

ODYSSEY magazine

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#26-16318 82nd Avenue
Surrey, British Columbia
Canada, V3S 2L7
Tel: (604) 543-7375
Fax: (604) 543-7376
E-Mail: info@btbtravel.com
Website: www.btbtravel.com

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THE STAFF

Group Publisher/Managing Editor

Colin J. Holden - colin@btbtravel.com

Associate Editor

Brian Menzies- brian@btbtravel.com

Associate Editor

Bill Tice - bill@btbtravel.com

Associate Editor

Sandra Tice - sandra@btbtravel.com

Associate Editor

Anita Streifel - anita@btbtravel.com

Associate Editor

Edward Lambert - ed@btbtravel.com

Technology Editor

Marten Streifel - marten@btbtravel.com

Editorial Intern

Ben Holden - edit@btbtravel.com

Production/Design Intern

Sam Holden - edit@btbtravel.com

Requests for an Editorial Calendar and/
or Editorial Submissions for Odyssey
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Corporates Beware The True Cost of 'Low-Cost' Online Bookings: FCm

Corporates being lured by travel websites promising 'lowest rates' are in some cases paying a higher price in the long term, according to global travel management consultancy, FCm Travel Solutions.

FCm has advised corporates to be aware of the 'real' cost of using online booking sites for air travel, hotels, car hire and rail travel, that require pre-payment in full and provide no flexibility on tickets.

FCm's executive general manager, Anthony Grigson, said in the current climate of belt-tightening, FCm had seen evidence of small to mid-sized companies believing travel websites offered the most cost-effective solutions.

"This may be tenable for companies whose travel plans never change. But for most this is not a realistic approach and some degree of flexibility is needed in their travel itineraries," he said.

"We have seen companies forfeit hundreds or thousands of dollars in lost room nights or

air fares when their travel plans have changed, after booking and paying for tickets that could not be amended and were non-refundable.

"Every company is focused on value right now – even more than before. However, value in travel doesn't come from buying what appear to be the cheapest tickets online. There are several factors that can push up the total cost of these bookings."

Mr Grigson said that while costs associated with booking changes were the biggest factor to consider, lost employee productivity was also a potentially significant expense.

"A business traveller or personal assistant can spend hours trawling the internet to find what they perceive to be the best rates, when not all available fares are displayed on the internet and there are hourly price changes. That's time and productivity impacting the real cost of the ticket and the company's bottom line," he said.

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Crossroads 2009 Paris: Pan-European Conference

Crossroads Paris 14-15 May, is a unique pan-European business travel conference bringing together hundreds of business travel professionals to share knowledge and best practices regarding effective travel and meeting management solutions.

Set against the backdrop of a troubled global economy, this year's conference will focus on how companies can effectively manage their business travel processes to ensure crucial face-to-face business interactions continue despite shrinking travel budgets and job cuts.

Organised by the National Business Travel Association (NBTA) – in partnership with the Paragon Partnership: The Global Alliance of Business Travel Associations, and ten business travel industry groups from across Europe – Crossroads Paris presents an

outstanding opportunity for anyone with travel management or corporate travel sales responsibilities to gain the expertise they need.

Over the two days, a wide range of keynotes, panel discussions and education sessions will be offered alongside an expo of some 25 leading business travel industry suppliers.

The education sessions are divided into three tracks:

- *Going "global" – finding the right local versus global strategy for multinational travel programmes*

- *Driving savings with strategic travel and meetings management techniques*

- *Travel Management In Uncertain Times*

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Fone-In Partners With Radius As A Preferred Interpretation Partner

RADIUS – the global travel company, and Fone-In, a leading phone-based language interpretation service, have announced the...

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Continental Airlines To Inaugurate Nonstop New York-Shanghai Service

Continental Airlines on Wednesday, March 25, will become the first U.S. carrier to inaugurate scheduled service between New York and...

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Edinburgh International Climbing Arena: A Truly Unique MICE Venue

The Edinburgh International Climbing Arena, Ratho (EICA) offers a unique and inspiring convention location at the world's largest...

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IN THE NEWS



Tourism Among The Industries That Will Fuel The Economic Turnaround

Jean-Marc Eustache, President and Chief Executive Officer of Transat A.T. Inc., highlighted the fact that tourism will continue to play a major role in tomorrow's economy, and will comply more and more with the principles of sustainability, in a speech centered on the competitiveness of destinations delivered (March 17) in Quebec City, during an international Symposium on the development of sustainable tourism organized by the ministère du Tourisme du Québec.

"Like all industries, tourism has its raw materials. But these are not found by digging earth or harvesting forests. The input of tourism is people, as no other industries centers so much on human interaction. It's landscape, as people want to discover natural sites or typical villages and towns, as well as clean water, air and environment, which are all essential to the flourishing of the travel industry. And lastly, there is also the past, as we all have distinct roots and heritage," Mr. Eustache said.

Mr. Eustache also made an analogy with the food industry and its "chain of cold", highlighting the potential of a "chain of responsibility" in the tourism industry. "We need to act responsibly, and encourage our suppliers and partners to do the same. We also need to do our part making travellers more aware, and co-operate with destinations. That's how I see the role of tour operators. We are in a global, highly integrated system, and local issues belong to all," he also explained.

Mr. Eustache also emphasized the economic impact of tourism, which represents more than 200 million jobs worldwide, and pointed to the travel industry's remarkable track record of resisting recessions and other market downturns. "Tourism holds the potential to build a better future. That potential needs to be unleashed, and put to work," he said.

With revenues of \$3.5 billion in 2008, Transat A.T. Inc. is an integrated international tour operator with more than 60 destination countries and that distributes products in over 50 countries. A holiday travel specialist, Transat operates mainly in Canada and Europe, as well as in the Caribbean, Mexico and the Mediterranean Basin. Montreal-based Transat is also active in air transportation, accommodation, destination services and distribution.

www.transat.com

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AIRLINES & AIRPORTS



The Emirates' A380 – with 14 First Class, 76 Business Class and 399 Economy seats, represents the latest example of innovation and technology

Emirates To Launch A380 Service To Bangkok And Toronto

Emirates Airline will introduce its double decker A380 aircraft on its Bangkok and Toronto routes. Effective 1st June 2009, the aircraft will debut in Canada while the new Thai route extends the aircraft's presence in Asia after the successful launch of the A380 on Sydney and Auckland in February.

"We are extremely pleased to announce the introduction of the A380 for our Toronto and Bangkok services. Our Toronto route has had consistently high demand since the thrice weekly service was launched two years ago. The A380 will allow Emirates to address some of the unmet need in Toronto while on Bangkok, the A380 will help support the Thai government's new tourism initiatives," said Emirates President Tim Clark.

The change on both services will provide a capacity increase of about 30% for each route.

The new aircraft routes also offer strengthened support for popular transit markets - with the A380 now servicing London Heathrow, UK tourists travelling to/from

Thailand can enjoy a seamless A380 experience while for Canada, the change means increased access to Dubai and the Gulf region.

Emirates A380's ground-breaking in-flight product include onboard shower spas in the First Class cabin featuring signature products by the airline's premium spa brand, Timeless Spa. The onboard lounge for First and Business class customers mirrors the ambience of an executive club and includes a bar with a wide range of beverages and canapés.

With flat-bed massage-equipped private suites in First Class, a new generation of intelligent seating and flat-beds in Business Class, mood-lighting, and a second-to-none in-flight entertainment system featuring over 1000 channels of on-demand entertainment, the Emirates' A380 introduces a new level of comfort and luxury. It is set in a three-class configuration (14 First, 76 Business and 399 Economy Class seats) and spread over two levels with the upper deck dedicated to First and Business class passengers.

Services to Toronto on EK 241 depart Dubai at 09:55 hours, arriving in Toronto at 15:45 hours. EK 242 departs Toronto at 21:40 hours arriving in Dubai at 18:35 hours on the next day. Services are offered on EK 241 and 242 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Services to Bangkok on EK 372 depart Dubai at 09:40 hours, arriving in Bangkok at 19:00 hours. It turns around as EK 373 departing Bangkok at 21:25 hours, arriving in Dubai at 00:30 hours the next day. The Bangkok service operates daily.

Effective 1st June 2009 Emirates will operate five A380's on the following routes: Dubai-London Heathrow (daily), Dubai-Sydney/Auckland (daily), Dubai Toronto (three times weekly) and Bangkok (daily). The airline will accept another four A380 aircraft into it's fleet in the financial year of 2009/2010 and has announced it will introduce services to Seoul in December.

Continental Airlines To Inaugurate Nonstop New York-Shanghai Service

Continental Airlines on Wednesday, March 25, will become the first U.S. carrier to inaugurate scheduled service between New York and Shanghai, China, with daily nonstop flights from the airline's hub at Newark Liberty International Airport.

Delta Announces Special Fares To Kenya and Liberia

Delta Air Lines has announced limited-time special fares on its new routes to Kenya and Liberia*, making travel to Africa more affordable on the only airline with scheduled service between the U.S. and that continent.

Delta is offering a one-way introductory fare of \$819** for travel between Atlanta and Nairobi, Kenya (via Dakar, Senegal), from June 2 to Aug. 30, 2009; and of \$989** for travel between New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) and Monrovia, Liberia* (also via Dakar), from June 8 to Aug. 30, 2009. A round-trip ticket purchase is required and travel must be booked by April 7, 2009.

Delta's new flights to Kenya and Liberia are part of the airline's expanding service to Africa, which already includes service between New York-JFK to Accra, Ghana; Dakar; Cape Town, South Africa; and Abuja, Nigeria* (via Dakar*, beginning June 10, 2009). Delta also offers nonstop service between Atlanta and Dakar; and Lagos, Nigeria. Delta's existing one-stop service between Atlanta and Johannesburg, South Africa, via Dakar, will become a nonstop flight starting June 1, 2009.

**Additional taxes/fees/restrictions/baggage charges may apply.
*Subject to foreign government approval

The new service will provide daily nonstop flights in the largest U.S.-China market that today lacks daily service, linking the world's financial center and top business and tourism destination with China's center for finance and trade.

"China is a valued international market for Continental, and we expect great success from this new nonstop route to Shanghai," said

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ODYSSEY magazine

Continental President and Chief Operating Officer Jeff Smisek. "China remains an important business destination, with economic growth projected to continue this year despite the weakened global economy. We are proud to bring our outstanding product to Shanghai by launching this service as previously announced, even as other airlines are canceling or delaying similar routes."

With the success of the Beijing Olympics showcasing modern China to the world, and the upcoming Expo in Shanghai in 2010, Continental expects to see increased demand for service between the U.S. and China over time.

Continental has operated nonstop service between New York and Hong Kong since 2001 and between New York and Beijing since 2005. With the new service to Shanghai, Continental will be the only airline in the world providing daily nonstop service between New York and three Chinese cities.

Convenient Flight Schedule

Continental will operate the nonstop flight daily with a Boeing 777-200 aircraft. Flight 87 will depart Liberty at 11:20 a.m., arriving in Shanghai mid-afternoon the following day at 1:45 p.m. The return flight 86 will depart Shanghai in the afternoon at 3:45 p.m. and arrive at Liberty in the evening of the same day at 6:20 p.m. Flying times are approximately 14 hours and 30 minutes in each direction. The flight is timed to provide convenient roundtrip connections at Continental's New York hub to more than 60 other cities throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Onboard Product Tailored For China Market

Continental's Shanghai flights will feature special products and services for customers, with movies and music available in English and Mandarin, and local Chinese newspapers available for BusinessFirst customers. Instructional videos, including the safety and arrival video and pre-recorded announcements, will be available in Mandarin. Menus will be available in English and Chinese, and inflight meals designed by chefs based in the U.S. and in China will feature Chinese choices. A Mandarin-speaking flight attendant will be available to help customers inflight and Mandarin-speaking agents will be available to help customers at check-in.

Award-Winning BusinessFirst Service

The new flights will feature Continental's award-winning BusinessFirst service, rated by Conde Nast Traveler magazine as the highest among all U.S. carriers for trans-Pacific flights for 10 years in a row.

Beginning in the fall of 2009, the premium-class cabin will begin to feature Continental's new 180-degree lie-flat seats. The lie-flat seats feature more individual storage space and laptop power, iPod connectivity and 15.4-inch video monitor for customers to enjoy on-demand movies, music and games.

Other BusinessFirst amenities include gourmet menu selections created by Continental's

Congress of Chefs. A specially selected and trained corps of Concierges is available to provide individualized pre-flight and post-flight services for BusinessFirst customers at 42 international airports worldwide. Customers traveling in BusinessFirst are also able to access any of Continental's 27 Presidents Clubs and more than 60 airline affiliated lounges worldwide.

Flights to Shanghai will feature Continental's new Audio/Video on Demand (AVOD) in both the BusinessFirst and Economy cabins of its Boeing 777 aircraft. The entertainment systems on these aircraft allow customers to choose from more than 250 movies, 300 short-subject programs including popular television shows and 3,000 music tracks, with a jukebox feature to make individual playlists. In addition, this new entertainment system has 25 video games and the interactive Berlitz Word Traveler foreign language program. With the AVOD system, Continental is installing in-seat power that will not require an adapter. One outlet is available per seat in BusinessFirst and two outlets for every three seats for all rows in main cabin.

Economy class on the Continental 777 is also exceptionally comfortable and spacious, in a 3-3-3 seating configuration with wider-than-usual aisles.

Continental also offers tour packages to China through Continental Airlines Vacations.

www.continental.com

South African Airways To Enhance North America Service To Botswana

South African Airways (SAA) will make it even faster and more convenient to fly from North America to Botswana by offering new jet service between Johannesburg and Gaborone, joining regional partner South African Express, which currently operates the route daily. Beginning March 23rd, SAA will operate 2 new flights Sunday through Friday, and one flight on Saturdays, with Airbus A319 aircraft featuring 25 seats in Business Class and 85 seats in Economy Class. Aside from adding more seats to the market, the new flights will offer the option of flying business class, and will continue to serve as convenient connection options for travelers flying from North America to the highly sought-after destination known for its pristine wilderness and unmatched safari experiences. The schedule also will result in same-day connections for passengers who fly on SAA's new morning non-stop service from New York JFK, which begins May 1st.

"SAA remains focused on offering the most convenient and extensive route network between North America and Southern Africa, and our non-stop New York service, along with expanded service into Gaborone, Botswana, goes a long way towards achieving that," said Marc Cavaliere, executive vice president, North America, for South African Airways. "Botswana is a destination with tremendous growth potential, not just in Gaborone, but in other cities in Botswana that SAA plans to serve. These additional

JetLite Enhances Services From Kozhikode To Mumbai, And Onwards

Effective March 29, 2009, JetLite, Jet Airways' wholly-owned all economy subsidiary, will introduce a new daily service on the Mumbai - Kozhikode - Mumbai sectors.

The new daily Mumbai - Kozhikode-Mumbai flights will be operated by JetLite's all-economy Boeing 737 series aircraft.

JetLite's flight S2 423 will depart Mumbai at 1125 hrs, and will arrive in Kozhikode at 1305 hrs. Flight S2 424 will depart Kozhikode at 1335 hrs, and will arrive in Mumbai at 1510 hrs.

From Mumbai, JetLite passengers may connect onto several destinations serviced by Jet Airways in North America (Newark, JFK and Toronto), Europe (London and Brussels), South-East Asia (Singapore, Hong Kong and Bangkok) and the Gulf region (Dubai, Doha, Abu Dhabi, Muscat, Bahrain and Kuwait) through its code-share partner, Jet Airways, India's premier international airline.

JetLite, as part of its inaugural offer on the Kozhikode-Mumbai- Kozhikode sectors, has introduced attractive fares of Rs. 1 plus taxes for bookings 30 days prior to travel, Rs. 500 plus taxes for bookings made 20 days prior to travel and Rs. 750 plus taxes for bookings made 10 days prior to travel.

Commenting on the launch of the new services, Mr. Wolfgang Prock-Schauer, CEO, Jet Airways said, "With the Kozhikode sector registering impressive growth in passenger traffic, the new services will cater to the domestic demand on this route, while ensuring seamless connections to and from North America, Europe Asia and the Gulf for international travelers from Southern India".

* Subject To Government Approval

www.jetlite.com
www.jetairways.com

connection options are just the beginning of what will continue to be a product and route network enhancement."

"The increased service is welcomed and needed to accommodate the additional volume of leisure and business travelers into Botswana," said Leslee Hall, Botswana Tourism Board in North America. "Along with the same-day connections that will be available from New York, SAA is providing an added level of convenience and accessibility to visitors of our country."

The new SAA flights to Botswana are now available for bookings.

South African Airways is celebrating its 75th Anniversary in 2009, having been founded in February 1934, and since then has led the

way in offering world-class service from Africa to the world. This attention to service throughout the years has resulted in the airline consistently being named "Best Airline" and "Best Business Class" to Africa by numerous travel experts and publications. Today, it is poised to continue this tradition of excellence by continuously enhancing its product offering, including non-stop service from New York JFK to Johannesburg, commencing May 1st.

www.flysaa.com

Lufthansa Investing In Products And Services

"Despite the highly challenging market environment, Lufthansa last year posted a very good result of 1.35 billion euros, maintaining its lead and succeeding against the competition thanks to a strong team performance and a strong balance sheet," said Thierry Antinori, Executive Vice President Marketing and Sales at Lufthansa Passenger Airlines, in front of journalists at the ITB in Berlin, the world's leading travel trade show. Although the economic environment is very difficult, Lufthansa continues to focus on the development of attractive products and services. "We will continue to expand our role as Europe's most attractive airline. The crisis does not represent standstill at Lufthansa – on the contrary! Major investments in the development of new products and services will allow us to offer our customers true added value and greater comfort when travelling. We shall remain a reliable partner for our customers."

Investments In Product Development

By 2013, Lufthansa will have invested about 150 million euros in the renovation and improvement of its lounges across the world. During the past twelve months alone, 17 new lounges throughout the world have been opened or reopened after renovations and improvements, including lounges in Frankfurt, Munich, New York and Mumbai. "Business travellers and frequent travellers expect attractive lounges all over the world. It is our aim to fulfil these expectations of our premium and status customers", revealed Antinori. "The investments in new lounges and the renovation and improvement of existing lounges underline this. Travelling with Lufthansa should be as pleasant and as comfortable as possible."

There are also changes to the on-board product. As of late summer, two of the three Lufthansa Business Jets, which are operated for Lufthansa by PrivateAir, will additionally be equipped with Economy Class seats. The Frankfurt-Bahrain and Frankfurt-Dammam routes will then have 32 seats in Business Class and 60 seats in Economy Class. The aircraft will be equipped with the latest generation of seats, i.e. with integrated in-flight entertainment in both classes. "The new equipment in our Business Jets will enable us to be far more flexible in the arrangement of the flight schedules. We will therefore also be able to present our customers with a better and more comfortable offer on routes that don't justify the deployment of two widebody aircraft."

Mobile Services For Added Comfort And Flexibility

Speed, flexibility and comfort are indispensable for business travellers. The expansion of Lufthansa's online and mobile services offers its customers more time and mobility while preparing for and during their journey. The new services have been well received by the customers. Whereas in 2002 only one in 125 customers booked their tickets online at www.lufthansa.com in 2008 it was already one in nine that did so. Last year, over 1.5 million customers used the mobile portal for a paperless and uncomplicated start to their journey, and the figure is continuing to rise. "We offer our customers additional comfort with our eFly services – All they require for booking, seat reservation, check-in and boarding pass is their mobile phone. It doesn't get any easier or quicker", so Antinori.

Lufthansa has also invested in its services for the customers that don't want to check in online. New check-in machines with state-of-the-art technologies, such as RFID readers, passport and 2D barcode scanners, ensure a quicker and uncomplicated check-in. Lufthansa is operating in a world, in which quality, speed and the intelligent use of technology is becoming increasingly decisive explains Antinori. "Our investments pay off. We have an eye on both quantity and quality. Last year, we didn't only set a new passenger record with 57 million customers, but also achieved top marks with our passengers in our customer satisfaction index."

Summer Schedule Adjusted To Lower Demand

Due to the current economic situation, Lufthansa will be adjusting its capacities according to the decline in demand during the upcoming summer schedule. "Almost all of the current Lufthansa destinations will remain in the schedule", stresses Antinori. The route network includes 206 destinations in 78 countries (in summer 2008 there were 207 destinations in 81 countries). Altogether, the capacity in the summer will be reduced by 0.5 per cent. This reduction is however already being overcompensated by the successful launch of Lufthansa Italia. The offered capacity of seat kilometres in the overall Lufthansa route network in summer 2009 will therefore be increasing by 0.6 per cent in comparison with the previous year. Thereby, European traffic will be increasing by 1.5 per cent. Adjusted after the Lufthansa Italia growth, European traffic would drop by 2.2 per cent. The intercontinental connections will increase by 0.2 per cent, whereby an extraordinary item shall be taken into account. Changes to the seat configuration in the Boeing 747-400 fleet will mean that in the future an additional 22 Economy Class seats will be offered in this aircraft type. Adjusted after the increase of the seating offer, the offered capacity in intercontinental traffic would drop by 0.7 per cent. "We will continue to maintain our presence in all of the traffic areas and regions despite the weaker demand and the resulting reduction of the capacities", emphasizes Antinori. "We are optimising our offer of flights and are carefully and flexibly adjusting it to the corresponding demand. Thereby, we are cancelling frequencies on certain routes,

clickair Launches The InFlight Take-Airway Menu

clickair becomes the first airline in the world to offer a take-away menu ("Take Airway") especially prepared for travellers planning a short stay in one of clickair's destinations. This innovative culinary option is part of the airline's new onboard catering service.

The entire menu has a Mediterranean flavour. It has been created from top-quality fresh produce to offer a selection of salads, market garden vegetables, freshly chopped fruit, sandwiches prepared with special breads and gourmet sauces to enhance flavours. The new menu selections have been designed to suit the tastes of every traveller; including menus for two, an executive menu and menus specifically for children.

New Airborne Cuisine In Response To Demand

The new clickair menu has been created in response to comments from more than 15,000 travellers surveyed over a period of six months. The collected data identified three types of flight 'diners': those travelling predominantly for leisure, often with children; those travelling with their partner; and those travelling for business purposes - on certain routes the latter category comprises more than 40% of passengers.

Based on the information gathered, the new clickair menu selections mirrors the tastes and requirements of every traveller - an economy menu for families and those travelling on a limited budget; a children's menu, to entertain as well as provide them with healthy food options; a menu for two, designed for sharing; and an executive menu that caters to the needs of people travelling for business purposes and who need to recharge their batteries, without feeling bloated.

"At clickair, we continually endeavour to develop innovative ideas based on what passengers want," says Jaime Lloret, Marketing Director for clickair. "The new catering service is a reflection of our passengers' requests. For example, many travellers, particularly business travellers, commented that during one-day business trips they often lack the time to even eat a meal. Accordingly, our in-flight menus may now be purchased as 'take-airway'."

The onboard catering can be paid for in cash or by using a credit or debit card. Furthermore, a new restaurant voucher payment method has now been added (Cheque Gourmet, Restaurant Pass and Tickets Restaurant).

deploying smaller aircraft in some areas and replacing non-stop flights with connecting flights in other areas, in order to continue to be able to provide our customers with a global network."

More Offers To Africa

Lufthansa has placed a major focus on the

growth market of Africa. The offer to Africa was already significantly expanded last year with new Lufthansa flights to Luanda and Malabo. There will be even more connections in the future with the planned integration of Brussels Airlines into the Star Alliance. The customers of Lufthansa, SWISS and Brussels Airlines will therefore have a total of 35 destinations in Africa at their disposal in the future. In addition, cooperation agreements with the three partners EgyptAir, Ethiopian and South African will provide customers with many more connections from Europe to Africa, as well as on the African continent.

Code-Share With Brussels Airlines

Within the framework of Brussels Airlines' future entry into the Star Alliance, Lufthansa and Brussels Airlines have already increased their cooperation. Both airlines have granted each other's passengers access to their lounges since mid-February. As of the summer schedule, many Brussels Airlines flights will also be offered with Lufthansa flight numbers and vice versa. In the future, Lufthansa passengers will therefore also be able to benefit from the Brussels Airlines route network. In return Brussels Airlines passengers will also have the opportunity to use Lufthansa connections. This service is initially available for flights between Germany and Belgium, as well as to selected European destinations and will later be extended to include additional connections. The flights can be booked as of 24 March.

The next steps of the cooperation are also already being planned: It will soon be possible to combine the tariffs of the two airlines in neighbourhood traffic. In addition, there will be a partnership between the frequent flyer programs Miles & More and Brussels Airlines' Privilege.

New Wine Consultant Adds Asian Flair To Singapore Airlines' Wine Panel

Singapore Airlines has welcomed the first Asian Master of Wine Jeannie Cho Lee to its distinguished panel of wine experts. Lee is co-founder of the Fine Wine School in Hong Kong, where she continues to lecture. She also lends her expertise, judging in various international and regional competitions including Decanter World Wine Awards, International Wine Challenge, Wines of the Pacific Rim, and the Royal Adelaide Wine Show.

Apart from teaching and judging, Lee is a bi-monthly wine columnist for Decanter (Hong Kong/China edition), Noblesse and Baccarat magazines. She is also currently working on a book on wine and Asian cuisine, which will be launched in September this year.

"We are pleased to welcome Jeannie onboard. She's highly respected among the wine circles as a consultant, judge and educator. She also brings with her an Asian perspective and palate to our tasting sessions," said Mr Yap Kim Wah, Singapore Airlines' Senior Vice-President Product & Services.

"I was especially thrilled joining the panel along

with Steven Spurrier and Michael Hill-Smith because I've known both of them professionally for many years. I know of their reputation within the wine industry, I know of their tasting ability, I've judged with them before. I know the standards for the Singapore Airlines' Wine Panel is incredibly high, so I feel very excited and pleased to be joining the group," enthused Lee.

Born in South Korea, Lee moved to the United States at a young age. But it was at Oxford University in the United Kingdom where she spent her junior year that sparked her interest in wine.

Her passion for wine continued through her Master's degree in Public Policy from Harvard and upon her university graduation, she attended the Windows on the World Wine School in New York City. Her keen interest in wine led her to obtain the Wine & Spirits Education Trust Diploma in 1998.

Two years ago, Lee made a name for herself when she became the first Asian in the history of the Institute of Masters of Wine to pass the notoriously difficult exams, which involve four days of rigorous theoretical exams, and blind wine tasting sessions. As an indication of just how challenging these exams are, only 276 people worldwide can lay claim to the Master of Wine title.

"I started to feel a strong sense of responsibility, especially as more people started asking me, 'How are you going to use this position to influence the wine industry in

Asia?' Probably the best path for me at the moment is just to continue doing what I love to do, which is writing, judging, tasting and trying to do it to the best of my ability and not just stay still because you have this title. This particular opportunity to judge a thousand wines every year for Singapore Airlines is a wonderful way also to make sure that I'm continuing to keep my palate fresh, to judge, and to give feedback, because the choices that we make as a wine consultant has an effect on what is served, and what people enjoy, so there is a strong sense of responsibility" said Lee.

Lee replaces Karen MacNeil who has retired from the Singapore Airlines Wine Panel. Established in 1989, the Singapore Airlines Wine Panel's two other members are Steven Spurrier from the United Kingdom, a leading authority on wine, and whose 45-year career includes founding the first Paris wine school, L'Academie Du Vin; and Michael Hill-Smith, who was honoured last year with the Order of Australia for his contribution to the Australian wine industry.

Together, the panel is responsible for recommending the wines, champagnes and port to be served in all classes and on all routes flown by Singapore Airlines. Wines are judged not only on their quality but also on their suitability for drinking onboard an aircraft, where the atmosphere tends to be drier. Up to 1,000 bottles of wines, champagne, and port are sampled by the panel annually.

www.singaporeair.com

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

Corporates Beware The True Cost of 'Low-Cost' Online Bookings: FCm

...continued from page one

"There is also the issue of pinpointing the location of your travellers in an emergency – which is part of any company's duty of care – and tracking what all your travellers are spending on their trips. Web bookings do not provide any of these benefits, which can be critical to overall expenditure.

"TMCs can take as little as five minutes to complete a point-to-point booking, while a corporate employee could easily spend an hour or more surfing the web to make the same booking. Furthermore, by tapping into our multiple fare sources and negotiating with suppliers based on volume, we can book world-best fares that are most suited to your business needs.

"Every booking is made under a policy designed to produce long-term savings, and we target every opportunity to streamline a company's travel activity, processes and suppliers. Cost control is achieved through extensive reporting and benchmarking, which provides total transparency."

Mr Grigson said companies using TMCs also had the peace of mind of traveller security services and 24/7 emergency assistance.

"Corporates need to ultimately weigh up

whether they want short-term gains or long-term consolidation, which is value that can only be driven by strategic travel management with a holistic approach to their travel and purchasing activity," he said.

www.fcm.travel

Gilpin Travel Ltd New Zealand Joins RADIUS

RADIUS - the global travel company has announced that Gilpin Travel Ltd. Of New Zealand has joined the RADIUS network. Gilpin Travel, headquartered in Auckland, is a leading travel group in New Zealand that specializes in managing corporate travel.

RADIUS is the largest network of independently owned travel management companies with 90 travel agencies operating from more than 80 countries.

Gilpin Travel was established in 1984 and is privately owned, offering specialist corporate travel, and conference and incentive management. Managing director of Gilpin Travel Keith Sumner remarked that customer demand and business growth had driven the need to join RADIUS' international network. "Many of our clients are expanding into new and different markets. Local knowledge and networks become increasingly important for us to provide the level of support they need. Having a business partner in Bahrain, for example, allows us to better assist our clients

so they can concentrate on the business they will need to do when they get there. With help on the ground we can ensure they're met at the airport, their hotel is at the most convenient location for their meetings, and the most appropriate mode of transport is arranged."

In addition, executive management anticipates that the agreement will open up new opportunities for New Zealand as a destination for conference and incentive programs.

Chris Vasiliou, Chief Executive Officer of RADIUS commented: "We are excited to welcome Gilpin Travel Ltd, as our premier partner in New Zealand and an important agency in the Asia Pacific travel scene. We are confident that this partnership will add value for both Gilpin Travel's customers and those of our agencies around the world."

www.radiustravel.com

iJET On Avian Influenza and Pandemic Preparedness

iJET Intelligent Risk Systems, a leading provider of global intelligence and business resiliency services, has announced the publication of its annual report: 2008 Review and Forecast: Avian Influenza and Pandemic Planning. Developed by iJET's health intelligence team, this report provides an in-depth analysis of worldwide events associated with avian influenza, details scientific developments, summarizes progress toward corporate and government pandemic preparedness and provides an outlook for the coming year.

iJET's 2008 Review and Forecast: Avian Influenza and Pandemic Planning report includes a special focus on Indonesia, the Indian subcontinent, Vietnam, Egypt, China and Hong Kong as well as a chapter on political and economic issues associated with pandemic preparedness.

International experts are increasingly recognizing the serious impact that a 1918-like pandemic might have on an already-compromised global economy and on national security. In 2008, the World Bank revised upwards its estimation of the likely economic impact of a pandemic, to \$3 trillion globally. Further, the U.K. now lists pandemic influenza as the greatest risk in terms of potential lives lost and economic impact facing the country today. Despite these assessments, pandemic preparedness among governments and corporations continues to fall short and a declining economy could further hamper preparations.

"The news media is flooded with reports and

statistics of avian influenza incidents, but few routinely unify this data and offer the predictive analysis organizations need in order to prepare for and survive such an occurrence," says Steve Cunnion, Medical Director for the National Security Health Policy Center of the Potomac Institute of Policy Studies and a member of iJET's Health Intelligence Board. "iJET's report provides critical information that can serve as the basis of support for organizations to update, develop or even defend their pandemic planning efforts."

The 31-page report, which comes with a standalone six page "Executive Summary and Forecast" companion piece, offers the critical intelligence needed to ensure organizations have the necessary tools for incorporating pandemic preparedness into their overall business resiliency plans.

"Successful organizations realize that continuity planning of all types, including pandemic planning, is especially important during economic downturns, and mitigating risk does not necessarily mean an increase in spending," said Dr. Joan Pfinsgraff, Director of Health Intelligence for iJET. "Improving corporate resiliency may simply require allocating spending and resources more judiciously – on early warning indicators, monitoring of threats, and reviewing continuity plans to ensure appropriate escalation and communication protocols are in place."

The 2008 Review and Forecast: Avian Influenza and Pandemic Planning report is based on data from iJET's World Pandemic Monitor, which provides real-time alerts, authoritative analysis, and best practices tools to help businesses mitigate the risks associated with a vast number of global health concerns.

www.worldpandemicmonitor.com
www.ijet.com

HRG Wins A Place On OGC Travel Management Services Framework Agreement

Hogg Robinson Group (HRG) has won a competitive tender to be part of OGCbuying.solutions' Travel Management Services Framework Agreement, starting from March 2009.

HRG will provide a comprehensive one-stop solution from specialist service centres covering air, rail, hotel, meetings and events. This traditional telephone based service will operate alongside HRG Online, an integrated self-booking solution supported by an e-fulfilment centre based in Liverpool, providing

HTH Worldwide Partners With RADIUS To Distribute mPassport

RADIUS - the global travel agency company has announced a distribution partnership with HTH Worldwide for mPassport, HTH's worldwide mobile healthcare tool. RADIUS is one of the largest travel management companies with 90 travel agencies operating from more than 80 countries. This partnership provides for participating RADIUS agencies to offer mPassport services to their travel clients

HTH developed mPassport in response to travelers' emerging demand to have access to top-flight medical care around the world. mPassport subscribers have access via mobile phone or the Internet to HTH's proprietary global databases of carefully selected emergency and urgent care services, contracted English-speaking doctors, health and safety alerts, and medical translations.

"RADIUS's focus on multinational corporate clients with global travelers is a perfect match for our mPassport service. We are delighted to be able to deliver our unique health and safety solutions to their clients and help keep business travelers healthy and productive as they circle the globe," said Andy Orr, Product Manager for HTH Worldwide's mPassport.

Patricia Locke, RADIUS' Senior Vice President of Supplier Relations commented, "RADIUS is always looking for the best global solutions that can benefit both its agencies and their clients. Access to outstanding healthcare professionals and services is paramount in today's international arena, and the agreement with HTH Worldwide will provide this access."

www.hthworldwide.com

an all-encompassing booking and information service for the public sector. This tool allows potential clients to search and book all travel and accommodation requirements from both GDS and non-GDS sources, obtaining the best possible rates for their individual needs.

Matthew Pancaldi, Director of Sales for HRG UK, said: "Being part of the OGCbuying.solutions Travel Management Services Framework highlights HRG's excellent track record for providing corporate travel management to government departments. I am delighted that OGCbuying.solutions has recognised HRG's commitment to providing outstanding service

CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA NEWS website archive

ODYSSEY magazine's four news websites collectively archive more than 20,000 news items via 23 editorial sections for your easy access and review. Take advantage of this comprehensive free news resource covering all aspects of the "business" of business travel; meetings, incentives, conventions & exhibitions - regionally and globally.

Visit and Bookmark: www.csan.btbtravel.com

ODYSSEY magazine

and look forward to working with various public sector bodies to introduce innovative travel management solutions.”

OGCbuying.solutions is an Executive Agency of the Office of Government Commerce in the Treasury. The framework contracts travel management on behalf of government departments and the wider public sector. This enables public sector clients to bypass lengthy tender processes required under government procurement rules, instead selecting services from a number of pre-approved Travel Management Companies. Prospective clients will benefit from HRG’s solutions, which ensure policy compliance, monitor traveller security and report on corporate travel both pre and post-trip. These services will be focused on obtaining better value for all business travel in terms of cost, quality and service delivery.

www.hrgworldwide.com

Fone-In Partners With Radius As A Preferred Interpretation Partner

RADIUS – the global travel company, and Fone-In, a leading phone-based language interpretation service, have announced the signing of a global marketing agreement. RADIUS is the world’s largest travel

management network with 90 travel management companies in over 80 countries. The agreement provides for participating RADIUS agencies to offer Fone-In services to their travel clients.

“It is important to explore all services relating to corporate travel; with the international reach and extensive live language system Fone-In can offer our clients can travel almost anywhere in the world with the reassurance of an interpretation service, regardless of time or day,” said Patricia Locke, Senior Vice President, Supplier Relations, RADIUS.

RADIUS travel counselors will be able to offer Fone-In services including the prepaid service providing travelers with easy access to live interpreters using international toll free access numbers, pinless dialing features and an automatic recharge option. Fone-In’s interpretation services include capabilities in over 100 languages, worldwide available 24 hours – 365 days.

Sam Wald, President and CEO of Fone-In commented “We are excited to be offering our on demand, phone-based interpretation service through RADIUS. The reach and international scale of RADIUS’ operations and partnerships makes it an excellent match for Fone-In’s international service.”

www.Fone-In.com

NBTA Canada President Tanya Racz, CTE, CCTE, said, “The word is definitely out – the NBTA Canada Annual Conference is the biggest and best corporate travel event in Canada. Even in today’s global economic crisis, corporate travel professionals from throughout North America who conduct business in Canada came to learn about current industry trends and network with clients and travel suppliers. They know that travel is essential to conduct business, and staying abreast to industry developments is the best way to contain costs when it matters the most.”

Attendees spent two days covering a range of corporate travel issues and trends including global risk management, meetings management strategies and international business aviation. Industry thought leaders discussed the Obama Administration’s take on corporate travel into and out of Canada and provided a general economic outlook for businesses around the world. Many delegates also earned their Corporate Travel Expert (CTE) designation and began work toward their NBTA Foundation Global Leadership Program (GLP) designation.

Racz continued, “Industry education and professional development are more important than ever in a down economy. This year’s Convention attendees have taken the time to network with colleagues and explore resources to help them further their companies, the corporate travel industry and their careers.”

To coincide with the NBTA Canada Conference, The Globe and Mail, one of Canada’s top national newspapers, published a special business travel supplement, which was distributed to Conference attendees and the newspaper’s national readership of more than 2,800,000. Included in the supplement was an interview with Racz about current NBTA Canada efforts and industry trends.

www.nbta.org

ASSOCIATIONS

Crossroads 2009 Paris: Pan-European Conference

...continued from page one

A finalised keynote speaker programme will be announced shortly, but already confirmed is Arjan van Weele, Professor, Purchasing and Supply Management, Eindhoven University of Technology, who will be the keynote speaker at Friday morning’s general session “Professionalizing Travel Management: Dealing With Compliance and Governance Issues”.

Spokespeople from leading companies including Accenture, Concur, Thalys, the l’Association Française des Travel Managers, NetApp and Dunn & Company are also confirmed for the panel and education sessions.

“Never has the need for effective business travel management been so great,” believes Kevin Maguire, NBTA President and CEO. “With operating costs being cut across the board, business travel professionals need to be armed with the knowledge and solutions to not only increase efficiencies but also demonstrate that – in the current economic climate – preserving and improving business travel plays a vital role in reaching recovery. Crossroads Paris 2009 will, I believe, play an important role in helping the industry achieve this goal.”

Crossroads Paris: Paragon Business Travel Conference & Expo, to be held 14-15 May 2009, is a unique pan-European business travel conference. The event, now in its second year, is co-hosted by: *The Paragon Partnership; The Global Alliance of Business Travel Associations; the Austrian Business Travel*

Association; the Brazilian Business Travel Association; the Danish Business Travel Association; the Finnish Business Travel Association; l’Association Française des Travel Managers, Verband Deutsches ReiseManagement (the Business Travel Association of Germany); the Netherlands Association for Travel Management; the Norwegian Business Travel Association; the Iberian Business Travel Association (Spain); the Swedish Business Travel Association; the Institute of Travel Management (UK and Ireland); and the National Business Travel Association (U.S.-based, global organisation).

Crossroads Paris offers corporate travel professionals unparalleled education and networking, as well as an Expo highlighting the latest products and services from the leading European business travel suppliers. The program will be in both French and English, with simultaneous translation.

www.nbta.org/crossroads

NBTA Canada Hosts Largest Ever Canadian Corporate Travel Conference

The National Business Travel Association (NBTA) Canada hosted its 5th Annual Conference & Exhibitor showcase, the largest corporate travel event in Canada. The Conference was hailed as a success by speakers, exhibitors and attendees and set an NBTA Canada record with more than 260 registered attendees.

Virgin Group Founder Sir Richard Branson To Speak at NBTA Convention

The National Business Travel Association (NBTA) has announced Sir Richard Branson, Founder and President of Virgin Group, will deliver a keynote address to attendees of the 2009 NBTA International Convention & Exposition, to be held August 23-26 in San Diego. Branson’s appearance during the Convention’s Tuesday General Session is made possible by Orbitz for Business.

NBTA President & CEO, Kevin Maguire, CCTE, GLP, said, “Sir Richard Branson is an industry and international icon. This is a huge get for us, and we are grateful to Orbitz for Business for bringing this airline and hospitality guru and corporate rock star to the NBTA community. His insights into the travel industry, perspectives on globalization, and advice on leadership are sure to prove both educating and inspiring.”

The Virgin empire was conceived in 1970 when Branson founded a mail order record company and opened a record shop in London. He has since rapidly expanded the Virgin brand, one

of the world's most recognized and respected trademarks, to the travel, communications, clean tech, financial services, and health industries. Last month alone saw the launch of its newest airline, VAustralia, with service from Sydney to the United States, and Virgin America, the award-winning U.S. domestic airline, began serving Boston, its eighth city.

Branson is also an avid traveler, world record-breaking adventurer, and humanitarian.

Branson's Virgin Unite, the philanthropic arm of the Virgin Group, uses business as a force for good with corporate, nonprofit and government partners, entrepreneurs, and artists. Branson was knighted in 1999 for his services to entrepreneurship.

Maguire continued: "As one of the world's most famous entrepreneurs and industry show stoppers, Branson is the perfect fit for the NFTA Convention. I know the business travel

community will be delighted to hear thoughts on the future of the corporate travel industry from a man who attempts to break world records, hob knobs with Hollywood celebrities, and is starting the world's first commercial spaceline, while still overseeing some of the world's most impressive travel and luxury property programs."

www.nftaconvention.org
www.nfta.org

MEETINGS, INCENTIVES, CONVENTIONS & EXHIBITIONS



Edinburgh International Climbing Arena: A Truly Unique MICE Venue

The Edinburgh International Climbing Arena, Ratho (EICA) offers a unique and inspiring convention location at the world's largest indoor climbing arena with delegate capacity to 1,600 - open after a £6.5m refit. It shares its home with the world's largest indoor climbing facility.

Offering a wide variety of quality meeting areas with excellent media facilities and delegate capacity to 1,600, the EICA can combine conference activities with the opportunity for teambuilding. Experienced staff can provide tuition on rock climbing, bouldering or abseiling as well as facilitating challenging problem solving team events or a terrifying assault course 100 feet above the arena floor.

In a rural setting, located close to both the M8 and M9 and just 10 minutes from the Airport, the EICA is the ideal venue for doing business in central Scotland.

www.uniquevenuesofedinburgh.co.uk

Conference & Events

Some are held in corporate hotels, some are in damp and airy castles and then there are those events that take place in the inspiring, unique surroundings of EICA: Ratho. As a corporate venue EICA: Ratho is contemporary, yet timeless, making it a distinctly different and inspirational destination for business. With the original quarry walls running through many of the conference and events spaces and with breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside this is a truly unique and inspirational venue.

The gallery will give you a taste of how spectacular this place can be, from perfect meeting spaces to evening dinners, or to really put yourself in the room view with 360 degree room panoramas.

Whether you're holding a small informal meeting, a conference or seminar, team building or incentive day, or perhaps a blend of the above; EICA: Ratho is guaranteed to make a lasting impression. The highly experienced and dedicated events team will be delighted to assist in every aspect of your event. From the initial planning stage, their professional team will advise and organise everything you need. Hospitality, catering, teambuilding or extra equipment can all be arranged.

Haston Suite: Named after the climber Dougal Haston who was the first to climb the south face of Annapurna on an expedition led by Chris Bonington in 1970 and, with Doug Scott, was the first to climb Mount Everest by the south-west face, also on an expedition led by Bonington.

The Haston Suite is located on the top floor of the EICA directly opposite the Raeburn Suite across the five floor open atrium area. It offers stunning views of the surrounding countryside to the front and beautiful views of the landscaped quarry and original rockface to the rear.

- Ideal for weddings, banquets, parties, large conferences and other corporate events
- Enclosed restrooms
- Blackout blinds for all windows
- Breakout space

Raeburn Suite: Widely recognised as the best Scottish mountaineer over the first two decades of the 20th century, Harold Raeburn is the inspiration behind the name of one of EICA's top floor suites.

Located on the top floor of the EICA the Raeburn Suite is a large room incorporating traditional features in a contemporary style. It offers stunning panoramic views of the surrounding countryside to the front and birds-eye views of the spectacular climbing arena and Aerial Assault.

- Ideal for parties, wedding receptions, formal/informal dining, large/small meetings and conferences
- Fully functioning bar area
- Contemporary fireplace in centre of room
- Cloakroom.
- WIFI internet access

Patey Suite: Although he was a leading Scottish climber, particularly excelling on winter routes, Tom Patey is possibly best known for his humorous writings about climbing, many of which were published posthumously in the collection One Man's Mountains.

The Patey Suite is situated on the fourth floor of EICA. It offers panoramic views of the arena through floor to ceiling windows running the length of the room, and also incorporates the

original quarry rockface to the rear.

- Ideal for receptions, formal/informal dinners, large/small meetings, presentations and other corporate events
- Natural rockface backdrop
- Can be used in conjunction with the Murray Lecture Theatre.
- Broadband internet access

Murray Lecture Theatre: William Murray was an influential climber in the early 20th Century. Captured during World War II he then spent three years in prisoner of war camps, during which time he wrote a book entitled Mountaineering In Scotland.

Fully functioning lecture theatre adjacent to the Patey Suite and the Cunningham Meeting Room. Beautifully designed room with a retractable seating area backed by an original rockface wall and overlooking the entrance to the EICA.

- Ideal for presentations, screenings, seminars, boardroom meetings and other corporate events
- Featuring: PA System, ceiling mounted projector, 10ft retractable screen and blackout screens on all windows
- Can be used with the Patey Suite to create larger room, or breakout space.
- Broadband internet access

Marshall Room: The Marshall Room is decorated in a simple contemporary style and is set in a boardroom format. It benefits from natural light and overlooks the entrance to EICA.

- Ideal for meetings, presentations and other small corporate events
- Can be used as breakout rooms
- Blackout blinds in the Marshall Room

www.eica-ratho.com

Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Opens

After five years of planning, building and planting, April 3 marks the official opening of the Vancouver Convention Centre's expanded facilities. With wide open views of the water and mountains, a downtown location, exterior public space, a "living" roof, and interior finishes such as the abundant use of British Columbian wood and unique art pieces, this convention facility feels more like a high-end hotel than a sterile meeting venue.

With the opening of the expansion, which will be known as the "West Facility", the original "East" section of the centre will undergo renovation starting in April and scheduled to

be completed by September. The renovation will include cosmetic improvements to mirror the look and feel of the expansion. Upgrades will include new stone work, a new plaza, updated carpets, wall treatments, the introduction of natural woods, and new chairs.

The expansion triples the size of the original convention centre facilities, bringing the available space to a total of 43,991 square metres (473,523 square feet). The centre boasts Canada's largest convention centre ballroom and the country's largest living "green" roof. The existing centre and new expansion are linked by a 90 metre (300 foot) covered connector offering views of the harbour.

www.vcec.ca

Fiera Milano Congressi, The Hotels of Milan Create "Destination Milan"

Fiera Milano Congressi, in conjunction with hotels offering business facilities, has come up with Destination Milan, a project aimed at promoting Milan as a conference venue, optimising all its areas of potential. A brand that "brings together" one of the Europe's leading conference organisers - Fiera Milano Congressi, a company belonging to the Fiera Milano Spa group created in 1994 to manage convention centres - and 18 hotels (four-star, four star superior and five-star) equipped with conference venues. Objective: to guarantee the city's ability to meet all needs, catering also for small to medium conferences and similar events, with top levels of professionalism and service.

Destination Milan thus becomes a unique point of reference for conference, convention and event organisers, guaranteeing an integrated service which not only meets the demand for conference venues, but also hotel accommodation, venues for gala evenings, sightseeing tours of the city and its surroundings as well as other tourist activities.

"Milan deserves a project like Destination Milan" stated Maurizio Lupi, CEO of Fiera Milano Congressi. "Because it deserves the chance to enhance its visibility as a venue for international conferences and events. We have all the necessary requirements here. And that's why Fiera Milano Congressi has started this network, acting as a single contact to promote our facilities and channel the demand towards the venues most suited to the event, offering accommodation at competitive prices and organising concerts, trips to the theatre and gala suppers. Fiera Milano Congressi caters for large scale conferences of an

international calibre. Destination Milan, by implementing a permanent synergy with the city's top venues capable of effectively meeting the needs of a market sector made up of events of no more than 500 delegates but which nonetheless represent 70%* of the global conference market, will enhance what the city has to offer, putting to use - for the benefit of all and with a substantial return for the city's economy - many areas of potential which are only partially exploited today".

Destination Milan therefore springs from the desire to meet a specific market demand: publicising the fact that Milan is fully equipped with organised conference facilities at the service of the organiser and capable of offering economic and organisational benefits.

Since 2002 with MIC - the Milan Convention Centre, Fiera Milano Congressi has created Italy's leading conference centre, propelling Milan into the closed circle of cities favoured by meeting planners as venues for large-scale international conferences. And it has shown that this activity can be profitable.

Now, with Destination Milan, Fiera Milano Congressi - which has up to now managed a total of four conference centres (MIC - Milano Convention Centre in fieramilanocity, the Stella Polare conference centre in fieramilano, Spazio Villa Erba in Como and MoMec - Montecitorio Meeting Centre in Rome) and the major hotels of Milan will be working together at the service of their native city: Milan.

**ICCA statistics report 2007*

www.destinationmilan.it

Work Proceeding On Schedule At ADNEC's ExCeL London Venue

Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Company (ADNEC) has announced that work is proceeding on schedule for the Phase 2 development of its London exhibition complex - ExCeL London. On completion of Phase 2 in Spring 2010, ExCeL London will be significantly larger than any other exhibition centre in the UK capital and will be one of the largest in Europe with a total exhibition floor space of almost 100,000sqm.

His Excellency Ali Saeed Bin Harmal Al Dhaheri, ADNEC MD, said: "The acquisition of ExCeL London was designed to directly support the Abu Dhabi Government's economic diversification strategy. For us to do this we must ensure that ExCeL London can compete with other major European venues in cities such as Paris, Frankfurt and Vienna - ADNEC's

expansion plans for ExCeL make this possible."

Commenting on the development progress Simon Horgan, ADNEC Group CEO said: "Development of ExCeL London Phase 2 is proceeding well and is ahead of schedule in many key areas. The construction contractor is almost one third of the way through its 90 week programme and despite recent poor weather in the UK, they have maintained their momentum."

ADNEC acquired ExCeL London in May 2008 as the first stage of developing a world-wide network of state-of-the-art exhibition and conference venues. It is widely acknowledged that by developing this network, ADNEC will be able to serve the needs of an industry which is increasingly global in its outlook.

ExCeL London was recently chosen as the host venue for the prestigious "The London Summit; Stability, Growth & Jobs" which will bring together leaders of the world's advanced and emerging economies and representatives of international financial institutions to work cooperatively to restore stability and stimulate global economic growth. Leaders will travel from around the globe to attend this crucial event.

www.adnec.ae
www.excel-london.co.uk

Modernisation of the CCD Congress Center Düsseldorf Now Underway

For years, the CCD Congress Center Düsseldorf has numbered among Germany's biggest and most important convention centres. Each year it plays host to some 2,000 events, which attract total audiences of more than 400,000. To ensure that the CCD Congress Center Düsseldorf remains outstandingly positioned on the congress market of the future, extensive modernisation and alteration projects were approved in autumn 2008. Work has now begun on these.

The major innovation in the course of this refurbishment is the integration of a Business-Lounge and a Garden-Lounge into the existing congress centre. Leading on directly from the CCD Congress Center Düsseldorf concourse, these two elements are designed to present visitors at events with a pleasing balance between effective work and relaxing time out.

The Business-Lounge will provide the CCD Congress Center Düsseldorf with modern information and communication headquarters. In attractively designed surroundings and with the support of innovative technology, up to 24

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ODYSSEY magazine

people will be able to hold focused meetings there or work alone. The bright and cheerful room structure and open, barrier-free access will facilitate the workflow.

The Garden-Lounge very close to the Business-Lounge is intended as an oasis of calm in the revamped working atmosphere of the CCD Congress Center Düsseldorf. Resting on benches set on sand under an awning, watching a little water course, delegates can snatch a few moments' relaxation and take the opportunity to unwind. In addition to the two new lounges, further revitalisation measures will be implemented in the coming weeks to place fresh optical accents in the CCD Congress Center Düsseldorf. Besides new colour schemes and illuminated banners in the corporate colour, new info counters and seating, particularly in the concourse area, are planned.

Hilmar Guckert, Managing Director of Düsseldorf Congress, sees this revitalisation as an important and necessary investment in the future. "Over the past few years the CCD Congress Center Düsseldorf has captured a very prominent position on the German meetings market – and that's how we want it to stay in the future. The comprehensive modernisation work will create a uniformly modern ambience throughout the CCD Congress Center Düsseldorf, accommodate new technical requirements and further optimise the premises we offer."

www.ccd.de

Shakespeare Country Launches New 'Conference Bureau' Microsite

Shakespeare Country has announced the launch of its new dedicated Conference Bureau microsite, following the decision at the end of 2008 to launch an independent identity for business tourism in Shakespeare Country. The Shakespeare Country Conference Bureau is a dedicated team of advisors offering a range of free services to support conference and event organisers looking to hold an event in the area.

The new microsite has a number of key functionalities. It details the free services and ways in which the team can assist event organisers with conference venues and corporate events. It also offers a venue and supplier search facility, online enquiry form, information on the corporate gift service and latest news and special offers relevant to event organisers.

Since its launch the microsite has proved to be extremely effective in promoting Shakespeare Country to the conference and events industry. Initial feedback has shown the site to be particularly user friendly, easy to navigate as well as featuring an excellent selection of venues. The Shakespeare Country website is one of the most popular destination websites in the UK. Last year the website won a number of prestigious industry awards and saw a sharp increase of 122% year on year in the number of unique visitors to the site.

An official launch for the Shakespeare Country Conference Bureau will take place on 23 April with the 'Shakespeare Country Celebratory Showcase'. The event, which takes place on Shakespeare's Birthday, will offer conference and event organisers the opportunity to view the destination and experience for themselves how it could benefit their events. The day

includes a networking exhibition at a key Stratford hotel, lunch at a stately home, tours of the area and other venues concluding with a traditional English afternoon tea party.

www.shakespeare-country.co.uk/conference

HOTELS & RESORTS

Hard Rock Hotel San Diego's Meeting Space Expansion Complete

The highly-anticipated transformation of Hard Rock Hotel San Diego's (HRHSD) executive meeting space is complete, bringing the four-diamond property's available meetings and events space offerings to a total of over 40,000 square feet.

HRHSD has become a choice destination of business travelers and meeting planners for its stylish accommodations, state-of-the-art technology and personalized service, and the newly transformed rooms will accommodate increased demand for in-house group space.

"We are eager to debut this spectacular new addition to downtown San Diego's meetings and events options," said Matt Greene, general manager of Hard Rock Hotel San Diego. "We decided soon after opening to expand our meeting space in response to growing demand, as San Diego truly steps out as the desired destination for corporate meetings and conventions. This is not your ordinary meeting space however, it's what one would expect from Hard Rock - contemporary sophistication and technology with a hint of rock n' roll."

The new multi-functional 7,500 square-foot, dual-level space, features seven new breakout rooms ranging in size from 650 to 1,900 square feet, offering groups from 10 to 180 the ability to wow their guests with unforgettable meetings and conferences.

All of the property's event space was strategically designed to accommodate everything from intimate meetings to extravagant large-scale parties, but was expressly configured to offer meeting planners one of the city's largest contiguous event spaces, meaning attendees can easily flow from one meeting to the next and companies have the option of commandeering an entire floor or wing of the hotel.

San Francisco-based Hatch Design was tapped to create an atmosphere as visually-stimulating as it is functional.

Taking advantage of its hip, urban surroundings, each breakout room features floor-to-ceiling windows that maximize natural lighting while offering panoramic views of downtown San Diego. Platinum, textured reptile-inspired wall coverings and stunning black etched murals of rock legends add the distinctive Hard Rock edge to each room. In addition, the wing is fully tech-enabled with WiFi-ready group connectivity, customizable electronic reader boards with optional video streams and individually-controlled music zones enabling clients to load in personal

Warwick Fiji Resort & Spa Wins Best Restaurant Award

The Warwick Fiji Resort & Spa re-affirmed its status as one of Fiji's leading holiday destinations by winning the 'Best Restaurant Award' at the recent AON Fiji Excellence in Tourism Awards 2009 held in Denarau.

Cited for its unique setting, friendly staffs, excellent seafood menus and a superb wine selection, the Wicked Walu restaurant was selected as one of the finest restaurants in Fiji.

Elegantly tucked in the heart of the Warwick's private island, the Wicked Walu restaurant is connected to the mainland by a causeway which at sunset, is lit with torches that offer a welcoming feeling to an evening of unforgettable dining experience.

Its unique island scenery, relaxed surroundings and the understated style of the Wicked Walu restaurant complements the mouth watering zesty dishes prepared by its very own dedicated local chefs. This combined with the ambience of the restaurant and the tropical prevailing sea breeze sets the mood for a truly Pacific dining experience.

This award also serves as a reflection of the management's and staff's commitment to ensuring that this unique island restaurant continues to deliver quality customer service and meets every guest's expectations.

www.warwickhotels.com

playlists.

Its signature "Rock Star" service coupled with an ideal location at the entrance to the city's Gaslamp Quarter and across from the San Diego Convention Center has made Hard Rock Hotel San Diego the city's preferred meetings and conventions hotel. Since its opening in November 2007, the property has hosted numerous blue-chip companies including Cisco Systems, Microsoft and Ernst & Young, as well as served as the official host hotel for several of San Diego's largest conventions including Comic Con and ASR. The property was also selected as the site for this year's American Society of Association Executives' annual conference.

www.hardrockhotelsd.com
www.hardrock.com

Amanresorts Launches Unprecedented New Wine And Spirits Program

Amanresorts, known for its luxury resorts throughout the world, has launched a new Wine and Spirits Program that makes available some of the world's most coveted wines and spirits. Partnerships have been forged with handpicked family and boutique producers from every corner of the globe and Amanresorts' own import company ensures that every bottle of wine and spirits maintains its integrity when it reaches its final destination, whether Bhutan, Bali or Beijing.

The intimate scale of each Amanresort allows a focus on producers noted for quality and craftsmanship instead of volume. Amanresorts' new partners all share the vision, mission and ethos of Amanresorts: to create and provide products made with soul, a respect for craft and, above all, passion.

From California's Napa and Anderson Valleys to Italy's Abruzzo to France's Champagne region, Amanresorts' more than 250 partners include artisanal wine and spirits producers such as Champagne Salon, Domaine Leroy, Fisher Vineyards, Martin Miller's Gin and Duncan Taylor Single Cask Rare Scotch Whiskeys - names that regularly appear on the world's 'Best Of' lists. A partnership has also been forged with Riedel Glassworks of Austria.

Many producers are developing reserves and single-vineyard bottlings of their finest vintages exclusively for Amanresorts. Others have made previously off-limits caves, private reserves and personal library selections available to Amanresorts alone. Amanresorts can also arrange for its guests to be welcomed into the wineries, chateaux and homes of partners around the world.

Such weighty names do not translate into daunting wine lists or over-the-top prices. According to head cellar master, Alejandro Ortiz, "Amanresorts will introduce wine menus designed, not to intimidate, but to reveal flavors and varietals that tell the stories of the families behind the wines. We encourage guests to explore new producers that embody the spirit of their stay at Amanresorts."

Dedicated cellar masters in Beijing, New Delhi and Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand) are on hand to help guests navigate these distinctive offerings. Staff members have received extensive training in wine, spirits, mixology and cigars.

Several Aman properties plan a full-scale rollout throughout the year. Amangani in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the first Aman to receive a Wine Spectator's Award of Excellence, has introduced an innovative cocktail program and a selection of specialty spirits. Amanpuri in Thailand offers a 'Master' wine list of approximately 150 wines and a reserve list of rare vintages with a special focus on Italy. Amansara in Siem Reap, Cambodia focuses on French wines and serves a superb selection from the Domaine Leroy in Burgundy. Amandari in Bali will feature an all-new wine - the Ubud Rosé - a blend of

Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Syrah and Zinfandel created exclusively for Amanresorts.

Beijing's Aman at Summer Palace features signature wines from the Hall family at Long Meadow Ranch and several vintages and library selections from Chateau Palmer in Bordeaux's Margaux district to complement its Chinese, French and international cuisine. And in an unprecedented partnership with Moët-Hennessy, Aman at Summer Palace offers Martin Miller's Gin as well as cognacs and scotches never before available in China.

At Aman New Delhi, house wines include Mas La Plana Estate, considered among the best in Spain; dry Scalabrone Rosé from the Antinori family of Guado Al Tasso in Bolgheri, Italy and champagne from the House of Champagne Jaquesson, a small family estate producing fewer than 300,000 bottles a year and one of Napoleon's favorite wines. Single malt scotches from Scotland's most celebrated distilleries, such as Bowmore, Dallas Dhu and Highland Park, are available. Each room features a special 30-year-old single malt scotch and a bottle of L'Inde - a wine made in collaboration with the world-famous Chateau Cos d'Estournel of Bordeaux whose founder had a penchant for all things Indian. A premium selection of cigars from around the world, to be paired with sherry, vintage port or a 1945 Madeira, will also be available.

www.amanresorts.com

Pan Pacific Whistler Hotels, British Columbia Announce "Spring Fling"

For those looking to get away for a little "Spring Fling," Pan Pacific Whistler Mountainside and Pan Pacific Whistler Village Centre are offering guests a special offer that accommodates each traveler's "preferences." Available from April 26 through June 25, 2009, guests who book their spring "preferences" getaway online at panpacificwest.com will receive the best prevailing rates (starting as low as CAD\$139) as well as guaranteed late check-out until 1:00 p.m. and an additional choice from the following "preferences": free parking (value \$25.00/day); \$30 spa voucher; \$30 Solomon voucher; option at Village Centre (only), pet stay free (\$25 value); OR option at Mountainside (only), breakfast for two (\$30 value).

As Winter melts into Spring visitors will enjoy a bounty of recreational options, including everything from golf, hiking, canopy tours and horseback riding to a vast selection of water sports, fishing and river rafting.

Hiking/Walking Tours: It's said there are more hiking trails in Whistler than one could explore in an entire season. Everything from day hikes to overnight back-country expeditions are available. Challenge yourself with one of the more technical hiking experiences like Via Ferrata, Glacier Hikes, Rap Jumping (face forward rappel), a high alpine trek like the "High Note Trail" or Tree Trek through an old growth rainforest.

Water sports: With five lakes and countless

rivers, water sports enthusiasts will enjoy the menu of options, including canoeing, kayaking, sailing, jet boating, white-water rafting, windsurfing or swimming in one of the many crystal clear lakes in the valley.

Golf: Recognized as "One of the best golf resorts in the world" by Golf Magazine, Whistler boasts four world-class golf courses. Designed by Arnold Palmer, the 18-hole, 72 par Whistler Golf Club is ranked as one of Canada's Top 25 resort courses and features nine lakes, two winding creeks, rich rolling greens and magnificent vistas. The 71 par Nicklaus North Golf Course winds alongside glacier-fed Green Lake with panoramic mountain vistas and is a Jack Nicklaus "Signature Design." The Robert Trent Jones Jr. designed Chateau Whistler Golf Course is a 72 par course has an elevation gain of nearly 400 feet and has been recognized as "Mountain Golf at its Finest." The Robert Cupp-designed Big Sky Golf and Country Club is tucked next to the massive Mount Currie (just 25 minutes north of Whistler) and features 18 holes with 360-degree mountain views and bent grass on tees, fairways and greens.

Biking: The resort's Valley Trail system provides bicyclists, in-line skaters and joggers with a network of paved trails that connect Whistler Village to each of the various destinations throughout the Valley. For mountain bikers who prefer a greater challenge, Whistler's Mountain Bike Park offers unparalleled excitement. There are over 60 km of trails to explore for the novice beginner or the hard core rider. Maps and bikes are available for rent throughout the Valley.

Heli-Sightseeing: For a bird's-eye view of the Valley, various companies provide helicopter and floatplane tours including everything from a 20-minute overview to a full day excursion with gourmet lunch on a glacier. Heli-hiking and -mountain biking trips are also available and campers may opt to fly in for overnights and hike/bike out. Glider tours are also available which soar over the mountains and glide over the valleys of the Pemberton Meadows.

The Family: In addition to the above activities, Whistler Resort has other options which the whole family can enjoy together, including the Adventure Zone which offers mini golf, an Alpine Slide, a maze, trapeze, a "great" climbing wall, trampolines, and bear viewing tours - all of which can be booked as combination packages for families and/or groups.

Horseback Riding: Horses are available for riders who want to explore the lush meadows, rushing rivers, shaded lakeside paths, and/or the alpine terrain. A backcountry trip to Whistler's Ancient Cedar Gove is an unforgettable experience for the adept rider.

Fishing: Guided summer trips to secret valley and alpine locations are available and accessible by 4x4, boat, helicopter, or plane.

Misc: Whistler also offer: paragliding, racquet sports, summer (glacier) skiing and snowboarding, individual and group guided tours, ATV's, bungee jumping, Ziptrek ecotours (ride on a series of zipline cables over rugged mountain terrain), and backcountry four wheel drive or "Hummer" tours.

www.panpacific.com

Accor Announces Four More Hotel Developments In Thailand

Accor, the international hotel operator in Asia Pacific and largest operator in Thailand, has announced the development of four more hotel developments in Thailand – with Fico. The hotels are Novotel Bangkok Fenix Ploenchit, Novotel Bangkok Fenix Silom, Mercure Samui Fenix and Hotel Muse - a member of the MGallery Collection.

Michael Issenberg, Chairman and Chief Operating Officer for Accor Asia Pacific, commented "We are very pleased to have strengthened our partnership with Fico, whom also own Le Fenix Hotel in Bangkok, which Accor has managed since 2007. These new hotels fulfill the geographic needs of business and leisure travelers to Bangkok and beyond, with some of Thailand's best known hotel brands."

Three of the four hotels will be in the heart of Bangkok.

Novotel Bangkok Fenix Ploenchit (380 rooms) is positioned directly next to Ploenchit sky train station, close to major shopping arenas, entertainment and nightlife. With its location and wide range of facilities, it is expected to attract both business and leisure travelers and will join the network in 2010.

Another Bangkok development is Novotel Bangkok Fenix Silom, (formerly known as Silom Plaza Hotel) which will undergo extensive renovations and is scheduled to join the network in 2010. The hotel is conveniently located in the business district and is within walking distance to Chao Phraya River while also providing easy access to the Expressway. It will feature 225 rooms, a restaurant, bar, lounge, swimming pool, fitness centre and business centre.

Hotel Muse (166 rooms) will become the second member of the MGallery Collection in Bangkok (joining Vie Hotel Bangkok which opened in late 2008). This design oriented hotel will be located in one of Bangkok's most livable areas on Langsuan Road with its long strip of gastronomic dining and entertainment options. The hotel is scheduled for completion in 2011.

Hotel Muse and Novotel Bangkok Fenix Ploenchit are newly built hotels.

Mercure Samui Fenix, formerly known as Samui Park, is located on lively Lamai Beach. The hotel has 52 rooms and 8 villas, and features a meeting room, swimming pool, kid's pools, restaurant and bar. It is expected to join the network in the third quarter of this year after renovations and a re branding process.

"These 4 hotels take the total Accor hotel projects in Thailand to 11 hotels and resorts and demonstrate our confidence in the future of Thailand Tourism. The country remains well serviced by international long haul and regional airlines, has a large selection of quality destinations, an evolved tourism infrastructure and some picture perfect resort locations. Thailand like a strong brand is recognised as safe and affordable and a destination that

travelers often return and they will soon enough" added Mr Issenberg.

Last month, Accor announced the development of seven projects in Bangkok, Samui, Phuket, and Krabi under the Novotel, Mercure, and ibis brands. These hotels are Novotel Bangkok Platinum, Novotel Phuket Kamala Bay, Mercure Samui Buri, all seasons Samui Chaweng, ibis Bangkok Nana, ibis Kata Phuket, and ibis Krabi. All are scheduled to open by 2011. These 11 projects add to the existing Thailand network of 39 hotels and resorts.

Earn Free Nights At Up To 1,500 Choice Hotels

While many businesses and consumers across the country are scaling back, many are finding that Choice Hotels provides more value than ever, with great savings and amenities, allowing travelers to spend more time enjoying their trips with the money they didn't spend back at their hotel. And now, guests can also earn a free night at up to 1,500 Choice Hotels properties after just two separate stays this spring.

"With the relaxing rooms, free breakfast and

free high speed internet offered at many of our hotels, our guests are enjoying great travel savings," said Chris Malone, chief marketing officer for Choice Hotels. "Now, by offering a quicker way to earn free nights as well, travelers can enjoy even more of the money they save by staying with Choice Hotels."

After every second qualifying stay, booked at choicehotels.com or 800.4CHOICE, at any Choice hotel this spring in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean, guests will automatically receive enough bonus Choice Privileges points to redeem for a free night at up to 1,500 hotels. To ensure the widest range of travelers can participate in this promotion, Choice Hotels has extended this offer at all ten of its brands, as well as its new Ascend Collection hotel membership program for the first time.

"This has historically been one of our most popular and successful promotions with Choice Privileges members," said Greg Brown, vice president of Choice Privileges. "But it's also the ideal time for new guests to enroll in Choice Privileges since it's free, available at all of our hotels in the North America and the Caribbean and they can earn a free night at up to 1,500 hotels with just two stays."

GROUND TRANSPORT

Eurail Pass Sales Challenged By Economic Downturn

The Eurail Group G.I.E. has reported a modest drop in Eurail Pass passengers triggered by the global economic downturn, but expects a full recovery in the coming years. The Eurail Group's passes offer flexible travel throughout Europe to overseas visitors. With a total of just over 433,000 customers, passenger numbers in 2008 were down by 7.5% in comparison to 2007.

"We are not experiencing an unwillingness to travel, rather a decline in travel due to people having to prioritize their budgets. For many, holidays abroad need to be put on hold. Once the market picks up, we expect sales to grow again," explained Ana Dias e Seixas, the Eurail Group's Marketing Director.

"The Eurail Group and its authorized general sales agents foresee that passenger numbers will continue to fall in the immediate future. Subsequently, we're concentrating on offering additional customer benefits to make the product more attractive, so we're ready when the travel market recovers and people start taking trips abroad again. We expect a modest performance in 2009, but everything depends on the evolving economic situation."

North America is the biggest market (50% of the market share), followed by the Asia-Pacific region (38%), which explains the challenging times Eurail Passes currently face. Signs of the weakening world economy are especially prevalent in the United States as well as in South Korea. However, several of the key markets are still showing considerable growth. Sales from Japan, Australia, and Canada were up by between 4 and 8%. A special global promotion launched during the fourth quarter

of 2008 helped generate additional sales.

Whilst most customers (around 57%) still wish to discover as much of Europe as possible, opting for a pass covering 3 to 5 connecting countries, or the classic Eurail Global Pass, which covers 21 countries, it's clear that times are changing. Launched in 2006, the relatively new Eurail One Country Pass range has become an important product line for Eurail with market trends favoring shorter trips to fewer destinations. Sales of this product are up by 14%.

Traditional western European destinations such as France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria and the Benelux region remain favorites for visitors - however, there is also an increased interest in discovering Eastern Europe. Consequently, the Czech Republic was introduced in the Global and Select Pass schemes this year, and Bulgaria became a One Country Pass member.

The Eurail Group considers climate change a serious issue and believes that passes can be used as a tool to stimulate environmentally friendly travel. Rail travel also has many other benefits: not only are trains safe, convenient and efficient, a well-planned trip can be very cost effective with one pass being used to visit multiple destinations across the whole of Europe. With today's modern high-speed connections, journey times are surprisingly quick. A direct train ride from Berlin to Munich covering 410 miles takes under six hours; from Copenhagen to Stockholm, you can travel 400 miles in just over five hours; and Paris to Bordeaux (a 350-mile journey) takes a mere three hours.

The Eurail Group offers a range of rail passes to suit all itineraries.

www.eurail.com

PEOPLE

San Francisco CVB Appoints Executive VP & Chief Marketing Officer

The San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau (SFCVB) has named Matt Stiker as executive vice president and chief marketing officer. Stiker will be responsible for developing and executing marketing strategies and programs that uniquely identify San Francisco from its competitors and promote San Francisco and the surrounding region as the most compelling convention and leisure destination in the world.

The decision to add a Chief Marketing Officer position is part of the SFCVB's internal reorganization to best position the Bureau for the future. Effective April 1, Stiker will report to the Bureau's President and CEO Joe D'Alessandro. In addition to consumer marketing responsibilities, he will work closely with Leonard Hoops, executive vice president & chief customer officer, to create and maintain a strong marketing presence for San Francisco's convention and travel industry products, and Dan Goldes, executive vice president & chief stakeholder officer, to develop effective, mutually beneficial marketing partnerships. Stiker will also work with Laurie Armstrong, vice president of public affairs, to develop and integrate public relations strategies that correlate with the Bureau's key themes.

Stiker, with 23 years of experience in advertising and consumer marketing, has led innovative and highly successful marketing programs for global consumer brands from Coca-Cola and adidas to ESPN and Xbox. Most recently, Stiker was with Hewlett-Packard, where he led joint marketing partnerships and activation efforts with DreamWorks, the NBA, and Starbucks. Prior to that, he served as senior vice president at McCann Worldgroup San Francisco as well as at Publicis in the West, Seattle, where he ran the State of Washington Tourism account. In addition, he developed award-winning advertising campaigns for the State of Oregon Tourism Division, and the Oregon Film & Video Office.

Anthony Mchale Appointed GM, Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has announced the appointment of Anthony McHale as General Manager of Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London effective 6 April 2009.

Mr. McHale is a veteran hotelier with more than 30 years experience of managing luxury hotels around the world. He joins Mandarin Oriental from Orient Express Hotels, where his most recent position was General Manager of Keswick Hall Club and Estate in Charlottesville Virginia, that has been frequently listed as one of the "world's best hotels" in various international publications. Mr. McHale was also General Manager of the award-winning Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana

from 2000 to 2005. Prior to this, Mr. McHale was with The Hotel Bel Air, Los Angeles where he held the position of Hotel Manager from 1997 to 2000. Over the previous 15 years, Mr McHale gained significant experience through senior hotel management positions with a variety of hotel groups, including The Peninsula Hotels and Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts.

Amikam Cohen Appointed Chairman, El Al Israel Airlines

EL AL, Israel's national airline, has announced the appointment of Amikan Cohen as Chairman, EL AL Israel Airlines. Cohen has served as President/CEO of some of the most successful companies in Israel and was most recently president of a leading telecommunications company, Partner Communications Co. Ltd., and previously at the well-known food companies Elite and Strauss.

"Without a doubt, Amikan Cohen is one of the leading figures in the Israeli business world. His vision and leadership will be a valuable asset to the EL AL Board, management and employees, both now and in the future," said Haim Romano, President, EL AL Israel Airlines. "We would also like to thank Major-General (Res.) Amnon Lipkin-Shachak for his significant contribution as interim Chairman and leading EL AL during this difficult period."

New VP Sales, Marketing and E-Commerce For Elegant Hotels Group

Elegant Hotels Group, Barbados, welcomes Sylvia Scholey as the new Vice President of Sales, Marketing and E-Commerce. In her new role, Sylvia will direct Elegant Hotels Group's worldwide marketing strategies and initiatives, growth in sales and all components of the e-commerce channel.

Sylvia brings over 15 years of international travel and hospitality management experience to the position. As the director of business development at The Drake Hotel, Sylvia led a record annual sales growth of 15% and a historic high of over \$60 million in revenues. Prior to this achievement, she initiated distribution strategies with online partners resulting in \$20 million incremental annual revenue for Hilton Hotels as the revenue regional director of the Caribbean and Central America. Sylvia has optimized online distribution strategies, developed automated sales performance tracking technology, successfully led a team to open seven hotel projects overseeing training in technology platforms, revenue management practices and marketing strategies.

Her years with Hilton International in London, Paris, Belfast, Caribbean and Central American regions, along with management experience at Chicago's landmark Drake Hotel, make her uniquely qualified to grow Elegant Hotels Group's worldwide market share.

Wyndham Brand Adds Experienced Sales and Operations Leaders

In a focused strategy to expand the global reach of the Wyndham brand and exceed customer satisfaction goals, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts has announced the expansion of its sales and operations teams with the addition of industry veterans Bill Scanlon, senior vice president of sales; Tim Rector, vice president of resort sales; Wayne Susser, vice president of brand operations; John Green, regional vice president of operations; and Kevin Regan, regional vice president of operations.

Bill Scanlon previously held executive-level sales and marketing positions with Marriott International and HEI Hotels and Resorts. Most recently he was president of Strategic Solution Partners, a lodging and hospitality consulting firm in Drexel Hill, Pa., responsible for the development and implementation of the company's overall business strategies.

In his new role as senior vice president of sales for Wyndham Hotels and Resorts, Scanlon will be responsible for defining and implementing the Wyndham brand's sales culture, executing programs that provide valuable customer insights, increased customer value and revenue-generating opportunities.

Tim Rector previously held executive-level sales and marketing positions with Starwood and LXR Luxury Resorts and the former Wyndham International. Most recently, he was area vice president of sales and marketing for Starwood in White Plains, N.Y. Based in Florida, he oversaw sales and marketing operations for the company's managed resorts in the Caribbean.

In his new role as vice president of resort sales, Rector will be responsible for the overall leadership of the Wyndham resort collection, overseeing all sales and marketing functions including advertising, promotions, distribution sales and direct sales. In addition, he will play a pivotal role in the recruitment, development and management of each hotel's sales and catering teams.

Wayne Susser previously served in executive-level operations roles with Hilton Hotels Corporation and Marriott. Most recently, he was senior director of international brand support for Hilton's Doubletree brand in Beverly Hills, Calif., responsible for managing international relationships with potential ownership groups and management companies.

As vice president of operations, Susser will oversee the Wyndham brand's license partner operations team and will be responsible for streamlining business processes across all hotels. In addition, he will work closely with independent, third-party research firms including J.D. Powers and Associates to hone quality measures and increase brand performance.