

pax

MAGAZINE

ANTJE SPLETTSTOESSER German National Tourist Office Director **FLYING THE FLAG FOR GERMANY**

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Letter from the publisher

Life always finds a way

In life, thousands of people cross our path. Among them are people that leave us indifferent; others leave a bitter memory; and some stay with us forever. Every relationship, short-lived or lifelong, is a stepping stone to something else. Because we must remember, the human is a creature of evolution. And sometimes, two beings evolve on parallel paths and meet at certain intersections: the crossroads of life.

This is undoubtedly true about our own history. You will have noticed, for the March edition of your *PAX magazine*, that there are two of us on this page: two faces, two minds to put their thoughts into writing and share a common vision.

We could easily have titled this editorial 'the destiny of two passionate women' because passion is always what has united us – and now, reunited us! If you've known Uguette for a long time, or if you've been in the travel industry for more than 10 years, Anne-Marie's face may seem familiar to you. It was at LogiMonde media that she started her career, and Uguette who gave her a first chance to prove herself. After that, she never really left the company: officially, yes, but informally, never. For a reason that wasn't clear to us then, she always remained a part of our identity.

partnership is strong, powerful, reliable and, above all, based on respect.

Anne-Marie is back among us, and brings with her a fresh approach, both to the company and to the industry. It is based around innovation and developing new ideas: creating a synergy between all of our products, French and English, and exploring new markets. You may have guessed from her co-writing of this editorial that she will be responsible for multiplatform editorial content, from print to the web to social media. Together, and with all the other members of our team, we have decided, as always, to go the extra mile. And you are all invited to take part in our journey to the next destination!

For now, though, enjoy your latest edition of *PAX magazine*. We feature a discussion with Antje Spletstoesser, the German National Tourist Office's Director for Canada, who tells us all about the dream job she discovered here. In addition, this month's special feature takes a closer look at the world of booking engines, asking the question: are they in danger of extinction? Our insight will allow you to make up your own mind.

With that, we leave you to reflect... and read!

Today, we both know why. It was written in the stars that one day, we would form a team again. This



Anne-Marie Santos

Vice-President, Publishing,
Media, Marketing &
Development



Uguette Chissou

President

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FRONT COVER

Antje Spletstoesser, Director for Canada at the German National Tourist Office

Text **Fergal McAlinden**

Photos **Massimiliano Galassi**

Special thanks to the Distillery District and Cluny Bistro & Boulangerie, which provided the location for this month's Business Meeting photoshoot.



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2nd Annual Home Based Agent Survey Paints a Clear Picture



Happier

91.9% of agents who switched from a bricks & mortar/store front to **home based** say they are happier.



Work/Life Balance

90% of agents believe they have a better work/life balance being **home based**.

■ Better ■ Not better ■ Other



Quality of Life

79.7% say they have a better quality of life, and top impacts include more time to travel and more time with family plus the ability to 'be my own boss'.

■ Improved ■ Not improved ■ Other

NUMBER OF AGENTS SAID:

221 More time with family	151 Less stress
140 More time with friends	258 Ability to be my own boss
209 More time for myself	289 Freedom to work from anywhere
224 More time to travel	157 All of the above
138 More time for other passions	12 Other
118 Increased earnings	



Room for Improvement

85% of hosted agents responded they are **very to extremely happy** with their host agency however 12% say they are unhappy to very unhappy showing there is room for improvement at host agencies.

NUMBER OF AGENTS SAID:

10 Very unhappy	29	82
6	27	159 Extremely happy
7	55	7 N/A
4	81	5 Other

The 2nd Annual Survey was conducted by Rob Glennie Consulting and attracted over 500 home based agents during the month of January. The survey provides valuable insight into this growing industry segment.



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Canada, 10 issues (one year): \$49.50 (plus tax)

Canada, 20 issues (two years): \$79.00 (plus tax)

U.S., 10 issues (one year): \$110.00 (plus tax)

International, 10 issues (one year): \$195.00 (plus tax)

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Printer: Impart Litho imprimeur

Distribution: Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 42658017

Legal deposit: Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec & National Library of Canada

Legal deposit number: ISSN 2367-9921



PAX magazine is published by

LogiMondemedia

Corporate website: logimondemedia.com

Travel industry news: PAXnews.com, PAXnewsWest.com, PAXnouvelles.com

416-581-1001 ext. 300

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FLYING THE FLAG

PAX sits down with the German National Tourist Office's Director for Canada, Antje Splettstoesser, to discuss how she found her 'dream job' marketing her home country in her adopted land

By Fergal McAlinden | Photos by Massimiliano Galassi

Antje Splettstoesser can vividly recall the moment, during her previous job at a pharmaceutical research company, when she got the call that changed everything.

Up to that point, Splettstoesser had divided her career between work in the medical and travel industries, having held prominent posts with a range of companies in both spheres. On the other end of the line that day, though, was the German National Tourist Office's outgoing director for Canada, Anne Dollendorf, and she had a proposition that would edge Splettstoesser's career trajectory back toward the travel industry.



"I still remember this day," Splettstoesser recalls. "She called me up and she said, 'Antje, my position will become available – I'm actually leaving the German National Tourist Office, and I think you would be the perfect fit.'" Having previously held positions at Canadian Tours International and Hapag-Lloyd, where Splettstoesser also worked, Dollendorf had witnessed firsthand the credentials that made her the ideal candidate to pass the torch to.

Splettstoesser had enjoyed her work in the pharmaceutical industry, describing it as an interesting, strategic role that afforded the opportunity to develop her analytical and project management skills. "But – what can I say?" she adds. "It's a different industry. It [felt] more like a nine-to-five job, where days are repetitive – and I was really missing the tourism industry."

Switching track once more and taking up the reins at the GNTO proved an inspired move for Splettstoesser, whose passion for her role – and her home country – is clear. "I can't tell you anything else, other than [that] I feel so blessed... it's an honour for me," she enthuses. "Every day is completely different. I just love the diversity."

Beginnings in travel

Describing herself as initially 'torn' between the medical and travel

industries, Splettstoesser's appetite for travel was whetted while working at a hotel in Switzerland. "That's where I got hooked with the travel market and the travel industry," she says. After stints in Austria, France and Greece, she decided to supplement her degree in nursing with a four-year program in tourism management, focusing on sustainable travel, at the University of Bremen.

Following a spell working with a tour operator in South Africa to develop its sustainable travel component, Splettstoesser then embarked on a semester in Thunder Bay, Ontario, giving

her a glimpse of what Canada had to offer. "I completely fell in love," she says. "I really loved the mentality of the people, I loved the outdoors – I just felt like Canada is such a wonderful place to live in."

“It's all about these untold stories that every country has. That's a great challenge, but also a true pleasure.”

A transformed Germany

The Germany that Splettstoesser works to market and promote as a tourist destination for Canadian travellers is one that bears a pronounced difference to the one she grew up in. Perhaps the most striking transformation has been undergone in the country's political landscape: the Germany of Splettstoesser's youth remained riven by the machinations of the Cold War, with her birthplace of Rügen lying in the communist-governed Eastern bloc and Berlin – where she later lived – sliced apart by its infamous Wall.

Now, Splettstoesser says that Germany is a destination with a myriad of different travel experiences open to a wide variety of travellers – a fact that the Canadian market is becoming increasingly attuned to.

"Germany is a very good active destination because we have amazing



pathways and also great signature, so it's almost impossible to get lost. We have the drivers, the walkers; we have the castle lovers, everyone interested in history... if you look at the older age group, or anyone who needs help with strollers or walkers, Germany is a very accessible destination as well. I think we have a lot of advantages, and lots of diversity."

Europe has witnessed a tumultuous last few years, characterized by political upheaval, economic uncertainty, terror attacks, and swirling anxiety surrounding the United Kingdom's impending divorce from the European Union. While acknowledging the impact of this turbulence on travel to the continent, Splettstoesser opines

that the resilience of travellers has shone through.

"Germany - and one can even say all of Europe - is working hard to ensure the safety of their travellers, but also their inhabitants," she says. "We are very pleased to see that the incidences in Europe have undoubtedly created →



an awareness, but also a new spirit amongst travellers not to get influenced, and travel even more than before."

Indeed, the sizeable increase in travel from Canada to Germany in 2017 - with growth of 8.8 per cent between January and November representing one of the best years since 2008 - attests to the country's safeness as a tourist destination, particularly for solo travellers. "From Canada, group travel to Germany was very, very important 10-15 years ago," Splettstoesser comments, "because no-one really felt comfortable enough to go on their own. Now, they realize that [there's] great infrastructure, everyone speaks English [and are] very helpful – if you go to Germany and you lose your direction, you can ask just about anyone, and they will happily point you in the right direction. Especially if it's a Biergarten," she laughs.

The forecast, meanwhile, looks optimistic for the future of travel from Canada to Germany.

"We know that Canadians, in comparison to all of the other global players, are the sixth-largest spenders," Splettstoesser says, "so it's good revenue that [Canadian] people bring into the country. We know there is consistent growth, and up until 2030, we actually predict one million overnights from Canada to Germany."

Continued importance of agents

Last year's Germany Travel Mart in Nuremberg saw German National Tourist Board CEO Petra Hedorfer note that the importance of agents in selling travel to Germany is dwindling. To

that, Splettstoesser adds an important caveat: Hedorfer was referring strictly to intra-Europe travel, rather than travel to Germany as a whole. In fact, she tells me, travel agents continue to play an essential role in providing expertise and experience for Canadians contemplating a trip to Germany.

**“I feel so blessed...
it's an honour for me.
Every day is completely
different; I just love
the diversity.”**

"The Internet can be a blessing, but also a curse," she explains, "in the way that there's too much information out there. We actually find that a lot of people are getting completely lost online, and they want to have something like a travel designer... someone who really designs an individual itinerary for someone, [so] that they can then go and travel. The travel agent will definitely still have a very big standing for the Canadian market."

Another indispensable attribute of travel agents, Splettstoesser added, is their ability to upsell German travel. "If someone goes on a river cruise, it's the travel agent who can basically say, 'Oh, you're in Nuremberg? You definitely should not miss the beautiful castles, the beautiful schnapps that they do there, and the red teller beer.' That's the opportunity where travel agents come in."

For Splettstoesser, continually gaining new skills and knowledge remains

one of the most essential components of her approach to the role. "It's the most important thing in life – not only in business life, but also in your private life," she comments. "If you always stay who you are, you will never grow, you will never develop, and you will never be able to go down different paths."

The GNTD director, who is currently enrolled in a digital marketing course encompassing online, social media marketing and search engine optimization, views education as an indispensable ingredient of a career in travel. "I think it's actually our responsibility in this fast-paced industry to be almost a step ahead," she says. Future aspirations, she adds, include a desire to learn creative content writing.

In the meantime, Splettstoesser will continue to market and promote her home country with a passion; every day, she says, allows her to learn something she didn't know about Germany. "You get a different appreciation – that's the fun part about the job. It's all about these untold stories that every country has. So that's a great challenge, but also a true pleasure."

Living in Canada and working to promote her home country, Splettstoesser affirms, has provided her the opportunity to thrive in her 'dream job.' "It's such an honour," she says. "When you're in love with two countries, and you have a passion for both countries, and you also have an understanding for both countries – to work with them, honestly, it's a blessing." ●



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NUMBERS OF THE MONTH

TRAVEL FACTS & FIGURES

By Benoît Schmautz

16 KM

The length of the longest marked black ski trail in the world. La Sarenne from the Alpe d'Huez Resort attracts many skiers every year. Created in 1974, it was initially an off-piste gliding route. La Sarenne starts at an altitude of 3,300 metres, and ends at 1,510 metres. For the more adventurous, the last gondola will take you down the slope to Pic Blanc at dusk.



5,375 m

The altitude of the highest ski resort in the world, Chacaltaya in Bolivia. Unfortunately, with global warming, there has been no snowfall since 2009. The station was built directly on the sacred Inca mountains and promised particularly challenging ski conditions. In Europe, Val Thorens is the highest ski resort, perched at 2,300 metres above sea level; in North America, meanwhile, it is Monarch, at 3,288 metres, located in the Rockies.



-2°C

This is the constant temperature maintained within Ski Dubai, the United Arab Emirates' indoor ski resort, despite the fact that it can reach 50° Celsius outside. Covering an area of 22,500 m², the area is ideal for skiing, snowboarding, tobogganing, and other winter events, such as meeting and playing with some of Ski Dubai's residents – real penguins!



TRAVEL *is their* BUSINESS

WE SPEAK WITH THREE MICE

TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS

By Blake Wolfe

Meetings and conferences: they're an ubiquitous part of work in today's world - and there's an entire world of professionals dedicated to making sure such events come together perfectly, especially if they involve travel.

PAX sat down with three members from this evolving segment of the travel industry to learn more about their roles and what goes into making a memorable MICE moment for their business clients.

SASHA MAZUCCA,

DIRECTOR OF SALES & ACCOUNT
MANAGEMENT, CIEVENTS

How would you describe the state/growth of the MICE sector in Canada?

The growth in the MICE sector has been nothing short of astonishing given the number of enquiries at our agency here in Toronto. Whether it's for incentive trips, a conference for training and growth, or just a straight up bash to celebrate a milestone, meetings and events are happening all day, every day at a major percentage of Canadian businesses.

What's the most interesting part of the MICE travel sector?

I would have to say being behind the scenes where you get to see the hard work of planning an event abroad come to fruition. So being able to move delegates from one country to another cohesively and seamlessly is very satisfying to both us and our clients. What most people don't realize is that travelling to the event is actually the beginning of the event.

In your opinion, what's the biggest misconception about MICE travel?

The amount of time and effort that goes into planning the group travel. The most challenging are the incentive trips. Nobody's qualified yet, we don't know which gateways they are coming from until a few weeks prior to the event, and all the delegates want to fly direct. Oh, and there's a really tight budget.

I smile just writing this as we encounter this every week, yet we always deliver.

Where are the majority of your bookings? Are there favoured destinations/types of bookings amongst your clients?

There is no shortage of requests to the Caribbean, that's for sure. However, we have recently been planning a lot of events in Central America and Europe. Costa Rica and Berlin are two of my favourite spots abroad.

Where is the most unique destination you've booked for a meeting or event and why?

Creating unique experiences is the fun part of the job. I often catch myself analysing any piece of square footage I see: a brewery, a laneway, a railway station, an airport, or a patch of concrete – the list goes on. We booked a



conference at the London Tower Bridge which was pretty cool. It's sort of regal to chat about business in the same vicinity as the crown jewels.

What sort of businesses do you work with mainly?

We work with a really broad scope of industries including beauty products, automotive companies, communications and education, to name a few.

Have you worked on the leisure side of travel and if so, how does it compare to MICE?

I actually started my career in leisure travel at one of our local Flight Centre shops here in Toronto. While there is some overlap, in the MICE world you are often creating an entire experience for the client, with no detail left untouched. Our company philosophies are the same across every brand and are applied to every business big or small.

Describe the most complex and/or unique itinerary/event you've worked on.

We did a very cool itinerary last year for 300 delegates. They were visiting a city in Europe to learn everything there is to know about that particular destination. The V.P. of this group had the brilliant idea of getting away from the typical conference room and the fancy coach buses. He wanted them to actually experience the destination. They are all now experts on this destination and came home without ever seeing the inside of a conference room. →

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DEBBIE GROSSI,

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
MANAGER, AMERICAN EXPRESS
MEETINGS AND EVENTS



How would you describe the state/growth of the MICE sector in Canada?

On a national level, the Canadian industry is gaining momentum. As the Canadian economy continues to show signs of strength, corporations are becoming open to meeting and incentive programs again, recognizing this sector as a key area of investment and a driver of growth.

What's the most interesting part of the MICE travel sector?

Incentive travel has always interested me. It is an opportunity for MICE professionals to use their imaginations and create unforgettable experiences that drive value - whether it is a dinner in a cave in Iceland, a private tour of the Vatican, or a dinner on a mountain peak in Switzerland. Execution must be seamless, but it is a very rewarding part of the job.

In your opinion, what's the biggest misconception about MICE travel?

It is widely believed that group travel is less expensive than travelling individually. While it is true that hotels often offer reduced rates and cost savings for large parties, the costs required for accommodating groups can add up quickly. Between bespoke dinner parties, award galas or nice to-dos like airport

meet-and-greets, the cost of successful group travel programs can escalate.

Where are the majority of your bookings? Are there favoured destinations/types of bookings amongst your clients?

While the industry is evolving and the sharing economy plays a larger role in travel, all-inclusive properties and cruises continue to be popular amongst my clients. With food and drink paid upfront at most resorts and cost-effective pricing on cruise ships, concerns of going over budget can be greatly reduced.

Where is the most unique destination you've booked for a meeting or event and why?

Throughout my career, I have had the pleasure of booking meetings and events in many unique places. One destination that I am particularly fond of was a resort in the Indian Himalayas for a client's elite-level incentive program. It had an element of mystery and provided

an experience that truly could not be found or replicated in North America.

What sort of businesses do you work with mainly?

Due to the nature and appeal of meeting and incentive programs, I work with a variety of businesses in different industries. Whatever the industry may be, we typically work with the sales department or dealer networks. The people that make up these teams are often the ones dictating the need for meeting or incentive programs.

Have you worked on the leisure side of travel and if so, how does it compare to MICE?

I actually started my career as a leisure travel agent. It was a rewarding role and it allowed me to work with many talented travel professionals. My role in leisure focused much more on travel elements such as hotels and flights. In the MICE industry, I play a larger role in meeting and events strategy and managing the bottom line.

Describe the most complex and/or unique itinerary/event you've worked on.

In addition to being one of the most unique destinations, the event in India became one of the most complex itineraries I have managed. We had participants fly to New Delhi for two nights, take an early morning train to see the Taj Mahal and continue on a journey to Jaipur. The elite guests in our group then travelled to Dehradun for a chance to enjoy the resort in the Himalayas. →

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KAREN WEEGAR,

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE - STRATEGIC MEETINGS & INCENTIVES, VISION TRAVEL

How would you describe the state/growth of the MICE sector in Canada?

The current state of meetings and incentive travel in Canada is quite strong and continues to grow. Many Canadian companies understand the ROI of bringing their people together to share information, network, recognize, and motivate performance that helps move their business forward.

What's the most interesting part of the MICE travel sector?

While we have long used technology for event registration, many companies are incorporating event apps into their conference and incentive travel programs. Some are simply a repository for conference information, while others are more interactive and incorporate attendee-driven content and gamification.

In your opinion, what's the biggest misconception about MICE travel?

I think that one of the main misconceptions is that many people don't really understand what is involved in planning and executing a meeting or incentive travel program. Our team is juggling so many aspects: vendor management and contracting, website design, budget management, individual attendee requests, client expectations, print and promotional materials, logistics planning, and more.

Where are the majority of your bookings? Are there favoured destinations/types of bookings amongst your clients?

We've been working a bit more recently in our own beautiful country which has been great, especially last year with Canada 150. We have planned and executed countless meetings and incentives throughout the U.S., Mexico, Caribbean, Europe, South America, Asia, and Australia. We've also conducted conferences on several cruise ships in different regions of the world and for some clients, we've even organized full ship charters.



Where is the most unique destination you've booked for a meeting or event and why?

That's a tough one as many destinations are unique for very different reasons. Certainly one that comes to mind is a program we planned in Saint Petersburg, Russia. It is truly one of the most beautiful cities I've seen. It does, however, require a great deal of unique aspects in terms of planning an incentive travel program; one in particular would be the Russian

visa process which is rather cumbersome to say the least.

What sort of businesses do you work with mainly?

As a B2B business, we work with a number of clients in various industry sectors. We have client partnerships with a variety of financial and insurance clients, but also work with automotive, consumer goods, manufacturing, and professional services companies.

Have you worked on the leisure side of travel and if so, how does it compare to MICE?

I worked on the leisure side of travel many years ago after graduating from college in Ottawa. The logistics of planning for a group are quite different than booking a vacation for a couple or family. Our goal is to try to incorporate unique aspects into the program that an individual couldn't necessarily experience on their own. For instance, an individual can visit the Great Wall of China, but we might arrange a private dinner for 150 people there for an incentive travel program.

Describe the most complex and/or unique itinerary/event you've worked on.

Earlier this year, we executed an incentive travel program in Lima and Cusco, Peru for approximately 140 attendees from across Canada. While in Cusco, the group stayed in a beautiful 5-star hotel which was a former monastery dating back to the 16th Century. We arranged back-to-back private roundtrip charters of the luxurious Belmond Hiram Bingham train from Cusco to Machu Picchu. ●



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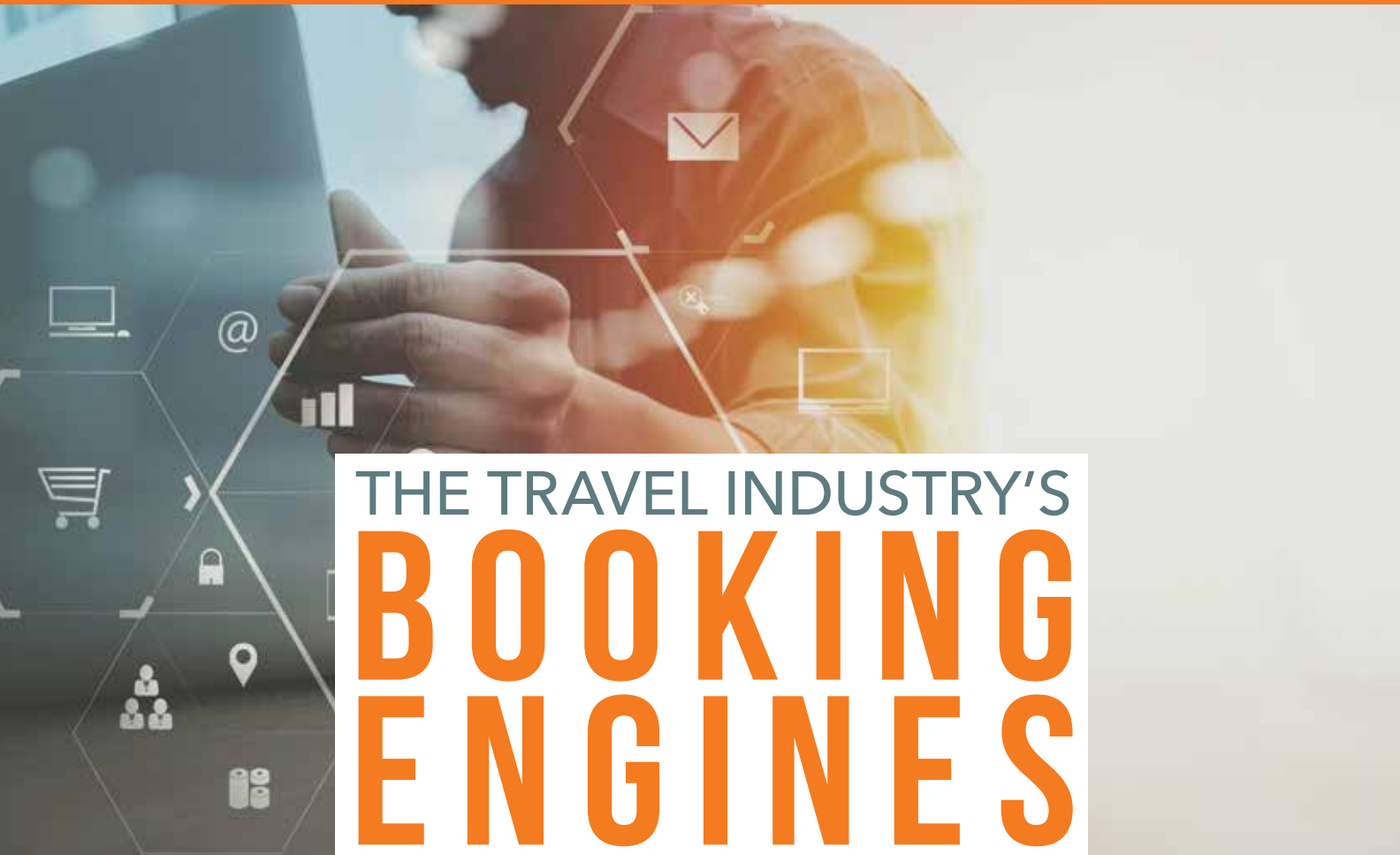
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THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY'S BOOKING ENGINES

By André Désiront

Travel agents were among the first professions to use computerized workplace tools in the 1970s. While the use of personal computers only spread to offices in the mid-eighties, United Airlines had equipped its North American dealers with Apollo terminals - the distribution system that had become Galileo 10 years earlier.

Since then, billions upon billions of megabytes have flowed into fibre optics, and both travel agents and consumers are using multiple automated distribution systems or websites to search the inventories of airline suppliers, hoteliers, and tour operators: GDS (Global Distribution Systems), such as Softvoyage, for tour operators and, more recently, systems like Kayak, Orbitz and Skyscanner. All these tools are constantly evolving, and their life expectancy is all the more limited as the world of information systems is in perpetual motion.

PAX magazine investigates the case of GDS, which is under threat today by carriers' determination to reclaim control of their distribution, and that of the 'metasearch engines' who distribute suppliers' inventories to all comers.

GDS: AT THREAT OF EXTINCTION?

Last November, the Air France-KLM group announced the imposition of a surcharge of €11 (CAD \$16.65) per segment on plane tickets booked and issued through computerized reservation systems, better known as GDS. This measure, which will come into effect on April 1, 2018, follows a similar initiative announced by Lufthansa – who charge €16, or \$24 per ticket – in June 2015.

Adopted to encourage intermediaries to book directly on these companies' websites, the 'Distribution Cost Charge' or DCC badly affects travel agents who, for the most part, go through GDS to make and manage their reservations. It also calls into question the very existence of the likes of Sabre, Amadeus and Travelport – with some experts predicting their disappearance by 2020.

In 2015, 60 per cent of global airline tickets were issued through GDS. For airlines, this translates into a distribution fee ranging from U.S. \$5 to U.S. \$12 per ticket, depending on the type of fare – regardless of commissions or incentives allocated by carriers to travel agents. The imposition of surcharges such as DCC is a way to encourage travel

retailers, who are the main users of GDS, to book live on carrier sites. The aim is for them not only to reduce the costs generated by intermediaries, but also to regain control of the distribution.

After having remained passive for years on the issue of GDS, Air France and Lufthansa have realized that they were lagging behind in terms of reservations, data collection, and therefore valuable information, relating to their relationship with their customers. For over 30 years, GDS have been accumulating comfortable profits, allowing them to spend billions of dollars on research and development to refine their products and create new ones. Carriers also cite the need to better manage ancillary fees, which now make up a significant portion of their revenues, but this claim doesn't hold up, since GDS have the ability to adapt quickly.

Profits reinvested in technology

There are around 20 GDS active worldwide, but the three main ones – Sabre, Amadeus and Travelport (Galileo and Worldspan) – account for 95 per cent of the market share (the fourth-largest being Travel Sky, which is owned jointly by the Chinese



state and carriers). These three big guns are reaping huge profits, and generate margins that dwarf those of other players in the distribution sector: 40 per cent for Amadeus, in 2014; 32 per cent for Sabre; and 26 per cent for Travelport. This allows them to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on research and development, while still paying generous dividends to their shareholders. Amadeus, for example, reinvested €726 million in R & D in 2016. This innovation race, supported by impressive profits, lasted for years, and during this time, the airlines had low margins (4.9 per cent, on average, in 2015 for all IATA members) which did



not allow them to set aside substantial sums to upgrade their technology.

They decided to react by imposing these surcharges on reservations made through GDS. Many observers say that their goal is to 'kill' Amadeus, Sabre and others, with some predicting their demise by 2021. The irony of the situation is that airlines were essential in the rise of GDS: Sabre was originally a subsidiary of American Airlines; Amadeus was launched by Air France, Lufthansa and Iberia; and Galileo is an offshoot of United Airlines. If the prediction of GDS' eradication proves to be correct, it would prove

to be a case of carriers wishing to kill their 'babies.'

However, the forecast of death is largely premature. Firstly, thanks to their enormous profits, the GDS have the means to react, and they continually add new products that make them indispensable to travel agents. Examples include Sabre's Sabre Red Workspace, which among other features (Sabre Media Solutions, Sabre Alerts, Flight Explorer Express, etc.) allows travel professionals to better target their ads and inform their customers in case of flight delays, gate changes at the airport and more.



IN NORTH AMERICA

According to a recent survey conducted by Travel Weekly magazine, **52 per cent of North American travel agents surveyed make airline ticket bookings via GDS**, and 32 per cent book flights directly with airlines – either via the Internet or by telephone. Sixteen per cent of respondents indicated that they did not sell airline tickets.

Amadeus is not left behind either: it recently launched Gestour Analytics, a management tool, which allows agencies to analyze their performance based on 220 indicators, and Amadeus Selling Platform Connect – from which the customer can view meals served onboard, the cabin plan with seats left free, and more.

It's clear, then, that the GDS have reacted to the carriers' new measures by introducing their own developments, ensuring that they remain the main distribution channel.

Significant impact on travel agencies

That said, the airlines' strategy seems to be working. Two years after imposing the €16 surcharge to encourage travel agents to book live on its sites, the Lufthansa Group is expecting record results: a net profit of €1.7 billion (CAD \$2.5 billion) is anticipated for 2017, an increase of 5 per cent over 2016. This is probably what prompted →

the Air France-KLM group (whose then-president, Alexandre de Juniac, announced in 2015 that he would follow Lufthansa's example) to follow suit.

Be that as it may, carriers do not expect to eliminate GDS from consideration in the medium term; they only want their piece of the cake. In a recent report, 'The future of airline distribution: 2016-2021' IATA spelled out the facts: currently, only 33 per cent of all bookings

leisure sector. On the other hand, the very large commercial agencies (TMCs, or Travel Management Companies, in industry jargon) which also use GDS will be favoured, since they generate sales with higher incomes 'high contribution' tickets, i.e. Business class, Premium class and Economy class, without restrictions). It's expected that their market share will have increased by six per cent between 2016 and 2021. This is because carriers grant

the leader of one large agency who spoke under condition of anonymity (all sources in this report asked not to be identified). With GDS, advisors are able to view all rates and schedules of companies servicing requested destinations – directly or through connections. "Instead of accessing all the information in a few seconds, our agents will have to check the offers on several sites, which will lengthen the search period to 15-30 minutes, with an anticipated loss of productivity," the agency owner continued. "This is not to mention that the GDS allow very fluid links with our back office software, such as PC Voyages or others. It will be more complicated if you book on the carriers' websites."

Some managers and agency owners are resigned to the changes, even if they agree about the loss of productivity. "We have no choice," commented another agency head. "The airlines have decided to put the distribution system in place, and they are the ones with the biggest influence. Anyway, we were already cross-checking by consulting the offers of Expedia or other metasearch engines. Now we will have to do some more, checking the rates of different carriers."

"With GDS, our agents took three minutes to complete a reservation process," she continued. "With our Air Canada program, it takes them 17 minutes to process the same file. We are told that it will improve, and I am convinced of it. But we will always cross-check with the carrier, our GDS, and the metasearch engines." ●



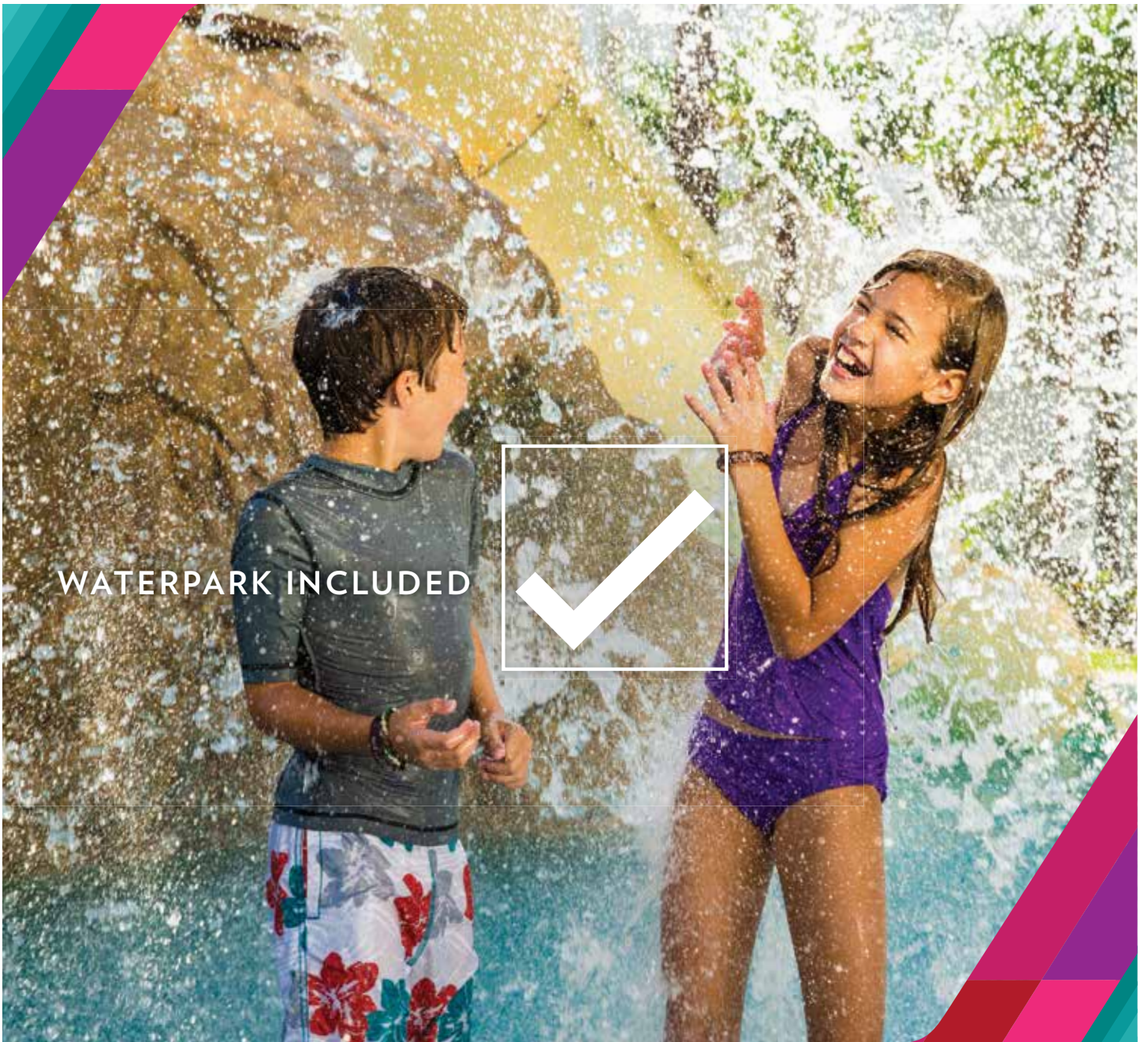
made in the world are recorded live – via websites or by phone – from carriers. They expect this percentage to rise to 45 per cent in 2021.

This new strategy will not only come at the expense of GDS. Even if they comply with the new carrier policies by avoiding GDS to register their reservations directly on airline sites, travel agencies should feel the strain, too. The same IATA report notes a 16 per cent drop in bookings from traditional retailers, especially in the

them benefits and exempt them from certain constraints imposed on 'normal' agencies – they won't necessarily be subject to DCC.

A 40-year decline

The determination of carriers to cut themselves a piece of the GDS pie is a constraint that will harm the productivity of the majority of travel agencies. "The airlines will make us go back 40 years; we will have to return to the methods of 1980," complained



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THE WORLD'S MAIN GDS

With a 95 per cent share of the global market, three players share almost the entire amount of airline tickets (and, to a lesser extent, hotel rooms, rental cars, and train tickets) sold by travel agencies. These are:

AMADEUS

Holding a 44 per cent share of the global market, this GDS owes its worldwide pre-eminence to its dominance in Europe, where it accounts for 63 per cent of the market share. This is perhaps to be expected, since Amadeus was founded by European carriers – namely Air France, Iberia, Lufthansa and SAS.

Figures for 2016: €4.5 billion in revenues, 15,380 employees, 1.38 billion tickets issued, and about 400,000 connected travel agents. The headquarters of the company is in Madrid.

Sabre

Founded in 1960 by American Airlines, it is the oldest of the three major GDS. It holds the upper hand in North America, with 58 per cent of terminals operating in travel agencies. Overall, it is used by 425,000 travel agents, and was responsible for 445 million airline ticket bookings in 2016 (505 million including hotel bookings, car rentals, etc.).

Turnover for 2016: U.S. \$3.4 billion. The head office is located in Texas.

Travelport

Founded in 1971 under the name Apollo, it was originally the United Airlines reservation system. Over the years, Apollo became Covia, and an association with several European carriers led to the creation of Galileo in 1987. The British consortium Travelport acquired Galileo in 2006 and purchased the GDS WorldSpan in 2007. Present in 170 countries, it has a good reach in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa, but is steadily losing ground against Sabre and Amadeus. Its turnover amounted to U.S. \$2.3 billion in 2016, with a workforce of around 4,000 employees.

The outsiders:



This fourth world player is Chinese. It's owned by a state-dominated consortium (the civil aviation agency), in partnership with 12 Chinese airlines operating in the domestic market: Air China, China Southern Airlines, China Eastern Airlines, Shanghai Airlines, Shandong Airlines, and more. It deploys a network of 7,000 terminals, mainly in Chinese travel agencies. It's a far cry, then, from the 425,000 terminals of Sabre!

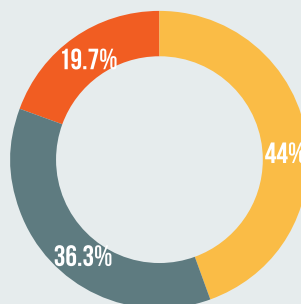


Founded by a consortium formed by several major Asian companies (Cathay Pacific, Malaysia Airlines, All Nippon Airways, and a dozen others) in collaboration with Sabre, Abacus enjoys a significant reach in Asia. It was bought by Sabre in 2015.



A small player present in Latin America. It's a consortium formed by about 30 small local carriers like Peruvian Airlines, Ecuador VIP, Lloyd Aéreo Boliviano, and more. The head office is located in Buenos Aires.

MARKET SHARES



- Amadeus
- Sabre
- Travelport (Galileo and WorldSpan) and others*

THE METASEARCH ENGINES: TWO BUSINESS MODELS & MAJOR PLAYERS

Their names are Kayak, Momondo, Skyscanner, Liligo, Jetcost, Rome2Rio and, more recently, Google Flights. These are the metasearch engines, also referred to as aggregators or flight comparators. The difference with the usual search systems is that a metasearch engine searches dozens of other engines simultaneously: those of airlines, hotel chains, large online agencies with high transaction volumes (Online Travel Agencies or OTAs) like Expedia, or sometimes by soliciting other metasearch engines like Orbitz. In short, a metasearch engine draws its information simultaneously from dozens of sites and 'aggregates' them on a screen, in a given order.

It is, in fact, a kind of automated travel agent, in that it deals with a one-time request for a price for a plane ticket, for example, at a given time. The difference is that it only takes a few seconds to produce a series of results that would have required long hours of work for a person.

One can still wonder what differentiates a metasearch engine from an OTA. Executives of the first claim that, unlike the agencies, which sell a product, they provide a service (the ability to compare offers) but sell nothing: the transaction takes place on the site of an airline or an OTA. And, unlike an agency, they do not charge any service fees. Another difference is that they provide access to a wider range of results than agencies. Aggregators introduced themselves in the first decade of the millennium and quickly became key players in the distribution network of airline tickets, hotel rooms, and even rental cars.

Kayak, which is the heavyweight in the category, was launched in 2004 and resold to Priceline ten years later for the hefty sum of U.S. \$1.88 billion. Today, it deploys sites in 40 different languages and processes 1.5 billion searches a year. Momondo, launched in Denmark two years later, was also acquired by Priceline, albeit for the more modest price of \$550 million.

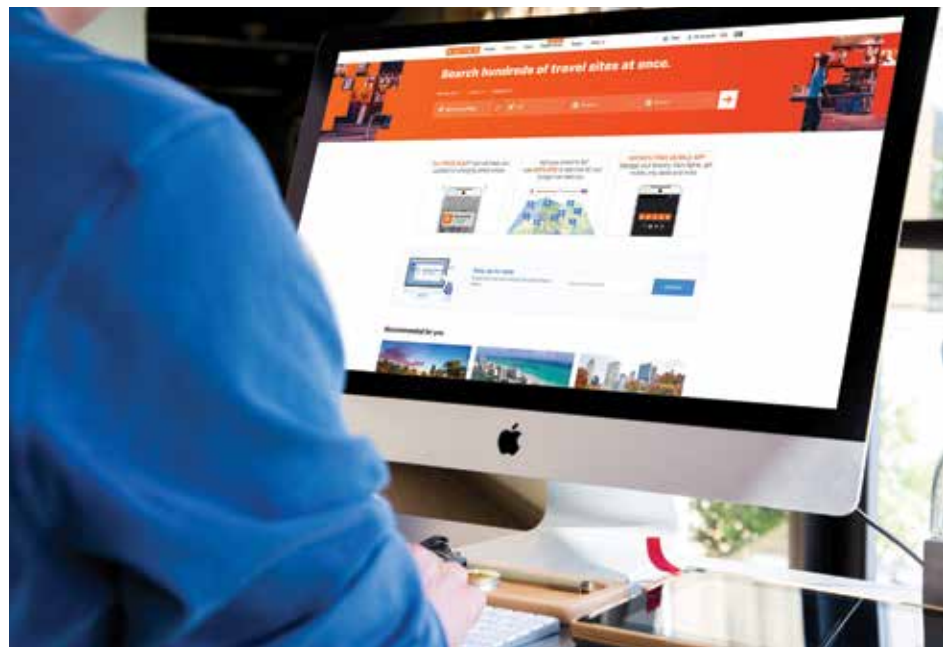
Two distinct business models

Since users do not pay a service fee to use aggregators, they have developed two different business models to find their accounts. Therefore Kayak, Skyscanner and Hipmunk receive either a percentage commission or a fixed amount each time a search on their site results in a transaction

with a supplier with whom they have previously concluded agreements. The higher the conversion rate (the process in which a search becomes a transaction), the more money they will make. The conversion rate, in general, is between 2 per cent and 6 per cent of requests. In other words – less than one search out of 20 actually leads to a reservation.

Other players such as Easyvols and Momondo are paid by click: each time a user clicks on the website of a carrier or another supplier to check an offer of a metasearch engine, the latter receives a small amount – even if the search is not 'converted' into a purchase. The cost per click (or CPC, in industry jargon) is tiny (a few cents) but when the number of clicks recorded in a day is considered, these few cents end up making healthy sums.

The players who have opted for the CPC have grounds to argue that they provide their users with completely objective information, since their income is not dependent on conversion rates. Therefore, they are not tempted to favour certain offers by deprioritizing the others, or at least relegating them to the bottom of the page. →



However, the so-called 'merchant sites,' i.e. those whose compensation agreements only cover research leading to sales, do not wish to be equally objective.

Since users do not pay a service fee to use aggregators, they have developed two different business models to find their accounts.

For instance, Skyscanner's Scottish aggregator, Gareth Williams, explained that while his company had agreements with just under 70 per cent of flight suppliers, he nevertheless still posted the proposals of airlines and OTAs that did not pay it in any way. He admitted, however, that his site gave more visibility to the first.

The other source of revenue is the resale of data. If an individual makes a search on

Momondo for a flight between Montreal and Barcelona, for example, thanks to IP Tracking, the localization of the IP address (or Internet Protocol, which can trace the computer that initiated the search) will allow suppliers to flood the user with offers on Barcelona in particular (not only flights, but also hotels and rental cars) but also on Spain.

In 2015, 30 per cent of Kayak's revenue came from flight-related conversion rates, 15 per cent from hotels, and the rest from advertising-related activities: selling data, better referrals, or advertising displays on the sites.

Concentration by two major groups

The category's biggest players were acquired by the two largest agencies in the world: Expedia and Priceline. For two years, these

groups have led the chasing pack of the largest travel agencies in the world. In 2017, Expedia was at the top of Travel Weekly magazine's 'Power List' with \$72.4 billion in sales. It was immediately followed by Priceline, which reported revenue of \$68.1 billion for 2016. American Express GBT (for Global Business Travel), long regarded as the world's largest travel agency, was dragging its heels in third place, with a sales volume of \$31.1 billion.

However, Priceline – which was originally a web auction company – bought Kayak in 2013 and Momondo (and its sister company Cheapflights) in February 2017. In its portfolio of subsidiaries, there are also aggregators Booking.com and Agoda, oriented towards the hotel industry. If metasearch engines are less present in Expedia's arsenal of products, we nevertheless find one of the very big players there: Orbitz, a product of four big American airlines (Delta, United, Continental, and Northwest) which,

THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR

Here is a non-exhaustive list of the top eight global flight aggregators, including the Alexa ranking, in the country where they are the most popular – as well as the three countries with the highest number of requests.



- 📍 U.S.A. – 2004
- 👁️ 265th most-visited site in the U.S.A.
- 👁️ 927th most-visited site in the world

71.5 per cent of searches originate from U.S.A., 3.3 per cent from Canada and 3.1 per cent from Japan



- 📍 U.S.A. – 2001
- 👁️ 871st most-visited site in the U.S.A.
- 👁️ 3,293rd most-visited site in the world

75.7 per cent of searches originate from U.S.A., three per cent from Japan, 1.6 per cent from Canada



- 📍 Scotland – 2003
- 👁️ 1,213rd most-visited site in the U.S.A.
- 👁️ 3,609th most-visited site in the world

54.6 per cent of searches originate from U.S.A., 7.7 per cent from Greece, 3.1 per cent from Japan



- 📍 U.S.A. – 2011
- 👁️ 8,150th most-visited site in the U.S.A.
- 👁️ 6,756th most-visited site in the world

15.3 per cent of searches originate from U.S.A., 8.4 per cent from the U.K. and 5.7 per cent from France

ironically, is an aggregator launched in 2001 to compete with... with Expedia.

The other major research sites are essentially price comparisons of hotel rooms (Hotwire, Hotels.com, Trivago) or rental agencies for villas or apartments (HomeAway, VRBO, Venere.com). Even if they are competitors, aggregators can be excellent search tools for travel agents – either to check a fare, or as a supplier. In an environment where airlines now almost never pay commission, and where travel agents get paid with service fees, what difference does it make to book on a carrier's site or go through an aggregator?

The unknown influence of Google Flights

Google launched its flight comparator in 2011 after acquiring ITA Software, a firm specializing in database management for airlines. This acquisition caused tremors in the world of aggregators and large online

agencies because, like many carriers, Kayak and other flight comparators use search engines developed by ITA. U.S. regulatory authorities have attached an obligation to the transaction: that ITA continues to provide all required services to its other customers for at least five years.

In 2016, 10 per cent of North American consumers searching for flights online used Google Flights, but this percentage climbed to 21 per cent among 18-32-year-olds. In the meantime, it is impossible to exactly quantify the actual performance of Google Flights, since Alexa amalgamates the search results on Google Flights with those of other Google sites – and Google is, of course, the most-visited site on the World Wide Web by far. ●



METASEARCH ENGINES



- 📍 France – 2006
- 👁️ 788th most-visited site in France
- 👁️ 8,265th most-visited site in the world

31.7 per cent of searches originate from France, 14.8 per cent from the U.S.A. and 5.8 per cent from Argentina



- 📍 France – 2006
- 👁️ 805th most-visited site in France
- 👁️ 20,719th most-visited site in the world

83.8 per cent of searches originate from France, 2.1 per cent from Belgium and 1.5 per cent from Morocco



- 📍 U.S.A. – 2010
- 👁️ 6,069th most-visited site in the U.S.A.
- 👁️ 23,376th most-visited site in the world

78.4 per cent of searches originate from the U.S.A., three per cent from Canada and 2.7 per cent from Japan



- 📍 Denmark – 2006
- 👁️ 1,346th most-visited site in Germany
- 👁️ 28,164th most-visited site in the world

82.6 per cent of searches originate from Germany, 2.1 per cent from Austria and 1.9 per cent from Switzerland

SOFTVOYAGE:

A METASEARCH ENGINE AT THE SERVICE OF AGENCIES

Apart from the GDS, the most-used search engines among members of the Canadian distribution network are those of Softvoyage. What, precisely, is the difference between metasearch engines like Kayak, Trivago or Orbitz, and the Softvoyage software? We asked the CEO and co-founder of the company, Steve Ringuet.

How would you define yourself against GDS or metasearch engines like Kayak, Orbitz or Trivago?

Technically, we are all metasearch engines – that's to say, we're developing software that simultaneously searches the databases of flight or hotel suppliers, and those of airlines, cruises and tour operators. We give our customers access to inventories from between 50 and 60 suppliers. The difference lies in the way we commercialize these search engines. Unlike us, Kayak, Trivago and other aggregators are directly aimed at consumers. Their business models are based on advertising: they're remunerated by the supplier who gives them a royalty, because they include that supplier's products in their search results. It's the equivalent of advertising, a bit like the SEO that advertisers buy from Google. We don't go to the consumer: we only deal with the travel agents, who we sell licenses



Steve Ringuet, CEO and co-founder of Softvoyage

to for our software. Consumers are very familiar with Kayak, Orbitz or Trivago, but with a few exceptions, they have never heard of Softvoyage.

How do you position yourself against these metasearch engines? Do you consider them competitors?

You might say that they are indirect competitors. While they boast of offering the best prices, or the widest range of offers to the public, our goal is to allow the travel agent to stand out from them. We make sure that nine times out of 10, the travel agent is able to offer better rates than Kayak or, for hotels in the South, than Trivago. This is our *raison d'être*! We allow the agent to remain a crucial contact in the travel industry.

Are there other companies that are marketing research software exclusively for travel agencies in North America?

Yes, there are many in Canada and the United States, including Acovia and Logibro. But in Canada, at least, I believe we're the one with the largest number of clients among travel agents. And we are also present in the United States, which accounts for a little less than 10 per cent of our sales. ●



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Photo by www.marinabaysands.com

ROOFTOP POOL

*Marina Bay Sands Resorts Pool,
Singapore*

Rooftop pools are popular near and far, but in Singapore, you'll find the world's largest. Located on the 57th floor of the Marina Bay Sands Resort, the rooftop pool provides a breathtaking view of Singapore. During the day, swimmers can take a dip or soak up the sun in a lounge, and as the sun winds down, take in the Singaporean sunset, while watching thousands of glittering city lights creep across the skyline.

THE WORLD'S MOST unique pools

By **Christine Hogg**

On hot days, nothing feels nicer than slipping into a refreshing pool. Architecturally and chemically, pools are no longer limited to the basic rectangle or oval design of an above or in-ground pool. Plus, overpowering chlorine that used to make your eyes burn is a thing of the past. One of the best assets of any luxury property is its pool.

INFINITY POOL

*Hanging Gardens Ubud Hotel,
Bali, Indonesia*

Imagine swimming in the heart of the Balinese jungle—not at a watering hole, but submerged in the crystal waters of an infinity pool, suspended above the rainforest's treetops. The upper of the infinity pool at the Hanging Gardens Ubud Hotel in Bali spills into a lower level below, where swimmers can literally hang out over the rainforest. At night, the pool is lit up, and guests of the hotel can even dine on a floating brigade.

Photo by www.hanginggardensofbali.com



SALT WATER POOL

San Alfonso del Mar Seawater Pool, Chile

By the sheer size of it, the San Alfonso del Mar swimming pool is a must for travellers to Chile. At 3,323 ft. long and 11.5 ft. deep, it's one of the world's largest pools—and it's completely filled with seawater—more than 250 million litres! Besides swimming, kayaking is one of the most popular activities to do in this enormous pool.

Photo by www.sanalfonso.cl



Photo by Four Seasons's Hotel and Resorts

AQUARIUM POOL

'King's Pond,' Four Seasons Resort Hualalai, Hawaii

Some pools are lined, some pools are tiled, and some pools are carved out of ancient lava rock. At the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai in Hawaii, the King's Rock aquarium pool rests next to the beaches of the North Pacific Ocean. Filled with more than 4,000 tropical fish and 98 species, including a free-swimming spotted stingray, King's Pond is a natural aquarium pool filled with both freshwater and ocean water. ●

SOCIAL MEDIA FAQS

By Frédéric Gonzalo



I started my Gonzo Marketing business in early 2012 to address an emerging need, born out of the advent of social media and digital marketing. In the consultations, training and conferences that I give – not to mention the articles published on my blog or here in *PAX magazine* – I am often asked the same questions.

Here is an overview of the questions I am most frequently asked (and their answers):

Should we be present on all social media?

No, it is not necessary to have an account on all social media, but you must certainly be curious, and try to understand how the different platforms work – and, in particular, who are the main users.

The key is to identify which platforms enable you to reach critical mass among your target audience of past, current, and potential customers. Today, we know that

Facebook is used by the vast majority of Canadians, but if you want to target a younger clientele (12-25 years), perhaps a presence on Snapchat would be wise? It's up to you to decide, according to your customer targets.

What is the ideal posting frequency?

There was a time when it was advised not to publish more than once a day

on Facebook, for example. Is this still true? No. Because of the algorithm that filters the content that we see in our news feed on Facebook and Instagram, it becomes more and more difficult for a company to 'show itself,' so the question becomes one of relevance: do you have relevant and interesting content to publish?



GOOD PRACTICES TO FOLLOW:

Facebook – 1-2 posts a day, spaced at least an hour apart if possible

Instagram – one publication per day maximum

Instagram Stories – no limits

Twitter – no tweet limit per day; it depends on the news you have to share

LinkedIn – one publication per day maximum

Pinterest – no limit of pins or repins, but it is better to space the publications in order to obtain a better potential reach

Snapchat – no limit

Should we respond to all comments?

No. It has been shown that beyond a certain threshold, the return on the effort to respond to all comments becomes negative. What is that threshold? 40 per cent. That is – we should generally respond to 40 per cent of the comments and opinions left on a Facebook page or TripAdvisor, for example.


Following the formula proposed above, we should answer all negative opinions – one star or two. You receive a three-star review? An answer is needed every two or three times out of four, because a three-star opinion


is usually synonymous with some dissatisfaction. For the four- and five-star reviews, we will want to answer 20-25 per cent of the time, depending on the relevance and nature of the comment left.



Is there a magic formula for a post to go viral? Well, if you know it, make sure to tell me! Joking aside, there is no miracle recipe, but some content works better than others. For example, on Facebook we know that asking questions generates interaction (especially 'likes') but videos generate the most sharing, and therefore the best potential for viral content. Today, video creation is a lot less complex than before, and you can do a Facebook Live, a YouTube Live or a live broadcast with Twitter directly from your smartphone.

That being said – if we don't know the perfect recipe, **we do know the ingredients!**

 **Subject** affecting the target audience

 **Emotions** – humour, pain, anger, dreams

 **Easy to share**

Facebook or website – which one to prioritize?

This question is rarely asked to me so directly, but it is often implied when I hear agents tell me that they have a good presence on Facebook... and nothing else. If Facebook disappeared tomorrow morning, what would happen?

Of course, Facebook will not cease to exist overnight, but as we know your organic publications reach a minority of people – 5-10 per cent of your subscribers on average, in 2017 – how do you ensure the durability of your presence online?

For me, there is no doubt – this is not a Facebook or website issue, but rather Facebook and website. If you really want to know, I would prioritize the website first, because it is a platform that belongs to you (or owned media, according to the terminology of the Content Marketing Institute).

For example, you should publish content on your website – in the blog, news, promotions, or other section – and share it via social media, including Facebook.

Does the sending of newsletters and promo emails still work?

Yes – very well. If you do not, you leave the field open to your competitors.

Today, there are still twice as many email addresses in circulation around the world as users on all social media combined! And when we look at the statistics for an average newsletter →



in the travel industry, we see opening rates of 20-25 per cent and click-through rates of four-to-six per cent, stats that would be the envy of any social media communications manager.

Is there a best time to post on social media?

The frequency of publication is less of an issue today, but the timing of your mailings remains an important aspect in the success of your publications. Because yes, there is a best time to post on social media.

With Facebook, just watch when your audience is active online, information found in the 'Statistics' section of your page.

As for Instagram, Twitter or LinkedIn, it is less obvious to know which is the best time to publish. You can of course test

publications at various times to detect a trend, but I recommend using tools like Hootsuite, Buffer or SproutSocial that publishes at the best time, with features built into the platform.

Advertising on Facebook: does it really work?

The consultant's typical answer: it depends! In fact, yes – advertising on Facebook offers proven potential, and yes, it can reach targeted audiences in a precise way. The problem is the often unrealistic goals we set ourselves.

If your goal is to increase revenue as well as interest, Facebook is not necessarily the tool of choice for generating sales. Yes, we can encourage event registration, increase website traffic or encourage the downloading of a mobile app, but remember – we're not on Facebook for the same reasons we're doing a search on Google.

In other words – it's often as relevant to run campaigns with AdWords as it is to bet on Facebook ads, depending on what you're trying to achieve: increase brand awareness, drive traffic, drive conversions, etc. Know why you plan to carry out an advertising campaign with Facebook; it will then be easier for you to measure the effectiveness of your efforts. ●



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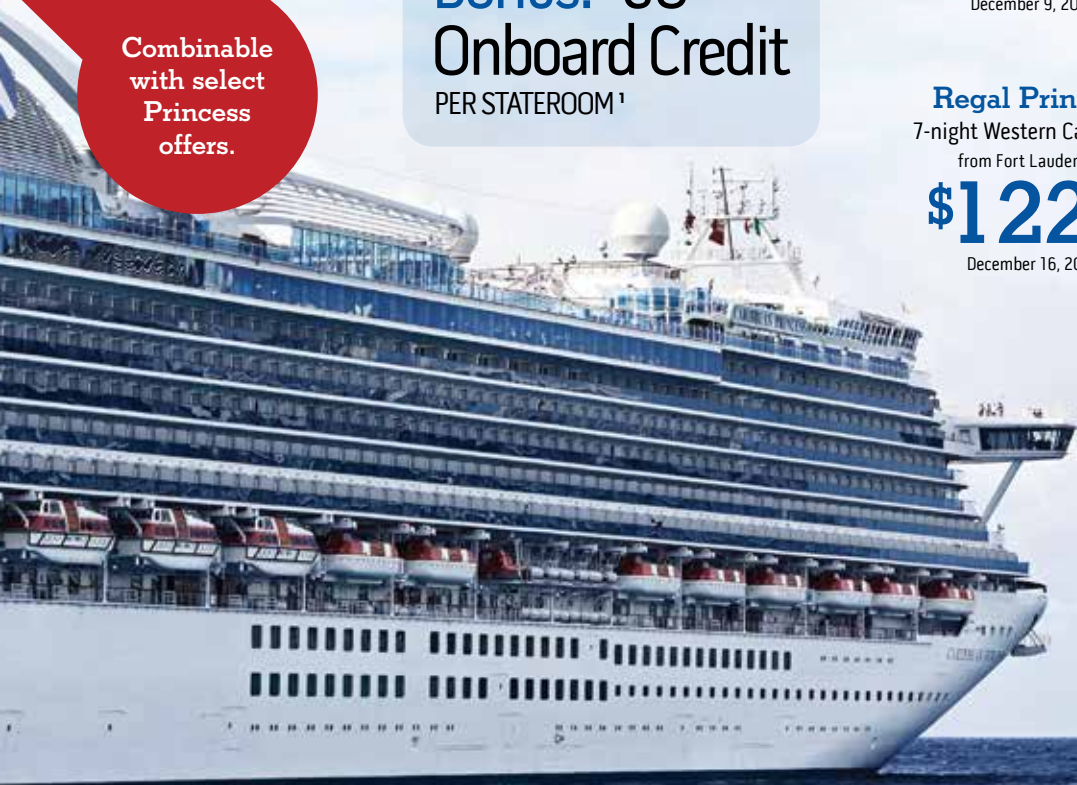
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CHOOSING THE
RIGHT CRUISE
FOR YOUR
CLIENTS

By Ming Tappin | Photos Uguette Chiasson

In my conversations with agents new to selling cruises, I am often asked how cruise lines are ranked and what the differences are between them. Here, I will share with you the major cruise categories and the brands associated with each.

Mass market



Mass market cruise lines are named so because they offer something for everyone. Featuring the largest and newest ships, the focus is on innovative shipboard amenities, large-scale entertainment, and children's programs. They are suitable for clients looking for active shipboard life, and come with extensive options.

EXAMPLES:

Carnival Cruise Line – a fun experience for everyone, especially families

Disney Cruise Line – the full Disney experience at sea

MSC Cruises – cruising with European flair

Norwegian Cruise Line – casual dress code and open dining

Princess Cruises – well-rounded brand with something for everyone

Royal Caribbean Cruise Line – innovative ships with all the bells and whistles

Premium



Premium lines offer medium-to-large ships with an elegant atmosphere, fine dining, and refined service. Although onboard offerings are similar to mass market ships, the focus on the itinerary begins to shift towards personal enrichment through lectures, visual and performing arts.

EXAMPLES:

Holland America Line – a mix of traditional and contemporary cruising with teak decks, fresh flowers and classic and modern art.

Celebrity Cruises – modern fleet with a focus on cuisine, spa, and suite accommodations

Deluxe Premium



Smaller ships allow for access to remote ports while providing the opportunity for longer stays. The spotlight is on culinary and wine appreciation, enrichment lectures and hands-on classes. They are suitable for clients looking for destination immersion and higher levels of service with more inclusions.

EXAMPLES:

Azamara Club Cruises – extended stays in ports, inclusive of beverages and gratuities

Oceania Cruises – the foodies' cruise line featuring the culinary creations of Jacques Pepin →

Luxury



This is small-ship cruising, with spacious suite accommodations, six-star service and haute cuisine for guests looking for an upscale cruising environment, without the stuffy atmosphere. With all-inclusive pricing, luxury lines also offer extended voyages and world cruises.

EXAMPLES:

Crystal Cruises – mid-sized ships consistently winning World's Best awards from Condé Nast and Travel + Leisure

Regent Seven Seas Cruises – the most inclusive brand with unlimited shore excursions

Seabourn – worldwide itineraries including Antarctica landings

Silversea Cruises – a fleet with elaborate suite categories and a focus on luxury expedition cruising

Specialty



Specialty lines offer unique ship experiences or bucket-list destinations. Their focus is on soft adventure, education, and getting close to the destination, wildlife, people and culture. They appeal to clients wanting small group travel and personal enrichment.

EXAMPLES:

Cunard – classic transatlantic liners offering traditional cruising with formal nights and galas

Paul Gauguin Cruises – luxury cruising exclusively in French Polynesia

Ponant – luxury expedition cruising specializing in Polar regions

Star Clipper Cruises – tall ships offering true sailing experiences

Un-Cruise – small group cruising focused on destination and active discovery

Windstar Cruises – motorized sailing ships and yachting experiences



Know your client

Your most important job as a travel consultant is to recommend the right cruise to your client. Putting them on the wrong ship can not only result in an unpleasant experience but could influence them to harbour a negative outlook on cruising, and your opportunity to become their trusted advisor is lost.

But, before you recommend, you must get to know your client by discovering their likes and dislikes and their needs versus wants. Ask what they would like to accomplish on the trip, and get to know what they consider important factors for that 'perfect vacation'. If done correctly, the answers uncover the perfect cruise line to recommend to your client. →



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you can learn about their offerings and onboard experiences. Attend training, participate in seminars at sea, or take advantage of reduced rates for firsthand cruise experience.

No Assumptions

Assumptions may lead us down the wrong path. Not all first-time cruisers want an action-packed large ship to the Caribbean. Not all young travellers are looking for party cruises, and not all seniors are looking for quiet ships. It is all about your clients' individual needs. So, ask the right questions, listen to the answers, and your knowledge and experience will do the rest. ●



Ming Tappin
Ming Tappin is a cruise writer and consultant, based in Vancouver, BC.

Know your cruise lines

Although categorized together, each of the above cruise lines are still unique in their own way. Invest the time to learn what sets them apart. Do you have clients who aren't interested in formal evening

gatherings, or ballroom dancing? What about clients who require Internet at sea?

It is important to know which cruise lines cater to specific client needs. All brands have online training programs where

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DESTINATIONS TO DISCOVER

Awe-inspiring **AUCKLAND**

By Fergal McAlinden | Photos by Auckland Tourism



If you've visited Toronto's CN Tower, you'll be familiar with the concept of an EdgeWalk, taking a scenic circuit around the circumference of the tower. But how does a SkyJump sound?

That's right – in Auckland, you have the opportunity to plummet from the top of the Sky Tower, New Zealand's highest building, in a hair-raising bungee jump experience. The 192-metre drop is just one of the many varied and unforgettable experiences available in the vast urban sprawl of New Zealand's largest city.

It may be viewed as one of the most expensive cities in the world to live, but Auckland also consistently ranks among

the best. That's due in no small part to the plethora of offerings for travellers in the city, ranging from its distinctive scenery – typified by its iconic Harbour Bridge – to a number of intriguing institutions including the Auckland Zoo (the largest in New Zealand) and the Museum of Transportation and Technology.

The Auckland War Memorial Museum, meanwhile, offers a comprehensive look back through New Zealand's history, both military and otherwise,

and is equally notable for its location – perched inside the explosion crater of the Pukekawa volcano in the Auckland Domain.

Known as the City of Sails, Auckland lives up to its moniker with a host of water activities on offer around its harbour. Kayaking and sailing are popular, while *waka ama* – the New Zealand term for outrigger canoeing – is unsurprisingly one of the city's most prominent water sports.

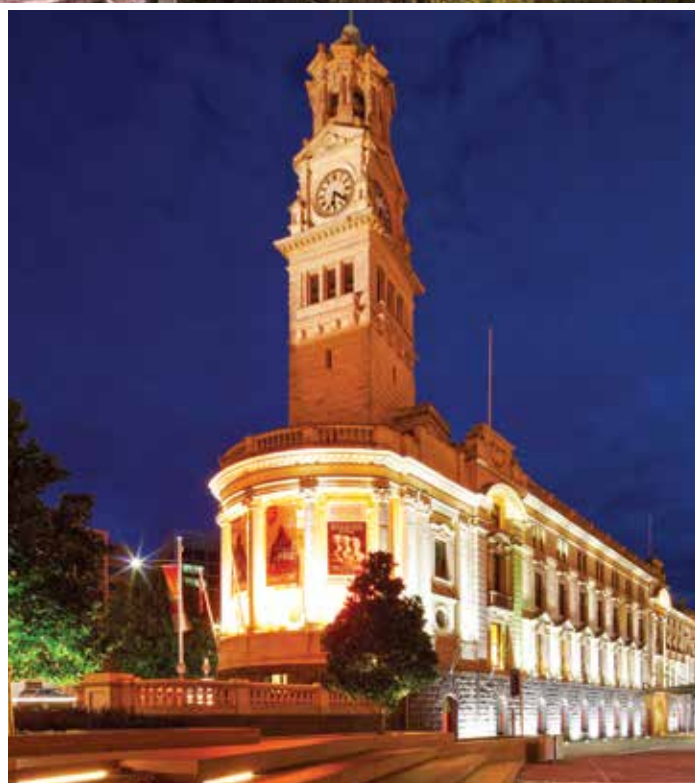
Outside Auckland's thriving city centre, there's plenty to recommend. If you're travelling with a young family, Rainbow's End is an ideal option:



located in Manukau, this colourful theme park features an array of costumed characters, in addition to an ever-expanding roster of roller coasters and other rides.

The volcanic Rangitoto Island, located in the Hauraki Gulf, includes some of the country's most scenic kayaking environs, in addition to spectacular views of the Auckland skyline from afar.

Literature and movie buffs, meanwhile, can witness some of the most noted scenery and filming locations from the renowned Lord of the Rings trilogy, with day tours offered from Auckland. ●



DESTINATIONS TO DISCOVER

MEXICO CITY

By Christine Hogg

The oldest capital city of the Americas, Mexico City is a thriving metropolis of approximately 21.3 million people in the Greater Mexico City region. The city is a unique destination all its own, known for its rich past involving Aztec, Mayan, and Spanish cultures.

Mexico City's historic city centre, Centro Histórico, features the largest plaza in Latin America, called the Zócalo. The square can fit 100,000 people and connects to many side streets and neighbourhoods, making it the perfect meeting spot. Most of Mexico City's downtown was founded by Aztecs, and a good majority of the structures have been preserved.

The Palacio des Bellas Artes, located on the western side of Mexico City, is an impressive structure affectionately called the Cathedral of Art in Mexico. The interior reflects the Art Deco style, as well as a series of murals commissioned by the famous Mexican painter, Diego Rivera. Many theatrical plays, dance recitals, concerts, and events take place here.

There are many museums in Mexico City, including the Frida Kahlo Museum which was built in Casa Azul, the artist's childhood home.

For travellers seeking a more historic adventure, one of Mexico's best-

kept secrets lies just an hour outside of Mexico City. The sheer volume of history in Mexico City means that there are still Mayan and Aztec ruins scattered throughout

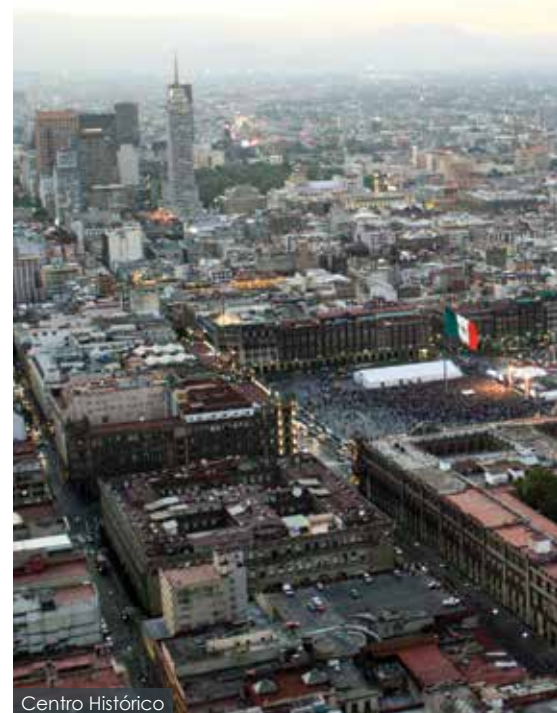
the country, some dating back to 2000 B.C.

In the northeast end of Mexico City, an ancient Mesoamerican city called Teotihuacan can be found. Meaning 'the birthplace of the gods', the archaeological site features the ruins of

a series of temples and several pyramids dating back to the first millennium A.D. The Pyramid of the Sun is the largest structure in Teotihuacan and the Pyramid of the Moon is the second-largest, where travellers can climb to the top.



Day of the Dead celebrations



Centro Histórico

Although Mexico's old ruins and history are quite a sight, modern-day Mexico City is in a league of its own, especially when it comes to big parties.

Dia de los Muertos, or 'Day of the Dead', is perhaps one of the most well-known festivals that takes place not just in Mexico City, but throughout the entire country. Rather than mourn the dead, in Mexico, *Dia de los Muertes* celebrates the lives of the deceased through parades and festivals, and thousands take to the streets dressed in colourful costumes, face paint, and masks depicting the traditional Mexican La Catrina figure.

Right in the centre of Mexico City, visitors can't miss the Ciudadela



Ancient ruins at Teotihuacan, Mexico



Local finds at the Ciudadela Market

Photo by Kevin, Flickr

Market, a local artisan market that's been operating since 1968. The market is home to 350 vendors, who come from 22 regions in Mexico to promote local art. Those who visit the market can expect to find everything from pottery, to hammocks, textiles, hand-made jewellery, and even musical instruments.



Local finds at the Ciudadela Market

As far as food is concerned, Mexico City is a lot more than tacos and tequila, and it's far from street food. Sure, you can still find stalls peddling hot and juicy tamales, but Mexico City has its fair share of swanky establishments meant for fine-dining, too, and visitors can find everything from gourmet tacos to Mexican street corn. ●

Spanish INFLUENCE

By Christine Hogg

Spain: land of the tapas, free flowing cava, flamenco dancers, and breathtaking architecture. There's a lot to take in, and it all depends on where the journey begins. Each city is captivating in its own special way and in Spain, there's never a dull moment. Around every corner, or down every cobble-stoned street, a cozy spot for a 4 p.m. pick-me-up cappuccino is likely waiting, if not a place to simply watch life go by on the street.

Exploring Spain starts with an up-close and personal introduction to its gastronomy. Here, it's normal to eat five times a day, and sometimes even more! Up until dinner, which is usually around 9:30 p.m., the snacking occurs, and this is where the beloved tapas come into the picture. Tapas are small, savoury plates that are traditionally shared among friends. From olives stuffed with sharp cheeses and Iberian ham, to crispy croquettes, tapas vary by region, and often come accompanied by drinks.

Barcelona and Madrid are both sprawling metropolises packed with culture; Barcelona is most famous for its European art, more specifically, the distinctive architectural masterpieces of Antoni Gaudi. Madrid is renowned for its museums, galleries, and shopping districts.

Plaza Mayor, in Madrid, is the city's main square. Here, travellers will find no shortage of restaurants and cafes, and the unique placement of the square links it to a series of side streets, with nine entranceways leading in and out. It's common to see street performers and merchants set up shop, and it's a great place to spend an afternoon. A short walk away, another plaza, the Plaza de Santa Ana, is a popular meeting spot for tourists and locals alike, and it connects to one of Madrid's busiest districts, Puerto del Sol, which is also the epicentre of the radial network of all Spanish roads.

Spanish Gothic architecture took the country by storm during the Medieval period, and hundreds of structures have survived, allowing visitors to marvel at their pointed arches and towering





Madrid, Spain

and wood carvings, Gaudi's work is unmistakable. The Basilica Sagrada Familia, though incomplete, remains the most-visited attraction in Spain, and along with Park Güell, an outdoor park system, is an example of the architect's modernist and naturalist aesthetic.

SPANISH GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE TOOK THE COUNTRY BY STORM DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD, AND HUNDREDS OF STRUCTURES HAVE SURVIVED

Shopping in Spain is another must, especially if you're looking to pick up a pair of the country's most famous footwear, espadrilles. Barcelona's biggest shopping street, Passeig de Gracia, is packed with everything from souvenir shops, to trendy boutiques, to big brands, and of course, cafes and bars. And, if fashion isn't the target, both Barcelona and Madrid are full of outdoor markets as well, selling everything from fresh foods to antiques. ●



Arc de Triomf in Barcelona, Spain

façades. Barcelona has an entire Gothic Quarter where Roman walls still flourish and small streets lead to medieval plaza squares. Most of the Gothic churches or plazas are free to enter, and you can spend the day revelling in some of the oldest architecture in Europe.

Perhaps some of the most famous architecture in the city, the works commissioned by Antoni Gaudi lend an almost fairy-tale experience to visiting Barcelona. Using crafts like stained glass, ceramics,



Barcelona's Gothic Quarter

DESTINATIONS TO DISCOVER

FEEL
THE

Rhythms of Rio

By Christine Hogg

Known for its impressive mountains, picturesque landscapes, and of course, Samba music, Rio de Janeiro, or Rio, is one of the most visited places in South America and one of the hottest destinations in the world.

Brazil's largest seaside city, Rio has a very strong Portuguese influence, making it the largest Portuguese city outside of Portugal. Located right on the South Atlantic Ocean, Rio is surrounded by some of the best beaches in the world, and travellers from near and far come to revel in the sand and sun. Copacabana Beach, Joatinga Beach, Ipanema Beach, and Prainha Beach have all been applauded for their azure waters and soft white sands, and thousands of sun-worshippers dot the beaches long after the sun goes down.

Copacabana Beach, with its warm, white sand, views of Sugarloaf Mountain in the distance, and blue water is Brazil's most popular beach, and said to be one of the best in the world. Vendors, bars, and restaurants are all located along the four-kilometre stretch of beach, making it easy to spend the whole day here.

Unlike Copacabana Beach, which is very open and accessible by public transit, Joatinga Beach is a secluded beach tucked in between the rocky cliffs of the coast. It's a smaller beach, but the waves that break here make it a popular spot for surfers, and even for those who don't surf, the natural landscapes alone make Joatinga worth coming to.

Guarding the entire city, one of Brazil's most famous attractions, the Christ the Redeemer statue, can be found in Rio's Tijuca Forest →



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GUARDING THE ENTIRE CITY IS ONE OF BRAZIL'S MOST FAMOUS ATTRACTIONS, THE CHRIST THE REDEEMER STATUE

National Park. The 98 ft. tall monument of Jesus Christ sits on top of the Corcovado Mountain, and lights up in various colours at night. A rail car will transport travellers to the top in roughly 20 minutes, or they may opt to walk up the trail, while taking in the sights of the surrounding rainforest.

Once at the base of the Christ of Redeemer, another famous landmark, Sugarloaf Mountain, can be seen a short distance away. A large part of Rio has been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its strong cultural ties.

A trip to Rio would be incomplete without witnessing traditional Samba dance, and

there's no better time than during one of the world's biggest parties. Every year, Carnival comes to Rio, and the entire city comes alive in colour, as more than two million people take to the streets to enjoy performers adorned in costume, and watch the parade floats. The Rio Carnival is the largest in the world, and its origins date back to 1723. When Carnival comes to town, everyone sings and dances as the Samba beat fills the air.

For the foodies, there's no shortage of good eats in Rio, a city famous for its country's churrascaria, which are barbeque restaurants featuring all-you-can-eat meat. Street vendors can be found on almost every corner of Rio, serving up tasty fried treats for a late afternoon snack or a bite on the go. ●



Copacabana Beach



Christ the Redeemer



Street art in Rio de Janeiro

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SAFARI, SAND, AND SUN IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Christine Hogg

The southernmost country in Africa, South Africa is a mix of breathtaking natural beauty, bustling cities, rugged landscapes, eclectic culture, and of course, safari. Airlines that service South Africa from Canada include Air Canada, South African Airways, and WestJet, meaning that getting into popular cities like Cape Town and Johannesburg has never been easier.

Situated between the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans, the country has a wide range of eco-systems and climates, ranging from the dry and arid temperatures of the desert, to warm and humid temperatures associated with a Mediterranean or subtropical climate. Due

to its range of ecosystems and habitats, South Africa is famous for being home to the Big 5: the African elephant, Cape buffalo, lion, rhino, and leopard, of which the lion and elephant are classified as vulnerable, and the leopard and rhino are critically endangered species.

Due to the scarcity of seeing all five of these animals up close anywhere else on the planet, South Africa is one of the most popular destinations for a safari, where travellers can try anything from a classic Jeep ride to the outback, to a luxury safari camp under the stars, to a canoe ride through an elephant watering hole!

Kruger National Park, just four hours from the O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, is one of the largest game reserves in South Africa where you can find the Big 5. It became



South Africa's national park in 1926, and covers 19,485 sq. km.

On the southwest coast, Cape Town remains one of the most popular choices for first-time and seasoned visitors to South Africa. Famous for its landscapes, which include breathtaking views of the South Atlantic Ocean, Table Mountain National Park can be found here, as well as one of the most iconic landmarks of South Africa, Table Mountain itself. Spanning a history of more than 30,000 years, Table Mountain is a popular hiking spot,

and was officially dubbed a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004.

For the travellers who don't feel like making the journey to the top, the Table Mountain Cableway will transport you 1,072 metres above sea level via an aerial cable car—making for incredible photographs along the way, as the cars are capable of rotating 360 degrees, offering panoramic views.

South Africa might be famous for its safari and wilderness offerings, but the country is also renowned for the

nightlife that stems from its bustling cities. Johannesburg in particular, South Africa's largest metropolitan city, is a hub for modern art, shopping, the restaurant and bar scene, thriving nightlife, and one of the most economically-developed cities in the world.

Close to one million people live in Johannesburg and it's filled with art galleries, museums, big shopping districts, public parks and gardens, and an enviable city skyline that is famous for its appearance at night. ●

TO RON TO THE 6IX

By Christine Hogg



The Rogers Centre

Undoubtedly, the first thing that comes to mind for travellers to Toronto is the CN Tower. While it's true that this 553.3 metre structure is an iconic landmark on Toronto's skyline (not to mention watching it change colours at night, or dine at the panoramic 360 Restaurant), there's so much more to the city.

Toronto is one of the most diverse and multicultural neighbourhoods in the world, with more than 200 languages spoken around the city. Visitors can expect to find a series of vibrant neighbourhoods that reflect this—Little Italy, Greektown, Chinatown, and Little Portugal are just a few districts where you'll find an abundance of authentic restaurants and a vibe that can't be replicated. Its cultural mosaic is the reason travellers can try any kind of ethnic food imaginable.

Toronto has a variety of tourist attractions, most notably Casa Loma, the Ripley's Aquarium of Canada, the Royal Ontario Museum, and of course, the Toronto Eaton Centre. Just slightly over 100 years old, Casa Loma is a house modelled after the Gothic Revival style, and was transformed into a museum in 1937. Many famous movies like *X-Men* and the hit Broadway musical *Chicago* have been filmed there, and the mansion is a popular spot for upscale events and parties.



Yonge and Dundas, one of Toronto's liveliest intersections.

The Ripley's Aquarium of Canada is a relatively new attraction, having opened in 2013. The aquarium holds 5.7 million litres of seawater and freshwater for the 20,000 exotic sea creatures from 450 species groups who call the aquarium home.

The Toronto Eaton Centre can be found in the heart of the city's downtown core, and boasts four floors, 235 stores

and services, and a record-breaking number of visitors per year that surpasses the Las Vegas Strip, Walt Disney World, and Disneyland combined (2015 saw 48,969,858)!

The Toronto Eaton Centre is located on one of the city's most popular streets, Queen St. West. The street has an abundance of art, music, and food and is known for its small hole-in-the-

wall boutiques that you'll miss, if you're not looking for them. In 2014, Vogue ranked this street as the second hippest neighbourhood in the world.

Besides the main attractions in the city and the fashion hubs, Toronto's underground cultural scene is one of the best in the world. While it's true that you can actually discover entire neighbourhoods through an underground network of pedestrian tunnels known as the PATH (1,200 stores across 12 million sq. ft.), it's the eclectic indoor and markets that really let you feel the hustle and bustle of city living.

The St. Lawrence Market, located right next door to Toronto's historic Distillery District, features more than 100 vendors selling everything from freshly baked bread, to hand-made jewellery. The market is a great place to spend an afternoon and find a great bargain, and it's open Tuesday through Saturday.

The eclectic—and sometimes eccentric—Kensington Market is a bohemian market in Toronto's west-end that features a number of specialty shops and people you won't find anywhere else.

Last but not least, one of the best markets for snagging a good sidewalk bargain can be found along Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West, Toronto's Chinatown! If you go, expect things to get a little crowded, as the sidewalks are generally packed with shoppers looking for a good deal! ●

Its cultural mosaic is the reason travellers can try any kind of ethnic food imaginable.



Ibiza: More than a **PARTY**

Text & photos by **Christine Hogg**

The briny smell of the sea and a warm breeze, balmy even for this time of year in Europe, were the first indication that life on the island was somehow different than the hustle and bustle of Spain's capital city, Madrid. In the taxi that sped away from the airport, the glowing neon advertisements for clubs and lounges that seemed to span the entire 30-minute ride to the hotel did



little to dispel the stereotypes and the reputation that the island has conjured up for itself in more recent years.

But in the morning, as the sun rose over the Balearic Sea, Ibiza showed its true colours.

Long before Avicii and Mike Posner released the hit mash-up song 'I Took a Pill in Ibiza', music and festival culture

flourished here. From the flower-power days, to the disco revolution, Ibiza has seen its share of party-goers come and go over the years, so when house music took the world by storm in the early 1990s, the culture simply stuck. Fast-forward to the arrival of the millennial generation, the cultured world-travellers who live for experiences, and Ibiza seemed like the perfect fit for those who enjoy spontaneous summer parties. Despite the faint trickle of house music trailing over from somewhere along the stretch of the Balearic Islands, that morning in Ibiza revealed something equally fascinating – talk of a medieval district with stone walls, fortresses, and ruins dating back to the 14th century.

Dalt Vila, otherwise known affectionately as Ibiza's 'old town', rests on top of a steep slope, one so significant that most



taxi cabs won't make the full journey to the very top. While the rest of the island's bustling cafes, restaurants, and boutiques thrive down below, this part of Ibiza remains virtually untouched by time. Walking along Carrer del Calvari eventually links to a series of dusty cobblestone paths. From the base of the road, timeworn stone walls arch upwards to a dramatic entrance, →



beckoning entry into Dalt Vila's old military tunnels. A walk through the winding archaic underpass eventually steered upwards to reveal the remains of an ancient fortress known as Zitadelle Ibiza, where panoramic views of the city and the sea await. Gulls shrieked and circled above, and down below, cruise ships and sailboats dotted the harbour.

to perch on to gaze at the sea and reminisce on what life must have been like centuries ago. Dalt Vila and the structures that remain, like Baluarte de Sant Berna and the Museo de Dalt Vila, contributed to the site earning UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 1999. Just a short walk away, the largest necropolis in the world can be found, housing the remains of 4,000 Phoenician tombs dating back to 600 B.C. The Catedral de Santa Maria d'Eivissa and her bell tower sit

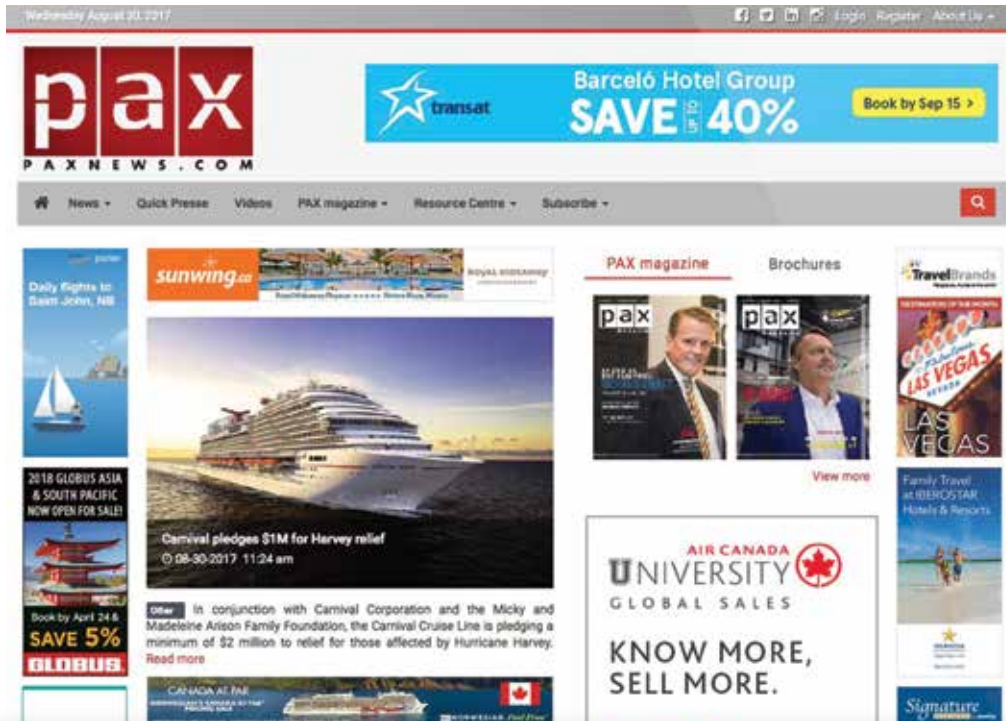
at the very top of Dalt Vila, and serve as a landmark for the way back down, which is where the magic happens. Back down in the port of Ibiza, it was business as usual. People chatted amongst one another on patios, sharing tapas and wine. Shop owners stood outside, beckoning tourists in for the last deals of the summer. And, amid laughter and conversation, the music played on. ●

In the morning, as the sun rose over the Balearic Sea, Ibiza showed its true colours

Dalt Vila means "upper town", and because of its leverage over the rest of the city, where bastions and embrasures with cannons once fired, Dalt Vila was used as a lookout spot to ward off pirates and protect the city from potential attacks. Now, the ancient walls are a nice place

A labyrinth of twisting cobblestoned streets, smooth and slippery from years of pedestrian traffic, revealed tiny cafes, tucked in amongst local homes,





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UNLIMITED LUXURY AT SECRETS SILVERSANDS

Text & photos by Fergal McAlinden



Eight is the magic number at Secrets Silversands Riviera Cancun.

Not only does the lavish five-star property, nestled along the picturesque Riviera Cancun coastline, boast eight restaurants, eight pools, and eight bars. It also opened on Aug. 8, 2008 – 08.08.08 – rounding off the pleasing symmetry that, in many ways, typifies the perfect attention to the smallest details that abounds at the idyllic, all-inclusive resort.

That said, the adults-only property opts against using the term 'all-inclusive.' Rather, it bills itself as 'Unlimited Luxury,' a description whose aptness became evident the moment our FAM group's transportation rolled through its gates to kick off the week-long tour of the properties offered by TravelBrands

in its 'Experiences by Sunquest' product line.

The resort boasts 441 expansive suites, with each offering its own whirlpool, private terrace or balcony, and plush, suspended king-sized bed – or alternately, two double beds. Our rooms were in the Preferred Club category, granting access to an upgraded suite, special concierge service and enhanced amenities: the epic Preferred Club Master Suite, for instance, features its own living room and dining area, with a jacuzzi for two and an expanded terrace area.

Such is the calibre of the property's rooms that it's difficult to single any one category out for special attention, but

its over-the-pool suites unquestionably feature amongst its most impressive offerings. The Over The Pool Cabana Honeymoon Suite includes generously-sized accommodation (with a separate sitting area), a king-sized bed, and a spacious bathroom with its own expansive jacuzzi.

If you're looking for an ideal spot to enjoy a refreshing cocktail in the heat before venturing to one of the resort's multitude of superb restaurants, look no further than the Barracuda Bar – featuring unencumbered views of the glistening, crystalline Riviera Maya water. The culinary fare on offer includes something for everyone: those in search of a more refined meal can find it at the swanky Bordeaux restaurant, requiring formal attire for guests, while authentic and savoury Mexican food is served at El Patio. The menu at the Himitsu restaurant is replete with offerings that



enthusiasts of Pan-Asian cuisine will relish, while fresh, tasty seafood is the order of the day at the resort's Oceana and Seaside Grill restaurants.

One of the undoubted highlights of our group's stay arrived as we bade a reluctant farewell to the property on our final night. After a comprehensive tour of the grounds by sales manager Lily Ceh Gruinal whetted our appetite for dinner, we were treated to a sensational meal by flickering candlelight in the atmospheric surroundings of the Bacanal wine cellar, whose brick walls are adorned by row after row of bottles and enormous, ornate tapestries as their centerpiece. It's one of the few features offered by the property that is not included in its 'Unlimited Luxury,' with a separate fee required for access to the restaurant, but its dramatic backdrop and stellar service ensures that it's a dining experience well worth paying extra for.

Secrets Silversands truly comes alive by night, with the curved sculptures that line its many paths emitting a luminous glow that sets the scene for an array of options including themed parties, live sports and other entertainment offerings. For those seeking a more relaxed experience, meanwhile, the quiet, secluded environs of Secrets Spa by Pevonia feature hydrotherapy and indigenous treatments, in addition to a hot stone massage.

Whether for a romantic getaway or a destination wedding, the couples-oriented property features more than enough to appease a variety of different tastes, with its gazebo suitable either for tying the knot or simply enjoying a



peaceful dinner for two. Unlimited Luxury is what the property promises – and there was little doubt in anyone's mind, as we took one last look at the immaculate waters from the powdery sand beach, that it more than delivers. ●



SLIP INTO SLEEP

Light sleepers face an impossible task on long flights. Between the excess noise, light, and various sleeping positions, it's usually impossible. The Ostrich Pillow creates a unique sleeping environment through micro-bead technology, which blocks external sound while providing a lovely place to rest your head. Use it on the plane, in place of lousy hotel pillows, or in transit.

OSTRICHPILOW.COM «



SNAP AWAY

Want to get great travel photos, but don't have enough room in your crammed suitcase for a clunky camera? The Sony QX10 is an attachable lens for your phone that allows you to enhance its camera with a DSLR effect, resulting in crisp, high-quality imagery. It can also be paired with photo editing apps to clean up and modify your images.

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New FINDS



GOT YOUR BAK

Contaminated drinking water is the biggest cause of illness around the world, and travel is no exception. Whether you didn't have time to get all of your vaccinations, or keep forgetting to buy bottled water, the Camelbak All-Clear UV Purifier filters water from any local source, which means you won't be doubling over with stomach cramps any time soon.

CAMELBAK.COM «

SO LONG, SAND

Every beachgoer has faced the dilemma of a sandy beach towel. It's no fun getting out of the water, only to come back and find that your towel looks like an ant hill. Even worse is when sand seems to stick everywhere if you're wearing sunscreen. The Sandless Beach Towel revolutionizes a trip to the beach, thanks to its unique layers that separate dust and dirt to one side, while the bottom layer shields more sand from coming through.



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