

May 2020, n° 61

# pax magazine

Business // Innovation // Travel

**TRAVEL  
AGENT  
MONTH**

Looking to sell  
something new  
and niche?

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*Special  
Feature*

**HAVE CART,  
WILL TRAVEL**

A look at  
golf vacations

---

*Cruise Industry*

**IN PRAISE OF  
CRUISE CUISINE**

Bon voyage...  
and bon appétit!

A portrait of Patrick Luciani, an older man with white hair, smiling and wearing a dark tuxedo jacket, a white dress shirt, and a patterned bow tie. He is seated in a large, dark leather armchair. The background is a blurred interior space with a window.

# Patrick Luciani

1943-2020

*Founder/Chairman, TravelOnly*



A man in white shorts stands in a clear turquoise pool at the base of a waterfall. The waterfall is surrounded by dense green foliage and trees. A wooden walkway with railings is visible on the right side of the waterfall. The scene is bright and natural.

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Heartbeat of the World  
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In celebration of Travel Agent Month this May, we want to acknowledge your hard work and thank you for everything you do.

We are in this together...one community,  
one love.

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*Maguette Chisson*  
President &  
Chief Executive Officer

## Travel Agent Month: ***Remembering legends and looking forward***

**The month of May begins on a somber note as Canada's travel industry mourns the loss of a great leader, a businessperson, a family man and a friend.**

On Sunday, April 26th, Patrick Luciani, the founder and chairman of TravelOnly, passed away unexpectedly at his home. The news was met with great sadness in our industry across all sectors, as Patrick was an inspiration to many.

On behalf of the Pax Global Media team, I wish to express my deepest sympathies to the Luciani family and all of TravelOnly's associates.

This month, we honour Patrick on our front cover with a tribute to his life. We hope the outpour of industry support in this heartfelt feature offers comfort during this difficult time.

I also want to take this moment to address the COVID-19 crisis, which remains a hot topic.

It is the subject of all our conversations and is the heart of all our concerns.

Pax magazine cannot ignore the fact that May is Travel Agent Month. We still believe that in May 2020, it is (perhaps now more than ever) worth highlighting the work of travel agents, to show just how dedicated they are to their customers, while applauding their contributions to society.

This year, we should raise our hats to all of the travel professionals in the industry. The past few weeks have been painful for everyone. And the weeks to come are not expected to be much easier. Everyone in the industry remains in our thoughts.

Our industry is going through the biggest crisis in its history.

Many questions remain unanswered.

When will the industry get back on track? How many of us, and who, will make it through?

Without knowing the answer to these questions, Pax Global Media uses all the means at its disposal to keep you up to date on current issues, while also supporting you as the industry continues to face immense challenges.

With this in mind, we've launched a weekly Facebook Live series that features some of the most prominent figures and experts in our industry.

It is in this same spirit that we created the Travel Professionals Club, whose members send you daily videos of encouragement.

And, it is for the same reason that we are gathering all news concerning COVID-19 in a dedicated section on PAXnews.com. Since the publication of our first article on January 20th – well before the coronavirus made headlines in mainstream media – more than 300 articles have been collected in this section.

Do you have any other suggestions for ways that PAX could support you?

Don't hesitate to share them with me at [newsroom@paxglobalmedia.com](mailto:newsroom@paxglobalmedia.com).

Pax magazine will be back in September, in both the print and digital versions. In the meantime, be strong, and stay united.

We won't give up! ☘



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MONTH GUIDE**

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3 busiest airports









Remembering  
*Patrick  
Luciani*

He built a company based  
on passion, innovation,  
kindness and family values.  
Now, Canada's travel industry  
says goodbye to the man  
who made everyone feel  
like family.

By BLAKE WOLFE and MICHAEL PIHACH  
Cover and feature photos by MATT MANHIRE



**C**anada's travel industry has lost a great leader, a colleague, a family man and a friend.

On Sunday, April 26th, Patrick Luciani, founder and chairman of TravelOnly, passed away unexpectedly at his home in Brantford, ON.

The devastating news came as a shock to travel professionals in and outside of Canada who knew Patrick or worked with him in some capacity over the course of his illustrious 45-year-strong career in the travel business.

And there are many. The advisors at TravelOnly, one of Canada's first home-based model agencies, for one, adored him.

"Patrick has been family to us for the past ten years," travel advisors Pat Probert and Mary de Almeida told *PAX*, one day after Patrick's passing. "He was a father figure, a mentor and a leader all rolled into one."

Patrick loved the people he worked with. In past interviews, he routinely acknowledged the hard work and commitment his family, head office team, associates and partners brought to the table each and every day.

"We have some of the best people in our industry who are conscientious about serving their clients," Patrick once said in a past interview. "That's a blessing."

Treating people around him like members of his own family was in Patrick's DNA, as many will attest. Any media interview, business appointment or casual run-in with Mr. Luciani was routinely met with a beaming smile and warm hug.

"He was a father figure, a mentor and a leader all rolled into one."

- *TravelOnly advisors  
Pat Probert & Mary  
de Almeida*

That smile walked into a room before he did.

"He was part of our family...he will be forever missed," Barbara Scrocco and Robert Rizzo, two other TravelOnly advisors, told *PAX* on that same heart-wrenching day when the word got out.

But there's no other family who will miss Patrick Luciani more than his immediate one.

Patrick was a family man at heart – a loving husband to his wife, Ann, and caring father to his son, Gregory, and daughters, Francesca and Nicole.

The Luciani children, now well into their adult years, each have families of their own, producing a total of nine adorable grandchildren for their parents.

"He will be fondly remembered as a wonderful husband, father, and grandfather who made an indelible mark on the travel industry with his passion, energy and love for others," Gregory Luciani said in a statement on the day after his father's passing.

Nothing meant more to Patrick than spending time with loved ones and sharing with them one of his true passions in life – travel.

## **Born to travel**

Arriving in Canada from Italy at age 12, Patrick Luciani nurtured a life-long love of travel from a young age, one that would fully blossom years later in the form of TravelOnly (more on that later).

Following Patrick and Ann Luciani's marriage in the early 1970s, that love of travel was crystalized in the form of a honeymoon across Europe, an adventure planned by Patrick that took the new couple through the splendors of the Mediterranean to the heights of the Alps and numerous points in between.

While he initially pursued a career in municipal politics, travel was never far from Patrick's thoughts. Serving two terms as a city councillor in Brantford, an unsuccessful campaign for mayor in the early 1970s would prove to be a turning point in his career trajectory.

On Monday, September 30th, 1974, Luciani World Travel opened its doors.

The fifth travel agency in Brantford, Luciani World Travel offered a full menu to Canadian globetrotters, including passport services – with Patrick taking the photos and notarizing the applications, which were then taken by Ann to the passport office in Hamilton, ON, for processing.

Expanding to bring on three additional agents in the office, Luciani World Travel catered to an ever-growing leisure market while also maintaining a few corporate accounts.

As the business continued to grow and thrive, so too did the Luciani family, with Patrick and Ann welcoming children Francesca in January 1974; Nicole in March 1975; and Gregory in October 1977.

Naturally, the children would inherit their parents' love of travel, with the family exploring the world together throughout the years.





© Michael Pihach



© Michael Pihach



© Pax Global Media



© Michael Pihach

## A tip from Texas

While the economic downturn of the early 1990s proved a challenge for many businesses, it was during this time that Luciani World Travel would pivot from a storefront agency to a home-based model, largely due to a chance encounter Patrick had during a travel trade conference in Las Vegas.

Sitting next to a Texas-based agency owner with 500 home-based advisors, Patrick brought the concept home and, shortly after, Luciani World Travel was rechristened TravelOnly, becoming one of Canada's first host agencies.

The advent of the Internet in the early 1990s would mark a dramatic shift in the way many industries operated – and travel was no exception. Embracing the new digital age, computers and email quickly became the norm for TravelOnly, along with new online booking systems, such as SIREV.

This new way of conducting business allowed TravelOnly to reach out to prospective advisors in other sectors, who were familiar with working in an online environment and could learn to sell travel product.

The approach paid off, with TravelOnly drawing new advisors from a range of fields, including accountants, nurses, teachers and even a judge.

Upon completing his degree in 2003, Gregory would join Patrick and Ann at TravelOnly, encouraging more professional marketing and advertising collateral for the program.

These changes would enable TravelOnly to expand across Canada, adding advisors in every province and paving the way for satellite offices in Vancouver, BC and Longueuil, QC.







© Courtesy TravelOnly | © Michael Pihach



© Pax Global Media



© Michael Pihach



© Courtesy the Luciani family

## A family affair

TravelOnly has been a family affair since day one. Up until his passing, Patrick continued to serve as company founder and chairman with Ann as CFO and Gregory as president and CEO.

Last September, the Lucianis and more than 170 of their associates and supplier partners celebrated TravelOnly's 45th anniversary in a glitzy ballroom at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

The pure love and joy for the Lucianis and TravelOnly at that glorious event (which PAX attended) reverberated with unbridled enthusiasm.

Gregory is quick to point out the secret to TravelOnly's 45 years of success:

"Family values and a family company at its core. That's paramount," Gregory said in an interview with PAX in February, a meeting that also included his parents Patrick and Ann.

That interview was almost exactly two months before Patrick's passing.

The photographs of Patrick in his tuxedo with equally elegantly-dressed Gregory and Ann in this month's issue of PAX were taken on that same day, representing one of the last times the Luciani trio would be professionally photographed together.

Among TravelOnly's 650-plus, home-based advisors across Canada (and

counting), there's a shared passion for seeing the world better and "bringing that world to our clients, family and friends," Gregory said.

"That's the belief of everyone in the company. When we wake up in the morning, we're not just going to work – we're doing what we love to do," he said.

Travel was always a topic of conversation with Patrick at the dinner table. Frankly, he likely wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

"We talk about travel, our partners, and our associates, 24/7," Patrick once told us, speaking on the rewards of running a family business. "It's a wonderful feeling."



## BUSINESS MEETING

// Remembering Patrick Luciani



“He will be fondly remembered as a wonderful husband, father, and grandfather who made an indelible mark on the travel industry with his passion, energy and love for others.”

- Gregory Luciani

But as one may expect, running a family business has its challenges. “We have to rely on each other and we each have different skill sets,” said Patrick.

Still, “travel and tourism is one of the most wonderful careers anyone can espouse to,” he continued to say, crediting Ann for initially pushing the host-agency route.

In Ann’s words: “It wasn’t easy to start with as we were going into new territory, but as we went along, we knew that we had to keep adapting and we’ve done that.”

The regulatory requirements at the time, in fact, made it illegal to operate a home-based travel agency. And twenty some years ago, many suppliers weren’t supportive of home-based advisors.

TravelOnly had to convince regulators that their model was no different than any storefront.

“[Suppliers] thought our associates were part-time and not professionals – that they were looking for a free trip,” said Gregory.

How times have changed. Patrick, for one, never let changes in the industry – as dramatic as they were at times – intimidate him.

He embraced them.

Forty-five years in the business “shows how we’ve evolved and adapted,” Patrick said. “This industry is always changing and we’ve always been front and centre no matter what occurred.”

Ongoing training and certification with advisors helped boost annual commissions and, rightly so, helped TravelOnly attract (and retain) talented newcomers to the travel industry.

And while associates may be home-based, they’re certainly not housebound, as Patrick explained.

“The successful associates are those who get out of the house, go into the community and really get involved,” he said. “That’s the most wonderful thing that helps them to evolve.”

—————

## BUSINESS MEETING

// Remembering Patrick Luciani



←

Family values are the secret to TravelOnly's success, said Patrick (left), Ann and Gregory Luciani.

### "To Patrick, we all mattered"

It's the personal touch Patrick brought to his business that his associates and industry colleagues will never forget.

Synthia Gawlak, TravelOnly's senior vice-president of sales and marketing, remarked that "TravelOnly has lost a visionary and the world has lost an amazing human being."

"Patrick leaves behind a company that only he could have built and his spirit will forever be the foundation of TravelOnly," she said.

Ian Elliott, TravelOnly's vice-president of sales and marketing, added that Patrick was "one of the most vibrant, positive and caring human beings I have ever met."

"He was passionate about using travel to make the world a better place," said Elliott. "Yes, he loved travel, but what he loved more was what travel could do for the human spirit."

Holly McBean started working with Patrick in 1998 and currently leads TravelOnly's training division.

"His love of family brought us all closer together and I admired his passion of the business he worked so effortlessly to grow," said McBean. "He has taken me through so many wonderful years of enjoyment in my career."

The relationships Patrick held were etched in time.

Douglas Hammond, TravelOnly's Director of IT, remembers starting computer repairs in Patrick's small office, 20 years ago, when the bathroom "was in a phone closet."

"Patrick has been a great example of charity for myself," Hammond told PAX. "Having watched how he has interacted with people, his participation in charitable organizations and his hours of personal time given is inspiring. He loved people and people loved him back."

Patrick's impact on individuals resonated across all sectors in travel.

"From the moment we met, I saw a man who smiled often and appreciated life," said Sandra Gardiner, director of national

accounts for Canada at AmaWaterways. "He had a zest for success, but more of a genuine appreciation of his supplier partnerships."

Brenda Lynne Yeomans, Celebrity Cruises' strategic market manager for Canada, knew she was part of the TravelOnly family from the moment Patrick greeted her with his signature "ciao bella" and smile.

"Patrick's passion for travel, love for his family, and genuine relationships was present in how he lived his life," said Yeomans. "You could see it and feel it."

David Harris, CEO of Ensemble, said Patrick was "truly a man of great integrity."

"He will be remembered by so many of us for his leadership in our industry and also as a friend," said Harris.

Frank DeMarinis, CEO of H.I.S. Red Label Vacations, added that "Patrick's accomplishments over the years in the travel industry came from his passion and love of travel."

"The respect he had towards colleagues and associates was one of a kind in the industry, and his infectious smile turned a business meeting into an enjoyable conversation," DeMarinis said. "He always found the time to say hello to everyone at industry gatherings with his wife Ann beside him."

Global sales and marketing executive Dana Gain spoke of Patrick's leadership and authenticity:

"Patrick believed in you even before you did," said Gain. "When he was not teaching with his words, you learned from Patrick just by watching him. He was a master in the art of human connection and never failed to make you feel special, and valued, and significant. It was his gift. To Patrick, we all mattered. Every hug was a validation, every conversation a reason to be inspired."

Kind, caring, thoughtful, and considerate, class acts are few and far between.

Grazie, Patrick. ☺





# Patrick Luciani

*1943-2020*

On April 26, 2020, in Brantford, Ontario, Patrick Luciani passed away peacefully in his 76th year. Some say actions speak louder than words, but when we lose someone, it's the words that tell the story of a life, and ever since the news broke about Patrick, the words have been flowing – in phone calls, cards, text messages, emails, on social media. And the same words keep coming up over and over again: kind... gentle... charming... charitable... vibrant... nonjudgmental. And then there's the word lucky. But to say Patrick was lucky suggests that all his good fortune just fell into his lap. That was absolutely not the case. This was a man who earned his luck. Maybe even manifested it. That's what happens when you live by the motto: anything's possible.

Born Pasquale Luciani on July 17, 1943, Patrick was raised in the tiny Italian town of Castropignano. Before long, Patrick moved on from his humble beginnings and immigrated to Canada, ending up in Brantford. As a ten-year-old who didn't speak a word of English, Patrick got off to a rocky start in his new homeland, becoming the target of bullies. So he learned how to box, and started defending himself and his little brother.

Shoe shine boy, fruit stand clerk, hairstylist. As a young man, Patrick was a striver, willing to do whatever it took to attain a better life. Then, at the ice cream shop he started up, that better life came walking through the door one day looking for a job. Her name was Antonette Onorato, also an Italian immigrant, and the most beautiful woman Patrick had ever seen. From that day forward, Patrick and his "sweet-heart Antonette" were together, leading to 49 years of marriage.

Instead of buying a house like most newlyweds did back then, Patrick and Antonette spent most of their money on an extensive honeymoon across Europe and the Middle East. It was an adventure that sparked the couple's life mission: to fulfill the travel dreams of others. So in 1973, Patrick and Antonette opened a small, one-room travel agency. Today, 47 years later, that same business, TravelOnly, has grown into a network of 750 home-based travel offices, making it one the biggest travel host agencies in all of Canada.

As Patrick's success grew, so did his desire to give back. He served three terms as an alderman on the Brantford City Council. He ran for Brantford mayor twice. He was a fourth-degree knight in the Knights of Columbus and a longstanding member of the St. Pius X Parish

Brantford. The more someone was beaten down, the more Patrick tried to help. When he met you, he immediately considered you a friend, or a "paisan" as he liked to call everybody. For decades, he regularly visited nursing homes, bringing gifts to the residents. And he rarely missed a funeral within his community so he could provide support to families when they needed it most. Another motto: call someone you love every day.

Patrick accomplished so much, but nothing gave him more pride than his three children. His parenting motto: give them whatever they need to succeed. And succeed they did, especially when they gave him nine grandchildren. His daughter Francesca lives in Los Angeles with her three children. His daughter Nicole lives in New York with her two children. And his son Greg, the CEO of the family travel business, lives in Toronto with his four children.

With his full head of white hair, Mediterranean skin, aviator sunglasses and crisp blazers, Patrick had presence. You always knew when he was in the room. Having carved such a colorful path through life, he left behind an endless amount of vivid memories that his family and friends will never forget. Like chasing his grandkids on a tricycle. Or tending to his rosebushes in a suit. Or never missing his beloved daily walks at dawn. Or his passion for soccer. Or always being first on the dance floor. Or travelling to all seven continents with the love of his life. Or being there for the births of all his grandchildren. Or standing at the head of a table with a glass of wine, giving toast... after toast... after toast. It's no wonder that Patrick's granddaughters love unicorns so much. Their Nonno seemed like one: a dazzling, one-of-a-kind legend. He'll be missed by all forever.

Patrick is survived by his wife Antonette; children Francesca, Nicole, Greg; sons-in-law Christopher, Jordan; daughter-in-law Kristy; grandchildren Alexander, Mikaela, Julien, Lake, Evangeline, Capri, Jesse, Siena, Tristen; brother Albino; sister Marisa; brothers-in-law Nick, Russell; sisters-in-law Anna, Maria, Donna; nephews Adrian, Anthony, Christopher, Ethan; nieces Shiloh, Alicia, Kristin, Alana. Patrick is preceded in death by his parents Alberto, Carmela; parents-in-law Anthony, Carmina; brother-in-law Vincent.

The Knights of Columbus recently hosted an online prayer for Patrick. A celebration of Patrick's life will be held at a later date.

## BLAST FROM THE PAST

# Using the **power** **of nostalgia** to **boost business**

With the origins of the word rooted in the Greek terms for “returning home” and “pain,” nostalgia is a powerful force indeed.

By BLAKE WOLFE







“The travel agent has a unique opportunity to tap into those memories and sell a travel experience that matches those expectations.”

————— *Dr. Dimanche*

**W**hether it's eating a favourite food, rewatching a TV show or movie from childhood or recalling a happy memory, everyone feels that warm sense of familiarity from time to time, a blend of comfort and security stemming from a time in the past.

Unsurprisingly, savvy marketers have been capitalizing on that desire to return to a simpler time since there were brands to be nostalgic about – see Coca Cola's annual polar bear-themed Christmas campaigns, or Christmas marketing in general.

For Dr. Frederic Dimanche, director of the Ted Rogers School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Toronto's Ryerson University, nostalgia as it pertains to marketing, whether in general or the travel industry, is all about evoking a specific sense of place – even if one hasn't experienced it personally.

“It all relates to how comfortable you are in a certain place,” Dimanche says. “You can also experience it even if you haven't experienced it before. You build on something that's previously happened.”

### **Looking back, moving forward**

When it comes to using nostalgia as a sales strategy, the world of travel marketing is no different than other sectors.

While airlines and tour operators have long relied on the romantic reputations of destinations like France and Italy to woo potential clients, there's a new generation of tourism draws banking on the power of nostalgia, from theme parks such as Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando Resort respectively leveraging the Star Wars and Nintendo brands in their latest developments, to hotels such as a soon-to-be launched chain of properties themed around video game developer Atari to New York's TWA Hotel, built in the now-defunct airline's Flight Center at JFK Airport as a time capsule dedicated to TWA's 1960s heyday.

Of course, to sell based on nostalgia, one must know their clients well, specifically their interests, desires and history, says Dr. Dimanche.

While large corporations like Coca Cola and Disney have extensive resources and decades of consumer research and feedback to assist in crafting their marketing strategies, travel agents can also tap into this channel simply by getting to know their clients on a personal level, giving them a distinct edge over OTAs when it comes to leveraging nostalgia as a sales tool, whether it's based on loyalty to a long-standing brand or a desire by a first-generation Canadian to revisit their homeland:

- **Meeting in person:** A phone call doesn't have the same impact as a face-to-face meeting. Arrange a time and place to meet your client in person, where they can tell you all about their personal interests and travel desires.
- **Setting is important:** While a consumer event allows for face-to-face meetings, it may not yield the same type of conversation that could take place at your office, a coffee shop or another similarly relaxed environment. Follow up with those contacts made at the show for a meeting later on.
- **Engage your client:** What's their story? What are they into? By getting your clients to talk about themselves, you're bound to pick up on important clues that can help craft an unforgettable itinerary.

“That's why the personal sales relationship is so important,” says Dr. Dimanche. “Nothing will replace that personal knowledge which the agent has of the client. They will always have the desire to interact with a person who can match and understand their needs. It's important to understand everything about a person – how and where they lived in the past.

“The travel agent has a unique opportunity to tap into those memories and sell a travel experience that matches those expectations.” ❖

# Ready for **voice search** yet?

**In November 2017, I wrote a column in this magazine asking, “Are you ready for voice search?”**

By FRÉDÉRIC GONZALO

**A**t that time, it was estimated that 20 per cent of searches performed on a mobile device were made through voice, that is to say via Siri (Apple) or Google Assistant, and that this figure would reach 50 per cent in 2020.

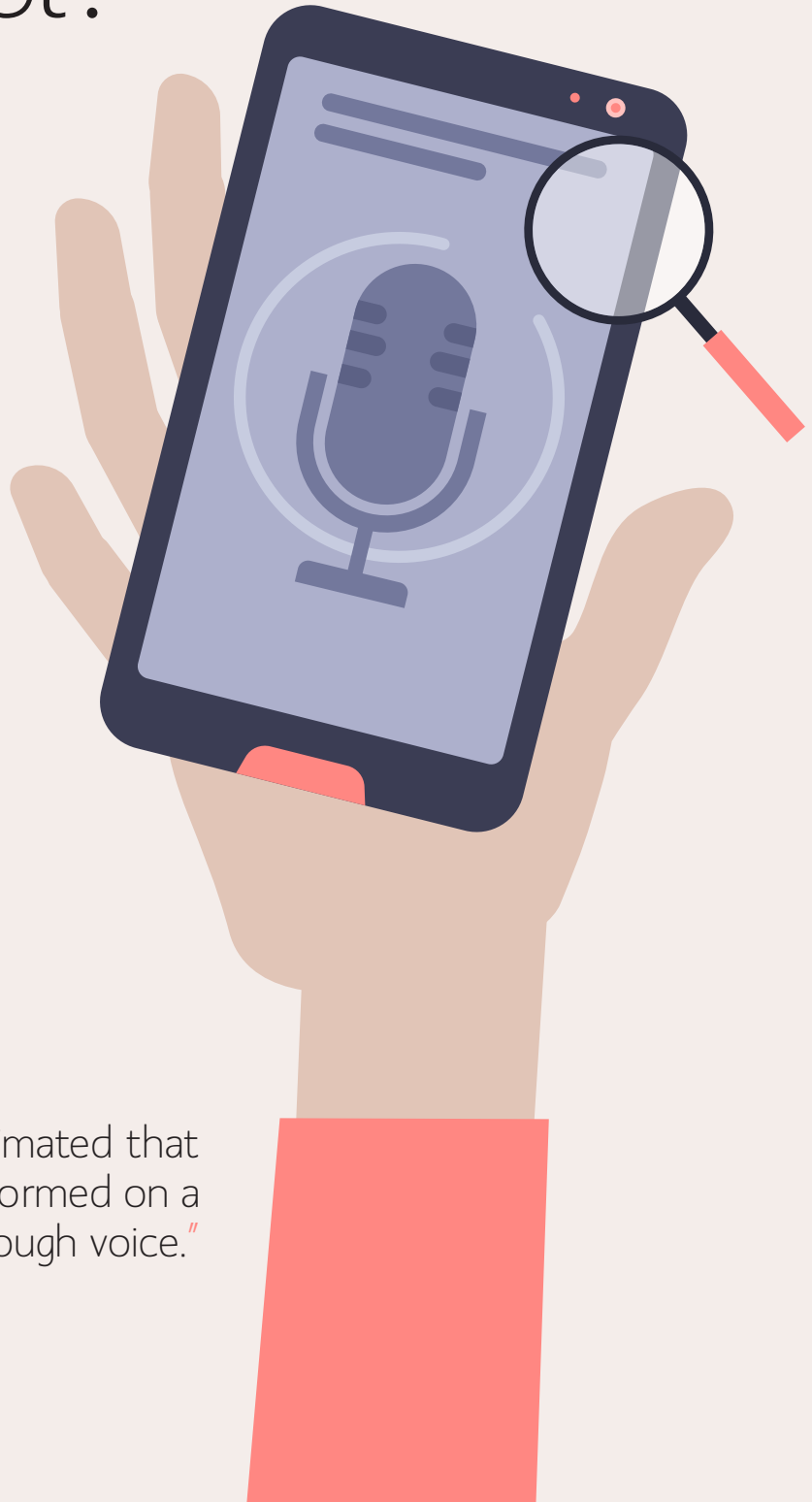
Well, we did not have to wait until 2020 – the 50 per cent mark was reached in 2019!

## **The impact of voice search**

Today, we are no longer surprised to see people researching companies using their smartphone, if not via an Amazon Alexa device, Google Home or simply the Apple Play system of one’s car!

How do you ensure your products and services appear in voice search results? Here are four basic principles that must be followed on your site so that your company performs well when potential customers search online, especially using their voice.

“At that time, it was estimated that 20 per cent of searches performed on a mobile device were made through voice.”





### 1. Have a mobile-friendly site

This should come as no surprise. Consider the following:

- Is the site adaptive (responsive)?
- What is the download speed of the site and pages?
- Are the images compressed? Defined?
- The size of buttons
- Caching less-relevant pages

### 2. Answering questions

Until recently, the SEO of a website was mainly aimed at responding to the most popular queries, based on keywords. However, in voice search, we use sentences, or at least sequences of different words. Content writing will henceforth have to take this aspect into account as well.

The use of "Frequently Asked Questions" is appearing on websites again, and you will want to index user-generated content because it may be more relevant and related to the kinds of questions asked during a voice search.

### 3. Optimizing to achieve position zero

Also called the featured snippet, to get to this position you can use good old SEO techniques.

That is to say:

- Write a page with a specific subject in mind.
- Create content that specifically answers a question.
- Identify the questions to which you can give a relevant, value-added answer (especially if these are keywords sought over time, hence the expression long-tail).
- Think in semantic mode, with synonymous words for the same expression.
- Use trigger words such as "how," "how much" or "best."
- Use "conversation with a friend" type language.
- Use the Titles (H1, H2, H3, H4).
- Ensure you have a unique title and meta description on each page.
- Include keywords from the first sentence or first paragraph.

### 4. Have a Google My Business page

Whether it is to ensure the correct geolocation of your business in Google Maps or to respond to reviews left by users among the Google Reviews, there are several reasons to manage your presence on Google.

It contributes favourably to your positioning in the results of voice search!

For one, it contributes to the strengthening of your domain authority on the web. And secondly, this works in your favour in the context of geolocated searches, which are at the heart of a majority of voice searches. ☺



Our industry is going through an unprecedented crisis.

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# Have cart, will travel

A look at golf vacations

By BLAKE WOLFE

**W**

ith Golf Canada assessing the value of the domestic golf market at more than \$14 billion and consisting of approximately 5 million Canadian players, there's a sizable market of potential clients who may be willing to incorporate golf into their travel plans – or vice versa!

Whether it's playing a bucket-list course or ensuring that there's opportunities to hit the links while travelling, golf vacations can take on as many forms as a golf course itself.

→  
**One & Only Palmilla: Los Cabos' One & Only Palmilla resort features the first golf course in Latin America designed by renowned golfer Jack Nicklaus.**

© One & Only Resorts







## Sun, sand and fairways

With winter escapes to sunny destinations in the Caribbean and Mexico as an annual tradition in Canada, golfers waiting for the spring weather to return at home can rest easy knowing that there's no shortage of courses in the most popular sun destinations.

Just outside of Montego Bay, the north shore of Jamaica is home to a trio of renowned courses – namely White Witch, Cinnamon Hill and Half Moon – located in close proximity to each other in the region's resort district. A little further to the east in Ocho Rios, the Sandals Golf and Country Club challenges guests of the company's Jamaica resorts (who receive complimentary green fees at the course) to 18 holes set in the rolling hills of the countryside.

Sandals also offers golf in other destinations, with two courses in Saint Lucia – Sandals Regency La Toc and Sandals St. Lucia Golf and Country Club at Cap Estate – and in Bahamas at Sandals Emerald Bay, with a 72-par course designed by golf pro Greg Norman.

Not to be outdone, the resort town of La Romana in the Dominican Republic is another destination that golfers should have on their radar, with Casa de Campo Resorts & Villas home to three renowned courses including Dye Fore, The Links and Teeth of the Dog, the latter of which frequently appears on lists of must-play and top Caribbean courses.

And with more than 200 courses across the country, Mexico is another top golf destination in the sun, with the majority of courses found in the resort areas of the Riviera Maya and Los Cabos. Standouts include Cabo's One & Only Pamilla, a resort nestled along the Sea of Cortez and featuring the 27-hole Palmilla Golf Course, the first course in Latin America designed by Jack Nicklaus; and the Mayakoba Resort in Quintana Roo, a complex featuring properties by Fairmont, Rosewood and Banyan Tree where golfers can challenge El Camaleon, a jungle-to-ocean course designed by Greg Norman and the only stop in Mexico on the PGA Tour.



## SPECIAL FEATURE

// Golf vacations



### Go further

Have a client looking to travel beyond the Western Hemisphere and still get in a round?

While golf is most often associated with Scotland, nearby Ireland boasts a strong history with the game as well.

Of the top courses to play in Ireland is the Royal County Down, founded in the small town of Newcastle in Northern Ireland in 1889, making it one of the country's oldest courses.

Designed by renowned Scottish golfer and course architect Old Tom Morris, Royal County Down has hosted numerous important tournaments over many decades. In 2016, it was ranked the number one course in the world by Golf Digest.

For golfers seeking the challenge of links courses, Ireland boasts 50 of the approximately 200 courses worldwide to feature the design style, constructed along coastal lands.

And while not normally associated with the sport, Thailand has been making a name for itself as a golf destination in recent years.

With its wide range of terrain, Thailand makes for some unique golf challenges, offering everything from mountain courses to seaside fairways, including Pattya Golf Course at the Siam Country Club, the site of more than 10 LPGA tournaments. Beyond golf, the city of Pattya is also a renowned resort destination with miles of beachfront along Thailand's west coast.

↑  
Sandals: Guests of Sandals' Jamaica resorts receive complimentary green fees at the Sandals Golf and Country Club in Ocho Rios.

© Courtesy of Sandals Resorts



↑ Legend Golf & Safari Resort: The 19th hole at Legend Golf & Safari Resort lives up to the course's name.

© South African Tourism

### One of a kind

Golf fans looking to play on the most unique courses in the world have plenty of options to choose from, including some in destinations not traditionally associated with the game.

East of Johannesburg, South Africa, the aptly-named Legend Golf & Safari Resort is home to a legendary 19th hole – accessible only by helicopter, players must successfully drive a ball 400 yards from a cliffside on Hanglip Mountain to a massive green shaped like the African continent. It's perhaps unsurprising that a prize of \$1 million for a hole-in-one has yet to be awarded.





## Only the brave

For golfers looking to truly check off that bucket list, there's courses that meet any number of criteria:

**Himalayan Golf Club:** one of only two 18-hole courses in Nepal, the course is located in a canyon with mountain views, a natural island hole and frequent visits by local wildlife, such as buffalo.

**Uummannaq Greenland Golf:** located more than 800 km north of the Arctic Circle, golfers must not only contend with unique hazards like seal dens and crevasses, but the possibility of frostbitten hands while playing. In addition, special clubs are used to play here, as the low temperature can result in regular clubs freezing and shattering.

**Nullarbor Links:** laying claim to the title of world's longest golf course at nearly 1,400 km in length, this course in South Australia spans two time zones and is made up of 18 holes in towns separated by 50-km drives. The average time to complete Nullarbor is four days. 🏌️



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# Bean voyage

## Warm up to these caffeine destinations from around the globe

**Culinary offerings can often be a determining factor in travel decisions. While renowned restaurants and famed wine regions often get the most consideration when planning a trip, many destinations have a thriving tea or coffee culture worthy of exploration.**

By BLAKE WOLFE

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If your clients can't do without their morning cuppa, here's four travel hotspots known for their hot beverages.

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© Courtesy of Jamaica Tourist Board

## Jamaica

**Jamaica's Blue Mountains aren't just a scenic tourist spot; they also provide the perfect growing conditions for the country's world-renowned Blue Mountain coffee. Known for a mild flavour with no bitterness, the coffee is a hot – and often pricey – commodity.**

While the majority – 80 per cent – of Jamaica's coffee harvest is exported to Japan, the famed beverage fills cups at coffee houses across the island, including Café Blue pictured here. The coffee is also served at all Sandals properties.



# Vienna

The coffee house capital of Europe, Vienna's coffee culture is intertwined with history: the Austrian capital's cafes have hosted everyone from royalty to revolutionaries, with Emperor Franz Joseph I, Leon Trotsky and Sigmund Freud all among the regular patrons of such establishments.

As a result, it should come as no surprise that the Viennese coffee house was deemed "Intangible Cultural Heritage" by UNESCO in 2011.



# Japan

Tea has been an inseparable part of Japanese culture for hundreds of years, dating back to at least the ninth century when travelling Buddhist monks brought the first tea to the country from China.

Rooted in a tradition developed in the 1500s, Japanese tea ceremonies

(known as chado or sado) can be undertaken by visitors in locations across the country; although not as involved as their historic predecessors, modern tea ceremonies still retain a highly-structured protocol, from placement of the teacup and utensils to hand movements during sipping.

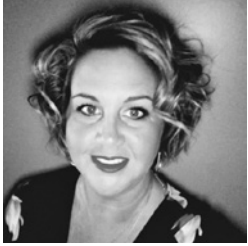


# New Zealand

While wine and lamb may be the first thoughts that come to mind when New Zealand cuisine is mentioned, coffee is among the most recent culinary crazes in the destination, as the beverage's popularity – and, subsequently, the number of cafes, like Wellington's Café Polo – increased substantially in recent decades.

In addition to competition between baristas to pour the perfect cup, there's also an ongoing debate between New Zealand and Australia over the origins of the flat white. While neither side is likely to concede, most coffee experts agree that no matter where it's served, a true flat white is determined by a higher ratio of coffee to milk compared to a cappuccino. ☒

# 2020 Travel Agent Month



*Audra Langton*



*Brian Durkin*



*Daniel Lamothe*



*Georgia Schley Ritchie*



*Linda Loewen*



*Linda Dinsmore*



*Patricia Corcos*



*Robert Sharp*



*Stephanie Mayorga*

Looking to sell something new and niche this Travel Agent Month?

**Some of Canada's leading advisors share their secrets**

By BLAKE WOLFE

**L**ike food or fashion, travel isn't a one-size-fits all.

The industry's many offerings can be segmented by any number of factors, from destination to method of transportation to the very purpose of the trip itself.

In celebration of Travel Agent Month, we're celebrating those advisors and specialists found across the many niches of the travel world – and sharing their tips and strategies for those looking to expand their repertoire or specialize in one of these segments!



# Adventures in Asia

With Asia spanning dozens of countries and numerous cultures, a first-time seller may wonder where to begin. Travel Edge's Georgia Schley Ritchie says that if you're new to selling Asia, it's as simple as starting with your peers.

"If you haven't sold Asia destinations before, I recommend exploring the experiences and tips of those with whom you work – they have real-life stories about destinations that can take a client's trip from good to great."

And while digital resources – from webinars to virtual reality headsets – can help, the only true way to up your Asia game is by experiencing it for yourself, Schley Ritchie says.



"No resource is going to beat your personal experience in the region," she says.

Schley Ritchie recalls one client fascinated "by all things Japanese," who received a birthday vacation she would never forget.

"As always, I gathered as much information as possible from the clients and reached out to my favourite partner for Japan and listed exactly what the client

wanted," she recalls, adding that the client was intent on staying in Japanese hotels during the destination's cherry blossom season. "Many, many communications later (both with our partner in Japan and with the client), we were able to close the sale for this detail-intense client and help her to plan the trip of her dreams to Japan!"



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## Cruising together

A long-time cruise seller, Linda Dinsmore of TPI affiliate Balcony Travel recommends that if you're used to selling land-based journeys, it's simple to take your clients to the high seas instead by learning about each line and what type of traveller and travel style they appeal to.

"For example, if you're a family travel expert, then take the training programs from the cruise lines that are family-oriented," she says, citing mass-market brands such as Royal Caribbean and Norwegian Cruise Line. "If you concentrate on adventure travel, then look at the expedition-type cruise lines."

Dinsmore also notes that education pays off: upon completing the Elite Cruise Counsellor program – the highest of three levels – offered through Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), her cruise sales increased substantially. In particular, she cites the course's mandatory ship inspections in boosting these numbers.

"At the end of their trip, they commented 'how did they travel this long without me?' They've now just booked their sixth cruise with me!"

Dinsmore recalls a Mediterranean cruise where she extolled the virtues of booking with a cruise specialist to a skeptical fellow passenger who had previously booked directly with the cruise line, winning a convert in the process.

"I explained my affiliation with Virtuoso and how I could offer special perks that they could not get on their own, plus help them with their airfare, pre- and

post-cruise hotels, shore excursions and more," she says. "They said they wanted to give me a trial run and asked if I could book their next cruise for them. I did and helped them with their flights – which ended up having major problems that I solved for them. At the end of their trip, they commented 'how did they travel this long without me?' They've now just booked their sixth cruise with me!"



### PeopleFirst is our Commitment

As we celebrate Travel Agent Month—we are reminded of our PeopleFirst commitment. Even in difficult times, we strive to deliver the best vacations, because we want to make a positive impact in our community.

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# Heading Down Under

Linda Loewen of Surf & Safari, a Manitoba-based member of The Travel Agent Next Door, translated her personal experience backpacking across Australia into a viable travel niche.

For agents who may not have visited the South Pacific yet but have potential clients looking to head Down Under, Loewen points to her preferred supplier partners for the solution and take advantage of any resources and training on offer, such as those provided by tour operators like Goway and Exotik Journeys or tourism boards such as Tourism Australia and Tourism New Zealand.

Once acquainted with your clients' South Pacific interests, it pays to delve into lesser-explored regions for potential sales, especially for those travellers who have familiarized themselves with capital cities



and the must-see attractions, like the Great Barrier Reef.

Loewen has begun to investigate the Kimberley region of Western Australia – a rugged and sparsely-populated part of the country – for travel potential. Another strategy Loewen has employed is to incorporate a client's interest – such as music or wine – and build an itinerary around a hobby or pastime.

This knowledge helped Loewen secure a month-long stay in Australia for a family

group keen on taking in the Australian Open – part of a globe-spanning one-year journey that saw the clients also explore South Africa and France – along with attractions such as Uluru, Kangaroo Island and the Daintree Rainforest.

“Getting them around the world was a huge achievement!” she recalls. “It was great to put that all together.”



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## Exploring Europe

Patricia Corcos, an agent with Club Voyages Selectour in Montreal, says that when it comes to selling Europe, confidence – whether gained from personal visitation to the destination or supplier training (or both) – and a little geography go a long way.

“If you want to go into that market, number one is that the agent must feel confident about what they’re selling,” she says. “It will help put the consumer at ease and that way we can eventually do the sale.”

With a keen grasp of Europe’s many destinations, Corcos adds that agents can stand out further by engaging with the client on their travel goals and desires, taking the focus off simply making the sale and crafting a well-planned itinerary tailored to the client’s tastes.

“If a client questions price, you need to explain what they’re getting. There’s a lot of subtle differences in tours – such as whether or not the guide is local or if there will be a tour conductor.”

“If a client questions price, you need to explain what they’re getting. There’s a lot of subtle differences in tours – such as whether or not the guide is local or if there will be a tour conductor. It’s about looking at the details.”

That attention to detail paid dividends for Corcos when a regular client booked an à la carte trip around Spain with a culinary focus, which saw Corcos

pre-booking a number of Michelin-starred restaurants – eateries that don’t normally take reservations.

“I called but they’re hard to get through to; other times they didn’t have space,” she says. “I knew a chef in France and one thing led to another and once I got one restaurant booked, I was able to get the rest. It’s so satisfying to see the client happy – the reward is amazing beyond the sale and the dollars.”

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costsaver.



## Hitting the links

While golf is a sport primarily geared towards individual players, Brian Durkin of TPI-affiliated Exclusive Trips says that when it comes to booking vacations for golfers, it's all about the team effort.

"Find a golf tour company preferably in the local area or a larger national one that has already cultivated relationships with accommodations and golf courses," Durkin says. "Make sure you can get a net rate or commission and promote relationships with that tour company."

For agents that are planning to book golf trips to the same courses consistently, Durkin says that a personal visit to the clubs is the best way to establish the relationship, particularly if your clients have special requests or requirements for their vacation package.



Knowing his clients' specific requirements, Durkin was able to save a sale that fell through at the last minute by offering the booking to another group all too eager to take the last-minute booking.

"I made a corporate sale for a sales incentive/recognition for four people, in a large four-bedroom house with high-end golf," Durkin recalls. "Close to the time of the trip, the company was sold and the

trip was cancelled. I offered the package to another group of eight guys, who took the house and golf package as-is. The shared cost between eight was reasonable (and) the group saved by staying at the house for meals instead of frequenting restaurants. They actually preferred that, and all had a fantastic time."



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## LGBT travel: investing in a community

While there may be a perception of the LGBT travel market as an extremely lucrative segment, Out Adventures' Robert Sharp tells agents who are considering starting out in the sector that they should plan on making a long-term investment of time and commitment to serving the community, including determining "truly welcoming" supplier partners, such as the hotels belonging to the Preferred Pride collection or the suppliers represented by the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA).

"There's a misperception that it's a cash cow market and once in, the pink dollars are raining," Sharp says. "Dealing with this

"We focus so much on our client relationships that sales come naturally."

community is different – agents need to understand the market before engaging. If they've done their research, they realize it's a long game – one dedicated to helping LGBT people find travel solutions."

For agents who make that commitment, Sharp says that a personal touch and focus on details will help expand an agent's client base and encourage repeat bookings.

"This is a community that appreciates and rewards great customer service," he says. "It's a loyal market and although it takes time, if an agent builds trust, their business will grow with repeat clients and referrals."

Sharp points to that focus on client relationships in Out Adventures' success in quickly filling up groups; for example, a new mystery itinerary to Norway this August ("The only thing guests know so far is where they'll fly in and out of," Sharp says) only had a few spaces left earlier this spring.

"We focus so much on our client relationships that sales come naturally," Sharp says. "We have a community of travellers that become friends; I'm happy to blur the lines, because we're so lucky to take our clients and friends around the world to share experiences that they wouldn't find on their own."

# Together we stand. Together we are resilient. Together we will overcome.

This year, more than ever, we want to thank you for your wonderful support, helping clients getting back home safely, canceling and revising their travel plans.

Tomorrow, you will be once again at the center of it all, being our first ambassadors to make customers dream of traveling again.

Hand in hand, we will overcome this crisis together and emerge stronger!

Let's have faith in the future, in the love for travel and in the resilience of this industry.

Club Med 



## Rolling on the river

With river cruising's popularity showing no signs of slowing down, Audra Langton of Horizons Travel By Audra (an affiliate of The Travel Agent Next Door) tells aspiring river cruise specialists that "knowledge is power," with the various lines' training programs a natural starting point.

"The river cruise lines offer fantastic online courses for travel advisors to dive into and learn everything they need to know to start selling the product," she says. "There are key differences between the lines such as inclusion of beverages, shore excursions and/or gratuities and also the decor and atmosphere on board. Knowing these differences allows an agent to fit the correct cruise line with the client's expectations and needs resulting in a vacation that wows the client."



Of course, knowledge is even more powerful when paired with first-hand experience, she adds.

"Would you feel comfortable selling a BMW if you've never even driven one or at least been in one? The same goes for river cruising - it enables us to add honest emotion to a sale which really helps the client feel comfortable and get excited about

what they're potentially buying. I sailed on a Christmas Markets river cruise a few years back and when describing that experience to prospective clients I get sentimental. The client imagines themselves there in the moment, you have effortlessly created an emotional connection between them and their possible cruise experience before they've even set sail."



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## Tying the knot

With wedding planning being stressful enough, Stephanie Mayorga of Designer Travel (TravelOnly) says that a couple looking to tie the knot abroad needs a knowledgeable agent confident in their selling skills. For agents who'd like to say 'I do' to the world of destination weddings, this means research and networking before taking the plunge.

"Never lead on that you may be uncertain about a destination or product as they will lose faith in their decision to work with you as their agent," she says. "With these tools on hand, you will be able to offer your clients the information they are looking for and be able to help make their travel dreams come true."

In addition to experiencing a resort or destination first-hand, Mayorga adds that it's important to visit the site as close to your clients' wedding as possible, particularly in the event of a resort renovation or update.

"Never lead on that you may be uncertain about a destination or product as they will lose faith in their decision to work with you as their agent."

"If you find you are selling a lot of a particular product, reach out to the BDM and ask for a FAM schedule," she says. "My top-selling products are ones that I have experienced myself first-hand."

The right destinations and impeccable service has helped Mayorga create "a special bond" with her wedding clients, often leading to referrals and repeat business from the happy couples and their guests.

"From any wedding group, I will have wedding guests that come back to me to book their own destination wedding, family vacation, and so on," she says. "I accept these referrals with honour and truly appreciate the support I receive from my clients."

"One client in particular emailed me as soon as she bought her wedding dress – she was so excited to tell the world, and I was honoured that she shared her very special news with me."

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## On safari

For agents looking to identify prospective safari clients, Voyages Transat's Daniel Lamothe says that they're likely an experienced traveller who has already explored several parts of the globe and is on the hunt for something new.

He adds that with experienced clients comes expectations of a well-planned and managed itinerary best handled by an experienced operator, one that can also help an agent new to the market.

"It's highly recommended to deal with experienced and reliable tour operators," Lamothe says. "Their knowledge will be particularly useful to newcomers in the industry, whose customers might be interested in more adventurous trips."

For such a unique and immersive travel style, Lamothe adds that a visual storytelling



approach can help close the sale, particularly if an agent's tales of spotting animals in the wild are based on personal experience; for example, Lamothe keeps a photo album of his Africa travels on his desk for clients.

And once your clients experience the thrill of coming eye to eye with an elephant, lion or leopard for themselves, that storytelling approach can be amplified.

"Within a few years of my first FAM trip, I was able to convince enough people with my enthusiasm and took groups to Africa on two separate occasions," Lamothe says. "Although initially reluctant to booking such a trip, several customers confided that it was a trip of a lifetime. I recall a couple in which the wife only went to Africa to accompany her husband. When she returned, she was my best sales aid!" ✖

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# *In praise of* CRUISE CUISINE

Next to the destinations, the most talked-about  
cruise topic has to be food

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By MING TAPPIN

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# W

ho hasn't been asked after coming back from a cruise, "How was the food?"

Cruising truly is a gastronomic journey. The menus in the main dining room feature a variety of international fare and the buffet often hosts themed cuisine days. Foodies can also book a culinary-themed cruise hosted by celebrity chefs and winemakers.

Food and wine are even more celebrated on river cruises, as the European rivers flow through the continent's most diverse gastronomic centres. Wiener schnitzel, Hungarian goulash, and Bavarian sausages are on the menu, complemented by Dutch cheeses and French pastries. Along the way, taste port on the Douro, raise a glass of Riesling on the Rhine, and sip Bordeaux, well, in Bordeaux.

"Cruise dining isn't just about the all-you-can-eat buffets anymore."

## **Specialty dining**

Every cruise ship has at least one specialty restaurant, and some have more than 10! Adding to the traditional steakhouse and Italian trattoria are now restaurants specializing in Asian fusion, seafood, barbecue, tapas, as well as sushi bars, teppanyaki rooms, and French bistros.

Chef's Table dinners are also prevalent, where an exclusive number of guests can indulge in a multi-course menu curated by the ship's head chef, accompanied by premium wines selected by the sommelier. Casual venues such as American diners, brewpubs, dessert shops, and Starbucks are now making an appearance at sea.

## **Lean cuisine**

With an increasing focus on healthy living, cruise dining isn't just about all-you-can-eat buffets anymore. Today's ship menus include a variety of calorie-wise offerings such as low-fat, low-salt options, and no-sugar-added desserts. Vegetarian and vegan cuisine is now widely available, with Oceania Cruises recently introducing an entire line of plant-based menus.





← Uniworld  
cooking class

↓ RCI Jewel Formal Dining



→  
NCL  
Cocos



## Celebrity chefs

The first cruise line to partner with a celebrity chef was Celebrity Cruises, which collaborated with Michel Roux to curate its restaurant menus. Since then, almost every cruise line today features globally-recognized chefs and culinary organizations to elevate cruise cuisine to the next level.

**Carnival Cruise Line's** celebrity chef line-up includes Guy Fieri whose Guy's Burger Joint and Guy's Pig & Anchor Smokehouse are found onboard several ships. And just announced is a new partnership with Emeril Lagasse, whose first sea-going restaurant will debut on the Mardi Gras launching in August.

**Princess Cruises** features Michelin-starred chef Curtis Stone, who designed a six-course SHARE menu available onboard three ships, in addition to dishes in the main dining room fleet-wide. Princess also works with chocolatier Norman Love to create decadent desserts for its restaurant menus.

"Cruising is truly a  
gastronomic journey."

**Seabourn Cruises** collaborates with three Michelin-star chef Thomas Keller, who creates classic American comfort food for the dining room as well as specialty restaurant menus.

**Oceania Cruises'** culinary team is led by master chef Jacques Pépin, who has his namesake restaurant onboard two ships. Furthermore, Oceania partners with Wine Spectator and Moët & Chandon to offer exclusive wine pairing dinners, including a six-course Dom Pérignon Experience.



## CRUISE INDUSTRY

// Cruise cuisine



↑ Regent Dining

→  
Carnival  
Teppanyaki



**Onboard *Crystal Cruises'*** ocean and expedition fleet, Nobuyuki “Nobu” Matsuhisa, brings his signature Japanese-Peruvian cuisine to a specialty restaurant and sushi bar.

***Windstar Cruises*** is the official cruise line of the James Beard Foundation, whose chefs and sommeliers have been awarded the highest accolades in the restaurant industry. These culinary experts create dishes for *Windstar's* restaurant menus, conduct cooking demonstrations, and also host culinary-themed sailings.

***MSC Cruises*** brings the talents of Hawaiian-fusion chef Roy Yamaguchi to the specialty restaurant Pan Asian Market Kitchen onboard two ships, featuring sushi, teppanyaki, and Asian-fusion dishes.

***Royal Caribbean Cruise*** Line features Jamie Oliver’s casual eatery Jamie’s Italian onboard five ships, serving family-style casual meals. And not to be outdone, ***Holland America Line's*** Culinary Council boasts eight Master Chefs including James Beard award-winners, Michelin-starred restaurateurs, and members of the international culinary society Confrérie de la Chaîne des Rôtisseurs.



↓ Seabourn Dining



“Every cruise ship has at least one specialty restaurant, and some have more than 10!”

### Experiences beyond the plate

Cruise cuisine has also been woven into the onboard enrichment program. Guests have educational experiences through cooking demonstrations and classes. Culinary arts centres with full cooking stations are found onboard ships of Regent Seven Seas and Oceania Cruises, and Holland America has partnered with America’s Test Kitchens for its culinary enrichment program. Ashore, guests can discover local flavours through chef-led shopping excursions at a local market or a cooking lesson with a chef at a restaurant.

With so many dining options to explore, the only thing left to say is bon voyage... and bon appétit! ☘

Perfect Day at CocoCay, Bahamas

# STICKING TOGETHER THROUGH AND THROUGH

It’s no secret — these are challenging and unprecedented times for our industry. And we will use this time to rebuild as an industry. Our commitment to you, your success and your future will never waver. And we’ll reach the other side of this together, as partners and friends.



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Travellers opting for Insight's Luxury Gold itineraries will enjoy a private after-hours visit to the Luxor Temple.

© Courtesy of Insight Vacations

# Timeless JOURNEYS

**Just as the Egyptian sun god Ra was reborn every morning, Egypt's tourism sector is going through a renaissance.**

By BLAKE WOLFE

While political unrest in recent years saw visitation wane, Egypt is beginning to see the return of guests looking to gaze upon its cultural and historical marvels, hoping to catch a glimpse of the wonder that enraptured the ancient inhabitants of the land.

Just as ancient and enticing as the land of the pharaohs is nearby Jordan, which is perhaps best known for the mysterious ruins of Petra. There's plenty to explore in Jordan, whether discovering desert canyons or getting an inside look at the life of locals.

Insight Vacations is exploring both of these unique and timeless destinations in its 2020-21 Middle East program. Read on to learn how your clients can begin their explorations in style!

## Exploring Egypt and Jordan with Insight Vacations

### **Egyptian odyssey**

"The first time I went was the first time I felt humbled as a traveller," said Mandy Kalitsis, Insight's groups manager. "The scale and devotion to their gods is extraordinary. That scale and love was brought to Greece and Rome. It was the culture where that started. It truly is a sensational destination."

While Insight's Egypt itineraries are of course centred around Cairo and the pyramids at Giza (led by local Egyptologists ready to answer travellers' questions), there's plenty to discover along the banks of the Nile.

Guests will have the opportunity to cruise down the famed river (the seven-night itinerary includes a return trip), taking in the sights of life along its banks. In Aswan, travellers will step back in time to the early 20th century with a high tea hosted at the famed Old Cataract Hotel, an historic property which has hosted the likes of Winston Churchill and Agatha Christie, the latter of which included the hotel as a setting in her novel *Death on the Nile*.

Additionally, travellers opting for Insight's Luxury Gold itineraries will enjoy extra perks, including upgraded accommodations and river cruise ship, plus private after-hours visits to the Luxor Temple and a chance to meet and dine with a local family in Aswan, including the opportunity to take part in traditional bread-making.

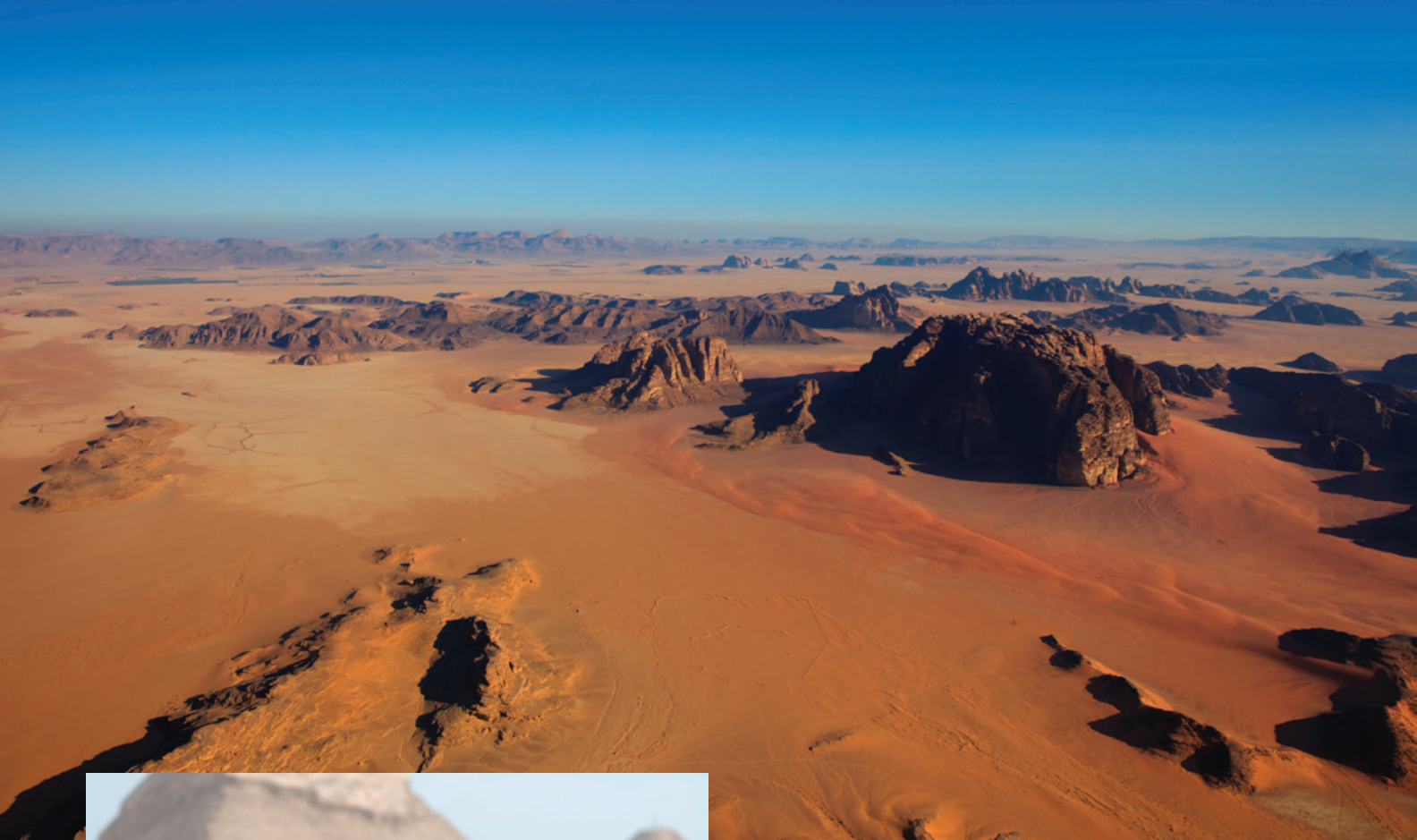
Additionally, with Egypt only just beginning to see the return of tourists, travellers can enjoy the destination's iconic sites without the crowds.











↑  
**Jordan's Wadi Rum is "like being on the surface of Mars".**  
© Courtesy of Jordan Tourism Board

←  
**With tourism to Egypt still bouncing back, travellers can explore sites like the Pyramids of Giza without the crowds.** © Courtesy of Insight Vacations

## Jordan: from Petra to the Wadi Rum

East of Egypt, Jordan also beckons to travellers seeking unique experiences in a new destination.

Like Egypt, Insight's Jordan itineraries are primarily based around the destination's archaeological features, from the Roman-era cities of Jerash and Petra, the ancient settlement carved into canyon walls and an enduring symbol of the destination. A two-day extension of the seven-day Jordan itinerary also allows travellers to visit the Dead Sea.

"A two-day extension of the seven-day Jordan itinerary also allows travellers to visit the Dead Sea."

But there's more to Jordan than history captured in stone, with a vibrant and welcoming people at the heart of the journey. Among the local experiences Insight offers in Jordan include spending time with local Bedouin families, along with explorations of the famed Wadi Rum by Bedouin guides, a desert canyon popularized in *Lawrence of Arabia*, which Brad Gibson, Insight's sales manager for Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, describes as "like being on the surface of Mars." This unique landscape provides the backdrop for an unforgettable glamping experience under the night sky.

Guests can also visit the Iraq Al-Amir Women's Cooperative, a project lead by The Travel Corporation's charitable arm The TreadRight Foundation, which assists local women in becoming financially independent through the creation and sale of food items and crafts.

"It's a bucket list trip," Gibson says. "Jordan exceeded what I hoped for – from the diversity of sites to the beautiful people. I had so many great experiences."



## DESTINATIONS TO DISCOVER

// Egypt and Jordan



↑  
The façade of the Treasury at Petra is synonymous with Jordan. © Courtesy of Jordan Tourism Board

### Agent advice

Both Egypt and Jordan involve a fair amount of walking and while the itineraries have plenty to offer for guests of all ages, travellers will have to be relatively mobile. Comfortable shoes are also a must and with Jordan's red sand, Gibson advised that visitors may want to consider footwear that they can easily part with following the trip.

Insight also offers plenty of options to combine its Middle East destinations: Egypt can be combined with Greece and Turkey in the *Athens and Three Continents Cruise* and *Glories of Greece and Three Continents* itineraries, while Jordan can be paired with Israel for a 14-day journey. For travellers looking to see Egypt and Jordan in a single vacation, the 12-day *Splendours of Egypt* and 25-day *Land of the Prophets* itineraries feature both destinations plus Israel.

Custom group itineraries can also be created for Egypt or Jordan with a minimum of 10 travellers. ✕

## INSIGHT VACATIONS

*The Art of Travelling in Style*

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# THANK YOU

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## TO OUR SUPERHERO TRAVEL ADVISORS

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*We extend to you our best wishes for health and fortitude as we navigate our way through these unprecedented times.*

*When your clients are ready to travel again, we're ready to guide you, as we have been for 100 years.  
We look forward to meeting with you again soon, to personally share our gratitude.*

*Your Insight Vacations Team*



A FAMILY OF BRANDS  
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HOTEL VISIT

// Iberostar Selection Esmeralda







# Say “hola” to Cayo Cruz!

The Coral Level at  
Iberostar Selection  
Esmeralda is  
Cuba’s newest  
luxurious escape

By MICHAEL PIHACH

Photos COURTESY OF IBEROSTAR  
HOTELS AND RESORTS







**E**very so often a new and exciting destination emerges in the Caribbean, giving vacation-seekers an opportunity to discover their own piece of untouched paradise.

One of the newest sun-kissed regions to welcome tourists in Cuba is Cayo Cruz, a small island community measuring about 25 kilometers long, located about a one hour's drive from Cayo Coco International Airport and a two hours' drive from Camaguey.

This tranquil archipelago, which belongs to "Jardines del Rey" (King's Gardens), is accessible via a newly-constructed road from Cayo Coco to Cayo Cruz and is already home to a handful of chic hotels that have opened recently.

The latest resort to open its doors along Cayo Cruz's sparkling and soft beachfront is the Coral Level at Iberostar Selection Esmeralda, one of Cuba's most-anticipated hotel openings for 2020.

↑  
Fresh products are served to make guests feel right at home.

Managed by Iberostar Hotels & Resorts and part of the Gaviota portfolio, the all-inclusive property – Cayo Cruz's third – draws on inspiration from 19th century Cuba, extending a nod to the coffee plantations and mansions of that time.

Simple and easy lines are some of the design elements your clients will find here.



## HOTEL VISIT

// Iberostar Selection Esmeralda

### Refined sophistication

The property is divided into two sections: Coral Level is for the adults; the Iberostar Selection Esmeralda is for families.

Coral Level is a new concept for Iberostar, whereby “the company offers its clients a superior experience within another hotel,” Alexei Torres, Cuba marketing director at Iberostar Hotels & Resorts, tells PAX. “Nestled within our existing properties, Coral Levels are luxurious enclaves designed with refined sophistication.”

There are 570 rooms total between the two areas – Iberostar Selection Esmeralda has 450 rooms; Coral Level has 120. Guests staying at Coral level have access to the rest of the hotel (but not the other way around).

“...Coral Levels are luxurious enclaves designed with refined sophistication.”

“Private areas and experiences, combined with cutting edge design and the latest art installations, provide a beautiful oasis available exclusively for Coral Level guests,” Torres says.

Other on-site amenities at Coral Level include personal butler service, three pools, a cigar lounge, complimentary Wi-Fi and access to a stunning beachfront.

“Clients will discover a unique and gorgeous place where they will enjoy upscale service. Butler service, private breakfast, excellent views... a place where the client is the big star,” Torres says.

The food on site is fresh, natural and handmade, delivered at three thematic restaurants – El Bolero (gourmet), Brasas (creole) and La Caleta (Mediterranean). There’s also the buffet restaurant, Tropico, and Yute, for snacks.



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DOESN'T STOP

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For more than 90 years, we have celebrated a joint curiosity for the wondrous world around us. Like you and your clients, we are wanderers and wayfarers, packers and partakers, explorers and adventure seekers. With “Let’s go!” as our mantra, the current stop sign before us is naturally unsettling.

We may have been temporarily relegated to armchair travellers, but we are all still travellers! Until the day comes when we can resume the joy of being your clients’ global guide, keep them dreaming. We certainly are.

LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SHARE OUR INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGE WITH YOUR CLIENTS?

Stay tuned for marketing materials and ideas to help your clients remember to keep dreaming. In the meantime, enjoy our video, and remember, Dreaming Doesn’t Stop.

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↑  
Connecting with nature is key at this laid-back property.

→  
The property is surrounded by a range of biodiversity.





## HOTEL VISIT

// Iberostar Selection Esmeralda

“Clients will discover a unique and gorgeous place where they will enjoy upscale service. Butler service, private breakfast, excellent views... a place where the client is the big star.”

*Alexei Torres,  
Cuba marketing director, Iberostar*

### “Exuberant nature”

And if the idea of passing fabulous flocks of pink flamingos excites you, then look no further.

Connecting with nature is key at this laid-back property as it is surrounded by natural landscapes with amazing biodiversity and facilities for diving, snorkeling and fishing.

“Exuberant nature,” Torres says, “will be the main and distinctive attraction.”

Speaking of the environment, Coral Level at Iberostar Selection Esmeralda is free of single-use plastic in its rooms and is committed to eliminating them completely this year in all of its areas.

This action, says Torres, is aligned with the company’s strategy to follow responsible tourism and is part of the Wave of Change movement for the preservation of seas and oceans.

“Single-use plastics have been eliminated from all Iberostar rooms around the

world in 2019 and by 2020 Iberostar’s operations are single-use plastic,” Torres says.

The inauguration of Coral Level at Iberostar Selection Esmeralda reinforces Iberostar’s commitment to “quality tourism in Cuba,” Torres says.

Following a series of major openings, Iberostar’s strategy for 2020 is to consolidate its extensive portfolio on the island and to promote new flagship hotels, positioning them amongst the top references for future visitors to the island.

“This is the first of the three openings that the chain has planned this year in the country as part of its commitment to this destination,” Torres says.

Two more openings are planned for 2020, including the Iberostar Selection Esmeralda, a resort where the new Coral Level is located, and Iberostar Selection Almirante, the only five-star hotel on Guardalavaca beach.

For more info, visit [iberostar.com](http://iberostar.com). ✕

# Happy Travel Agent Day



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KEEP CLIMBING





↓ The Air Canada Signature Suite is a concept unique to Toronto-Pearson. © Courtesy of Air Canada



# Lounge act

## Comparing lounges at Canada's 3 busiest airports

By BLAKE WOLFE

For frequent flyers, the airport lounge is an important stop en route to their final destination.

Whether a full-service facility with five-star food and amenities (or simply a more comfortable place to sit than waiting at the gate), airport lounges come in all shapes, sizes and styles.

Take a quick journey through the lounges of Canada's three busiest airports – Toronto Pearson, Montreal-Trudeau and Vancouver International Airport – and see how your clients can depart relaxed and refreshed.

### Open to all

Offering six lounges at YYZ and four at YVR, Plaza Premium lounges can be booked by passengers of any airline/seating class. Worldwide, the company offers 160 locations in 44 international airports across 21 countries. In addition, the company also designs and operates lounges on behalf of airlines.

### Air Canada

Canada's flag carrier maintains a presence at airports across the country, including

five of its Maple Leaf Lounges at YYZ and three each at both YUL and YVR.

Toronto-Pearson also features the sole Air Canada Signature Suite concept, designed exclusively for Air Canada Signature Class customers travelling to Europe, Asia and South America. The lounge features exclusive amenities including a menu by Chef David Hawksworth, complimentary signature cocktails, luxury skin care products and more.



↓ Vancouver International Airport's SkyTeam lounge can be accessed by passengers flying any member of the airline alliance.



### **Air France/KLM**

Eligible passengers of both Air France and KLM can access exclusive lounges at both YYZ and YUL.

The lounges offer free Wi-Fi, refreshments including hot and cold meals and more; in Montreal, passengers can access shower facilities to freshen up before flying.

### **oneworld**

British Airways (BA) operates lounges at both YYZ and YVR, while each airport also offers lounges from oneworld members American Airlines and Cathay Pacific respectively.

Any of the above lounges are open to Business or First Class passengers of the respective airlines and can also be used by eligible customers traveling on any oneworld member airline, including members of the oneworld Priority program with Sapphire or Emerald status.

Additionally, at YYZ, Plaza Premium operates a oneworld lounge exclusively for First and Business class passengers flying with BA or Cathay Pacific.

“For frequent flyers, the airport lounge is an important stop en route to their final destination.”

### **SkyTeam**

YVR also boasts a dedicated SkyTeam lounge, open 24/7 and offering a range of amenities from refreshments to shower facilities and a business centre. The lounge is available to passengers of the SkyTeam alliance airlines flying to Vancouver including Aeromexico, Air France, China Airlines, China Eastern, China Southern, Delta, KLM, Korean Air and Xiamen Air.

### **Exclusive to YUL**

Montreal-Trudeau also boasts a pair of lounges not found at YYZ or YVR, namely the Desjardins Odyssey Lounge and the National Bank Lounge.

The lounges offer exclusive access to cardholders of the Desjardins Odyssey and National Bank World Elite credit cards when flying internationally from YUL on flights assigned to gates 50 to 68 in the international zone.

### **A new player**

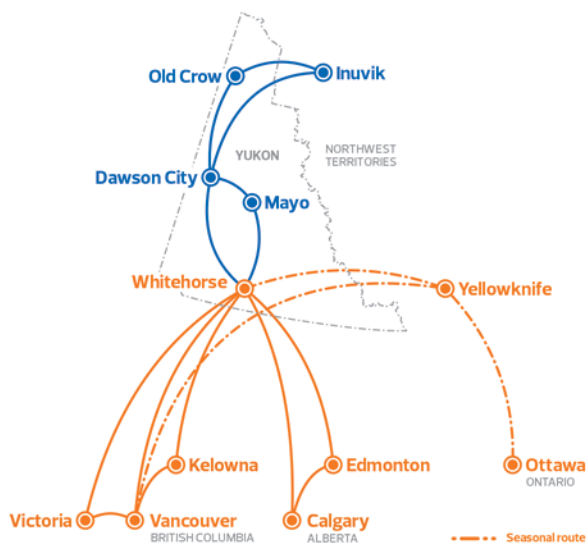
In 2019, WestJet announced that it would launch its own proprietary airport lounges, with the first set to debut later this summer at Calgary International Airport.

The carrier's lounge concept will “blend contemporary interior design with refined mountain living” and “bring together exceptional local food and beverage, along with business amenities designed to keep travellers connected,” according to WestJet. ☒





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# This Travel Agent Appreciation Month, *we want to express our most sincere thanks.*

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All of us at Air Canada are incredibly appreciative and grateful for your great collaboration. Through both ordinary and extraordinary times, it is the long-standing relationships and trust we have built with you, our partners, that will get us through this together.

As we look to the future this Travel Agent Appreciation Month, it is our pleasure to continue working together closely to make travel dreams come true.

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