

travelbulletin

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Giving agents the edge

Accommodation Only

How selling the experience is
key to success



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we report direct from the 2018 AITO conference in Ras Al Khaimah



mediterranean islands

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germany 21

national tourist office brings a taste of Germany to the UK



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SANTA IN THE SUN...

SPENDING CHRISTMAS in the sun is becoming more popular among British holidaymakers and plenty of resorts in the Maldives are encouraging visitors who want to combine sun with Santa to spend their holidays on the beach rather than in front of the telly. Kandima Maldives is offering an extensive Christmas-New Year programme, including the arrival of Santa on Christmas Day to give out goodies to the kids, Christmas Eve and New Years' Eve beach cocktail parties and live entertainment. See www.kandima.com for more information.

Can holiday dreams come true for 58% of British travellers?

PUTTING OFF booking a holiday to a dream destination is not uncommon among Brits, according to a nationwide study commissioned by Travel Republic. Researchers found that 58% of Brits have never been on their dream holiday.

Money was the main reason why people have been reluctant to book their ideal holiday with 64% of survey respondents saying they could not afford it. Financial commitments, such as paying bills and clearing debts, were cited as the main monetary hurdles for 59% of respondents.

Other reasons for not taking that dream trip included work commitments with 49% admitting to prioritising their career over travel. Some respondents reported that they felt it could be too late to take the holiday of a lifetime with

17% saying they wished they had taken the trip when they were younger and had more time.

The top destinations Brits would love to visit but have not yet been included the Caribbean (25%), Iceland (25%), USA (17%), Mexico (16%) and Bali (16%). However, there is hope for agents keen to help their clients' holiday dreams come true with Travel Republic reporting a rise in bookings to the Caribbean and the USA. The online travel agency reported a 110% year-on-year increase in bookings to the Dominican Republic and a 34% increase for Barbados. For the USA, Orlando has experienced a 77% increase in bookings year-on-year and for New York, bookings are up by 41%. In further encouraging news for agents, the ABTA Travel Trends Report 2018 found that last year more British holidaymakers have taken more holidays than at any point in the last five years.

Naomi Wilkinson, marketing director at Travel Republic said: "The research highlights that everyday life can often get in the way of booking holidays to our dream destinations. We hope to show that visiting these aspirational destinations is possible, and it shouldn't break the bank."

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Fjord fun, British boating, Baltic banter and Canary cruising with CMV for 2019

CRUISE AND Maritime Voyages (CMV) is adding five new cruises to its 2019 programme. The sailings include a British Isles cruise, the Norwegian fjords, the Baltic, Southern Norway, and a Canary Islands and Madeira cruise calling in to Casablanca and Cadiz.

Cruises start at £399 per person for the six-night Norwegian fjords itinerary, and the Canary Islands and Madeira voyage starts at £999 per person. The Canary Islands-Madeira trip sets sail from London Tilbury on November 10 and runs for 19 days, while the six-night fjords trip runs from November 3.

The ten-night British Isles cruise on Magellan sails from London Tilbury on April 3. On April 13, the Magellan then sets sail for the Norwegian fjords on a seven-night itinerary with fares available from £499 per person. Completing the departures on April 20, Magellan sails on an 'Easter Hidden Baltic' cruise visiting Scandinavia, Germany and ports in Lithuania and Poland with fares from £799 per person.

Lisa Jacobs, head of trade sales said: "This is good news for the travel trade as we know there is a large number of people, who like to travel during the early or late season, and have yet to book. Demand for 2019 has been remarkable with a waiting list in place for many popular itineraries."

For more information, visit www.cruiseandmaritime.com

Tourism strategy to focus on authentic Palma attractions

VISIT PALMA has launched Palma 365, a sustainable tourism strategy aimed at promoting the Balearic Island as a year-round European destination focused on culture, shopping, heritage and art for the benefit of local communities. The strategy aims to highlight Palma's lesser-known attractions and to increase visitor numbers over the winter months.

There are four main initiatives in the Palma 365 strategy. They include a new app called "Welcome Palma" with live heat sensors designed to show tourists which areas of the city are crowded and to suggest alternative places to visit based on preferences such as culture, shopping, gastronomy, history and art. The app will have a live chat function for tourists to ask questions about where to go and how to avoid crowds.

To further encourage visitors to seek

out local arts and crafts, Palma 365 has introduced a new catalogue of shops where traditional goods, such as ceramics, glassware and shoes, can be bought, as well as historic shops, restaurants and bakeries.

The other two strategies are more bus stops to reduce overcrowding in the main tourist areas, and new signage and tourism routes to encourage people to visit points of interest outside the main city.

Pedro Homar, general director of Palma 365 says: "Our tourism strategy aims to achieve a sustainable tourism model, which will benefit both locals and visitors alike, and will propel Palma to the top of the list of desirable year-round city-break destinations from the UK."

For more information, go to www.visitpalma.com

Mediterranean expansion for TUI Group across Spain, Greece and Turkey

TUI Group is set to expand its international concept hotel portfolio with the addition of 12 new TUI Sensimar hotels and three new TUI Family Life hotels in 2019.

As part of this expansion, TUI will debut a TUI concept brand in the Greek island of Santorini with the TUI Sensimar Meltemi Blue. In addition, TUI Sensatori Barut Fethiye Resort in Turkey will be extended with the construction of a new building next to the hotel. This will take the portfolio of TUI's three international concept hotel brands from 88 to 103 hotels. UK guests have around 84 hotels to choose from. TUI Group's overall hotel portfolio comprises 380 hotels and resorts, 50 of which are operated by third-party hoteliers.

"For our three international concept hotel brands, we plan to deliver strong growth in cooperation with local partners," said Sebastian Ebel, TUI Group executive board member in charge of Hotels & Resorts. "We are also driving our growth roadmap in the hotel segment further ahead through our TUI Blue, Robinson and TUI Magic Life brands and our long-standing joint venture partners such as Riu."

While some of 15 the new hotels are located in top destinations such as Spain, Greece and Turkey, some others will expand the offering in Italy, Egypt, Tunisia and Croatia.



CONSULTANTS FROM Aberdeen's Thomas Cook shops participated in a sales training session with Super Break. Pictured from the left are consultants from the Bon Accord branch: Rachel Cormack, Sarah Davidson, Wendy Cameron (business development manager at Super Break) Fiona Pastuszko, Kristian Hughes and Lewis Edwards.



TURKISH AIRLINES held a dinner to mark ten years flying from Birmingham, with historic Warwick Castle as the backdrop for the celebrations. Guests were taken on a trip back to the War of the Roses era with knights showing off their sword skills to a captive audience.

On track in Australia and New Zealand

HOT ON the heels of room night bookings in Western Australia going up by 7% and room night bookings on Australia's Gold Coast increasing by 113%, Travel 2 is expanding its offerings to Australia and New Zealand.

Buoyed by new direct flights from the UK to Australia on Qantas and increased investment by Great Southern Rail to double capacity over the next two years, rail touring is on the up down under.

Rail travel has set itself apart as the highest grossing sector of all Australian touring. For the first time, UK travellers can take advantage of all-inclusive expedition holidays with Great Southern Rail on the cross-continental north-to-south The Ghan and east-to-west Indian Pacific journeys.

Travel 2 is launching its new Australia and New Zealand brochure featuring 78 new properties, 56 new day and extended tours and suggested itineraries to help agents provide tailored advice to suit different holidaying groups.

Highlights include overnight safaris in Sydney's Taronga Zoo and epicurean self-drives in the Barossa Valley in the state of South Australia.

To find out more about an agent incentive for booking trips to Australia and New Zealand with Jet2, turn to Agent Bulletin on page 9. For more information about the itineraries to these two countries, log on to www.travel2.com

Uncover the mysteries of Myanmar by sea and air

MYANMAR HAS spent several years off the mainstream tourism radar but the Southeast Asian country is making a comeback with operators making forays into sectors that go beyond the backpacker market.

An example of this is the partnership between Plateau International and Ayravata Cruise Company, which is offering luxury cruise experiences in Myanmar on the Irrawaddy and Chindwin Rivers.

These serene rivers symbolise the richness of this ancient land and the cruises are aimed at the premium market.

Meals onboard are prepared by chefs and when on dry land, the chefs will take guests on tours through local bazaars to experience the country's best produce and learn how to cook local dishes, and experience traditional Myanmar culture. Cruises range in duration from four to 11 days.

For agents looking to book trips to Myanmar involving multiple destinations within the country, Myanmar's domestic airline, Air KBZ, has opened up more internal flights. The new routes link the capital, Yangon, to Loikaw and Dawei twice a week. Loikaw's main attractions are the Taung Kwe Pagoda and Seven Stages Lake, while Dawei is best-known for temples, pagodas and beaches.

For more information about the cruises, go to www.plateauinternational.com and for details about Air KBZ flights, go to airkbz.com



www.bahiaprincipe.com

Tenerife · Spain

Sweet 16 ship to set sail across Europe for Amadeus River Cruises

THE AMADEUS Imperial will be the 16th passenger ship for Amadeus River Cruises, joining the fleet from spring 2020. It will cruise the Danube, Rhine and Main rivers as well as the Dutch and Belgian waterways.

Passengers can enjoy a choice of 72 deluxe cabins or 12 Amadeus suites.

As on all ships built since 2011, the Imperial cabins on the Mozart and Strauss decks also feature lowerable panoramic windows along the entire cabin width.

All deluxe cabins and suites are equipped with spacious bathrooms, an infotainment system, a flat screen television, a telephone, a cabin safe, a minibar and individually adjustable air conditioning. All suites have an accessible outdoor balcony with a seating area.

The Amadeus Imperial will set sail on its maiden voyage in early April 2020 along the canals in Holland and Belgium. Following this journey, the ship will operate between Amsterdam and Basel to the Black Sea and the world-famous Danube Delta.

Natalie O'Mahoney, head of sales for Amadeus River Cruises said: "This is an exciting addition to the Amadeus fleet. River cruising is growing

increasingly popular amongst UK audiences who are looking to explore new destinations and enrich themselves in new experiences. Amadeus understand that its passengers want to combine European culture with high class luxury whilst still retaining the comfort and familiarity of their temporary home and this new ship will manage these expectations perfectly."



Adults-only wellness centre boosts health tourism in Portugal

IN JUNE 2019, Longevity Wellness Worldwide will open a five-star property in Alvor, Portugal. This state-of-the-art wellness centre will include modern integrative and regenerative medicine with wellness and preventative diagnostics, therapies and programmes.

The adults-only property set in the western Algarve with panoramic views of the bay of Alvor will offer a dedicated wellness and medical spa over two floors focused on a range of medical and non-medical state-of-the-art diagnostics and therapies for optimal health and wellness. The hotel will have 70 bedrooms and suites including standard Longevity rooms, junior suites, Longevity thematic suites and one premium Longevity 'The One' suite.

Treatments on offer will include hyperbaric treatments for intense tissue oxygenation, in-depth diagnostics, advanced detoxification and health regeneration therapies, cardio-vascular repair and prevention programmes, diabetes, metabolic and sleep optimisation programmes and obesity management programmes.

For more information, log on to www.longevitywellnessworldwide.com

Wizz Air opens up Kraków route from Doncaster Sheffield Airport

BOOKINGS ARE now being taken for a three-times-a-week service with Wizz Air from Doncaster Sheffield Airport (DSA) to Kraków, Poland, with flights commencing from May 2, 2019.

The service will deliver an additional 56,000 two-way seats and an expected record year for Wizz Air at Doncaster Sheffield Airport, with more than 600,000 passengers in the next 12 months. The announcement follows Wizz Air launching a new route to Budapest, Hungary, with a further new route to Debrecen, Hungary in December from DSA.

The airport is predicting these new routes will help deliver a record year for total passengers in 2019-20.

Chris Harcombe, aviation development director, Doncaster Sheffield Airport, said: "This is great news for us to have another exciting leisure route from Wizz Air, who have continued to grow their range of low-cost routes since starting operating from DSA in 2006. More than half of the total seats available from DSA are low cost with Wizz now operating 12 routes and we're pleased to be one of the first routes from their new Kraków base."

Kraków, close to the border of the Czech Republic, is the second largest and one of the oldest cities in Poland. Originally the official capital of Poland, the old town gained UNESCO World Heritage status in 1978.



TEMPLES THROUGHOUT Japan are now open to hosting travellers and tourists thanks in part to the launch of new project Terrahaku. Temple lodgings (Shukubo) offer visitors the opportunity to get a taste of the simple, traditional lifestyle of Buddhist monks and Shinto priests. The Terrahaku project will feature 100 temples. www.seejapan.co.uk

Shiva Hotels set to expand in London starting with a Soho site

SHIVA HOTELS and Reuben Brothers have entered into a joint venture to transform a prime site in London's Soho.

Reuben Brothers purchased the site in August this year and Shiva Hotels will be the operator under a long lease. The companies are working with the local community and Westminster City Council to combine two separately consented hotel schemes on Great Marlborough Street and Poland Street.

The plan is to create a 200-bedroom luxury lifestyle hotel that will incorporate substantial restaurant and retail space and become a focal point for the neighbourhood.

Rishi Sachdev, managing director of Shiva Hotels, commented: "We are delighted to be working with the Reuben family on this joint venture. We are looking forward to adding another truly great central London location to our soon-to-be revealed luxury lifestyle hotel brand."

In addition to the Soho development, other sites that will come under Shiva Hotel's new umbrella include Marylebone Lane, Covent Garden, Buckingham Gate and Holborn. Shiva Hotels already owns and manages the Kingsway Hall Hotel in Covent Garden, the Hilton at London Heathrow Terminal 5 and the Hilton DoubleTree at London ExCel.

Reuben Brothers owns a portfolio of hotels across England, including the Lingfield Park Marriott Hotel and Country Club with its 18-hole golf course.

For more information, go to www.shiva.co.uk

A shark spectacular for St Helena

ST HELENA, a tiny island in the South Atlantic Ocean becomes a focal point for nature lovers between November and April with the annual arrival of whale sharks, the world's largest fish species. This is when they feed on plankton and small fish and the area is one of the best places in the world to swim alongside these surprisingly docile creatures.

As a Southern Hemisphere destination, January and February, when the whale shark presence peaks each year, are summer months, making it an option for adventurous travellers seeking a winter sun holiday. Experts and travellers are drawn to the island by this unique whale shark interaction, which is strictly regulated on the island and is only offered by accredited local marine tour operators.

The island's tourism board is keen to promote the destination in the coming months and it is highlighting the island's close proximity to Johannesburg so agents can sell trips to St Helena as an extension of South African trips.

The first whale sharks typically arrive in St Helena from late November and early December, and stay until April, peaking in January and February. Direct flights to St Helena during the summer season operate on Saturdays and Tuesdays from Johannesburg in South Africa.

Helena Bennett, director of tourism for St Helena, said: "St Helena is lucky to have some incredible marine wildlife experiences throughout the year, but the arrival of the first whale sharks is always a much-anticipated moment on the island. The chance to witness these creatures firsthand is a truly special experience and we look forward to welcoming visitors drawn by this opportunity."

For more information visit www.sthelenatourism.com

HUMMINGBIRD



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At home with Eileen...

What has homeworker Eileen been up to this month?

NOVEMBER HAS BEEN a special month in the Travel Counsellors calendar – it's when our annual conference took place. There's always much excitement and anticipation prior to the event, a fantastic atmosphere throughout the weekend and great enthusiasm and motivation following the conference.

This year, our conference was held in Scotland for the first time with the SEC, in Glasgow as the venue. Things got underway on Friday evening with an informal meal with entertainment provided by comedian Des Clarke and singer Craig David.

On Saturday, after a morning of business sessions and guest speakers, the afternoon "pow wow" gave us the opportunity to meet suppliers and hear the latest news about their products and services.

On Saturday evening, we got glammed up for our gala dinner and awards evening. This year, unsurprisingly, there was a "Tartan & Thistle" theme and quite a few of the men elected to wear kilts. Continuing the theme, entertainment was provided by the bagpipe-rock group, the Red Hot Chilli Pipers and Marti Pellow, lead singer of the Scottish '80s band Wet Wet Wet.

On Sunday, it was back to the conference hall in the morning for more business sessions and to hear from our hugely popular guest speaker, Olympic champion Sir Chris Hoy before the conference came to an end in the early afternoon.

Having never visited Glasgow before, I opted to extend my stay and see more of what the city has to offer. The highlight of my visit was the famous Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum which was excellent – a must-see for anyone visiting Glasgow.

With its world class visitor attractions, lively arts scene, vibrant night life, not to mention its famous football clubs, Scotland's biggest city really does have something for everyone.

It is a great choice for a city break as well as a great starting point for visiting other parts of Scotland.

As this is my last column of the year, I'd like to take this opportunity of wishing everyone a very happy Christmas and a prosperous 2019.

Eileen

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



COMO POINT Yamu is launching the Phang Nga Bay Experience which will give guests the chance to discover more of Phuket. The experience includes a four-hour cruise and villa accommodation with butler service. It is available until October 31, 2019. www.comohotels.com

Thailand-Vietnam route opens up with new Bangkok Airways flight

AGENTS LOOKING to offer client extensions to Vietnam on Thailand holidays, and vice versa, can now consider a new route with Bangkok Airways.

Commencing on January 25, 2019, reservations are now open for the airline's Bangkok-Cam Ranh/Nha Trang route. The service will operate four times a week with Airbus A319 aircraft. Cam Ranh is located on a scenic bay and has become a popular resort destination for travellers to Vietnam. Nha Trang is another Vietnamese coastal destination, with the region known as the Riviera of the South China Sea. It is popular with divers.

Marconfort makes its mark in Malaga

THE MARCONFORT Hotels Group will open the new Marconfort Costa del Sol Hotel in April 2019.

The four-star property is a fully refurbished hotel located 15 minutes away from Malaga airport, and it is aimed at families, couples and groups of friends seeking all-inclusive seafront holidays.

For spa treatment fans, the hotel features a modern wellness centre with a wide range of treatments on offer, as well as a hydro zone and gym and there are new areas to cater to children and teenagers as well as adults-only spaces. A Blue Lounge with special services is available for those staying in the superior "Blue" room category, which includes a range of room sizes up to junior suites.

For more information about the property, go to www.marconfort.com

AGENT INCENTIVES

- EXODUS TRAVELS is giving agents the chance to win Love2Shop vouchers worth £75 and £50, as well as runner-up prizes of a limited edition of the Exodus Travels cookbook and branded water bottle by filling in a simple survey on the Travel Bulletin website. As an extra incentive, agents who make bookings with the operator by December 15 will go into a draw to win an iPad, cases of wine and £15 Love2Shop vouchers. For all the details, go to www.travelbulletin.co.uk
- AGENTS CAN earn T2 Rewards on all bookings made from the new 2018/19 Australia & New Zealand brochure through Travel 2, that include return flights with Etihad and a minimum of five nights' ground arrangements until December 9, 2018. A minimum deposit of £100 per person must be paid or the balance paid in full with Travel 2 before December 9 to qualify. See www.travel2.com for more information.



SHEARINGS HOLIDAYS hosted more than 20 agents at the Country Living Hotel in Harrogate for a training session, afternoon tea and chance to see the refurbished hotel. Pictured are: (left to right): Ginette Steele - personal travel agent, Midcounties Co-operative; Jennifer Harding - personal travel agent, Hays Travel; Claire Dutton - national key account manager, Shearings Holidays and Damian Kellegher - travel expert, Designer Travel.

AGENT TRAINING

AGENTS WILL have the chance to win one of two fam trip places to Antigua and Barbuda in 2019 if they complete the Travel Gym training module for this stunning destination on the Travel Bulletin website. The online module outlines flight accessibility to Antigua and Barbuda, the focus on romance and honeymoon tourism, as well as exciting activities and events to help agents make more bookings. To complete the module and go into the running for the fam trip prize, go to www.travelbulletin.co.uk/travelgym/destination-training



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- NEW! Three nights' stay to be won at the new Marconfort Costa del Sol Hotel in Torremolinos
- NEW! Win seven nights at the new Fantasia Bahia Principe Hotel in Tenerife
- Win a three-night stay at the Hotel La Torre Golf Resort & Spa with Youtravel.com and Costa Calida!
- Win a £50 Love2Shop voucher with Bangkok Airways

FOR ALL COMPETITIONS ON THE SITE VISIT
travelbulletin.co.uk/competitions

Louise's next holiday will be on the island of Rhodes.



Louise Tansey

National sales manager at Bourne Leisure

Which three words would best describe your personality?

Fun, bubbly and passionate.

What's the best way to start a holiday?

With a glass of Prosecco in hand, of course... Bubbles all the way!

On weekends I am most likely to be found...

After all the chores are done, I'll either head out for a bit of retail therapy or get out into the garden – I have my very own garden bar!

My next holiday will be...

After sneaking in a few cheeky UK breaks, I'll be jetting off to Pefkos in Rhodes. It's a stunning place.

What's your favourite month – and why?

December. I just love the lead-up to Christmas with the dark nights and all things festive.

Do you have any phobias?

I don't like heights at all – just the thought makes me go all funny!

What do you always take on holiday?

My hair straighteners are a must, and I always pack dominos and Scrabble.

Your best-ever holiday?

There have been too many to mention but if I had to choose one, it'd be Florida as it was magical.

What should you win an award for?

People always refer to me as the hostess with the mostest. Whether it's an award do, networking event or conference, I always ensure the Bourne Leisure table gets noticed.

The best piece of advice from a mentor was...

Always try your best, enjoy every day as if it's your last – and never lose the passion and drive.

The top three experiences (or destinations) on your bucket list:

A narrowboat holiday, a visit to the Grand Canyon and a tour of Australia and New Zealand.

The last picture on my mobile phone is...

A Snapchat picture of me and my daughter – I was getting a lesson on how it works... Getting down with the next generation!

If you had to choose another profession, what would it be?

I love events and organise the Travel Brit Awards, on behalf of Bourne Leisure and several other domestic operators. It's a huge event within the industry and I get a real buzz pulling it all together – so on that basis, I'd have to say party planner.

What are you looking forward to?

My holiday. I can't wait for a little bit of R&R.

At weekends, you'll find me...

Socialising and mainly in the garden by the bar – it'd be rude not to, really.

What would you change about the travel industry?

I'd want everyone to book their holiday with their local travel agent and not book direct!

I'm super-proud of...

My children – they have grown into such lovely adults.

My celebrity dinner date is...

Robbie Williams and just a table for two, thank you!

If I won £100,000 I would...

Go on a huge shopping spree to stock up on everything I'd need for a round the world ticket – there's so much I want to see and experience in the world.

What I love most about my job:

Socialising with my industry friends, on the road, at events or catching up on Facebook. I love meeting new faces and welcoming them into our travel family.

My top travel tip is...

Always, always add the additional luggage allowance. It's important to be able to pack all your clothes and shoes without the panic of going over your limit at check-in.



“Try your best, enjoy every day as if it's your last – and never lose the passion”

Su Doku

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

Number: 044

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

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, December 6th. Solution and new puzzle will appear next week.

The winner for 16th November is Jessica Matthews, Myriad Travel in Liverpool.

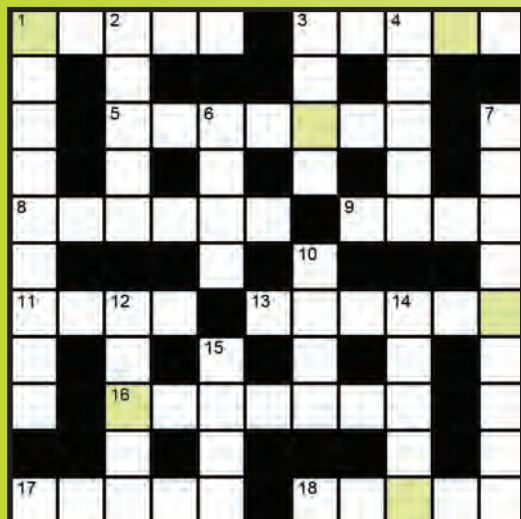
November 16th Solution: A=2 B=1 C=6 D=8

Where Am I?



Rising dramatically from the central plains, this ancient rock fortress was designated as a world heritage site in 1982 and is famous for its palace ruins set atop a 200m high rock surrounded by the remains of an extensive network of gardens, reservoirs and other structures.

Crossword



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

Across

- Major US airline, sounds like a letter of the Greek alphabet (5)
- White-washed Andalusian town, famous for its burro-taxis (5)
- Iconic Singapore hotel, re-opening next year (7)
- Capital of Macedonia (6)
- Ancient South American civilization (4)
- Well-known Accor brand (4)
- Capital of the Gambia (6)
- Home of the Disneyland Resort (7)
- Indigenous people of New Zealand (5)
- Marked ski run (5)

Down

- BBC's new Sunday evening nature documentary series (9)
- One of the Florida Keys (5)
- Bamako is the capital (4)
- Still Open All Hours actor, Sir David (5)
- Suva is the capital (4)
- Princess, fourth in line to the throne (9)
- Largest island of the Seychelles (4)
- Boise is the state capital (5)
- Specialist operator, ___ Villa Holidays (5)
- Capital of the Italian region of Puglia (4)

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

AITO 2018 begins under the theme 'A Tale of the Unexpected'

THE 2018 edition of the AITO conference (The Association of Independent Tour Operators) took place in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE.

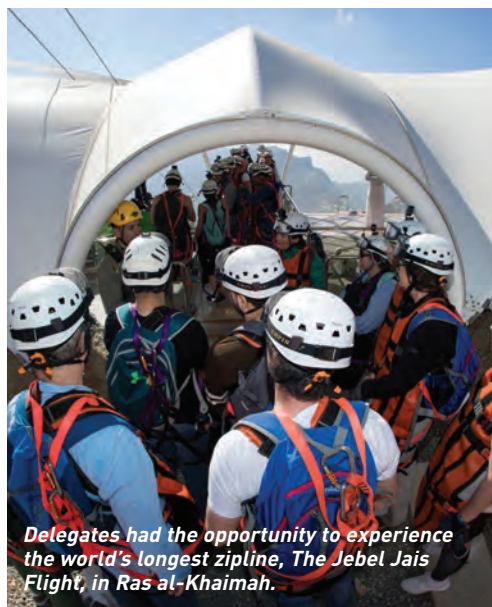
This year's conference highlighted Ras Al Khaimah as a tourist destination that has a variety of offerings that go beyond its sandy beaches, taking holidaymakers on a journey of discovery, including a variety of cultural and outdoor adventures which delegates had the opportunity to experience for themselves.

In 2017, the region saw visitors from the UK increase by 17% over the previous year. The Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) aims to increase the number of UK visitors in 2018 by 20%, and is set to exceed a total of one million visitors this year.

As 70% of visitors to the region are families, the tourism authority is keen to continue to attract this demographic; the region has recently added a new zip line for children and will see the return of hotel packages that offer a 'kids go free' incentive.

Speaking to Travel Bulletin at the conference Haitham Mattar, CEO of the tourism authority, said: "The key thing with the new zip line is that children of all ages can do it now. The current one has a weight restriction and you have to be 45kg. Kids will be able to go together with their parents. The youngest kid we had on there was nine years old and there's a video out there with this kid and he's so brave."

Ahead of the conference Mattar also highlighted: "The United Kingdom has



Delegates had the opportunity to experience the world's longest zipline, The Jebel Jais Flight, in Ras al-Khaimah.

held its position as one of the top four key source markets for Ras Al Khaimah Tourism over the past few years and continues to show strong signs of growth."

Also speaking ahead of the event AITO chairman, Derek Moore, said: "We're thrilled to have been invited by RAKTDA. It is particularly exciting for AITO members to visit such a fascinating destination that is on the cusp of change in terms of tourism. We are also pleased to be flying with Emirates to the conference – its vast network of airports in the UK will make travel to Ras Al Khaimah so convenient for our members who are spread across the country."

Travel trends across the generations

ELIZA FILBY, generations expert and historian of contemporary values, explained to delegates that her role primarily is to distinguish what is age specific behaviour, highlighting the different generation stereotypes; Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979), Millennials (born between 1980 and 1994) and Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2012) and Generation Alpha born within the 21st century.

Addressing delegates she said: "Travel for the Millennial Generation and Generation Z after them is not just a leisure activity. It is determining how they choose their jobs, their partners and how they are choosing their education. A lot of people now define travel experiences as a core requirement for their education, particularly for university and how they are defining their life cycle and lifestyle through travel. For these two generations, even more so than for the Baby Boomers and Generation X, travel is their identity."

Filby highlighted millennials are becoming parents and becoming family travellers and their demand as family travellers are very different to Generation X, noting 40% of UK millennial parents say the quality of their holidays has gone down since they've had kids. She further highlighted that multi-generational holidays are a new growth area, with more multi-generational households in the UK - three generations living under the same roof - than there has been since the Second World War. Filby added "One fifth of UK residents last year took a multi-generational holiday so its becoming more common for millennials to go on holiday with their parents and to take their Generation Alpha kids."



JOHN PETERS, managing director of Monkey business and the former pilot of the Royal Airforce was on television screens around the world as his disfigured image became a symbol of Saddam Hussein's reign of terror. He spoke to delegates about his seven-week ordeal of torture and interrogation during the Gulf War, that brought him close to death. He now advises, coaches, and offers a consulting service to major companies on leadership issues.

Challenges facing the Middle East's tourism sector

A SERIES of roundtable discussions were held on Day two and Day three of the conference, one being on the challenges that are facing the Middle East's tourism sector. The debate was led by conference moderator Jono Vernon-Powell, the founder of Nomadic Thoughts, who posed a series of questions to delegates who responded in their groups in a live poll via the Slido app.

Some of the issues raised about the region included: safety, such as the ongoing threat of terrorism; human rights; alcohol laws and medication permitted in the region; and environmental issues concerning sustainable tourism.

AITO chairman Derek Moore said: "Of great interest to tour operators is that the perception in the mind of the consumer at the point of purchase is the reality to the tour operator because if I'm going to sell this place and the consumers have a negative perception of it that is my starting point in reality as I've got to solve that negative perception."

He added: "Ras al Khaimah is the perfect example of a very well organised tourism development authority. They have only been doing it for two years as a programme and they are going about it in a very logical and sensible way, developing the product and trying to get the message out and I hope we have helped them".



A GALA dinner was held on the last evening of the AITO conference at the Ritz-Carlton in Ras Al Khaimah. Pictured from the left is: Shaji Thomas, director of destination tourism development for the Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA); Kate Kenward, executive director of AITO; Derek Moore, chairman of AITO; Haitham Mattar, CEO of RAKTDA and Mohamed Khater, assistant director of tourism development, RAKTDA.

'Desire to holiday remains high' among AITO members

THE AITO 2018 Travel Insights Survey, involved more than 22,000 participants, providing an in-depth insight into the rising trends in travel and tourism, while providing the 36 AITO businesses that took part with their own in-depth market research into their customer and prospects.

The survey found the level of satisfaction with AITO members remains high, with 96% of respondents saying they would be likely to recommend their AITO travel company, matching the results achieved last year. The likelihood of them rebooking with their AITO member has also stayed steady year-on-year, with only 4% of respondents saying they were unlikely to book with their AITO member again. The two driving factors for booking with an AITO member for nearly 60% of respondents are for their knowledge and the expertise they possess. The study highlighted consumers' desire to holiday remains high – only 9% said they would

be taking fewer holidays over the next three years, while 69% said they would be taking the same number and 22% said they would be taking more; almost exactly the same results achieved last year. Email and brochures remain the most popular ways to keep in touch with customers and 80% said email was their preferred method of contact.

The survey suggests only 13% said that Wi-Fi access was not a requirement when they were on holiday. Approximately 30% of 75-84 years olds said access was fairly or very important. The real Wi-Fi enthusiasts are the 55-64 year olds where 44% said it was fairly or very important, while 80% of people who value Wi-Fi want it in their hotel room. The survey also found as many people use their smartphone to research and plan their holidays as they use a desktop, however laptop and tablet remain the most popular choices.

TV presenter Monty Halls speaks out on the next generation of sustainable travellers

BRITISH EXPLORER and founder of Seadog TV & Film Productions, Monty Halls who recently starred in the C4 series 'My Family & the Galapagos' took centre stage as he discussed issues surrounding sustainability.

Addressing delegates, Monty said: "Because of the huge surge of interest in the environment, because of this huge wave of mobilisation in this new generation, people are doing things about it. There is a revolution I think going on – local people and tourists as well are really keen to engage with this stuff – I'm sure you've found this. They are really keen to get involved in this sustainability message and that's a really powerful thing."

He continued: "I think it provided these experiences at these remote places – what you're doing is creating the most wonderful ambassadors for these places around the world and there's some interesting theories at present."

Monty explained that he felt more confident than ever that 'the power to save the planet rests with the individual consumer.' He added: "There is good evidence emerging that the best way to save a delicate eco-system and a threatened eco-system is to send tourists there. What you can do is create a viable local economy. That eco-system environment has real value to the nation as a whole and you can create ambassadors as well. So I'm a big advocate of responsible tourism."

Industry Insight by...



Tracey Poggio, chairman of ANTOR, reflects on another successful World Travel Market...

ONCE AGAIN, World Travel Market (WTM) was a very busy event but it was also very successful. It was great to be able to offer so many agents hospitality and learning experiences – and for us to receive great feedback from the agents, which helps us work more effectively.

On the Philippines stand, local delicacies and drinks were served daily and there were great opportunities for agents to network with suppliers, particularly in the MICE sector. The MICE sector is growing in the Philippines with revenues on the increase and constantly improving infrastructure.

Israel offered mouthwatering treats with cooking demonstrations, as well as wine-tasting. The travel technology centre proved very popular along with the caricaturist and more than 100 industry professionals on hand to network with agents.

India Tourism hosted nearly 200 guests. Rashmi Verma, secretary for tourism, made announcements about market share and position, e-visas and a 24/7 security helpline. Aashima Mehrotra, director of tourism, talked about the new website and app, as well as experiential and medical tourism. Visitors enjoyed traditional dances, henna, turban-tying, yoga, meditation and a Bollywood workshop.

Grenada held a daily prize draw to win a hamper of Grenadian goodies, and used WTM to promote the first new-build luxury property on Grand Anse beach for a generation, Silversands Grenada, which opens in December. Also in the Caribbean, Tobago exhibited for the first time as a stand-alone destination – the new Tobago Tourism Agency launched a new brand and marketing strategy, and an online training programme.

Qatar showcased models of the FIFA 2022 stadiums designed by internationally-renowned architects as the next host nation for the World Cup. Shifting from the Middle East to the Mediterranean, it was great to see how Tunisia has successfully rebuilt its reputation as a

safe destination with more than 100,000 British tourists so far this year. Their stand featured 80 hoteliers and local agents led by the Minister of Tourism. Also in North Africa, Egypt's minister of tourism, Dr Rania Al-Mashat and Ahmed Youssef, chairman of the ETPB, announced a new flight incentive programme.

Representing destinations across Europe, multiple stands had much to offer agents at WTM. Gibraltar unveiled the 2019 opening of Gibraltar Vault, a warren of military tunnels inside the Rock of Gibraltar which has been converted into the world's largest natural storage facility for investment-grade wines. Poland marked 100 years of Polish independence with a range of travel packages focusing on authentic travel experiences, slow tourism, gastro culture and Kraków's

turn as the European Capital of Gastronomy Culture. Czech Republic observed 100th anniversary celebrations by sharing insights about 2019's opportunities while enjoying Moravian wine.

"WTM offered great insights for agents from multiple destinations"

At the French pavilion, Valérie Péresse, Paris Ile-de-France Region's president, and the Normandy Tourist Board hosted drinks for the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings and the Battle of Normandy. Catalonia and Slovenia also focused on history and culture – Catalonia launched 2019 as the Year of Cultural Tourism by promoting six new cultural routes. Slovenia launched its new Year of Culture campaign, which encourages visitors to ancient castles, UNESCO World Heritage sites and lesser known regions to reduce the impact of crowded tourist hotspots.

Visit Sweden held a matchmaking event, alongside WTM, where agents could meet 15 Swedish suppliers for 20-minute meetings and enjoy a Swedish buffet lunch and interactive learning. And Visit Finland launched the new Moominvalley TV series. The Moomin characters appeared for photo opportunities.

It was another great WTM and we hope the agents were able to glean new insights into the destinations so they can be more effective every day.

Mediterranean islands



Menorca to tran-'sport' visitors in new tourism initiative

THE BALEARIC Island of Menorca has unveiled its new tourism strategy, 'Menorca, an island for sport' which capitalises on the island's natural resources and sports facilities, as well as an increasing worldwide demand for sports tourism.

Earlier this month at a presentation in London, Menorca's tourism minister, Maite Salord, joined Joan Febrer from Menorca's Sports Association and Matias Ximelis from Menorca-based organisation 'Cycling Friendly' to outline the island's new strategy.

Over the past few years, there has been a steady growth in demand for sports tourism with an increasing number of holidaymakers identifying sport as their primary reason for travel and, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council, sports tourism now represents 25% of the total tourism income worldwide.

In 2017, 10.6 million people travelled to Spain for sports tourism (up 5.9%), spending more than 12.8 million euros, marking an 8.9% year-on-year increase in tourism expenditure. Sports tourism expenditure is approximately 20% more than the average, creating significant opportunities for destinations with the appropriate resources and infrastructure.

For Menorca, the sports tourism

opportunities stretch beyond just spending power with sports tourists typically travelling outside of the main summer season, also addressing seasonality objectives.

The island is also very competitive as a sport destination: the environment is well preserved with the island celebrating 25 years since it was acknowledged by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve; there are more than 300 days of sunshine a year; the coastline is 220km long and the ancient path which circles the island, the Camí de Cavalls, offers opportunities for cyclists, walkers, horse-riders and trail-runners. In recent years, the public and private sector, together with the Menorcan community have made a concerted effort to restore the Camí de Cavalls path for public use and have succeeded in turning it into an important tourism feature.

The Spanish island has a wide range of sport competitions held each year for both amateur and professional athletes such as marathons, trail running, cycle races and sailing regattas, all contributing to a premium sports calendar. For 2019, the calendar will expand with the addition the World Padel Tour championships which will take place from October 20 to 27, 2019.

Four new islands from Planet Holidays

IN 2019, Planet Holidays is adding Kea and Kythnos - two of the closest islands to Athens but which remain largely unexplored - with the five-star Porto Kea Suites in Korissia, Kea and the 'Class A' Porto Klaras Studio & Apartments in Louta, Kythnos.

The operator is also adding Patmos island, where St John is said to have written the Book of Revelations and Paxos, the smallest island within the Ionian Islands.

In total, the company now features 28 Greek islands, and has added a new feature of island hopping and multi-centre itineraries. Options include 16 nights in 'Athens, Iraklia & Naxos'; 14 nights in 'Athens, Kos & Rhodes' and a 14-night itinerary combining 'Mykonos & Cyprus'. The holiday operator can also tailor-make itineraries from its extensive programme, combining mainland and island destinations.

Visit planet-holidays.co.uk for more details.

Seek out the sights of Sicily with Rail Discoveries' low deposit offer

HOLIDAYMAKERS CAN explore the largest Mediterranean Island with Rail Discoveries' 'Sicily & Mount Etna' tour, which is currently subject to a low deposit offer.

Eight days exploring this Italian island starts from £1,195 per person, during which guests will discover scenic coastlines and historic cities with an itinerary that includes an excursion to Mount Etna, a journey on the Circumetnea Railway, Taormini, Giardini Naxos and a cruise to the Aeolian Islands.

Julian Appleyard, commercial director at sister brand Great Rail Journeys, said: "Sicily is a wonderful Mediterranean island to visit and being the largest there's plenty to see and do. For example, this island is home to Europe's largest active volcano, Mount Etna. However, my favourite excursion on this trip is the cruise to the Aeolian Islands. This small volcanic archipelago is a UNESCO World Heritage site with dense greenery and rugged hillsides that rise out of the clear water, it is truly a picturesque area of the world."

Tour departures fall on April 23, May 14, June 4, and September 3 and 24, 2019. Customers can also secure their place for £50 per person when booking before December 7.

Visit www.raildiscoveries.com or call 0800-240 4470 to find out more.

Peter Vella, Director UK & Ireland, is mapping out Malta's gastronomy, culture, film and adventure experiences.



Film Trail shines a spotlight on Malta's big screen sights & on set locations

THE SCENIC coastlines and striking historical sites of Malta, Gozo and Comino have played host to many blockbuster movies. The Malta Tourism Authority has therefore compiled a list of the destination's hottest A-list locations in a new Film Trail; the latest map to be released in its series of themed 'trails' providing agents and visitors with useful maps to guide them during their time on island.

The map highlights the backdrops of famous Hollywood films and series' that have been shot on location across the archipelago. With craggy coastlines, lagoons and renaissance architecture, TV series' such as Game of Thrones (season one) were filmed at inland villages for a number of

dramatic scenes, while Valletta has provided the backdrop for Murder on the Orient Express and Gladiator.

With more than 300 days of sunshine a year, visitors can explore the picture-perfect scene locations for themselves. Some of the Film Trail highlights include:

- **Mdina:** this was Malta's first capital city and was the location for one of Game of Thrones' most emotional scenes – the farewell between Catelny and Ned Stark in season one. Boasting a maze of tangled streets built in golden limestone, Mdina is a favourite with film directors looking for a medieval-looking location.

- **The water tank:** Malta is world renowned for its water SFX facility,

located on the south-eastern side of the island. Captain Philips' was shot here in 2013, and the tank is one of the very few to operate with a natural horizon as the backdrop.

- **Fort Riscoli:** located at the South Entrance to the grand harbour at Valletta on Malta, this was a major location for the setting of the films 'Troy' and 'Gladiator'. The Fort is in a dilapidated state but has been a key setting to much of Malta's history.

- **Gozo:** the setting for Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's 'By the Sea' (2015), Gozo has winding roads and is home to the island's oldest village, Gharb. For more information or to download the map visit www.maltauk.com/filmtrail



THE CYPRUS Tourism Organisation's most recent visitor figures continue to show strong growth to the destination. For the period of January – September 2018 tourist arrivals totalled 3.2 million compared to 3 million in the same period of 2017, recording an increase of 7.9% and outnumbering the total arrivals ever recorded in Cyprus during the first nine months of the year. Tourist arrivals from the United Kingdom increased by 5.3% in September 2018 compared to September 2017.

Columbia Beach invites guests to enjoy the festive season

CYPRUS' COLUMBIA Beach Resort has launched a new festive programme with a Cypriot twist.

Kicking off December 22 and running until January 1, 2019 the resort is inviting guests to enjoy Christmas and the New Year with a bespoke timetable of activities; from sampling the resort's festive food, to singing traditional carols by the fire, meeting Santa, Christmas games and enjoying fireworks on the beach.

There will also be plenty of family festive fun to be had with The Den Kids Club offering a variety of themed activities including a dedicated Christmas party, making gingerbread and a festive family treasure hunt. Christmas family movies can be enjoyed on both Christmas Day and New Year's Day with popcorn and juices. Face painting, Christmas cookie making, marshmallows and hot chocolate tasting are also available throughout.

Cyplon Holidays is offering a seven-night festive break from £979 per person. This price is based on two adults sharing a Junior Suite, Pool View on a bed-and-breakfast basis, departing on December 19 with Gatwick flights with Thomson (excluding baggage), and private resort transfers. (Visit www.cyplon.co.uk)

For more resort information visit www.columbiaresort.com



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WITH TWO new daily flights from Athens, Sunvil is reintroducing the island of Kythira, found off the south coast of the Peloponnese, into its programme. The island has a lush landscape with thick forests covering half of the land mass and Sunvil guests can stay at either the Kapsali resort which offers two bays and is backed by a Venetian chora or in hotels in Agia Pelagia or Avlemonas. The operator offers tailor-made itineraries, and recommends combining the island with a city break in Athens or as part of a fly-drive trip into the South of the Peloponnese. Visit sunvil.co.uk

Healthy happenings as Astypalaia goes smoke free

ASTYPALAIA, AN island in Greece's Dodecanese, has just gone smoke free.

Maria Kampouri, the deputy mayor of the island responsible for this initiative, is looking to get the inhabitants of the island fit and healthy by banning smoking altogether first from all public areas, restaurants and bars and next will be the beaches.

This initiative is part of a programme to turn Astypalaia into a well-being destination by promoting the sports and leisure activities that will contribute towards the fitness of visitors and the islanders.

In terms of accommodation options, there are a number of small boutique hotels with the cost per room per night under £150. Some examples include the Afrodite Studios, Pylaia Boutique Hotel, Tholaria Boutique Hotel, Melagrano Villas and the Chrysalis Hotel.

Meet the new Magaluf as Melia investment pays off

MAGALUF'S END of season results for 2018 reveal the transformation of the area into a safer and more family friendly destination.

In 2012, Gabriel Escarrer, executive vice president and CEO of Meliá Hotels International, pledged to transform Magaluf; highlighting the need for strong investment in the area. Working in partnership with the Palmanova-Magaluf Hotel Association and Calvia Town Hall, the Spanish hotel group has invested almost 250 million euros into its hotels in the area to improve and reposition its properties, and the destinations of Palmanova and Magaluf.

A five-year regeneration plan was also launched in 2015 to: extend the season to nine months (March to November); attract more families and adult travellers to the destination; enhance diversification, focusing on the MICE and sports travel segments as a complement to leisure travel; to modernise and increase the quality of complementary facilities (shopping centres, restaurants, beach clubs and other leisure facilities); and

improve security, public order and the reputation of the destination.

The quality of hotels in Magaluf has continued to improve, with 66% ranked as four- or five-star properties, which is the highest percentage on the island, and it is expected to rise to 70% once hotel upgrades are completed by 2020. Investment in both high-quality facilities and customer safety has been fundamental in attracting a new type of customer to the destination; 80% of current visitors to Magaluf are families, adult travellers and couples or senior travellers, with more disposable income. There has also been a significant reduction in the number of young people and students, associated with Magaluf's nightlife, falling to less than 17% compared to 22% in 2016. The destination has also welcomed the recent announcement by Thomas Cook to remove its travel programme for students in 2019.

As part of the initiative, Meliá Hotels has renovated 11 of its hotels in the area, totalling more than 3,500 rooms.

The Parklane 'pitches' the perfect escape

THE PARKLANE in Limassol, designed by The Harrods Design Studio, is currently undergoing a reconstruction and is scheduled to open its doors next year as the Parklane, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa.

Located on the waterfront, the hotel will consist of 53 suites, most with their own private pools, and 222 luxury guestrooms. Among the facilities on offer will be a conference centre with a theatrical Ballroom, ten restaurant and bar outlets, a Thalasso spa including three Russian Bagna Suites, and three outdoor swimming pools, including a seawater pool. In addition, there will also be the Princess & the Pirate Kids' Park consisting of a Castle, a lake with a Pirate Ship, water-games and a Kids' Restaurant.

The property will also introduce its Football Academy in partnership with Football Escapes featuring coaching from football legends Rio Ferdinand and Bobby Zamora. The academy will see some of the world's best footballers share their tips and techniques and children staying at Parklane will benefit from the knowledge and experience of these footballing legends during week long courses. These are available on select dates throughout 2019 to children between the ages of five and 15. Children will receive a full kit, including shirt, shorts and socks, and expert training from a selection of UEFA licensed coaches from renowned English Premier League clubs.

Off the pitch, parents can enjoy 25 acres of landscaped gardens, 300m of sandy Mediterranean coastline, a choice of three swimming pools, the world-class Kalloni Spa and a wealth of restaurants and bars offering international and local cuisine.

Accommodation Only bookings on the rise as Jetset shares top trends with agents

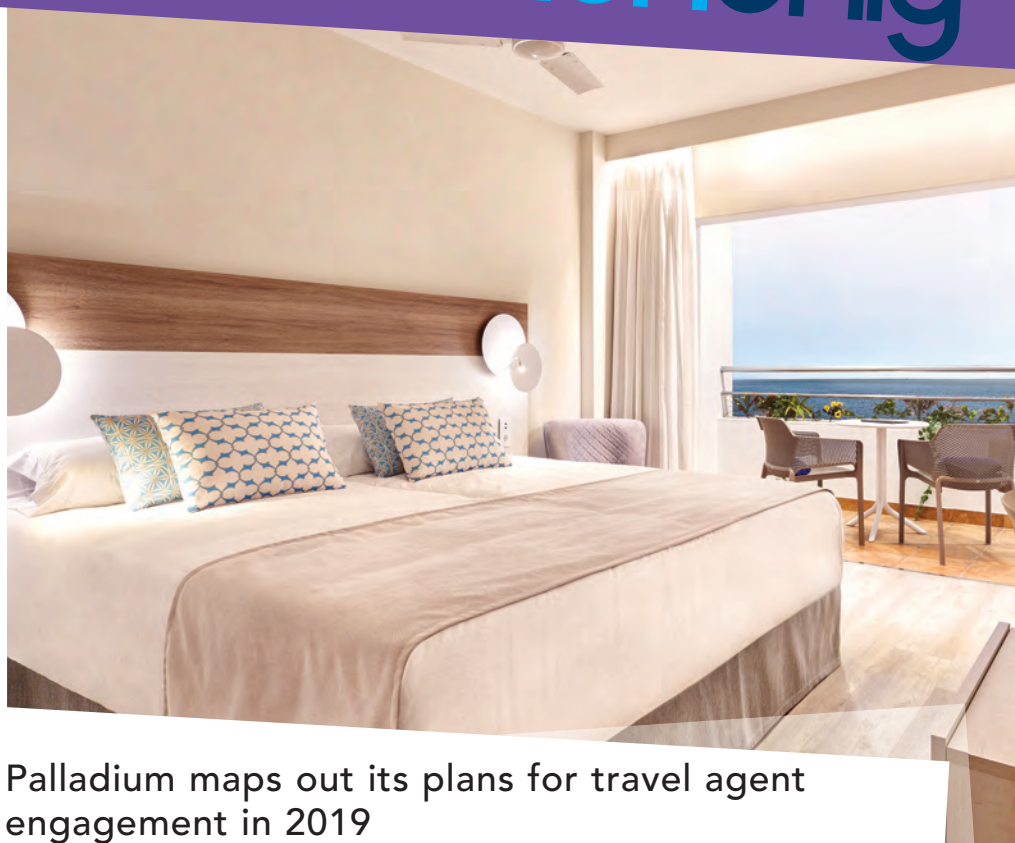
WITH 'PEAKS' just around the corner, Jetset is sharing some of the most exciting trends agents should be keeping an eye out for into the New Year.

For the first half of 2018, the operator noted that the fastest area of growth was for Accommodation Only bookings; the JETS system has long had a standalone section for this product, but the company has attributed this notable rise to several factors. Firstly, the brand has integrated new supplier feeds into the system; the new APItude feed from Hotelbeds and STUBA feed (from the merged Getabed and RoomsXml) have successfully opened up new content. Add to this the most recent 'speed based' development of the Package Pal and Hotel booking stages and the company is able to provide one of the quickest systems for the trade.

In terms of destinations being booked, usual suspects such as NYC, Vegas and major European capitals continue to lead the way, however the company has also noted a strong pick up in destinations linked to cruising such as Fort Lauderdale, Tampa, and Singapore.

The final key trend identified by the company is linked to the durations being booked. Jetset product executive, Chloe Smyth, said: "The cruise phenomenon aside, we have become the fortnight kings (not the Xbox game variety) but the duration of stays. Throughout the year we have taken massive strides in longer durations being booked. Turkey has seen a massive boost this year in packages but also Accommodation Only and the typical booking there is 14 nights. This is really helping move our average duration numbers up from where it was a year or so back. Turkey is not the only area where 14-night bookings are coming through with Spain and Portugal already starting to book well for such breaks in Spring and Summer 2019. Orlando bookings are also helping to drive this duration figure along."

Continuing with Jetset's 50-year anniversary and celebrations, the company will be finishing the year on a high by releasing an Affinity code with a Jetset funded discount. The Code 14100 will run throughout December and provide a £100 discount on any 14-night breaks (Packages or Hotel Only).



Palladium maps out its plans for travel agent engagement in 2019

2018 HAS proved a successful year for the Palladium Hotel Group both in its work with the UK travel trade and in achieving its first ever Travel Bulletin Star Award as travel agents' 'Star European Hotel Brand'.

In a recent interview Sergio Zertuche, chief sales and marketing officer for the hotel group, said: "Travel Agents are one of our most valuable partners and a key audience we want to engage with. We've taken great efforts to ensure our message and our brand proposition is delivered directly to them, such as in the creation of Palladium Connect, our loyalty B2B programme, where we provide travel agents with our latest news and products and where we can reward them for their loyalty. To be considered as one of the most respected hotel chains in the UK market is an honour and I think it reflects well on the efforts we have undertaken to talk as much as we can with travel agents."

"We're going to continue being very active with the trade into 2019, so will still be pushing ahead with fam trips and our successful 'Palladium Night' roadshows in different locations across the UK. Our core values are entertainment, engagement, excellence, and innovation; so we organise these events in order to engage with travel agents and to also offer them a platform to share some great moments with us, learn more about our products but also take the time to listen and understand their needs so that we can help make it easier for them to offer our brands and products. At the end of each event is when we offer them free trips to some of our properties, either in the Caribbean, in Ibiza or Tenerife and we will continue to organise events with them."

The hotel group has a raft of new openings across its portfolio, including the announcement of Palladium Hotel Costa del Sol; the company's first in southern Spain which will be opening its doors in July 2019. After an extensive renovation project, the building will become a four-star establishment with 336 rooms, located on the beach front a 30-minute journey from Malaga airport, in the coastal town of Benalmádena.

This month also saw the opening of three hotels, two of them in Costa Mujeres, north of Cancun: the Grand Palladium Costa Mujeres with 673 rooms; and TRS Coral representing the company's all-inclusive luxury brand concept for adults-only. TRS Cap Cana located in one of the most luxurious parts of Punta Cana also opened this month.

The company is also further developing its Bless collection with the first property opening under this brand on January 15, 2019 in the neighbourhood of Salamanca in Madrid.

"We're not selling beds but selling experiences" says Melia Hotels International

RANKED AMONG the biggest hotel groups in the world and with 58 properties in the pipeline, Meliá Hotels International is continuing to invest in its key markets, devoting itself to the ongoing regeneration of Magaluf, and embarking on an expansion into Asia.

Gabriel Escarrer, (pictured) CEO and vice chairman of Meliá Hotels International, said: "We're moving away from the perception of commodity; we're not selling beds but selling experiences. This is something that we have continuously worked toward during these past 62 years. To keep you in one of my resorts worldwide, I need to innovate the whole time; I need to bring different concepts throughout your stay in terms of food, beverage, entertainment, spa, meeting facilities, and activates...our approach is what makes our brand so unique compared to others."

A key stepping stone for the brand has been its digitalisation strategy. This includes merging its B2C (melia.com) and B2B (Melia Pro) rewards platforms; tasking administration procedures to robotics so hotel employees can dedicate more time to guests; and the enhancement of the customer experience such as a digital bracelet that replaces the wallet, ID and room key in resort.

A project close to Escarrer's heart has been the ongoing transformation of Magaluf (the full details of which can be found in Mediterranean Islands - p.18). Highlighting the need for strong investment into the area back in 2012, Escarrer updated us with the latest news: "It was something that needed to be given a second chance so we designed together with the local administration a business plan to be developed in the next three years; this is our seventh summer season and the results so far have been amazing and well above our feasibility study. We've been able to not only invest 248 million Euros to upgrade all our properties but to also open

28 different food and beverage outlets, 16 different shops, a beach club called Nikki Beach, a theme park called 'Katmandu' tailor-made for families, and a concept called Wave House for teenagers. We are trying to differentiate as much as possible the offering for different customers and this is something I'm very proud of - to reposition an existing place like Magaluf was no easy task."



With an average of one property opening every two weeks during the last two years this ratio will be one the hotel group is planning to maintain in the coming years along with a long-term objective to expand further into APAC, recently signing the Meliá Hoi An and Meliá Phu Quoc in Vietnam, and Meliá Phuket Karon in Thailand.

Escarrer concluded: "What we are now has always been thanks to the travel agencies and the wholesalers, and this is something that I keep in mind. It's very important that we always work very closely with them and to anticipate their needs - that's the reason why we have developed Melia Pro and its tailor made for the trade."

RCD gains greater momentum & succeeds in attracting more UK travellers

WITH FOUR distinct hotel brands under its stewardship, RCD Hotels is making significant strides both in its property expansion and in attracting increasing numbers from the UK.

Initially the "pioneers of all-inclusive within the Hard Rock brand" with its Hard Rock Hotels All Inclusive portfolio in Mexico and the Caribbean, the evolution of the company has seen RCD Hotels develop Unico 20°87° Hotel Riviera Maya along with the iconic Eden Roc and Nobu brands in Miami Beach.

The Hard Rock All-inclusive portfolio of Punta Cana, Riviera Maya, Cancun and Puerto Vallarta bring a combined total of 4,000 rooms with an occupancy rate reportedly averaging 86% upwards throughout the year. In tandem the UK market has also been seen to be increasing year-on-year, up by 35% for 2018. Responding to this demand the Hard Rock All-inclusive brand is to expand and open the Hard Rock Hotel Los Cabos in the first quarter of 2019.

Developed with an aim to take the all-inclusive product concept to the

next level, UNICO 20°87° has further enhanced its gastronomy programme with rotating celebrity chefs and daily cookery classes including Sushi Making, Focaccia Making and sessions that incorporate local flavours. Moreover, the property has expanded its local all-inclusive programme with the addition of new excursions and on property activities bringing a local and authentic flavour to guests including 'Wine and Art', 'Tequila Tasting', and 'Astronomy and Wine'.

Tracey Dyson, UK regional sales director at RCD Hotels, said: "Travellers are becoming a lot more adventurous. They want to learn about the culture, the food, the mixology, the art; all of that is important and I think you get that whole feel within UNICO. Most of everything within the hotel has been sourced locally, your host is a wealth of knowledge telling you where to go if you did want to eat out or find a beach - they are there to give and share that local knowledge with you. What we've found is that where we

initially went in to attract young affluent travellers, we're actually seeing an age range that's off the radar; we're seeing guests from 18 to 80 and everyone seems to enjoy it."

In the USA, Eden Roc Miami Beach recently benefitted from a USD250 million make-over, creating a Beach Cosmopolitan concept and fusing influences of the Miami cityscape and its world-famous beach into the hotel's rooms, public spaces, restaurants and health and fitness programmes. It's been a strong year for the property with an average occupancy of 82% this year to date and a significant increase in UK trade sales.

The second tower shared with this property encompasses a five-star Nobu hotel, which has been in development over the last three years and designed with a Japanese beach house vibe. The brand will also be expanding with a standalone Nobu in Los Cabos next to the Hard Rock opening in the first quarter of next year and in July a Nobu in Chicago.

GNTO brings a taste of Germany to the UK

AS PART of its Culinary Germany campaign for 2018, the German National Tourist Office (GNTO) UK and Ireland has teamed up with global meal kit company HelloFresh UK to develop a regional German themed speciality recipe, bringing a taste of the destination to UK consumers.

The tourism board's recent culinary campaign has focused on regional foods and includes a dedicated recipe page on its website featuring specialities from each of the 16 Federal German states, all linked together on social media through #EnjoyGermanFood. As food tourism becomes increasingly popular, this latest collaboration with HelloFresh UK looks to provide a new way to raise awareness of the diversity and mouth-watering quality of German food, plus inspiration for food travel.

The move follows a successful summer for the destination, with statistics from Germany's Federal Statistical Office showing an increase of visitors from the UK (registered as overnight stays) of 5.7% for

the month of July, compared to 2017. This marked the seventh consecutive rise in a row for the UK in 2018 and followed the announcement for Germany's half year results (January – June 2018) of a 4.5% increase in international overnights.

Beatrix Haun, director of the German National Tourist Office UK and Ireland, commented: "The UK is one of the most important source markets for Germany, regularly achieving second place worldwide and we are delighted by the continuing increase in overnight stays by visitors from the UK. Just when you think you know Germany, there is something new to discover, whether it's on the coast, through Germany's vast natural landscapes, a city you've never visited or exploring one of Germany's 25,000 castles, parks and gardens; travel experiences in Germany can offer something new every time".

For more destination information or culinary inspiration go to www.germany.travel

Europa-Park gets into a winter wonderland this season

EUROPA-PARK will be transformed into a wonderland this winter with 3,000 snow covered Christmas trees, a Christmas market and festive shows for all the family including the Winter Starlight Parade.

With more than 100 rides set across 15 themed areas - each reflecting a different country of Europe - special events for the Christmas season include helping park mascot Ed Euromaus open the doors to the Advent Calendar in Italy each evening, the lighting of the Christmas tree at Luxembourg Square (with Santa's help!), and an outdoor ice rink set in the Scandinavian area along with a ski school.

Thrill-seekers might like to head on over to the Eurosat - CanCan Coaster, designed and built in cooperation with the Moulin Rouge cabaret in Paris, complete with iconic red windmill. With views over the park at night, the Big Wheel Bellevue towers above the Portuguese area will come with blankets in each gondola to keep everyone warm during their scenic flight and, indoors, the Voletarium - Europe's largest Flying Theatre - offers the virtual reality experience of flying across the continent.

For further information go to www.europapark.com

A Great Rail Grand Tour

HOLIDAYMAKERS CAN discover Germany's illustrious cities over ten days with Great Rail Journeys' Independent 'Grand Tour of Germany'.

With prices from £1,095 per person, guests can immerse themselves in Germany's history, discover contemporary and historical architecture and uncover the ever-changing face of the German capital. The itinerary includes Berlin, Munich, Kaiserburg Fortress, Freiburg and Nuremberg.

Julian Appleyard, commercial director for the operator, said: "Germany is a country rich in history and culture, with a mix of ancient and modern; there is so much to see, and this tour takes in the highlights of some of Germany's most majestic cities. My favourite stop on this tour has to be Berlin due to its many historic highlights which have helped to shape the city. Simply wandering through the city is a great way to explore and soak up the atmosphere."

Visit

www.greatrail.com/grj-independent or call 0800-240 4470.

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puzzlesolutions

Crossword:

Across: 1. DELTA, 3. MIJAS, 5. RAFFLES, 8. SKOPJE, 9. INCA,
11. IBIS, 13. BANJUL, 16. ANAHEIM, 17. MAORI, 18. PISTE.
Down: 1. DYNASTIES, 2. LARGO, 3. MALI, 4. JASON, 6. FIJI,
7. CHARLOTTE, 10. MAHE, 12. IDAHO, 14. JAMES, 15. BARI.

Highlighted Word: DALLAS

Where Am I?: Sigiriya, Sri Lanka



FOR THOSE that love the fairway, Maritim has a dedicated golf course on the Baltic Sea with nearby deluxe hotels to help golfers improve their handicap. The Maritim Golfpark Ostsee on the Baltic Coast in north Germany offers multiple, year-round playable nine-hole courses designed by internationally renowned golf architect Christoph Städler. Only a few minutes' drive away from the course, guests at either The ClubHotel Timmendorfer Strand or The Maritim Seehotel Timmendorfer Strand receive a 50% discount on green fees. Visit www.maritim.com

We asked our staff the following question this week:

What's something you like to do 'the old-fashioned way'?



Jeanette Ratcliffe

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Play vinyl records.



Adam Potter

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Using a real fountain pen & taking notes by hand.



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Reading - always a book, never an e-reader.



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Tea with a teapot



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Drink tea (with a teacup, saucer & teapot!)



Paul Scudamore

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Use cheques and (any remaining) High Street banks.



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Cheese course before sweet.



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Drive an old classic car.



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Speaking to people.



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Read a book



Ashweenee Beerjeraz

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Write a Love Letter instead of texting - It's more touching.



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Slow cooking.



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Using cash.



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Wedding Traditions.

travelbulletin

SHOWCASES

JANUARY

Africa Showcase

Monday 21st January - Home Counties (Surrey)

Canary Islands Showcase

Tuesday 29th January - Birmingham

FEBRUARY

Luxury Showcase

Monday 4th February - Reading
Tuesday 5th February - Cheltenham

Weddings & Honeymoons Showcase

Monday 18th February - Belfast
Tuesday 19th February - Dublin

LGBT Travel Showcase

Monday 25th February - Manchester

MARCH

Escorted Tours Showcase

Monday 11th March - York

Airline Showcase

Tuesday 12th March - Birmingham

North America Showcase

Monday 18th March - Oxford
Tuesday 19th March - Sheffield

Cruise Showcase

Tuesday 26th March - Liverpool

APRIL

Caribbean Showcase

Monday 8th April - Cambridge
Tuesday 9th April - Brighton

Pacific Islands Showcase

Monday 15th April - Chester

Luxury Showcase

Monday 29th April - Southampton
Tuesday 30th April - Northamptonshire

MAY

Family Holidays Showcase

Monday 13th May - Bristol

Airline Showcase

Tuesday 14th May - Manchester

The Travel Bulletin agent training dates, themes and locations for 2019 have now been announced!

Calendar
2019

JUNE

Mediterranean Showcase

Monday 10th June - Oxford
Tuesday 11th June - Sheffield

Luxury Showcase

Monday 17th June - Liverpool
Tuesday 18th June - Glasgow

JULY

Far East Showcase

Monday 1st July - Home Counties (Essex)

City Breaks Showcase

Tuesday 2nd July - Southampton

Cruise Showcase

Monday 15th July - Belfast

Australasia Showcase

Tuesday 16th July - Home Counties (Surrey)

SEPTEMBER

Cruise Showcase

Wednesday 18th September - Cambridge

Adventure & Activity Holidays Showcase

Tuesday 24th September - Exeter
Wednesday 25th September - Bournemouth

Luxury Showcase

Monday 30th September - Peterborough

OCTOBER

Luxury Showcase

Tuesday 1st October - Sheffield

Airline Showcase

Monday 14th October - Chelmsford

Family Holidays Showcase

Monday 21st October - Birmingham

NOVEMBER

Indian Ocean Showcase

Monday 18th November - Chester
Tuesday 19th November - Home Counties (Kent)

travelbulletin
SHOWCASES

To register to attend any of these Showcases, simply email your name, job title and contact details confirming which events you are interested in to events@travelbulletin.co.uk



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