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CRUISE GUIDE

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IRELAND

*Morris  
Chia*

FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN,  
TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL



SPECIAL FEATURE

STANDING OUT: A LOOK AT  
**SPECIALIST TRAVEL AGENCIES**




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# Letter *from the* publisher



## A sincere thank-you

Five years. Fifty-one editions. And thousands of pages of content!

This May 2019 issue of *PAX* magazine that you hold in your hands marks the fifth anniversary of the magazine itself, and I couldn't be prouder. This issue comes just in time, as the month of May also happens to be Travel Agent Month.

Over the last couple of years, print publications around the world have been closing their doors. The downfall of print journalism is a very tangible and quantifiable crisis that's affected the media industry here in Canada, and elsewhere around the world.

To say that launching a specialized print magazine back in 2014 was a bold move would be nothing short of an understatement.

But despite this, our company has not only stayed afloat, but has also gotten stronger over time. PAX Global Media's continuous efforts and recent acquisition of Tourisme Plus has allowed us to add more products to our inventory and remain leaders in the industry.

As visionaries, we continue to deliver in-depth print coverage of the travel industry's most polarising issues, the uncertainties of innovation, and emerging trends to keep an eye out for. In short, we cover everything that pertains to a daily life in travel.

Thanks to you, our readers, and to my experienced editorial team, we can say that we've accomplished our mission.

To this day, PAX Global Media and its subsidiaries remains the only combined print and digital media enterprise, offered in both English and French, for business professionals in the Canadian travel industry.

I'd like to take this very special opportunity to thank you, each and every one of you, for your loyalty and your diligent readership. We know that it's a very precious bond and we are grateful for your unwavering support. Thank you, one thousand times!

Each month, we look forward to showcasing a variety of work from the industry's most prominent players, and this time around, it's particularly exciting because it's Travel Agent Month!

In this issue, we chat with Morris Chia, founder of Travel Professionals International (TPI), along with the company's CEO, Zeina Gedeon, to learn about what it takes it takes to remain a relevant host agency for 25 years in the Canadian travel industry.

Further inside the pages of this spring edition, you'll find our 2019 Expedition Cruise Guide (one of the most popular segments among travellers), a charming historic hotel in Guadeloupe, as well as the wild beauties of Ireland.

Happy reading!

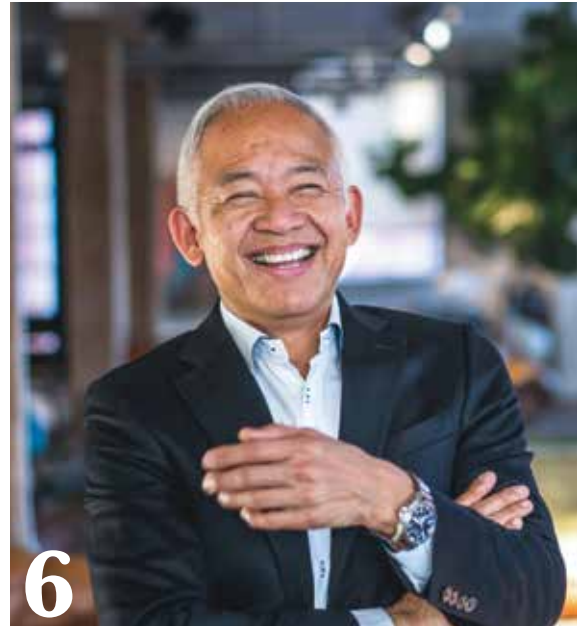
President & CEO,  
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# Predicting *the future*

A quarter-century into the travel business, **Morris Chia** & the TPI team show no signs of slowing down

Story by Blake Wolfe / Photos by Geoff Fitzgerald

**W**hile it may seem like yesterday to some, the world of 1994 was a very different place: a globe on the verge of a profound transformation, thanks to a then-recent concept called the internet which was about to go mainstream.

Much like the world at large, the travel industry of 25 years ago was similarly poised for change at the hands of the World Wide Web; it's perhaps fitting, then, that 1994 also marked the debut of Travel Professionals International (TPI), which would introduce a new agency model that would, in some ways, anticipate the effects of the internet on the traditional travel agent.

And as most industry disruptions go, it would take an outsider to apply a new approach – in this case, it was TPI Founder and Chairman Morris Chia leading the charge, transitioning from the declining fur industry to the world of travel.

“We actually started in an old fur storage facility in 1994 – it wasn't converted yet to an office space!” Chia recalls. “The previous business I was involved in had a small travel element – we moved a team from city to city and ended up spending \$500,000. But my wife and I also have a passion for travel, which is the typical comment from folks like us getting involved in the industry because we love it! →





Clockwise from top left: Amy Losics, director of operations; Gareth McNulty, director of technology; Colton Chia, director of partnerships; Caroline Hay, national director marketing & sales engagement; Megan Allen, group financial controller; Morris Chia, founder & chairman; Zeina Gedeon, CEO; Christine Winchester, national director sales & professional development.



Morris Chia and his son Colton Chia

“I thought maybe travel was something interesting that I could get involved in but I had no background in it,” he adds. “The first step was looking at acquiring a traditional agency, but after looking at the numbers it didn’t make sense. I then looked to the U.S. to see what was happening – the internet was coming in and I learned about Sabre. I picked out the model from the U.S. and thought ‘maybe this could work in Canada.’”

That new approach would involve taking office duties off the shoulders of travel agents so that they could focus on selling, subsequently introducing the concept of the independent agent to the Canadian market and creating a network of affiliated agents with enhanced freedom and flexibility to sell travel on their own schedule.

### Early growth and challenges

Moving into a completely new industry is not without its challenges, Chia recalls.

“They say ‘you don’t know what you don’t know,’” he tells *PAX*, describing the learning process as “drinking from the firehose.”

“Had I known then what I know today, I would have taken a different path. It was a challenge because I had no experience; we had to hire a manager to apply for IATA and we incurred a lot of costs when we got going. But we had a few early adopters (agents) who believed in us and joined us.”

Chia adds that TPI also experienced initial resistance from some entrenched members of the travel industry, reacting to a newcomer bringing a different approach that was growing in popularity.

“I wasn’t from the travel business and I think people were also resisting similarly to when discounters came in,” he says.

“We were something new and people didn’t think it would work.”

Twenty-five years later, the TPI approach has been proven to work. Winnipeg, Manitoba and Saskatchewan were the network’s first key markets until expanding in 1997 to Ontario with the establishment of its Toronto office. Growth has continued from coast to coast, with an especially strong presence in Atlantic Canada, which accounts for approximately 20 per cent of TPI’s membership, Chia says.

### An evolving role

It’s interesting to note that the travel agency approach introduced by TPI coincided with the advent of the online age and seemingly predicted the impact the internet would have on travel agents in just a few short years: with a world-wide resource for travellers to conduct research and, eventually, make their own bookings, the role of the agent would need to evolve from a purely transactional position to that of a knowledgeable and trusted advisor.

“I saw back in the 1990s, agents had the power because of GDS,” Chia says. “Their skill sets were not yet developed to get to know customers better – to know exactly what their customers wanted and all of the follow-up and touch points that other industries have moved forward. That was what made me realize that we can further enable them by having all

“ I wasn’t from the travel business and I think people were also resisting similarly to when discounters came in. We were something new and people didn’t think it would work. ”



of the back-office services handled so that agents can focus on selling.”

Chia points to the Canadian real estate sector for an example of the approach he has brought to the travel world.

“ReMAX is a great example, where their agents are focused on dealing with customers and the office maintains all of the licensing and administration, and really put most of the revenue back to the agents that are producing it.”

That evolution was hastened by the events of Sept. 11, 2001, which caused a ripple effect across global political, social and economic fault lines, including the travel world.

“Over time, with the advent of Sept. 11 and OTAs putting so much pressure on the agents,” he says, “those who have not evolved to know their customers better – to be more than an order-taker – have essentially been wiped out; anyone left doing that is hanging on by a string.”

### The right team

While he’s now an industry veteran, Chia explains that his former status as a travel newcomer has shaped his approach to leadership and management.

“I believe in finding the right people, since I wasn’t from the travel industry originally. “I always look to find someone smarter and once you’ve found them, don’t be afraid to let them run with it. I’m not a micro-manager.”

To that end, following a realignment of TPI’s sales and marketing team in 2017, Chia brought on travel industry veteran Zeina Gedeon as CEO, bringing years of industry experience from TravelBrands and Air Canada Vacations to the role.

“I have an easy job!” Gedeon tells PAX. “The leadership team is really good; they understand the advisors and more importantly, they’re always learning, which allows them to help the advisors even more. If they’re too close-minded, it doesn’t help the advisors or TPI.”

That focus on education and agent support – spearheaded by a leadership team that

have all previously served as travel advisors – has paid off for several TPI agents, who are welcomed into the network’s Chairman’s Circle for annual sales of \$2 million or more. Chia and Gedeon explain that the education aspect at TPI has focused on several niches – including cruise, luxury and adventure travel – to help agents boost their selling power and expand their client base. →



“ I always look to find someone smarter and once you’ve found them, don’t be afraid to let them run with it. I’m not a micro-manager. ”

Looking back on 25 years of success, Chia notes the industry’s changing opinion of independent agents; while “outside agents” were once an addendum to a travel agency’s retail operations, the market has since shifted gears to view these agents as an integral part of the travel landscape, evidenced by the growth of the home-based market over the years.

“It’s interesting to look at 25 years ago when there was so much resistance to today, when everyone wants to be like us,” Chia says. “We’ve almost become mainstream; back then we weren’t. We were ‘the other company.’ Now everyone wants a piece of that.

“I’m most pleased that it gives the compensation back to the advisors. Back then, no one earned \$100,000. \$200,000? It was unheard of! The advisors work their butts off to generate those numbers and they’re getting rewarded for it. We’re part of that process to help them earn that kind of money.” ●

*Special thanks to the East Room for providing the location for this month’s cover photo shoot / 50 Carroll St, Toronto*



Morris Chia with Zeina Gedeon

## ..... WATER *versus* LAND .....

When he’s not in the office or travelling the world, Chia tells *PAX* that there’s one place in particular where he can be found.

“Travel is in my blood but I also like to be close to a lake or any body of water, as I enjoy water skiing. That gives me a grounding. I just generally like spending time with friends and family.”

After a visit to Ireland’s Ashford Castle, which hosted TPI’s Chairman’s Circle in April, Chia says that South America is the next region on his travel wish list that he wants to see more of.

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# Alone, but

# not lonely

By Jean-François Venne

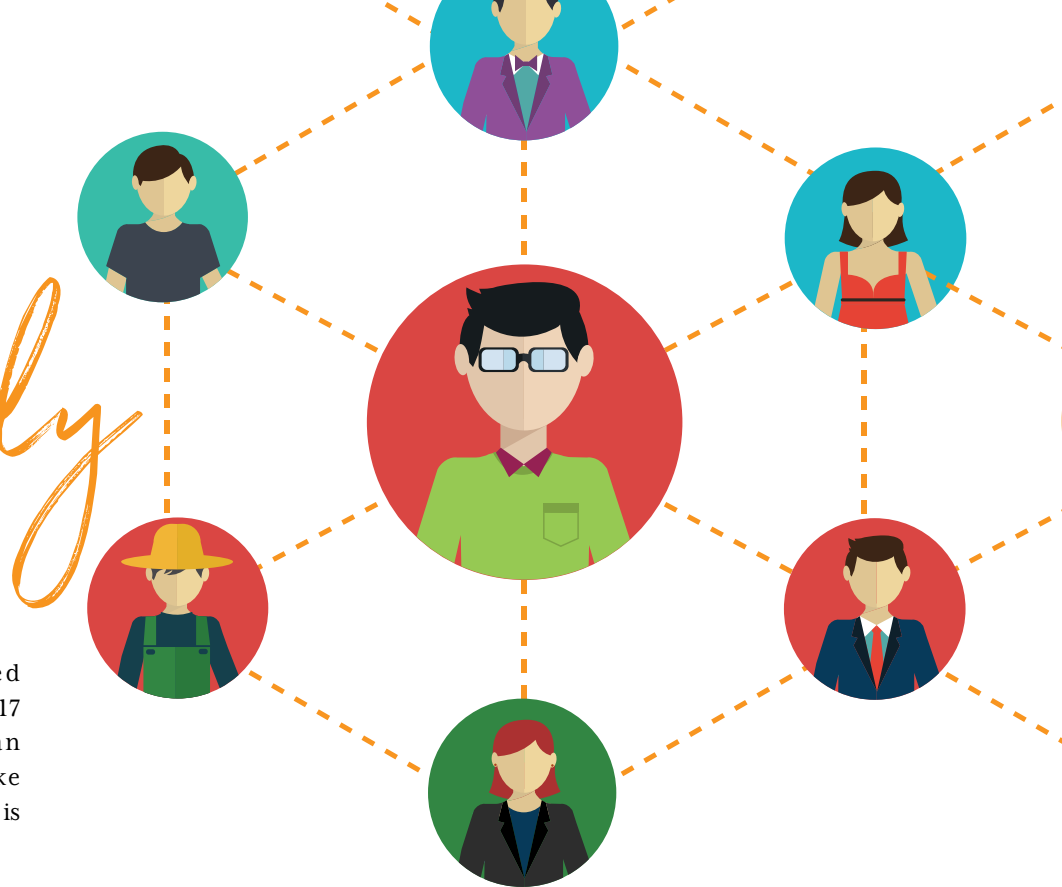
**E**velyn Casaubon founded Wellness Destinations in 2017 and has officially been an outside agent since May 2018. Like most self-employed workers, her office is her home.

But it's out of the question for her to confine herself to the four walls of her house.

"From the beginning, I chose several strategies to avoid finding myself isolated," she says.

Although she has a home office, she doesn't hesitate to work from a café or library from time to time. Regular meetings with customers or partners offer her the opportunity for one-on-one interactions.

Casaubon also wants to find a networking association that allows for more engagement. "I'm shopping around for the right organization," she says.



She has tried several, such as the International Wellness Network (RIME) and women's groups, such as Heart Link Quebec. She also regularly attends conferences and trainings, which usually includes a networking component.

### What is she looking for, exactly?

An organization that commits to its members and delivers what it promises. One meeting a month in a networking organization would be adequate, as long as the cost remains reasonable. But above all, she's seeking a network whose members, beyond the profession or the fact of being in business, possess values similar to her own.

"I'm looking for a group of people with whom I feel good and who will allow me to evolve, while also adding value to my small business," she says.

### Virtual networking

Chantal Laporte, a travel agent at Espace Voyages, has been an outside agent since October 2014. She sometimes works full-time. However, at other times, she's balancing another job.

To avoid isolation, she uses a lot of social media, including Facebook. She participates in several specialized groups, such as Travel Professionals or Quebec Travel Counsellors.

Laporte is also a director at the External Advisors Group.

"It's interesting, because this group brings together external agents, and more often than not, it's those who are just starting out, who can therefore share similar experiences," Laporte says.

**"I'm looking for a group of people who I feel comfortable with, and who will allow me to evolve, while also bringing an added value to my small business"**

- Evelyne Casaubon

Without necessarily revealing their best tips (they're still competitors after all) they discuss various situations and, in turn, help each other in order to better manage their customer experiences.

Laporte also plans to participate in networking activities. She attended an event organized by Entrepreneurs Networking Live. The members of this group organize parties about once a week.

"You can attend conferences, chat with friendly people, and discover some of the services you may need in your practice," she says.

Many other opportunities to break the isolation and network is presented to outside agents, she adds, naming bulk brochures, presentations from tour operators, hotel chains or various tourist offices.

Laporte also takes advantage of familiarization trips aimed at discovering hotel chains and new destinations in order to network with representatives and hoteliers.

**"With so many options out there in terms of networking and exchange groups, it's almost impossible to feel isolated"**

- Chantal Laporte

When asked if she feels as though there's a risk of isolation by working as a self-employed person, she responds that it is actually less of a risk than a choice.

"With so many options out there in terms of networking and exchange groups, it's almost impossible to feel isolated," she concludes. ●

## Where to network?

- social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, etc.);
- chambers of commerce and young chambers of commerce;
- associations and groups related to your activity sector;
- conferences and trade shows related to your activity sector;
- entrepreneurial workshops, events, and trainings;
- business clubs
- personal networks (gender-based, community-based, language-based, etc.);
- graduate associations

Source: Entreprises Québec

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# HAPPY Travel Agent MONTH!



**12,000**

The number of Canadian travel professionals in 2018 represented by the 1,500 registered agencies who are members of the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies (ACTA).

**1,060** The number of travel agents who received security awareness training from ACTA through its ongoing PCI DSS compliance initiative. The new industry standard, which aims to reduce incidents of credit card fraud, came into effect for Canadian travel agencies on March 1, 2018.

**66,563**

(and counting)

The amount of TICO (Travel Industry Council of Ontario) exams written by Ontario travel agents and agency managers/supervisors between July 1, 2009 – the date the exams were introduced – and March 31, 2018. The exam is mandatory for Ontario travel agents and agency managers under TICO's Education Standards.

**0** The amount in dollars required by Quebec travellers to contribute to the province's travel Compensation Fund.

As of Jan. 1 this year, the Office de la protection du consommateur Quebec (OPC) announced that as long as the fund remains above \$75 million, travellers are not required to pay the contribution fee of \$1 per \$1,000 of travel services purchased through a registered Quebec travel agency.

**2 million**

The maximum amount per event that British Columbia's Travel Assurance Fund will pay out to assist travellers who do not receive the services they paid for. Licensed travel businesses in the province contribute 0.05 per cent of their total gross sales, with a minimum payment of \$100 per fiscal period. ●

Sources: ACTA, TICO, Consumer Protection BC, Office de la protection du consommateur Quebec



# Happy Travel Agent Appreciation Month.

Trip Advisor recently named WestJet 'Best airline in Canada' for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row and we couldn't have done it without you. It's one of the many reasons we celebrate travel agents for the entire month of May. Consider it our way of thanking you for your endless support as we build our network and become a global carrier together. So here's to you and continuing to provide your clients with travel experiences they'll never forget.



# How to *streamline* your event costs

By Aurore Bonvalot







**W**hen setting up an event, regardless if it's big or small, organizers quickly learn that curbing costs can be a very large beast to tame.

Costs must be addressed very early on in the process after the underlying themes and outcomes trying to be conveyed are identified.

You need to establish a fair and adequate budget that will allow you to create the event within certain parameters in order to avoid wasting time dreaming up unrealistic concepts.

This doesn't mean that more money can't be allocated towards the event during the planning process, but it's best to remain cautious about the scope of your own expectations.

Here are some tips that will help you spend wisely when the time comes to plan an event.

By optimizing your budget properly, not only will your client's needs be met, but the event, also, will stay within your own budget and, in turn, ensure success for all.



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### Consider group contracts

Nothing is better than establishing group contracts to ensure the best prices and the best freebies. You'll also benefit from more adequate and flexible payment terms.



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### Book in advance

Experienced organizers know that it's always better to book multiple services in advance as soon as possible. This allows access to cheaper rates and a wider selection of options. It also lets organizers avoid last-minute additions, which can be very expensive.

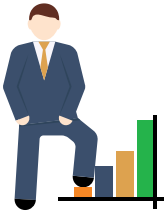
Confirming a place sooner, rather than later, is also key. Once a venue is reserved, all the other decisions will fall into place.

One should also consider the impact of the date of your event. Room rental fees may be reduced or more affordable on certain days of the week. →

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### Use your bargaining power

Don't underestimate your negotiating power! One way to make sure that you get the right price is to request two to three submissions.



Analyze them, compare, and play the competition off each other.

On the other hand, if you're still working with the same suppliers, negotiate wholesale rates and explain that you will use their services X number of times in the coming year. Business loyalty pays off so long as it's a win-win relationship.



### Hire the right staff

If it's obvious that you need to put together a team of professionals, you should also consider hiring volunteers. The right volunteers can bring tons of value to your event.

Get closer, for example, to schools with hospitality and tourism programs. Very often, students must complete internships and undergo real-life training before pursuing a career in the field, making them ideal candidates.



### Think local

It's good to collaborate and hire as many local suppliers as you can.

It ensures you're promoting and supporting local businesses in the community; not only will it pay dividends for your company's reputation, it could even help establish relationships with suppliers who may be keen to work out a deal with you for future events.

Hiring local suppliers can also help you save on transportation expenses. In addition to saving money, you're also reducing the chance of potentially expensive problems such as lost or delayed deliveries and customs issues.



### Analyze the costs

When organizing an event, it's important to have a clear overview of your budget by getting as many submissions as possible.

First, determine what is essential and immutable in the organization of the event; these are the fixed costs that you can't reduce or eliminate, including venue rental fees and catering.

Next, decide what is critical to the success of the event in terms of brand awareness and the effect on the collective memory of the guests, costs such as promotional materials and audiovisual equipment.

Once the mandatory spend is covered, you can take the leftover cash and fine-tune the details to create an event that will really make an impact on attendees. It's important to never forget the power of the 'wow' effect: you could hire an interesting keynote speaker, upgrade the door prizes in your contest or spend extra on premium giveaway gifts – it's up to you! ●

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# Standing out: a look at *specialist* travel agencies

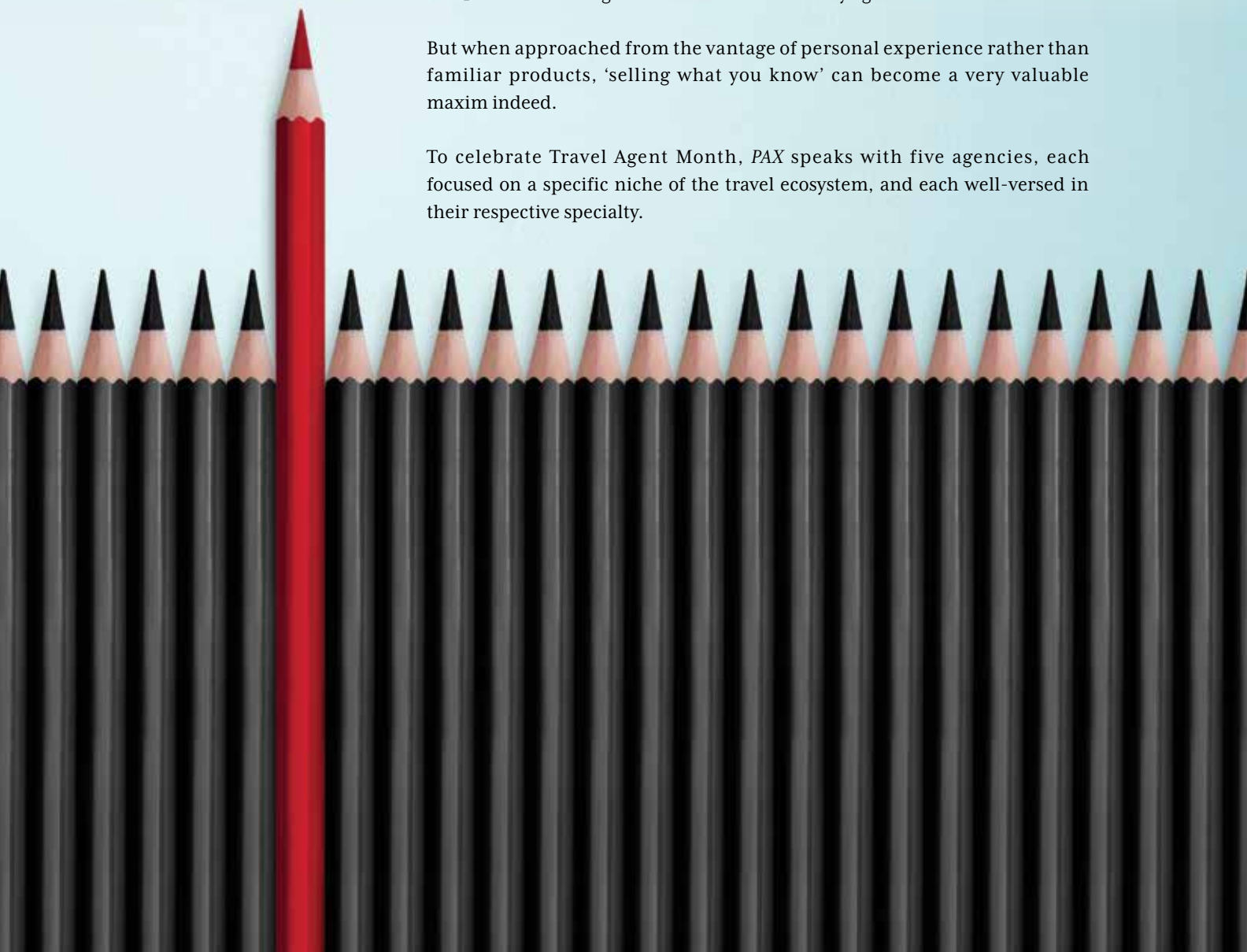
By Blake Wolfe

**Calls for travel agents to specialize are nothing new.**

**M**any advisors can find themselves in the cycle of selling what they know: a loop of go-to resorts, sun destinations and cruise itineraries that are guaranteed sellers offered by agents from coast to coast.

But when approached from the vantage of personal experience rather than familiar products, 'selling what you know' can become a very valuable maxim indeed.

To celebrate Travel Agent Month, *PAX* speaks with five agencies, each focused on a specific niche of the travel ecosystem, and each well-versed in their respective specialty.



## AISLE TRAVEL

### Specialty

Destination weddings in romantic hotspots.

### At a glance

Two agents (with plans to grow that number) and three subcontractors, all working to make clients' wedding dreams come true.

### History

A wedding planner in Calgary since 2006, Amira Harris saw a demand from her local clients for destination weddings. Two years later, she graduated from a local travel agent program and switched exclusively to booking clients' nuptials in locations such as Mexico, the Caribbean and Hawaii – and the relationship is still going strong!

“It was the demand of the clients that made me shift our business; now, we don't do any local weddings – it's only destinations,” Harris tells *PAX*. “I always assumed that a travel agent was the easiest job in the world – I learned quickly that's not the case!”

### Building relationships

Switching business models meant that Harris had to build relationships with a new host of suppliers – including resorts, destinations and airlines – from the ground up.

In turn, these new relationships have resulted in client referrals from across Canada, Harris says, as well as through previous clients referring friends and family. And when it comes to referrals for a destination wedding planner in 2019, the undeniable power of social media must be factored in.

“I'm part of the older generation but most of our clients are millennials, so we have to be tech-savvy. We're on all social media channels – Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest. That's where our clients are seeing these travel destinations.

“I recently had a client contact me who said that she had been following us on social media for four months. She reached out because our social media presence showed her that we're the type of business that she'd like to work with.”



Amira Harris



### Benefits of booking

Offering a boutique agency approach, Harris says that it's her attention to detail and a “quality-over-quantity” approach that sets her apart – important factors to consider for a couple planning their special day.

“We have an initial discovery call with every single one of our clients, which is a requirement for us,” she says. “We do a lot of due diligence and research right from the start. It's a very personalized service and we only take on a certain amount of clients.

“Sometimes a destination wedding isn't for everyone; we get calls where I talk to them and let them know it won't be right for them after I see the type of buyer they are and it's going to cause them a lot of stress.

“I think that's why we attract the clients that we do – they want their hand to be held throughout the process.” →



## BC GOLF GUIDE

### Specialty

Golf packages 'fore' groups.

### At a glance

One avid golfer and a custom-built booking engine.

### History

What began as a hobby in web design for Kelowna, BC golfer Ross Marrington more than 20 years ago has since evolved into a full-time online niche travel agency, specializing in golf vacations in Western Canada and to popular golf destinations worldwide, including Palm Springs, Scotland and Ireland.

After purchasing the BC Golf Guide web domain and registering as a travel agent, Marrington began investing in a custom booking engine for the site, prioritizing an efficient, user-friendly approach for both clients and himself.

"I've spent a pretty penny on my website," Marrington tells PAX. "Every year, if I think of a new feature that will automate the system further, I'll contact my programmer to write the code. It's my storefront, so I have to invest in these efficiencies."

### Building relationships

A fixture at golf shows in Western Canada, Marrington also hits the links to spread the word about BC Golf Guide directly. This word-of-mouth approach has paid off, with approximately 60 per cent of his clients making repeat bookings.



Ross Marrington

"I'm social and when I'm out golfing, I'll let the other golfers know at the courses I'm playing," he says. "I'll also occasionally play a round with a group and post that on the site so that people can see I'm real and that I'm not just a website. I also start emailing past guests in the fall to see if they want to rebook their annual trip with me."

Having a current social media presence is key for an online business, Marrington says. While most clients aren't booking based on his Facebook page alone, regular updates help him "buy credibility."

"They go there to see what I'm all about and if they see a post from eight months ago instead of something recent, they might start to question things."

### Benefits of booking

Clients planning a golf getaway can book everything they need with one URL, Marrington says, while his strong relationships with suppliers can also pay off for both parties, he adds.

"I'm a one-stop shop for coordinating it all, especially if they need things like a shuttle or dinner reservations. Depending on where they're going, I get preferred rates so I can put a little margin on it and still come out the same, more or less."

And Marrington's extensive knowledge of the courses he books also comes in handy for travellers – especially those with PGA Tour dreams and mini-putt skills.

"I can also steer golfers away from courses that may be above their skill level and toward courses that they can handle!" →

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## CLICK THE MOUSE



Sandra Pappas

### Specialty

Booking and organizing trips to the happiest place(s) on earth.

### At a glance

Twenty-seven “huge Disney fans” from across Canada, including representatives in Ontario, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick.

### History

A self-described “Disney fanatic” with a media background, Toronto’s Sandra Pappas Halket found herself becoming a travel agent after she took her decades of Disney experience to help a neighbour book a family vacation.

With Disney vacations a popular yet complex product to book, Halket responded to that need by launching Click The Mouse in 2014, a Disney-focused agency that plans vacations to the company’s theme parks faster than you can say ‘Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo.’

“There’s such a huge need for people looking for help with Disney, because it’s a very involved process to plan a trip there,” Halket tells *PAX*. “I decided that as a travel agent, I wanted to sell something I’m familiar with and that I can speak to through my experience.”

### Building relationships

In addition to travellers approaching the agency directly, Halket says that the complexity of planning a Disney vacation often results in Disney transferring direct bookings to Click The Mouse for Halket and her team to complete the planning process. Dubbed an ‘Earmarked Agency’ by Disney, Click The Mouse has been certified as an Authorized Disney Vacation Planner since 2016.

“After they book directly with Disney, we typically get a letter that says they need a hand and we take the booking over,” she says. “A lot of the feedback we get is clients expressing surprise and relief that Click The Mouse helps with the often-extensive planning process that comes with a Disney vacation.”

Many Click The Mouse reps are also active bloggers and social media users, Halket says, reaching out directly to potential clients; for example, one Ontario agent has a Facebook group for parents with 117,000 members and counting, while blogs run by team members, such as Mickey Chatter and Canadian Disney Blog, have also attracted a strong following.

### Benefits of booking

With the entire team at Click The Mouse consisting of veteran Disney park-goers, that experience allows for both a smooth planning process, as well as insider tips for what to see and do.



Click The Mouse team members and representatives of The Walt Disney Company Canada Parks & Resorts at Disney Parks Canada's Toronto office in December 2018.

“Through trial and error by going every year, you acquire the tips and tricks to maximize your trip,” Halket says. “That only comes through visiting; you can read all the blogs and absorb all of the information out here, but once you actually are in the park, that’s when you discover these things.”

Halket adds that the agency also has access to Canadian offers at Disney parks and takes into account the Canada-U.S. exchange rate when booking.

“When you work with us, it’s like working with an extension of Disney; we’re up to date on the latest products and trained by Disney. We start your vacation before you even get there.”



## THE LUXURY TRAVEL AGENCY

### Specialty

As the name implies, only the finest hotels, resorts and experiences.

### At a glance

Nine advisors ensuring clients enjoy the lap of luxury.

### History

A qualified gastroenterologist, Toronto's Dr. Nabeel Alateeqi prescribed himself a new career path in 2012. With some coaxing from partner Andrew Satkowiak, Alateeqi took his decades of travel experience and turned it into a business, with a focus on luxury accommodations and experiences.

"I was already travelling with my family from nine months on summer holidays," Alateeqi tells *PAX*. "By 18, I had seen nearly all of Europe, Japan, Singapore, the U.S. and Russia. When I was in medical school, I stopped travelling but when Andrew and I met in 2002, we travelled a lot – more than 60 countries!"

With that, The Luxury Travel Agency quickly became a full-time focus for Alateeqi and Satkowiak.

"We sell everything – hotels and resorts are the main thing, but the longer we've been in this business, the more clients come to us and say 'I want to do a trip, I don't know where – help me!'" adds Satkowiak. "When we first started it was 'book me this hotel, book me that hotel.' Now it's 'I want everything' – tours, transfers and activities, you name it."

### Building relationships

With a focused product and clientele, The Luxury Travel Agency operates strictly on a word-of-mouth basis.

"We do an excellent job and people love what we do so they tell their family and friends," says Alateeqi.

While some agencies may want as many bookings as possible, Satkowiak explains that the company prefers to take on



a select number of clients so that a full-service experience can be provided.

"We all have very full plates right now and the last thing I want to do is have clients that we can't service 100 per cent."

### Benefits of booking

As with many things in life, experience counts, and the advisors of The Luxury Travel Agency only sell what they know. And when investing time and money in luxury, an experienced advisor is especially important.

"We have decades of knowledge and we've visited 80+ countries," Alateeqi explains. "Our advisors know what they're recommending."

"I can give you the advice and assure you that it's the right property for you – I've been there and I've done that. Canadians only have a few weeks of vacation each year, so you really want to spend it wisely. If you go and it's a bad experience, you can't get that time back." →

## TRAVEL FOR ALL

### Specialty

Eliminating barriers and making travel accessible for everyone.

### At a glance

Four agents (and growing!) helping clients achieve their travel goals.

### History

After being diagnosed with MS at 29, social worker Tarita Davenock of Nanaimo, BC was advised by her neurologist to pursue a less-stressful career.

Taking her life-long passion for travel, Davenock applied for an advisor role at a local travel agency; 10 years later, she has utilized her personal experience and created Travel For All, a Flight Centre Independent agency specializing in booking clients with accessibility requirements, including travellers with complex health issues and developmental disabilities, as well as a growing number of seniors.

“MS has affected the way I travel and made me realize that this is such an under-served demographic,” Davenock says. “Someone who’s able-bodied can walk into a travel agency and book a trip to anywhere in the world – why should it be different for someone in a wheelchair?”

### Building relationships

Approaching accessibility requirements from the perspective of a customer service issue, Davenock built her client list by directly reaching out to non-profit organizations and advocacy groups whose memberships could benefit from Travel For All’s services.

In turn, stories on her clients have been shared by these groups, spreading the word even further.

“We get the word out ourselves and do very little advertising, so word of mouth and social media are huge!” she says.



Tarita Davenock

In addition, many travel agents with clients who require accessibility considerations have reached out for her expertise, she adds.

### Benefits of booking

While accessibility issues are still not at the forefront of most travel suppliers’ considerations, Davenock and her team will appeal directly on behalf of clients to ensure their trips are made possible.

“The only reason that it improves is because we go around the travel suppliers and straight to the resort manager, for example, and let them know what’s needed,” Davenock says.

“I just booked a trip for a client to Finland – she wants to stay in the Aurora Village cabins so she can see the Northern Lights. That’s not the type of thing that people in wheelchairs think about doing – or that travel agents think about doing for their clients with accessibility needs.”

And by making travel accessible to every, Davenock hopes to bring attention to these issues – not only in the industry but society as a whole.

“What needs to happen is that disabilities need to be looked at not as inconveniences but as opportunities. It doesn’t need to be perfect – for example, many of my clients are fine with being lifted – they just want to be accommodated. Most importantly, they don’t want to be told what they can and can’t do.” ●

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# 4 of the world's most epic *cycling routes*

By Antoine Stab

Cycling is one of the best ways to discover the world and immerse yourself in a region's landscapes and local life. Here are four epic destinations to explore by bike!



Photo by Alain Hocquet - Vaucluse Provence Attractivité

## Ride like the pros: Mont Ventoux, France

A mythical ascent and a demanding climb that inspires both dreams and fears, this route is often used by cyclists in the Tour de France.

Nicknamed the Giant of Provence, Mont Ventoux is the highest peak of the Vaucluse mountains, culminating at 1,910 metres above sea level. Isolated and overlooking the surrounding hills and wine valleys, the striking mountain is visible from miles around. Mont Ventoux is colloquially known as "Mount Bald" because of its barren, snow-capped summit and lunar landscape.

Three paved roads make it possible to reach the summit. The most popular is undoubtedly the road leading up south, with the road passing through the village of Bédoin, a long climb of about 21 kilometres.

## For cycling tours: the Mae Hong Son circuit, Thailand

Located in northwestern of Thailand, this route has more than 4,000 turns and numerous coastlines spreading over 660 kilometres through the mountains and densely forested woodlands of the region.

The most motivated cyclists are in for quite a treat, as the entire circuit is the equivalent of one and a half times the ascent of Everest. A daunting challenge that's certainly not for beginners!

However, the ride is well worth it knowing that the province of Mae Hong Son is renowned for its beautiful landscapes, rice paddies and fields where cattle and buffalo herds graze.



Photo courtesy of Tourism Authority of Thailand

## For urban explorers: Buenos Aires, Argentina

Buenos Aires, the capital city of Argentina, is the perfect place to cycle. This cosmopolitan city, with a vivid set of neighborhoods each with its own identity and atmosphere, has developed a network of bike paths that span more than 130 kilometres on a flat terrain.

Buenos Aires has a reputation for being a city where many things are happening outside on the street: its sidewalk cafes are the perfect spots to have a traditional South American drink with a friend; the murals of old buildings and contemporary works of art that you can admire without even getting off your bike; the museums; the city's colourful alleys lined with jacarandas, the subtropical tree that produces a mauve flower from May to July; and the tango dancers at Belgrano Park.



Photo courtesy of Buenos Aires City Tourist Board

## For families: Shimanami Kaido, Japan

Located in rural Japan, Shimanami Kaido is a spectacular, 64-km cycling network linking Honshu, the main island of the country, to Shikoku, the fourth largest.

Between these points, cyclists will ride, well-separated from road traffic, through a series of small picturesque islands in Hiroshima Prefecture. The route is bristling with bridges, which are all places to stop and admire the Inner Sea of Seto. Among them, the Kurushima Bridge, which, at 4,045 metres, is the longest suspension bridge in the world.

The route will also allow you to discover some treasures that cars often pass by without stopping: lighthouses; sanctuaries, including Kosanji Temple on Ikuchijima Island; and the citrus orchards of Mukaishima Island. ●



Photo courtesy of JNTO

15 free tools that  
will take your digital

*marketing*  
to the next level

By Frédéric Gonzalo,  
speaker and consultant, digital marketing



**D**o you manage your own Facebook page, uploading photos from your computer or mobile phone, without retouching?

On Instagram, do you go directly into the mobile app to publish images or stories?

If so, you are missing out on some great tools offered by various online platforms that are designed to take your digital marketing to the next level. While most of them cost money, some are free, too!

### **f** Tools for Facebook

When it comes to managing your Facebook page, it's usually better to publish content directly on the platform itself (desktop or mobile) rather than sharing content from a third-party website or app, like Hootsuite, SproutSocial or AgoraPulse.

But if you mostly use Facebook to change your profile pic or cover, why not experiment with the Canva app?



Canva is a free tool that allows you to optimize your photos and change their dimensions for various posts on Facebook, but also on Instagram and other social media channels.

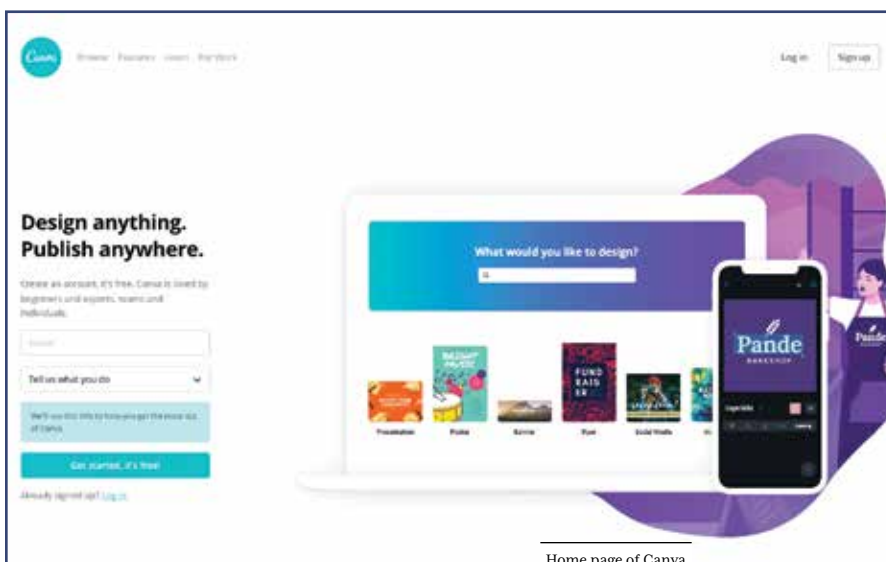
Of course, there are some features that you have to pay for but the majority of the platform is still very affordable.

For those looking to take their Facebook analysis to the next level, I also suggest BuzzSumo and FanPage Karma, two solutions that provide metrics and statistics that can't be accessed through the Facebook analytics module.

### **ig** Tools for Instagram

Instagram is easy enough to use for personal use. Business accounts, however, are little bit trickier to understand. Business profiles on Instagram grant access to audience statistics, such as how engaging your content is – if you have a standard profile, you won't see those metrics.

The Iconosquare app has certainly been one of my favourites for a long time, and even though it's not free anymore, it's →





Website of Woorank

inexpensive and very useful in providing oversight on statistics and allows you to schedule content and even manage contests.

Social media managers also like to use tools such as Later or OnlyPult to manage corporate accounts on Instagram because, just like Iconosquare, these tools allow you to schedule posts and get interesting stats which help you to better understand how your published content is performing online.

### Tools for your website

Social media is all well and good, but is it benefiting your website?

Everything is relative, especially when it comes to the user experience (UX). But, there are still some universal criteria that can help and guide you, especially when it comes to understanding the natural SEO (search engine optimization) of your website.

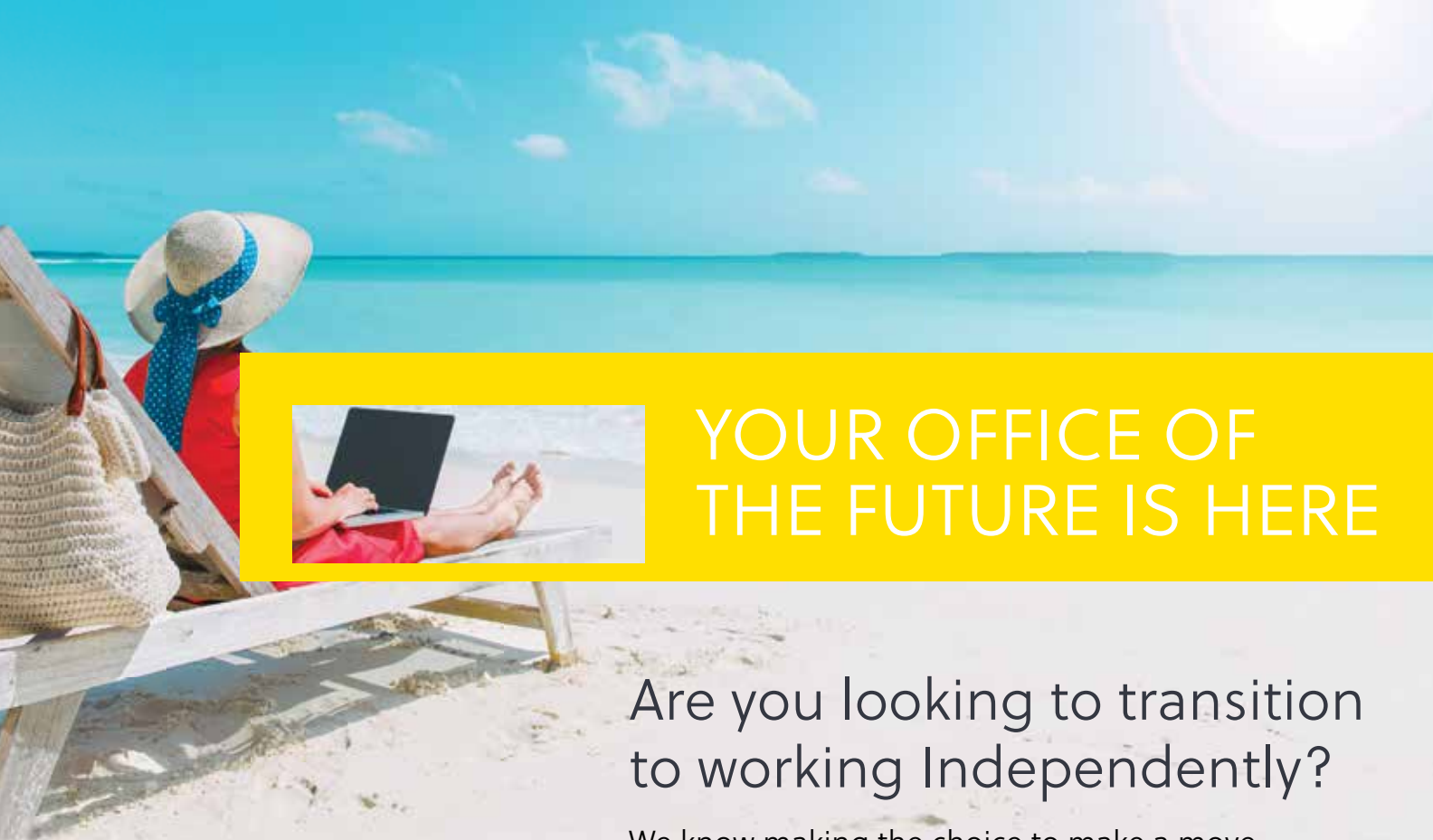
Tools like SEMrush or WooRank provide a wealth of information, such as overall website performance and speed, the keywords you should be using, and even the more technical aspects, such as titles, meta-descriptions and important tags that validate your website's authority.

Google can provide you with a package of relevant tools (and they're all free!)

Here are a few to keep in mind:

- Google Analytics: Provides insight on your overall site, its users, the time spent on the site, the most popular pages, conversion rates and much, much more!
- Google Ads: For advertising placement within the Google search engine or YouTube, but also used to access the keyword planning tool.
- Google Page Speed Insights: This site lets you know how Google views your site in terms of download speed, which is a fundamental aspect of a successful site
- Mobile optimization test: Just enter a URL and Google will tell you how it "perceives" this page from the point of view of a mobile user. Remember: Google now penalizes sites that are not mobile-friendly. ●





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## THE 2019 EXPEDITION CRUISE GUIDE





# 2019 Expedition Cruise GUIDE

## Bon voyage!

By Ming Tappin

**E**xpedition cruising is exploding onto the cruise scene judging by the amount of new-builds and the number of ocean cruise lines venturing into this market. In this issue, *PAX* looks at what's hot in expedition cruising, and how you can capitalize on this trending market.

### No longer a bucket list trip

It used to be that people saved travelling to the Arctic or Antarctica for their bucket list, but today's travellers want to see polar bears in Svalbard, walk with king penguins on South Georgia Island and take a hot air balloon ride over the North Pole now – while they still can. With experiential travel being a growing trend, cruise lines are racing to increase capacity to capture interested guests.

### A wealth of choices

Fewer than 12 cruise lines are offering expedition cruises around the globe, and numerous tour operators are offering expedition programs on chartered vessels.

Even mainstream brands such as Celebrity Cruises and Holland America Line are in the game, with Celebrity operating a Galapagos program and Holland offering its EXC In-Depth sailings. PONANT is launching six explorer ships by 2020 and Silversea has announced a first-of-its-kind expedition world cruise in 2020. →

Between now and 2021, close to 30 purpose-built expedition ships will come online.

### Expedition cruising gets luxurious

While most expedition ships provide basic comfort, a few luxury cruise lines are upping their game to cater to clients with discerning tastes. Expansive suites, champagne and caviar, private butlers, and gourmet cuisine are now available to those who don't want to be "roughing it" while on an expedition.

Luxury cruise line Silversea has converted four of its ships for expedition cruising, while Crystal Cruises, Scenic, Hapag-Lloyd, Viking, and Ritz-Carlton will all be launching luxury expedition ships within the next two years.

### Where to look for expedition cruise clients

Expedition cruises are ideal for those interested in photography, ornithology,

wildlife and nature. Look to your local outdoor clubs and hobby associations for prospects.

Expedition cruising also attracts solo travellers, as many cruise lines offer a single share program or a low single supplement.

Lastly, talk to your non-cruising clients. Expedition guests usually aren't attracted to a mainstream cruise, but will consider an expedition cruise for destination immersion, cultural enrichment and soft-adventure travel in small groups.

### Tips on selling expedition cruises

Clients need to have full mobility in order to participate on an expedition. They need to be able to climb gangway stairs, step in and out of zodiacs and walk on uneven terrain. Older expedition ships do not have elevators, doorways have high sills to step over and, with the exception of some new-builds, none are wheelchair-accessible. →



## Protecting the environment

As expedition ships sail to some of the earth's most sensitive regions, tremendous efforts are being put in place to minimize the impact on these ecosystems. This includes limiting the number of visitors, and complying with stringent regulations while ashore. Advance ship building technologies create engines with hybrid propulsion that release less emissions, and cleaner fuel such as liquefied natural gas will soon be powering ships.

## Sustainable Ships

Norwegian expedition line Hurtigruten is leading the way in sustainable cruising by ordering the world's first hybrid-power expedition ships. *MS Roald Amundsen* and *MS Fridtjof Nansen* will be launched in 2019 and 2020 respectively. Nearly identical, both ships will have the capability to sail under electric propulsion for 15 to 30 minutes at a time, producing soundless sailing, and reducing fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 20 per cent. Designed for cruising in the polar regions and the Norwegian coast, both vessels will have ice-strengthened hulls, large viewing platforms, and Scandinavian interiors.

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# 2019 Expedition Cruise GUIDE

A sense of adventure and willingness to face the unexpected is also a must. Itineraries may be affected by weather and sea conditions, especially in the polar regions. Landings may be cancelled or substituted and excursions may be shortened or revised. While the expedition team will ensure everyone still enjoys the cruise without compromising on safety and comfort, clients should travel with a flexible mindset and be adaptable to change.

Due to its specialized nature, expect expedition cruise per diems to be \$500 and up. This is definitely the time to sell value over price. The opportunity to explore the ends of the earth – and to have bragging rights to such accomplishments – are the key points to emphasize to clients.

As with any big-ticket purchase that requires pre-planning and budgeting, an expedition cruise booking does not materialize overnight. Plant the seed early and work with your clients to realize their dream. ●



## Here are a few notable expedition ships launching in the next two years:

Cruise Line	Ship	Year Launching	Tonnage	Guest Capacity	Crew Capacity	Notes
Crystal Cruises	<i>Crystal Endeavor</i>	2020	20,000	200	206	All-suite accommodations; spa and salon; helicopter and submersibles.
Hurtigruten	<i>MS Fridtjof Nansen</i>	2020	20,889	530	120	Battery-powered, hybrid technology will reduce emissions by 20 per cent.
	<i>MS Roald Amundsen</i>	2019	20,889	530	120	
	<i>Le Bougainville</i>	2019	10,038	184	110	
PONANT	<i>Le Dumont-d'Urville</i>	2019	10,038	184	110	Blue Eye underwater multi-sensory lounge; certified "Clean Ships" by Bureau Veritas.
	<i>Le Bellot</i>	2020	10,038	184	110	
	<i>Le Jacques Cartier</i>	2020	10,038	184	110	
	<i>Le Commandant Charcot</i>	2021	30,950	270	187	Electric hybrid polar exploration ship powered by liquefied natural gas.
Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection	<i>Azora</i>	2020	26,500	298	248	Curated dining by a Michelin-starred chef; Ritz-Carlton spa; families welcome.
Scenic	<i>Scenic Eclipse</i>	2019	17,805	228	176-192	Helicopter, submersible and diving excursions.

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### 3. YOUR BASE CAMP AT SEA

Our purpose-built expedition vessels are specifically designed to navigate in polar waters and will serve as a comfortable base camp at sea for your adventure to Antarctica.

### 4. MORE OPTIONS TO EXPLORE

From kayaking by icebergs or night camping under the Antarctic sky to photographing astounding concentrations of wildlife, we offer more ways to connect with your inner explorer.

### 5. ANTARCTICA AND BEYOND

Hurtigruten offers unique itineraries to Antarctica, along with options to combine your expedition with explorations of South Georgia, the Falkland Islands, Patagonia, and the Chilean fjords.

### 6. COMMITMENT TO ANTARCTICA

Hurtigruten is an industry leader in sustainability with a deep commitment to preserving the waters of Antarctica and its marine life.

### 7. EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

Hurtigruten's unrivaled Antarctica expeditions are an outstanding value that provide an abundance of memorable and life-affirming experiences.



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# 2019 Expedition Cruise GUIDE

PAX presents the 2019 Expedition Cruise Guide, a handy chart to help you present options to your clients. Depending on demand, programs and itineraries may vary from season to season. For the most current deployment, always check the cruise line's website.

Company and Ships	All Inclusive	Number of Ships	Year Launched	Tonnage	Passenger Capacity	Crew Capacity	Registry	Principal Cruising Area				
<b>Adventure Canada</b> www.adventurecanada.com												
	No	3										
<i>Ocean Endeavour [Charter]</i>			1982	12,907	198	124	Bahamas	Arctic & Atlantic	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Island Solitude [Charter]</i>			2018	491	12	5	Canada	Haida Gwaii	✗	✗	✗	✗
<i>Variety Voyager</i>			2012	1,593	72	33	Malta	Costa Rica & Panama	✗	✗	✓	✓
<b>Australis</b> www.australis.com												
	Yes (except gratuities)	2										
<i>Stella Australis</i>			2010	4,508	210	63	Chile/Argentina	Patagonia	✗	✗	✗	✗
<i>Ventus Australis</i>			2017	4,508	210	63	Chile/Argentina	Patagonia	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>Celebrity Cruises</b> www.celebritycruises.com												
	Yes	2										
<i>Celebrity Flora</i>			2019	5,739	100	81	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✓	✓	✓
<i>Celebrity Xpedition</i>			2004	2,842	100* *Changing to 64 in June	TBA	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✓	✓	✓
<b>Coral Expeditions</b> www.coralexpeditions.com												
	Yes	3										
<i>Coral Discoverer</i>			2005	1,799	72	24	Australia	Australia	✗	✗	✗	✗
<i>Coral Expeditions I</i>			1988	730	46	14	Australia	Australia	✗	✗	✗	✗
<i>Coral Expeditions II</i>			1986	730	42	12	Australia	Australia	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>G Adventures</b> www.gadventures.com												
	No	6										
<i>G Expedition</i>			1972	6,334	134	55	Liberia	Arctic & Antarctica	✗	✗	✓	✗
<i>Eden [Charter]</i>			2000	184	16	8	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✗	✗	✗
<i>Estrella del Mar [Charter]</i>			1990	150	16	7	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✗	✗	✗
<i>Montserrat [Charter]</i>			2005	169	20	7	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✗	✗	✗
<i>Xavier III [Charter]</i>			1996	162	16	7	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✗	✗	✗
<i>Yolita [Charter]</i>			2007	251	16	7	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>Hapag-Lloyd Cruises</b> www.hl-cruises.com												
	No	4										
<i>MS Bremen</i>			1990	6,752	155	100		Global	✓	✗	✓	✓
<i>Hanseatic Inspiration</i>			2019	15,650	230	175		Global	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Hanseatic Nature</i>			2019	15,650	230	175		Global	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Hanseatic Spirit</i>			2021	15,650	230	175		Global	✓	✓	✓	✓

Legend: Pool () , Whirlpool () , Fitness Centre/Equipment () , Spa/Salon Services ()





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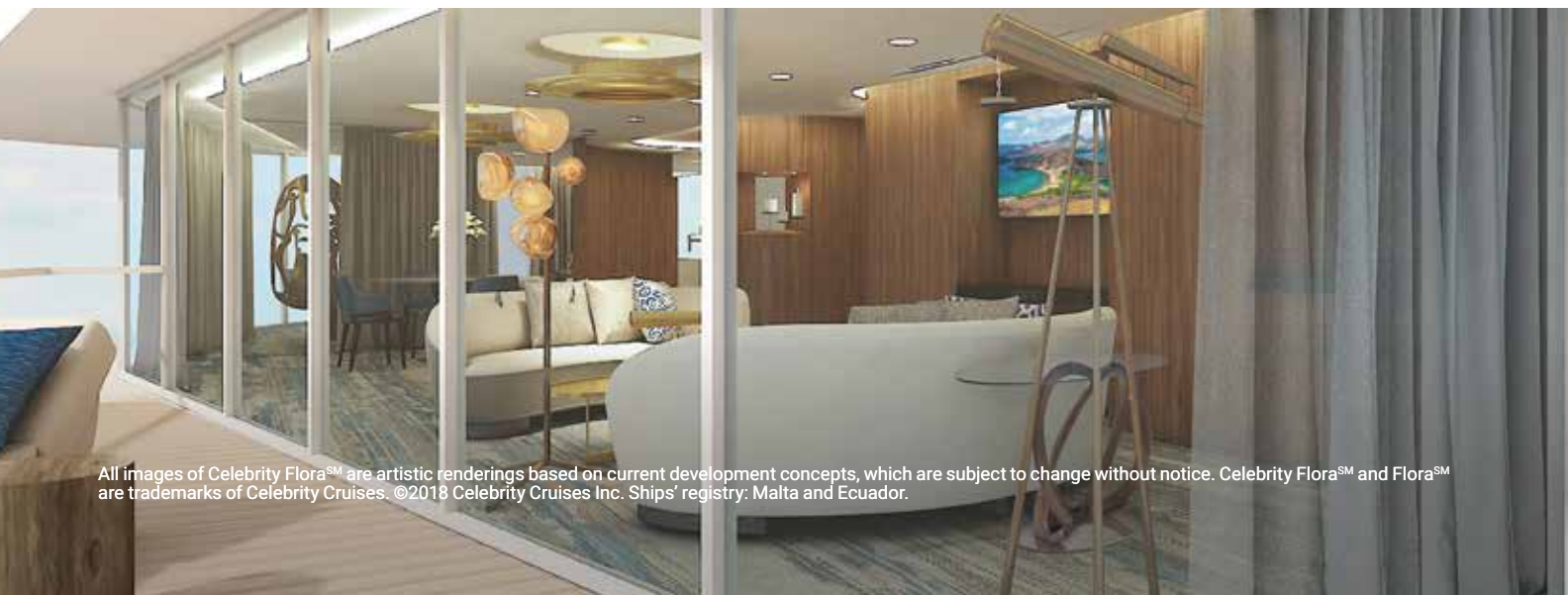
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# 2019 Expedition Cruise GUIDE

Company and Ships	All Inclusive	Number of Ships	Year Launched	Tonnage	Passenger Capacity	Crew Capacity	Registry	Principal Cruising Area				
<b>Holland America Line</b> www.hollandamerica.com												
	No	1										
<i>Maasdam</i>			1993	55,575	1,258	569	Netherlands	Global	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Hurtigruten Cruises</b> www.hurtigruten.com												
	No	11										
<i>MS Finnmarken</i>			2002	15,690	919	257	Norway	Norwegian Coast	✓	✓	✓	✗
<i>MS Fram</i>			2007	11,647	318	75	Norway	Global	✗	✓	✓	✗
<i>MS Kong Harald</i>			1993	11,204	590	176	Norway	Norwegian Coast	✗	✓	✓	✗
<i>MS Midnatsol</i>			2003	16,151	970	256	Norway	Global	✗	✓	✓	✗
<i>MS Nordkapp</i>			1996	11,386	590	173	Norway	Norwegian Coast	✗	✓	✓	✗
<i>MS Nordlys</i>			1994	11,204	590	171	Norway	Norwegian Coast	✗	✗	✓	✗
<i>MS Nordnorge</i>			1997	11,384	590	162	Norway	Norwegian Coast	✗	✓	✓	✗
<i>MS Polarlys</i>			1996	11,341	619	171	Norway	Norwegian Coast	✗	✓	✓	✗
<i>MS Richard With</i>			1993	11,205	590	176	Norway	Norwegian Coast	✗	✗	✓	✗
<i>MS Spitsbergen</i>			2009	7,344	335	196	Norway	Arctic, Norwegian Coast	✗	✓	✓	✗
<i>MS Trollfjord</i>			2002	16,140	822	196	Norway	Norwegian Coast	✗	✓	✓	✗
<b>Lindblad Expeditions</b> www.expeditions.com												
	No	8										
<i>National Geographic Endeavour II</i>			2005	3,132	96	40	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✗	✓	✓
<i>National Geographic Explorer</i>			1982	6,471	148	87	Bahamas	Arctic, Antarctica, Patagonia	✗	✗	✓	✓
<i>National Geographic Islander</i>			1995	1,065	48	27	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✗	✓	✓
<i>National Geographic Orion</i>			2003	3,984	102	75	Bahamas	Arctic, Antarctica, South Pacific	✗	✓	✓	✓
<i>National Geographic Quest</i>			2017	2,906	100	35	U.S.A.	Alaska, Central America, Pacific Northwest	✗	✗	✓	✓
<i>National Geographic Sea Bird</i>			1981	1,000	62	25	U.S.A.	Alaska, Baja, Pacific Northwest	✗	✗	✓	✓
<i>National Geographic Sea Lion</i>			1982	1,000	62	31	U.S.A.	Alaska, Baja, Pacific Northwest	✗	✗	✓	✓
<i>National Geographic Venture</i>			2018	2,906	100	35	U.S.A.	Alaska, Baja	✗	✗	✓	✓
<b>One Ocean Expeditions</b> www.oneoceanexpeditions.com												
	No	3										
<i>One Ocean Navigator (Akademik Ioffe)</i>			1989	6,230	96	65	Russia	Arctic & Antarctica	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>One Ocean Voyager (Akademik Sergey Vavilov)</i>			1988	6,230	92	65	Russia	Arctic & Antarctica	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>RCGS Resolute</i>			1993	8,378	146	124	Portugal	Arctic, Atlantic, Central & South America, Antarctica	✓	✓	✓	✓

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# 2019 Expedition Cruise GUIDE

Company and Ships	All Inclusive	Number of Ships	Year Launched	Tonnage	Passenger Capacity	Crew Capacity	Registry	Principal Cruising Area				
<b>PONANT</b>												
www.ponant.com	Yes	7										
<i>L'Austral</i>			2011	10,944	264	140	France	Global	✓	✗	✓	✓
<i>Le Boreal</i>			2009	10,944	264	140	France	Global	✓	✗	✓	✓
<i>Le Champlain</i>			2018	10,038	184	110	France	Global	✓	✗	✓	✓
<i>Le Lapérouse</i>			2018	10,038	184	110	France	Global	✓	✗	✓	✓
<i>Le Lyréal</i>			2015	10,992	260	140	France	Global	✓	✗	✓	✓
<i>Le Ponant</i>			1991	1,443	64	32	France	Global	✗	✗	✗	✗
<i>Le Soléal</i>			2013	10,992	264	140	France	Global	✓	✗	✓	✓
<b>Quark Expeditions</b>												
www.quarkexpeditions.com	No	5										
<i>50 Years of Victory (Charter)</i>			1993	23,439	128	140	Russia	Arctic	✓	✗	✓	✗
<i>Ocean Adventurer (Charter)</i>			1976	4,617	132	87	Bahamas	Arctic & Antarctica	✗	✓	✓	✗
<i>Ocean Diamond (Charter)</i>			1974	8,282	189	144	Bahamas	Antarctica	✗	✗	✓	✗
<i>Ocean Endeavour (Charter)</i>			1981	12,907	199	124	Bahamas	Antarctica	✓	✗	✓	✗
<i>Ocean Nova (Charter)</i>			1992	2,183	78	38	Bahamas	Arctic	✗	✗	✓	✗
<b>Seabourn Cruise Line</b>												
www.seabourn.com	Yes	2										
<i>Seabourn Quest</i>			2011	32,000	458	332	Bahamas	Antarctica & Patagonia	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Seabourn Sojourn</i>			2010	32,000	458	332	Bahamas	Alaska	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Silversea Expeditions</b>												
www.silversea.com	Yes	4										
<i>Silver Cloud</i>			1994	16,800	254	212	Bahamas	Global	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Silver Discoverer</i>			1989	5,218	116	100	Bahamas	Asia & Australia	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Silver Explorer</i>			1989	6,072	144	118	Bahamas	Global	✗	✓	✓	✓
<i>Silver Galapagos</i>			1990	4,077	100	75	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✓	✓	✓
<b>UnCruise Adventures</b>												
www.uncruise.com	No	9										
<i>La Pinta</i>			1989	1,438	48	27	Ecuador	Galapagos	✗	✓	✗	✗
<i>S. S. Legacy</i>			1984	96	88	35	U.S.A.	Alaska, Columbia & Snake Rivers	✗	✓	Yoga mats	✗
<i>Safari Endeavour</i>			1983	99	84	34	U.S.A.	Alaska, Sea of Cortes	✗	✓	Yoga mats	✗
<i>Safari Explorer</i>			1998	97	36	14	U.S.A.	Alaska, Hawaii	✗	✗	Yoga mats	✗
<i>Safari Quest</i>			1992	97	22	9-11	U.S.A.	Alaska, Pacific Northwest	✗	✓	Yoga mats	✗
<i>Safari Voyager</i>			1982	1,195	62	29	St. Kitts	Costa Rica & Panama	✗	✗	Yoga mats	✗
<i>Wilderness Adventurer</i>			1984	89	60	25	U.S.A.	Alaska	✗	✓	Yoga mats	✗
<i>Wilderness Discoverer</i>			1992	99	76	26	U.S.A.	Alaska	✗	✓	Yoga mats	✗
<i>Wilderness Explorer</i>			1976	94	74	27	U.S.A.	Alaska	✗	✓	Yoga mats	✗

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# Croatia:

## An historic road trip in Dalmatia

By Antoine Stab



It's been a long time since Croatia made headlines for conflict in the 1990s. More than 25 years later, the country is now a leading destination in the Mediterranean, with many cities showing off their cultural heritage (and not just Dubrovnik either).

### Dubrovnik, the star

Croatia's popularity today is partly thanks to Dubrovnik.

Known as "the pearl of the Adriatic," and a listed UNESCO World Heritage Site, Dubrovnik is the country's architectural

treasure, thanks in part, to the thick medieval walls that surround it. The battlements are one of the easiest ways to admire the city's splendor, with its red tile roofs and the opulent palaces that once housed nobles.

However, the city with a thousand and one superlatives is a victim of its own success with narrow streets that struggle to accommodate and contain a steady flow of tourists.

Dubrovnik deserves tourism, but more than just as a result of day-tripping cruise

visitors. Stay overnight and discover its marvels the way they were meant to be discovered!

### The country of many fortifications

Like Dubrovnik, many cities on the Dalmatian coast have been fortified throughout history.

Among them, Ston, a former military fort that, to this day, still has its monumental defences, including a rampart of five kilometres –making it the biggest one in Europe– winding uphill to the nearby town of Mali Ston.





Dubrovnik, the pearl of the Adriatic

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## GOOD TO KNOW

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- Croatia has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 2013, but it doesn't use the Euro. Instead, the country has kept its own local currency, the kuna (kn). It's approximately \$1 CAD for every 5 kn.
- 

Another city famous for its old walls is the peaceful harbour village of Omiš.

Located where the Cetina River and the Adriatic Sea join waters, Omiš is surrounded by steep cliffs and has been the scene of various historic battles over the years.

### Zadar, the forgotten one

Nestled approximately 150 kilometres from Split, it's a destination that's beginning to gain some recognition; Lonely Planet has included Zadar in its list of 10 cities to visit in 2019.

Visiting this modestly-sized peninsula – at just four kilometres long and 500 meters wide— is a thousand-year journey through time and history. Zadar is a real crossroads of peoples and civilizations that saw, in turn, the Slavs, the French, Austro-Hungarians and Yugoslavs taking advantage of its central geographical position in the Mediterranean.

Though less extravagant than Dubrovnik and Split, Zadar has created its very own tourism attraction: Sea Organ. The attraction is an architectural sonic art object that produces music through waves that hit the stone steps of the waterfront and rush into a system of pipes and bellows.

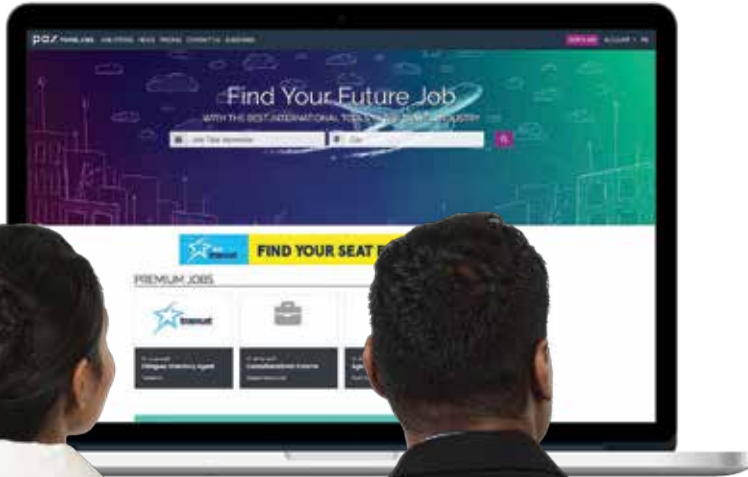
The melody that comes out of it, although random, is strangely melodious.

A few metres away, the organ is bordered by the "Monument to the Sun" attraction, three hundred multi-layered glass plates placed on the ground that store energy during the day and produce a spectacular lightshow at night, evolving to the sound of the nearby Sea Organ. ●



The Monument to the Sun in Zadar

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## DESTINATIONS TO DISCOVER

# Montserrat: the other Emerald Isle

By Blake Wolfe



The black sand beaches of Montserrat hint at the island's volcanic nature.

**A new destination to many travellers, Montserrat offers a true vacation from the ordinary.**

**L**ocated 45 minutes from Antigua by ferry or charter flight, visitors to Montserrat will immediately notice that the large all-inclusives typical of many Caribbean destinations are nowhere to be found.

And like neighbours Dominica and St. Kitts and Nevis, a mountainous

landscape provides the canvas for natural escapes, perfect for outdoor activities and explorations.

### From the North Atlantic to the Caribbean

A British overseas territory, Montserrat boasts a large Irish cultural component stemming from 17<sup>th</sup> century settlements

on the island. This influence is celebrated each March with a week-long St. Patrick's Day festival, which in Montserrat also commemorates the island's slave uprising of 1768.

In addition to the island's early settlers, the British Invasion quite literally reached the shores of Montserrat in 1979, when Beatles producer George Martin opened his AIR Studios, recording albums – 76 in total – for numerous legendary acts including Paul McCartney, Elton John, The Rolling Stones and Stevie Wonder.

The ruins of the studio, closed in 1989 after Hurricane Hugo devastated Montserrat, can still be seen, a monument to some of the biggest hit albums that defined a generation.

Memorabilia from AIR and Montserratian soca star Arrow (of 'Feeling Hot, Hot, Hot' fame) can also be found at the Hilltop

With no all-inclusives, secluded villas are the main form of accommodation in Montserrat.



Photo courtesy of Montserrat Tourism Division

Coffee House in Fogarthy Hill, which functions as a non-profit café, community centre and museum chronicling the island's place in music history.

### Boutique stays

With no all-inclusives, Montserrat's hospitality sector consists of small villas and guesthouses – ideal for travellers in search of a unique stay.

Properties of note include the recently-reopened Vue Pointe Hotel and the Tropical Mansion Suites, boasting just 16 rooms and offering either ocean or mountain-view rooms.

For guests seeking a more exclusive experience, villas such as Chez Mango Luxury Oceanview Villa and Yogilazer's Top View Villa feature 10 and two rooms respectively, offering accommodations for a wide range of group sizes.

### The power of nature

While Montserrat's volcanic activity helped shape the destination's unique topography (including its black sand beaches), such beauty comes at a price.

On July 18, 1995, the previously dormant Soufrière Hills volcano erupted, blanketing large swaths of the island in volcanic debris, destroying WH Bramble International Airport and the town of Plymouth; a large part of the island's south, dubbed the Exclusion Zone, is still inaccessible.

While access to Plymouth is prohibited, a view of the destroyed town can be seen from Garibaldi Hill in Isles Bay. Views of the volcano's devastation can also be witnessed from Jack Boy Hill, which overlooks the buried town of Trants, WH Bramble International Airport and the Atlantic Ocean.

Visitors can also learn more at the Montserrat Volcano Observatory, which monitors activity at Soufrière Hills and allows guests to learn more about the island's history.

And for travellers looking to get a bird's-eye view of Montserrat, Emerald Isle Helicopters can take four to six guests on a 20-minute exploration of the island, including awe-inspiring views of Soufrière Hills.

### Reaching Montserrat

Ready to explore Montserrat? With no direct international flights to the destination, Canadian visitors can first head to Antigua on Air Canada or WestJet and then connect at V.C. Bird International Airport with Fly Montserrat or SVG Airlines.

Alternately, a ferry named the Jaden Sun operates on a regular schedule between Montserrat and Antigua and Barbuda, as well as Guadeloupe and St. Kitts and Nevis. ●

Montserrat's musical history is chronicled at the Hilltop Coffee House, featuring artifacts from AIR Studios.



Photo courtesy of David Lea

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## DID YOU KNOW?

- Cars in Montserrat drive on the left-hand side of the road.
- Forgot to pack a voltage converter? It may not be a problem, as most hotels and villas in Montserrat offer both 110V and 220V power outlets.
- If you bank with Royal Bank of Canada, you're in luck – RBC is one of two banks on the island (the other being the Bank of Montserrat).

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# LOOK WHO'S TURNING 5 IN MAY!

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# 5<sup>th</sup>

ANNIVERSARY

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# Immersive *Ireland*

From flying boats to Belfast's street art, Ireland's experiential tourism scene beams with insight and intrigue.

Text by Steven Bereznai



Photo by Tourism Ireland



Photo by Tourism Ireland

**A**s members of the travel industry, how many of us stop to think about the history of commercial aviation? On a recent FAM to the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, PAX discovered how interesting that history is, thanks to Ireland's innovative approach to immersive tourism.

After landing in Shannon, on the west coast of the island, we drove about 40 minutes to the Foynes Flying Boat Museum. This sea plane museum opened our bleary eyes with its walk-through replica of a B314, one of the original flying boats. Its tiny galley would've served multi-course meals and there was even a honeymoon suite.

We also learned that the tiny town of Foynes was the gateway for a trans-Atlantic route from Newfoundland in the 1930s and '40s. The planes took off from the water because that allowed the planes to be heavier, accommodating a "luxury" experience to compete with cruise lines.

The immersive experience continued in the town's former airport, which is also part of the museum. It was here that Irish coffee was born. During a hands-on tutorial, we discovered how this combination of coffee, cream, and whiskey was directly linked to the travel industry.

Back then, bad weather often forced flights to turn around, sometimes several hours into the journey. On one such occasion, passengers were beyond frustrated. Airport staff knew they had to up their customer service game and treated the irate (and freezing) travellers to coffee with "a little something extra."

### A journey back to medieval times

Another 40-minute drive took us to King John's Castle. Located in the heart of medieval Limerick City, the castle overlooked the majestic Shannon River and boasted a new visitor centre. It created a deep sense of the tragedy of the battles that occurred in this historic place. This included faux heads on pikes,

vivid descriptions of the odours of the time (from the sickly stench of chamber pots to the scent of drying skins at the tannery), and videos of characters in various rooms.

We felt the castle's weight as we followed a catwalk through the underbelly of the fortification and breathed misty air as we clambered circular staircases to the top of a tower for the best view of the city.

### Authentic Gaelic experiences

About 1.5 hours from Limerick, or 30 minutes from the city of Galway is Cnoc Suain; this is a series of lovingly restored thatch roof cottages surrounded by stunning scenery. The site has won numerous awards for its authentic Gaelic cultural immersion, including song and dance, baking soda bread in a pot above hot coals, and learning how local bogs provided peat for heat and moss for dressing wounds.

"We thought it would be older people who would be drawn to the immersive experience," said one of the owners, Dearbhaill Standún; but through Airbnb, she and her husband found younger couples love it, especially IT professionals looking to disconnect in this Wi-Fi/TV-free zone. →

These were fantastic experiences, but for a more city-centric destination, PAX recommends Athlone City. It combines small town charm with the history and culinary experiences of larger urban centres.

Visiting Athlone also offers great value. According to tour guide Ann Ellard, that's because Athlone is "off many people's radar," She adds that it's the centre of the country, making it an ideal jumping off point to the rest of the island or a stopover.

Athlone Castle has numerous innovative educational components, including medieval dress-up (which the adults love), statues dressed in anachronistic uniforms recreated from repurposed materials (kids aren't supposed to touch, but they can't resist), and the ceiling mirrors over some of the displays (selfie heaven for teens).

Around the corner was Shaun's Bar, the oldest remaining pub in the world. It opened in 900 AD and was key to unearthing the region's history as the birthplace of whiskey.

For a foodie experience, we munched at the trendy (and delicious) restaurant The Fatted Calf and wrapped with a peaceful Lough Ree Cruise on a replica of a vintage Viking boat. All of this was within an easy five minutes walking distance of each other.

### Titanic-sized tours

To round off our trip, we travelled to Belfast in Northern Ireland, which took the immersive experience to new heights.

The Titanic was built in Belfast, and the city's Titanic museum is housed in a modern building that evokes icebergs. In the atrium, a guide pointed to the top



balcony above. "That's the height passengers on the top deck would've jumped from," he explained.

A ride took us through the ship's construction – a beeping S.O.S. signal and recordings of the calls for help were intensely emotional.

My favourite experience was Belfast's street art. During the day, we were shocked by a Catholic quarter that was still separated by a wall from Protestant Belfast. The wall was covered in politically driven murals that paid homage to Cuban revolutionaries, the Tamil Tigers, and the Palestinian struggle.

During a tour ([www.seedheadarts.com](http://www.seedheadarts.com)), we learned that in more recent years, Belfast street art has been moving away from depicting everything through Ireland's "green" or "orange" political lens (Catholic vs. Protestant). Images of unity are mixed with the downright playful, from a boy holding a dove pierced by arrows to a kitty cat.

It was the perfect way to round off the trip, immersing us in a land of leprechauns, war, religion, whiskey, and politics. ●

For more information, visit [www.ireland.com](http://www.ireland.com) and [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com).

## Good to know

### ✈ Getting there

Air Canada launched a seasonal route in 2018, flying directly from Toronto to Shannon, June to October. Air Canada flies Toronto to Dublin year-round and Montreal to Dublin July-October.

### 🚗 Getting around

Ireland is very driveable (our longest drive was two hours). Driving is on the left side of the road; some routes are winding and have narrow lanes.

### ☀ Weather

Ireland is known for its rain. Bring layers, a waterproof shell, scarf, and toque (depending on when you go). It can also be sunny. Bring sunglasses and sunscreen.

### 💰 Currency

The Republic of Ireland uses the euro. Northern Ireland uses pound sterling.

### 🏠 Where to stay

Ballynahinch Castle ([ballynahinch-castle.com](http://ballynahinch-castle.com)). Live like royalty in this castle hotel. Set in a private 700 acre estate of woodland, rivers, and walks. Visit nearby Kylemore Abbey & Gardens.

Hodson Bay Hotel ([hodsonbayhotel.com](http://hodsonbayhotel.com)). Set on the banks of Lough Ree in the city of Athlone, next to the Athlone Golf Course. It's L'Escale Restaurant lives up to its award-winning status. Lough Ree Cruise tours pick-up/drop off right at the hotel.





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### THE AMRESORTS® COLLECTION



# Le Relais du Moulin:

## distinctive character in Guadeloupe

By Hortense des Dorides

**L**ocated between the towns of Sainte-Anne and Saint-François on Grande-Terre, one of the main islands of Guadeloupe, the Relais du Moulin is a charming four-star hotel and spa offering a refined respite to its customers.

It owes its name to the nineteenth-century mill which stands proudly in the heart of the property.

Back in 2016, after falling in love with this historic estate, current Guadeloupean owner, Jean-Claude Loret, created a hotel project on what was formerly called Eden Palm. He then invested in major renovations to meet the specifications of the "Hotels of Charm and Character" collection of which he is now a part of.

"The requirements involve exceptional comfort, environment and gastronomy," explains Stephanie



Zaccarini, marketing manager, as we explore the lush greenery of the Relais, where hibiscus and bougainvillea unfold profusely.

### Three room categories

The hotel has a total of 60 accommodations, with 40 bungalows, 15 junior suites and five superior suites, scattered amongst vast flower gardens that are maintained with mastery.

Guests can choose from three categories:

- Colourful bungalows, which have a small terrace with views of the gardens.
- Charming junior suites, which are spread over two floors with the mezzanine bedroom and a terrace.



- Superior suites, which have a larger, private terrace with a private spa, perfect for couples looking for an intimate getaway.

Although the Relais du Moulin is not directly adjacent to a beach, water enthusiasts can go to Helleux, which is only 700 metres away and is particularly popular with surfers, or Bois Jolan to discover a calm water cove that's an attractive, translucent emerald colour.

#### Creole flavours

At the scenic Le Mango restaurant, guests can enjoy three meals per day. In the morning, breakfasts are served buffet-style in the purest Franco-Caribbean fashion: with croissants and other pastries, cheeses, tropical fruits and fresh juices. →





“ The requirements involve exceptional comfort, environment and gastronomy ”

from elsewhere around the world. Don't forget to try a *ti-punch*, the flagship cocktail of the French West Indies and the locals' go-to drink: simply mix lime juice with cane sugar and add as much, or as little, rum as you'd like. The perfect recipe for a fun, festive and authentically Caribbean evening!

#### Full service

The property features a tennis court, a gym, a hammam, a pool table, electric bikes and a space dedicated to seminars. Additionally, the spa, located near the pool, promises beautiful moments of relaxation in one of its two dedicated cabins.

It's impossible not to linger at the property's landmark, the mill from the country's sugar era, which is now an historical monument. The nineteenth-century structure, with its striking turquoise propeller, serves as an art gallery and features a plethora of Guadeloupean artists.

Its spiral staircase, running along the walls, brings visitors to the panoramic salon at the top which, as its name suggests, offers superb and unobstructed views of the surrounding's forest lush green hills. It is also possible to privatize the space for events and weddings.

In the vicinity on the mill are dotted small terraces for two to four people, which make for a good place to have breakfast or enjoy a drink in the late evening, while the cats of the property come to seek out attention from visitors. ●

Lunches and dinners skillfully bring regional flavours to life with, for example, "accras" or creole pudding, fish of the day and grilled meats.

To reinvigorate its programming and to add extra excitement for guests, Le Mango offers themed evenings three nights a week: Creole on Wednesdays, *méchoui* (whole sheep spit-roasted on a barbecue) on Fridays and lobster on Saturdays.

Before or after dinner, guests can visit the Lounge Bar for cocktails to taste the rich collection of white and amber rums; the collection is, of course, predominantly sourced from Guadeloupean distilleries but also



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**AIR CANADA**

# Sharing *the wealth*

## A brief history of airline commissions and what the future holds

By Blake Wolfe

**Just as plane tickets were once printed on paper and smoking was still permitted during flights, there was a time when travel agents could turn a significant profit on airfare bookings.**

**A**sk any veteran travel agent and they can recall a time when airlines paid a healthy return for putting clients in their seats – as well as when those payouts started to decline.

“It started in the mid-1990s,” recalls Mary Jane Hiebert, manager of Canada One Travel and chair of the board of directors for the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies (ACTA). “I entered the business in 1994 and it was in 1995 when commissions began to be cut. We were making 12 per cent commission on airline tickets and that started dropping, going to eight per cent. That started the process of some travel agencies requesting booking fees to make up the difference.”

The cuts continued in the wake of Sept. 11th, 2001 as the aviation industry weathered a series of economic setbacks, further reducing agents’ commissions from eight to five per cent on the base fare, the current industry average, Hiebert says.

“It varies from class to class,” she says of the commission rate, adding that an

agency’s volume of sales with a particular airline can also affect commissions. “The airlines have manufactured their base fares; for example, from Winnipeg to London, one airline may offer a base fare of \$800 while another pulls money out of there and says it’s a tax and they’re only going to pay commission on \$500.”

### Ancillaries take off

In the wake of cuts to commissions, however, airlines began increasing revenues through another channel – the sale of ancillaries, such as checked baggage fees, advance seat selection and cabin upgrades, all sold directly to travellers.

According to IdeaWorksCompany and CarTrawler, profits on these products have grown dramatically: while total ancillary revenue among the aviation industry’s 10 biggest sellers of ancillaries totalled just \$2.1 billion USD in 2007, that number ballooned to more than \$28 billion among the same airlines in 2016.

The companies’ latest report on ancillaries estimates that such sales will hit \$92.9 billion worldwide in 2018.

While such ancillaries can be booked by travel agents – often done as a customer service gesture – no commissions are currently paid on these products. That’s a big piece of the pie that travel agents aren’t currently enjoying.

“Agencies today, dependent on size, the only way they’re making profit is off of the base fare, not the taxes,” Hiebert says. “Any ancillaries – seat selection, baggage, meals – the agencies are not making commissions.”

### NDC: a possible solution?

Introduced in 2014, the International Air Transport Association’s (IATA) New Distribution Capability may allow travel agents to share in the ancillary wealth – but that will all depend on whether airlines are open to the idea.



Described as a new industry standard “launched by IATA for the development and market adoption of a new, XML-based data transmission standard,” NDC has been slowly rolling out over the last four years.

With a stated goal of “enhancing the capability of communications between airlines and travel agents,” the NDC standard is open to any third party, intermediary, IT provider or non-IATA member, to implement and use.

According to Yanik Hoyles, IATA’s director of distribution programs, there are currently 66 airlines worldwide that are NDC certified (including Air Canada and WestJet), representing 60 per cent of IATA passenger capacity.

While the volume of NDC transactions is “very low currently,” IATA is eyeing



“No one has to do NDC; despite that, there are 65 airlines involved already. They see value out there.”

- Yanik Hoyles, director of distribution programs, IATA

2020 as the next milestone in NDC implementation, with a goal of having 20 major airlines (which IATA calls its NDC ‘leader board’) achieve 20 per cent of sales via NDC. Further out, IATA envisions mass adoption of the NDC standard by 2025.

Among the potential benefits of NDC touted by IATA is a transparent shopping experience, as well as access to “full and rich air content” for travel agents,

in which airfare and ancillaries can be booked in the same portal, rather than toggling between GDS and individual airline websites.

But if agents will have enhanced access to selling ancillaries via NDC, they also want a cut of the action: in a 2015 IATA report titled NDC: Travel Agencies’ Enabler to Success, a survey of travel agents from around the world (including Canada) found that 70 per cent of →



retail travel agencies surveyed want airline-paid commission for selling ancillaries via NDC.

“Agents believe they should share in the additional revenue they will help airlines earn, so it’s understandable why they prefer airlines be the parties to compensate them to sell ancillaries,” the report states. “The ‘what’s, where’s and how’s’ of compensation must, for legal and competitive reasons, be determined individually between each airline and the agencies with which it does business.

“Airlines that decide not to compensate agencies for NDC-enabled transactions owe agencies clear, rational, and intelligent explanations for those decisions as well. The one thing airlines can’t do is ignore this topic.”

### Real world examples

While it’s still the exception to the rule – and doesn’t include ancillaries – at least



“Agencies today, dependent on size, the only way they’re making profit is off of the base fare.”

- Mary Jane Hiebert, manager, Canada One Travel

one airline has monetized NDC for travel agents, providing a possible glimpse into the future.

In June 2017, American Airlines announced a new agency incentive program that will compensate travel agencies \$2 USD for each AA-marketed flight segment booked using an American-approved NDC connection.

Such an approach is yet to be implemented in Canada. WestJet spokesperson Lauren Stewart tells *PAX* that currently, “a very small number of bookings are made

via NDC,” adding that at the moment, the airline is not considering incentivizing agents to book airfare or ancillaries through the platform.

Similarly, Air Canada spokesperson Peter Fitzpatrick says that while the carrier is one of the 20 airlines on IATA’s NDC leader board and is “in the process of onboarding new partners and adding NDC volumes through this channel,” agent incentives are not currently part of its NDC strategy.

“Each airline will have their own decision,” Hoyles tells *PAX*, regarding the possibility of paying agents for selling airline ancillaries. “No one has to do NDC; despite that, there are 65 airlines involved already. They see value out there. There’s no doubt that the players involved will find the best way to share that value.... I don’t think I’ve met one travel agent who doesn’t see the value.”

Hiebert is not so easily convinced.

“Right now, there’s no plans to add commission for agencies through NDC – I don’t think it will benefit commissions but it won’t reduce what we already have in place,” she says. “They’re (airlines) not necessarily making money off tickets – but they’re definitely making money from checked baggage, change fees and seat selections.” ●





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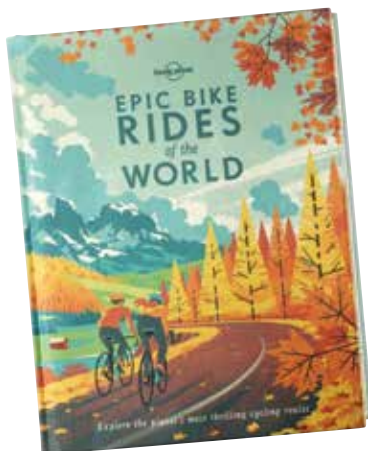
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