Ranga, is from £2,634 per person based on two sharing, including private car transfers and a full-day super jeep excursion to the scenic black sands and waterfalls of Iceland's South Shore with a local guide.

For more information go to [kirkerholidays.com](http://kirkerholidays.com) or call 020-7593 2288.





*THE SWAN House - RÆTUR Apartments is a new boutique apartment-hotel located in the heart of Reykjavik, offering 44 self-catering apartments in a classy minimalist design and with personal service in a central location. RÆTUR is the Icelandic word for ROOTS, and has been used to reflect the property's philosophy of developing accommodation rooted in Icelandic heritage and the local community, with an appreciation of nature and of living in harmony with the environment. Guests can enjoy being a part of an authentic, living neighbourhood, close to the busy city centre. Visit [swanhouse.is](http://swanhouse.is)*

## Super Break launches ski packages to North Iceland from regional UK hubs

SUPER BREAK has launched new 'Ski North Iceland' breaks, available on selected dates in January and February 2018.

Three- and four-night packages are now on sale which include charter flights from a selection of regional airports, accommodation, ski hire and a two-day ski pass to Iceland's ski resort of Hlíofarjall, situated just outside the town of Akureyri.

Graham Balmforth, the operator's national sales manager, said: "Skiing in Iceland is pretty unique and perhaps something many customers don't realise they can do. Our short breaks offer a great opportunity to sample the slopes and perhaps if lucky, even ski under the Northern Lights. I hope that our inclusive packages will appeal to agents

as they can earn commission on the whole holiday cost which includes ski hire, lift pass and shuttle service."

The Hlíofarjall ski area offers a wide selection of runs to choose from, with a gently sloped bowl area ideal for beginners, plus blue and red slopes well-suited for intermediates. For advanced skiers there is the chance to warm up on the piste before heading off to explore the more untouched areas of powder. As well as 15km of cross-country trails, the seven ski lifts give access to more than 20 slopes, complemented by a ski school, hire shop and restaurant. Hlíofarjall has a number of snow-making machines installed which extend and improve snow conditions on the slopes, and all of the main runs are floodlit for evening skiing.

Packages cost from £749 per person for three nights and £819 per person for four nights. Each package includes flights with 20kg of hold luggage, return transfers, self-catering accommodation at the Saelehus Apartments, Akureyri, two-day ski pass, standard ski rental and shuttle service.

Dates on which these packages are available include four nights from Edinburgh on January 15, 2018; three nights on February 2 from East Midlands; four nights on February 5 from Liverpool; Stansted on February 19 for four nights; and from Bournemouth for four nights from February 26.

For more information call 01904-436000 or visit [superbreak.com/agents](http://superbreak.com/agents)

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TravelBulletin

**EXPLORE HAS** introduced several shorter trips to its programme, building on the idea of the weekend getaway but still packed with adventure. Amongst the range is 'Iceland Highlights', a four-night trip complete with a tour of the longest lava cave in Iceland, a boat trip off the west-coast of the country and the chance to visit an old farm estate and try fresh home-made ice-cream. Geysers, Gullfoss waterfall, Thingvellir National Park and the Blue Lagoon all feature and prices start from £1,799 per person based on a twin share basis and including flights, breakfast accommodation and a tour leader.

## puzzlesolutions

### Crossword:

Across: 1. DFDS, 3. HAWAII, 7. CONGA, 8. HETTY, 10. ELF, 12. THE STAR, 15. SURFERS, 16. NOD, 17. MAHON, 19. EXCEL, 21. ADVENT, 22. ARCH.  
 Down: 1. DICKENS, 2. DAN, 4. ATH, 5. IVY, 6. CASTLE, 9. TITAN, 11. FIRTH, 13. EASTER, 14. RUDOLPH, 17. MEA, 18. NUN, 20. CBR.

Highlighted Word: CHINA

Where Am I?: Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree, New York, US.

We asked our staff the following question this week:

## What's your Christmas day routine?



### Jeanette Ratcliffe

Publisher

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*Stockings, Champagne breakfast, presents, lunch, wine, more presents, wine & Dr Who.*



### Laurretta Wright

Editor

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*Breakfast, watch kids open pressies, welcome family, open more presents, lunch, TV & games, get drunk, snacks, watch TV.*



### Adam Potter

Editorial Assistant

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*Star Wars movie marathon & box of Cadbury Roses*



### Paul Scudamore

Contributing Editor

*Get up whenever, pressies, pub, late turkey lunch, bed whenever.*



### Simon Eddolls

Sales Director

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*Tea, presents, food, more presents, drink, food, food, food, drink, more presents, games, food, more games, TV, more food, tea/coffee..bed!*



### Tim Podger

Account Manager - Far East

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*Open stocking, games, lunch, pressies, movie, snooze.*



### Bill Coad

Account Manager

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*Open Champagne, open presents, open oven, open mouth, open wine, open crackers, open games, open port, open bedroom door.*



### Matt Gill

Senior Account Manager

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*Eat, sleep, open up presents, repeat.*



### Sarah Terry

Account Manager

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*Spend precious time with my lovely little family.*



### Hannah Carter

Events & Sales Administrator

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*Eat...pick up family... open presents...eat...open present... drop family back off...drink/eat.*



### Robyn Kirby

Sales & Events Apprentice

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*Open presents, eat, drink, eat, sleep.*



### Nicky Valsamakis

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*In South Africa we have a Braai.*



### Miriam Brtkova

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*Lying on the sofa eating and watching Christmas fairy tales*



### Lucia Mathurin

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*Church, Eat, Open presents, TV and Bed*



### Eugenia Nelly Mendes

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## WIN ONE OF OUR 12 PRIZES OF CHRISTMAS!

In the build up to the festive period, we are giving you the opportunity to win one of 12 amazing prizes including an Amazon Echo, Playstation 4, Fortnum and Masons Hamper, and much more.

All you have to do is make as many bookings as possible between 20 November and 15 December and log your reservation numbers on our competition site!

At the end of the competition on Monday the 18th of December, 12 people will be asked to choose a number between 1 and 12. The winner will then receive one of our amazing prizes as a thank you for choosing Avis Budget Group.

The more bookings you make, the greater your chance of winning, so register now at [www.competition.winwithavis.com](http://www.competition.winwithavis.com) to start!

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