

TRAVELAGENTS THRIVE IN NZ

TAANZ CEO Andrew Olsen talks to Travel Daily...

HARD LANDING

A major Chinese airline is in trouble after a dangerous landing

ASIAN SECRETS Luxury travel company Secret Escapes adds first four Asian markets

JUMBO ARRIVAL

Guangzhou will become Qatar Airways' first A380 destination in China



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10 May 2016 🕨 P 1

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New Zealand agents thrive in digital world

Travel Daily talks to TAANZ CEO Andrew Olsen...

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hile many voices have predicted the death of travel agents – a sector apparently destined to fail in a new era of online booking options – one country at least appears to be bucking the trend.

Speaking to *Travel Daily* this week, Andrew Olsen, CEO of the Travel Agents Association of New Zealand (TAANZ), which represents 90% of the country's agencies, revealed that New Zealand's unique consumer landscape is allowing travel agencies to not only survive, but thrive.

"Many people are talking about a downturn in travel agency sector, but we're not seeing that," Olsen told *Travel Daily*. "There was a decline, but that has arrested and flattened."

Travel agents in New Zealand have, according to Olsen, emerged from the "DIY onslaught" of online travel bookings, and bricks and mortar agencies are now seeing a resurgence.

Rising levels of inbound and outbound tourism (the sector has now overtaken dairy to become New Zealand's number one GDP earner), supportive government



policies and rise in the number of airlines permitted landing rights in the country, have combined with a "wane in the romance of selfbooking" to fuel a strong rebound for New Zealand's travel agents, according to Olsen.

But it is the country's strong community culture that has really allowed travel agencies to thrive in New Zealand.

"There is a unique business landscape," Olsen explained. "Many provincial towns and cities have three, four or more travel agencies on the High Street. They deal with communities. For many consumers, their small town is the epicentre of their life - they've built up a 20-year relationship with their travel agent."

Travel agents across the country's towns and cities have "thousands of years of intelligence and experience", Olsen said, which gives them a unique advantage over the vast array of online shopping options now available. **Continued on page three...**



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Older foundations discovered under Forbidden City



rchaeologists in Beijing have discovered the foundations of older buildings underneath the Forbidden City, Xinhua reports. The complex, also known as the Palace Museum, was believed to have been constructed between 1406 and 1420, during Ming dynasty. But remnants of buildings unearthed recently could date back as far as the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Forbidden City was the seat China's imperial rulers until 1912.

30,000 visit Shanghai Disneyland in trial run

S hanghai Disney Resort welcomed approximately 30,000 visitors last week, in a test run ahead of its official opening next month. The *Shanghai Daily*

EXPERIEN€E

OUR A330

reports that theme park itself was opened to around 10,000 staff and their relatives, while the Wishing Star Park and Disney Town, the nearby retail and entertainment

BW | Best Western

area, welcomed the general public. The park, which will become the world's largest Disneyland resort, will officially open to the public on 16 June.

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Qatar Airways reveals first A380 destination in China

Guangzhou to welcome double-decker jet from July...



atar Airways has announced plans to fly its largest aircraft, the Airbus A380, to China for the first time.

On 1 July, the Doha-based carrier will deploy the doubledecker jet on its direct service to Guangzhou. This will make the southern Chinese city only the fourth global destination to welcome Qatar Airways' A380, after London, Paris and Bangkok.

"This year marks our eighth anniversary of operations in Guangzhou and we are delighted to celebrate this milestone by introducing our... A380 aircraft," said Qatar Airways' group chief executive, Akbar Al Baker. "The Pearl River Delta region is one of China's most vibrant trade and travel hubs and we have witnessed

DAY IN NUMBERS

Oakwood has signed its first

property in Malaysia

steady passenger growth both to and from Guangzhou over the years. Passengers from Asia can now enjoy their entire journey on our luxurious A380 aircraft when they fly to popular cities such as London and Paris via... Hamad International Airport in Doha."

Qatar Airways' A380 will depart Doha daily at 0230 and arrive in Guangzhou's Baiyun International Airport at 1530. The return flight will then take off at 0055 and arrive back in the Qatari capital at 0400.

The 517-seat A380 offers eight flat-bed seats in first class and 48 in business class, both in a 1-2-1 configuration. The first class seats have a 90-inch (2.3-metre) pitch and come equipped with a 26-inch HD in-flight entertainment screen, while the business class seats



have an 80-inch pitch and a 17inch IFE screen.

There are two economy class cabins - one on the upper deck in a 2-4-2 configuration (pictured) and one on the lower deck in a 3-4-3 layout. Each economy class seat has a 32-inch seat pitch and a seat-back IFE screen.

The A380 will replace the Boeing 777-300ER aircraft Qatar Airways currently deploys on its Guangzhou route.

Raffles brings Asian luxury to another Chinese city



R affles has unveiled plans to bring its brand of Asian luxury to the eastern Chinese city of Suzhou.

Scheduled to open in 2020, the Raffles Suzhou will be a brand new 150-room hotel located in the Suzhou New District Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone (SND), which is home to companies including Logitech, Canon and Motorola.

"Suzhou represents a very exciting opportunity for the Raffles brand," said Peter French. president of Raffles Hotels & Resorts. "As one of China's leading economic centres, with a growing arts and cultural scene, the city is quickly establishing itself as a very popular regional travel destination. Likewise, with a new international airport in the pipeline and the city attracting a greater amount of foreign investment, there is a growing need for luxury hotel options in the market."

The new hotel will offer five food & beverage venues, including the brand's signature Writer's Bar and Long Bar, plus a Raffles Spa and more than 1,400m² of function space. The development will also include a "limited selection" of Raffles Residences, details of which will be announced at a later date.

Raffles currently operates Chinese hotels in Beijing and Hainan Island, and is also planning to open in Shenzhen in 2019. *Click here for full story.*

China Eastern punished for landing incident

Secret Retreats has

Etihad opens new Melbourne lounge



than 70 spirits and aperitifs. Other amenities include separate male and female bathrooms with shower facilities, male and female prayer rooms, a children's playroom and a luggage room. The lounge will also be connected with free Wi-Fi, power sockets and USB ports. The launch of lounge comes as Etihad prepares to launch its first Airbus A380 flights to Melbourne next month. *Click here for full story.*

hina Eastern Airlines has been punished after an incident at Chengdu Airport which resulted in damage to one of its aircraft. The Shanghai Daily reports that the airline, which is headquartered in Shanghai, has had two new routes suspended by the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), and will not be able to apply for new routes or additional flights. The restrictions only apply to China Eastern's branch in Sichuan province. Two pilots involved in the incident have also been suspended. The Airbus A319 aircraft suffered damage to its tail and tyres during a landing attempt at Kangding Airport. Having failed to land property, the aircraft flew back to Chengdu. Bad weather was cited as a possible factor, but the CAAC ruled that the pilots approached the runway too fast.

launched in its first four Asian markets

517

Qatar Airways will start flying its 517-seat Airbus A380 to Guangzhou this summer

30,000

The number of people who visited Shanghai Disneyland last weekend, during a preopening trial run

13,940,000

The number of passengers carried by AirAsia in Q1, up 17% year-on-year

in

tihad Airways has opened its new Premium Lounge at Melbourne Airport.

Measuring 800m² and with floor-to-ceiling glass windows that overlook the runway, the new facility is the airline's largest Premium Lounge outside Abu Dhabi. It can seat 133 people and features a 26seat dining area with a la carte and buffet options, plus a bar stocked with local Victorian wines and more

China Southern buys new crew training simulators

C hina Southern Airlines has moved to enhance its cabin crew training capabilities with the purchase of two new simulators. The Guangzhou-based carrier has selected an A330 Cabin Emergency Evacuation Trainer (CEET) and A320 Door Trainer (DT) from UK-based manufacturer, EDM. These will enable it to train flight attendants in key safety procedures such as door operation, evacuation, fire and smoke training.

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Thai AirAsia secures fleet financing



Asia's CEO Tassapon Bijle

hai AirAsia has secured a financial deal that will enable it to expand its fleet of aircraft. The agreement, penned with Thailand's Krungsri Leasing, a subsidiary of the Bank of Ayudhya, will provide funds for the purchase of the low-cost carrier's new Airbus A320neo aircraft. Once delivered by the end of 2016, this will become the 50th aircraft in the Thai AirAsia fleet.



Andrew Olsen interview

(Continued from P1)

he online space is still important in New Zealand however, with many consumers using the internet to research their trips. But in many cases they will take their online findings to their travel agent, and consumers are "happy to pay" for the expert advice and peace of mind that an agent provides.

"Travellers research online, then travel agents put customer care and protection on top of that," said Olsen. "The customer is telling the agent: 'this is what we want: how do we get there?'.

Technology has also provided opportunities for agents to move out of bricks and mortar, Olsen revealed, leading to a substantial increase in home-based agents, or "travel brokers".

And harnessing new technology will also be extremely important in allowing bricks and mortar agencies to expand and improve their customer offerings in future. "The big thing now for travel agents to consider is: 'how many

more customers can I touch without expanding my infrastructure'?" said Olsen. Technology, and especially harnessing the ability to bring the travel experience to life, will become an increasingly important part of the travel agency role, he believes.

Envisaging a future of state-ofthe-art high street stores, which "spoil customers with gadgetry". Olsen predicted that travel agencies will need to provide customers with a "virtual pre-travel experience" - sharing destination information and imagery with their clients in a virtual way, and not necessarily in the office.

"Technology will increase the capabilities of travel agents, increasing their scale," said Olsen. And this, he believes, forms part of a bright future for the travel agent sector in New Zealand.

"[I believe] we will continue to see year-on-year growth - agents will continue to successfully exist and grow. The future is really exciting for our industry," he concluded.

BY THE WAY

Boeing jet embarks on strange journey across the sea



A decommissioned Boeing 767 recently swapped its life in the clouds for a journey across the high seas, floating on top of a cargo barge.

Shannon Airport shared video of the former Transaero Airlines aircraft as it made its way from the airport, along the open waters Ireland's Atlantic coastline, to the port of Enniscrone. Upon arrival, the aircraft will embark on another unusual venture, becoming a unique accommodation option at a glamping resort.

Hundreds of onlookers awaited the plane's arrival in Enniscrone and the plane's unusual journey inspired the Twitter hashtag **#**Planesailing. **CLICK HERE** to watch the video.

India plans airport-style lounges at train stations

ndian rail passengers will soon be able to relax in comfort before their journeys following the establishment of new "Executive Lounges" at stations across the country.

The Railways Ministry has unveiled plans to set up new lounges at 49 stations in India. These new facilities, which will be available to all passengers for an entry fee, will offer services

such as Wi-Fi, F&B, bathroom facilities and concierge services. Currently, Executive Lounges are in operation at stations in New Delhi, Jaipur and Agra. Click here for full story.



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Amadeus allows airlines to auction seat upgrades



A madeus has teamed up with Plusgrade, a solution that allows air passengers to bid for upgrades to other seats.

Plusgrade provides technology to airlines so that passengers can bid to move to a higher class, or to a seat in the same cabin which has no neighbouring passenger. After buying their ticket, passengers can place online bids for these seats, and find out if their offer has been accepted between 24 and 72 hours prior to departure.

This service will now be provided to airlines as part of the Amadeus Altéa system, which controls how airlines manage their flight bookings.

"Enhancing merchandising capabilities for our airline customers is a priority for us at Amadeus," said Julia Sattel, Amadeus' senior vice president of airline IT. "We have been focusing on developing partnerships in order to deliver additional innovative solutions fast. Through this partnership, Altéa customers will be able to implement this solution much quicker than before."

Qantas, an Altéa customer, has already started using the Plusgrade system. *Click here for full story.*



O akwood Asia Pacific has signed an agreement that will lead to the launch of its first property in Malaysia. Scheduled to open in the second half of 2016, the new Oakwood Hotel & Residence Kuala Lumpur will be located in the historic Ampang district of Malaysia's largest city. The management agreement was signed with Plenitude Berhad.

"Kuala Lumpur is an important destination for us, especially with the Malaysian capital emerging as one of Southeast Asia's most alluring metropoles," said Dean Schreiber, managing director of Oakwood Asia Pacific. "We have seen a rising demand for a dual hotel and residence property in the city and know that Oakwood Hotel & Residence Kuala Lumpur will be an environment in which guests will feel right at home. As more travellers appreciate the benefits of the Oakwood accommodation offering, we will continue to grow our portfolio to meet these demands around the globe."

Oakwood Hotel & Residence Kuala Lumpur will feature 252 units, plus a swimming pool, children's wading pool, gym and restaurant. It will become 28th Oakwood-branded property across 16 Asian cities. *Click here for full story.*

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Indonesia wants Wakatobi flights

ndonesia's Tourism Minister has said he expects new flights to be launched to Wakatobi, the island chain located off the southeast coast of Sulawesi. The Antara news agency reported Arief Yahya as saying that flights connecting Wakatobi with Jakarta and Bali could be launched as part of efforts to boost the islands' tourism industry.

"Wakatobi has been established as one of the 10 major tourist destinations in Indonesia, and therefore the government is expected to open regular scheduled flight services connecting Jakarta to Wakatobi and Jakarta-DenpasarWakatobi," the minister was quoted saying. His comments were made at the launch of a new passenger terminal at Matahora Airport, on Wakatobi's Wangi-Wangi Island.

Home to the Wakatobi National Park, Indonesia wants to promote the islands as a world-class diving and snorkelling destination.



R CI, Wyndham's holiday exchange unit, has added three new resorts to its portfolio in Yatsugatakekogen in Yamanashi, and the Hotel Ambient Azumino in Nagano made available to RCI's 3.8



Japan. A new agreement with Cest la vie Resort Izumigo will see the Hotel Ambient Izukogen Annex in Shizuoka, Neo-Oriental Resort million global exchange members. RCI now offers a collection of approximately 4,300 resorts in more than 100 countries.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Many people are talking about a downturn in travel agency sector, but we're not seeing that."

Andrew Olsen, CEO of the Travel Agents Association of New Zealand (TAANZ)

Thai AirAsia X mulls Middle East

Thai AirAsia X could start flying to Iran and Muscat in the coming months, as it prepares to expand into the Middle East. The *Bangkok Post* reported unnamed "industry executives" as saying that flights from Bangkok to Tehran and Muscat could launch as early as August 2016, using its fleet of two-class Airbus aircraft. The airline would compete with Oman Air and Thai Airways on the Muscat route, and with Iran's Mahan Air on the Tehran service.

Location : Bangkok Salary : Negotiable

About the role :

- Writing the daily Travel Daily Asia e-magazine and managing the Asia section of our website, www.traveldailymedia.com;
- Sourcing daily content and maintaining strong relations with the Asian travel industry;
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- Conducting interviews with key travel industry executives;
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- Must have experience in travel journalism or related field;
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- Must have good knowledge of WordPress and social media.

For more information, please contact **mark@traveldailymedia.com**. We regret that unsuccessful applicants will not be contacted.

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m Valentine (left)

chief executive of Secret Escapes.

destination for customers looking

to book affordable luxury holidays,

and it seems pretty clear to us

that there is a strong desire for

our kind of product in Asia. With

this launch, we'll reach a new set

of Secret Escapers, develop new

our range of deals in Asia for our

existing members. There are still

a few territories in Europe that are

untapped, so we'll be strategically

assessing opportunities closer to

than 28m members worldwide, who are offered exclusive deals

on luxury hotels and holidays at

discounts of up to 70%. Click here

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for full story.

relationships with hotels and expand

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Secret Escapes launches in first four Asia markets

S ecret Escapes, the UK-based site for discounted luxury travel, has taken the next step in its global expansion strategy with its launch into four Asian markets: Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Asian growth follows a US\$60 million investment in 2015, led by Google Ventures and Octopus Ventures, and marks the company's first foray into Asia. In the last 12 months, Secret Escapes has started operating in the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Italy, and the company said it is planning more openings later in 2016, including further growth in North America.

"Asia has, for a while, been the next big frontier for us and we're excited to be entering into Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia. Last year's US\$60m cash injection is helping us to realise our ambition to become a truly global brand, enabling us to open up opportunities in Asia, continue our expansion throughout Europe and capitalise on our good start in the US," said Alex Saint,

Lithium battery causes fire on **Taiwan flight**

lithium battery carried in a A passenger's hand luggage caused a small fire in the cabin of a Taiwanese passenger aircraft on Friday. Taiwan's Central News Agency (CNA) reports that the battery "self-ignited" on a V Air flight from Taipei to Tokyo. It was not revealed what type of device the battery was used in. The fire was extinguished by cabin crew and the battery placed in a bucket of water, but pilots decided to turn the flight back to Taipei.

No-one was hurt in the incident, which is reported to be the first time a lithium battery has ignited on a Taiwanese flight.

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AirAsia traffic jumps 17%



irAsia recorded a sharp rise A in passenger traffic in the first guarter of 2016

The group's short-haul airlines in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, India and the Philippines carried a combined total of 13.94 million passengers in the first three months of the year, up 17% compared with Q1 2015. This far exceeded the 6% expansion of the group's seat capacity, allowing its average load factor to surge nine percentage points to 86%.

Much of this growth was driven by AirAsia's largest unit, in Malaysia. Traffic on the Kuala Lumpur-based low-cost carrier jumped 17% to

IHG plans new-build InterContinental in San Diego

EYEONAMERICA



IHG has formed a partnership with Portman Holdings for the development of a brand new InterContinental hotel in San Diego. Scheduled to open in 2018, the 18-storey hotel will form part of a new mixed-use development known as BRIC, which is being created in the

North Embarcadero area of downtown San Diego. The InterContinental San Diego hotel will offer 400 rooms, a rooftop bar, restaurant, bar, fitness centre, spa and more than 2,100m² of meeting space. There will also be a "significant amount of outdoor space" including an pool area.

Delta Air Lines commits to Atlanta



Atlanta will remain the headquarters of Delta Air Lines for the next 20 years. The agreement, which was signed last week, comes into effect on 1 July and will run until the end of 2036. This confirmation will now enable Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport to move

forward with a US\$6 billion expansion programme, which includes the construction of a sixth runway and a new international concourse. The new lease replaces the previous agreement which took effect in 1980. Delta is the largest employer in the Georgian state capital.

Orlando welcomes record 66m visitors



Orlando attracted 66.1 million visitors in 2015, up 5.5% year-on-year and a new full-year record for the Florida city. According to new data from Visit Orlando, arrivals have now more than doubled over the past 20 years, from 32.4m in 1995. Orlando also sold a

record 33m room nights in 2015, resulting in tourist development tax collections of US\$230m, which marks another all-time high. Passenger traffic at Orlando Airport reached 38.81m. Last month it was revealed that Florida welcomed 105m out-of-state and international visitors in 2015.

Virgin America connects LA with Honolulu



Virgin America is expanding its Hawaiian operations with the launch of flights from Los Angeles International Airport to two destinations: Honolulu and Maui. The new LA-Honolulu route commenced last week and will now operate daily, with a morning departure

from LAX and an afternoon return flight from Honolulu. The Maui route starts on 14 June and will also operate daily with morning departures Virgin America first launched flights to the Aloha state in November last year, with a service from San Francisco to Honolulu.

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in

2

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6.48m passengers in Q1, while Thai AirAsia also performed well, with passenger numbers surging 18% to 4.37m.

Despite a 10% reduction in seat capacity, Indonesia AirAsia managed to achieve a 2% rise in passenger traffic, to 1.17m. But the Jakarta-based airline's position as AirAsia's third largest unit is now under threat from Philippines AirAsia, which increased its passenger numbers by 15% to 967.600. Finally in India. AirAsia's fledgling LCC carried 538,800 passengers.

AirAsia is planning to launch its sixth short-haul subsidiary this vear, with AirAsia Japan expected to commence flights from Nagoya in the coming months. Click here for full story.

Cambria hotels celebrates double launch in Chicago



Choice Hotels International has unveiled two new Cambria hotel projects in Chicago. The first to open in mid-2017 will be the Cambria Hotel & Suites Chicago Magnificent Mile, which will mark a conversion of the existing MileNorth Hotel. The 29-storey hotel will

offer 215 rooms. And then in September 2017, the Cambria Hotel & Suites Chicago City Center will open above the historic Ford Center for the Performing Arts Oriental Theatre, in the city's "Loop" neighbourhood. This property will rise 22 storeys and will feature 198 rooms.

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