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TRAVEL DAILY

MON 13 NOV 06 - PAGE 1

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EDITOR: Bruce Piper

E-mail: info@traveldaily.com.au

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MFS expands accom

MFS Limited has today announced the acquisition of a 49.9% interest in listed hotelier Sunleisure.

Sunleisure manages the Q1 Resort and Lumiere Apartments on the Gold Coast as well as a number of other hotels and resorts in Qld.

The move will see further consolidation in the management rights industry, but MFS says it had already flagged the acquisition in its ACCC submission over the S8 bid.

As well as the accommodation interests Sunleisure also operates a number of shopping centres and child care facilities in Qld.

HWT flagship to Escape

FLIGHT Centre has secured a new franchise deal with prominent Queensland businesswoman and multiple Harvey World Travel agency owner Debbie Giudes.

Giudes owns ten agencies between Brisbane and Cairns with nine currently operating under the Harvey World Travel banner and one branded The Travel Professionals.

Giudes will now change her stores over to FCL's Escape Travel brand.

Flight Centre Limited franchising executive general manager Mark Aponas said Giudes decision represented a "significant step" in the development of Escape Travel's franchise model.

"The fact that Debbie has decided to take her businesses forward under the Escape Travel banner is a reflection of the value proposition we are able to offer high calibre franchisees," he said.

In addition Giudes has also agreed to a deal that allows FCL an

option to acquire the businesses after a seven year period subject to them achieving growth targets.

The acquisition price will be linked to the businesses' performance, including growth in total transaction value and profit.

The group of agencies is highly recognised within Australia after repeated nominations for various categories in the National Travel Industry Awards in recent years.

Giudes said she is looking forward to the beginning of a new era of growth for her agencies.

"This will allow our agencies to build on their successes of the past and, at the same time, draw on the expertise and experience Flight Centre Limited can offer," she said.

With the addition of Giudes stores Escape Travel will now have 85 shops Australia wide.

HK pier closes

THE world famous Star Ferry pier in Hong Kong closed yesterday after 48 years of operation.

Millions of travellers have crossed Victoria Harbour from the pier which is being demolished to make way for a shopping centre built on reclaimed land.

IDP changes

THE NRMA has advised of a number of changes to the acceptance of International Driving Permits (IDPs) in a number of destinations.

For Italy, the permits were previously "recommended" but are now actually "required" for anyone wanting to drive a vehicle, while in Germany the permits are also now "strongly recommended".

International Driving Permits are no longer accepted in Vietnam, where travellers must hire a chauffeur.

The NRMA said the permits are also useful as an additional form of identification as they are UN sanctioned documents.

Full details on how to apply for an IDP are available at www.mynrma.com.au/idp.

New ICCA chairman

JOHN Molinaro, vice president Sales for Carnival Corporation's Complete Cruise Solution in Australia has been appointed as the new chairman of the International Cruise Council Australasia.

He succeeds Steve Odell of Silverseas, who's moving to a new London-based role with the line.

The ICCA annual general meeting on Fri also confirmed the appointments of Andrew Millmore of Travel The World as vice president membership & marketing, Orion Expedition Cruises' Steve McLaughlin as vice president training and joint secretaries Ken Byers of Complete Cruise Solution and Belinda Kent of Wiltrans.

Richard Cranmer of Royal Caribbean and Celebrity Cruises will also continue as Cruise Council treasurer.

The agm followed the recent appointment of gds firm Amadeus as an ICCA associate member (*Cruise Weekly* last Wed).



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MON 13 NOV 06 - PAGE 2

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Toga joins Velocity

HOTEL group Toga Hospitality has partnered with Virgin Blue's loyalty program Velocity, to allow members to earn and redeem reward points for stays at its hotels.

Toga owns and operates the Medina Apartment Hotels, Vibe Hotels and the Travelodge Hotels brands across Australia.

As part of Velocity's first birthday celebrations members will also receive triple points for weekend stays at Toga properties between 17 Nov 06 and 28 Jan 07.

Toga is the second hotel group to join the Velocity program after Choice Hotels announced a partnership with them last month (*TD 05 Oct*).

Charges force Rex pullout

REGIONAL Express has announced the withdrawal of flights from Portland in south-west Victoria following a steep rise in airport charges by Glenelg Council.

Rex ceo Geoff Breust said the imposition of a 30% increase in airport passenger head tax without warning in Jul had made the route uneconomic.

Even though subsequent talks brought the head tax down to \$12.25, Breust said the figure was still one of the highest passenger charges on the carrier's network.

"Councils operating airports have to understand that most regional air services are in an extremely fragile state", he said.

"Those enjoying such a service should play their part in nurturing and protecting it instead of looking at it as a cash generator".

He contrasted the Glenelg approach with that in the NSW

country town of West Wyalong, where the service is also not meeting its operating costs.

Breust said in West Wyalong the community had contributed to the cost of the route through low airport charges, and Rex was "committed to work as hard as we can with the community to maintain the service".

MEANWHILE, Rex on Fri also announced it would be offering share gifts and options to some of its employees as set out in its prospectus earlier this year.

The gifts and options will be issued out of trust accounts set up for the purpose, and don't involve the issue of any new shares.

QH eNett winner

LAST Fri's winner of the Qantas Holidays eNett incentive was Harvey World Travel Broken Hill, NSW.

The agency has won a double movie pass just for registering to use eNett.

WINDOW SEAT

THE upmarket Rae's at Wategos Beach, Byron Bay bills itself as a "unique accommodation experience", which means it's probably too good for most people.

And it thinks it's too good for bookings from travel agents, if recent events are any indication.

A **TD** reader from a prominent corporate travel agency with many 'A-list' clients here and overseas, tells us he was gobsmacked when organising a booking last week to be told by Rae's that "we don't need travel agents" and "we're not interested in the travel industry".

Sounds like biting the hand that feeds you.

CONGRATULATIONS to David Carroll, fellow travel scribe and former editor of *TravelTrade* which ceased publication earlier this year.

Carroll has popped up as a columnist in *The Australian*, with a regular feature on new travel technology called "The Switched-On Tourist" to appear in the national newspaper's Saturday travel section.

YES, we finally found it!

TD was determined to improve our geographical knowledge after embarrassingly confusing the location of Andorra earlier this year (*TD 21-22 Sep*).

After World Travel Market in London last week we now know exactly where Andorra is - just over the aisle from Belgium and across from Madrid.



Andorra at WTM - never again to be confused by *Travel Daily*.



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Irwin acknowledged

A NEW award will be named in honor of Steve Irwin at next week's Queensland Tourism Awards.

The 'Steve Irwin Ecotourism Award' will recognise ecologically sustainable tourism and is being sponsored by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Tourism minister Margaret Keech said the award is its way of "acknowledging the incredible contribution made by Steve Irwin to conservation around the world and to promoting tourism in Australia, and especially in Qld," she said.

Whistler here I come...



Pictured above are Michelle Bartolo from Hilton Whistler Resort & Spa with Jill Varley from Quorum Magazine and Ainsley Ericksen from Tourism BC at a cocktail function held at the Hilton in Sydney earlier this month.

The night was a celebration of the 1st anniversary of the Hilton Whistler and the expected bumper 06/07 ski season.

Michelle said the snow is "dumping down" in Whistler at the moment which could herald an early start to the ski season there.

She also said a hot new winter package will be released later this month for stays at the hotel.

Jill won't need to take advantage of this deal though after winning a five night stay at the Hilton Whistler on the night!

Newmans winners

NEWMANS Holidays has announced the week one winners of its USA On Sale campaign are; Sonia Cripps and Judy Shaw from NSW who have both picked up state of the art mobile phone/MP3 players; Melanie Hardy, Vic and Kate Wardle, WA who have won \$250 Harvey Norman vouchers; and Marijana Deak who has won a five night holiday in Hollywood!

A creative earlybird

CREATIVE Holidays has released details of an earlybird fare with CX available for sale when booking a minimum \$300pp on Creative accommodation, car hire or sightseeing.

The return airfares are available to several points in the UK/Europe from \$1892 ex Mel; \$1910 ex Adl; \$1893 ex Bne; \$1895 ex Per; and \$1908 ex Syd, valid for sale to 18 Dec 06 for travel 01 Apr-30 Nov 07.

New game reserve

TANZANIA is planning on establishing a new wildlife park.

Mkomazi Game Reserve which borders Kenya in the countries' north with be elevated to the status of a national park and developed as a fully fledged tourist site.

Tourism officials said the plans resulted from an increase in the number of wildlife from the once poaching area.

The planned park will contain the African Big Five and brings the total number of national parks in the country to 15.

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DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD

TRAVEL DAILY



ABOVE: Newmans Holidays hosted a group of Qld and Vic agents on a trip to the Cook Islands recently.

During their stay the group also registered themselves for the Triple M radio's "Shebanging The World" competition and Newman's sales exec Qld Samantha Gordon is shown holding the comp entry above during a lagoon cruise of Aitutaki.

The rest of the group consists of **from left;** Yessenia Gonzalez, Newmans Hols Reservations; Sandra Lysiak, Escape Travel Highpoint; Stacey Jayne Fowler,

HWT Torquay; Melanie Brown, Wow! Travel; Gillian Connors, HWT Nambour; Sasha Baxter, Travelscene Echuca; Jessica Smalley, Travelscene Nth Rockhampton; David Ballingall, Jetset Ballina; and Brenda St Claire, Travelscene Byron Bay.

Explore France & Italy

EXPLORE Holidays has released details of its new 'Explore France & Italy 2007' program.

The firm said the program includes a range of new options including new chateau stays in France and 'experiential' Paris programs along with accom in Italy's Cinque Terra and coach itineraries linking Rome with Venice.

Prices start from \$639pp for a four day 'Noble Paris' tour or \$872 for a four day 'Italian Serenade' tour.

See www.exploreholidays.com.au.

AC's record load factor

AIR Canada has achieved a record load factor of 79% for Oct, the highest ever recorded for the month of Oct the airline said.

The load factor was up 1.1% on last Oct and resulted from a rise in AC's overall capacity of 0.3%.

Pegasus agent commission alliance

PEGASUS Solutions and commission handling specialist Net Trans have entered into a new agreement which they say will enhance commission processing for travel agents, travel management groups and online providers.

The firms claim the alliance will "set a new standard for hotel commission handling" with the technology to deliver an end-to-end automated commission process designed to increase the speed of reconciling payments, facilitate automated banking functions and enhance customer satisfaction.

Net Trans currently handles commission for more than 5,000

travel agent locations in over seventy countries.

Pegasus will improve Net Trans' current reconciliation service by centralising payments and simplifying the overall process for the company's travel agencies.

Pegasus currently provides commission processing for over 40,000 properties and said it would receive an "incremental boost" in the amount of agencies it services under the Net Trans deal.

New Mantra gm

MANTRA Resorts has appointed Mark Hodge to the role of group general manager.

Hodge has held several senior management roles in hospitality including ceo of the Lakes Cairns Resort and Spa and also sits on the national board for the Hotel Motel Association of Australia (HMAA).

Disney has record profit

THE Walt Disney Company has had a "spectacular" year according to president Bob Iger after the firm saw an increase in net profit of 33% to US\$3.4b for the year ended 30 Sep 06.

The firm said the growth reflects the strength of its US parks and resorts division which saw operating profit improve 30% to US\$1.5b as a result of increases in attendance, guest spending and hotel occupancy.

Disney said its non US resorts also performed well with growth attributed to the first full year of operations at Hong Kong Disneyland and a rise in attendance and hotel stays at Disneyland Resort Paris.

BLUE gets connected

SYDNEY'S BLUE hotel has announced it will now offer wired and wireless high speed internet in all its guest rooms.

The service is available for \$24.95 for 24 hours.

Win a UK trip!

INSIGHT Vacations is sponsoring the Nov/Dec *Travel Daily* competition, where the prize is a trip for two to the UK including airfares and a tour.

To enter all you have to do is send us a photo of yourself (or even your whole team) dressed up in an outfit that resembles an Insight Vacations destination.

Extra points will also be given for photos that contain one of Insight's 2007 brochures.

At the end of Dec one lucky subscriber will win a trip for two to the UK.

The prize includes rtn airfares and a nine day *Focus on Britain* tour, all courtesy of Insight.

The tour travels from one end of Britain to the other and includes visits to Stratford, Loch Ness, and Edinburgh Castle.

Entries can be emailed to insightcomp@traveldaily.com.au with full terms and conditions at www.traveldaily.com.au.

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