

The magazine for the European inbound tour industry reaching 8 million escorted visitors into & around Europe

This month we have a closer look at the Swiss Rhine City of Basel, on the door step to neighbouring France and Germany. Visiting to see the now famous Basel Tattoo also gave us the opportunity to explore this cosmopolitan destination with its very 'Riviera' feel. See page 17

The Travel Club - launches in London this month - the brainchild of Tom Nuttley former chairman of Reed Travel Exhibitions. The club for the national and international travel industry offers a new central focus, somewhere that people can meet, socialise and conduct business. See page 2 for details



UK 'challenging period' for inbound travel could be mitigated

UKinbound said that the challenging period for inbound tourism as predicted by VisitBritain could be mitigated if Government were to alleviate the barriers to tourism it has imposed on the industry.

VisitBritain has warned that inbound tourism could continue to decline and that trips to Britain could fall by as much as 5% in 2009. However the Government's own initiatives, such as air passenger duty and high visa costs, deter overseas residents travelling to Britain, damaging the international competitiveness of the UK as a destination, and making it



difficult for the industry to achieve its full potential for export earnings. Air Passenger Duty is set to rise in November, with long haul and business travellers being hit particularly hard; the Visa application process and cost are also a major deterrent for overseas visitors; and with VAT set to rise at midnight on the 31st December, many tourism businesses, such as hotels, bars and restaurants will have to change their prices whilst they are still open.

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Delays in 12-Day Rule for coach operators

Travel trade bodies have expressed concern that the re-introduction of the 12-Day Rule for coach operators has been delayed, and will not come into effect before Easter 2010.

ETOA, the European Travel Agents and Tour Operators Association (ECTAA) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) have issued a joint call for the European institutions to complete the decision-making process. The three leading travel industry organisations insist on an immediate publication of the new rules in the EU Official Journal so that operators, drivers and customers can benefit from the derogation by spring 2010.

The delay seems to have been caused by bureaucratic procedures within the EU linguistic services where the final text is translated



into all the official EU languages. The hold-up in approving the final text is likely to increase the costs for travel businesses that had planned and contracted their services under the assumption that the so-called 12-Day Rule would be in effect by the start of 2010.

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Nip off for a Renoir

One of the art exhibitions of the year opens in September, when 'Renoir in the 20th Century' (23 Sept.09 - 4 Jan. 10) comes to the Grand Palais (www.grandpalais.fr). Paintings, drawings, and sculptures - it features more than 100 of the master's latter works, with a smattering of Picassos and Matisse's, too. It will be a shame to miss it as the exhibition's next stop is Los Angeles. So if you are in Paris and the Grand Palais is not on your group's itinerary you will have to find them an optional extra that does not require an escort - as an art-lover, you've little choice, have you?



The Pan European Advent and Christmas Markets website

Highlights details of 100's of Advent and Christmas markets and Festive events from Aarhus to Zurich and beyond

www.christmas-markets.org

You can also identify many benefits on offer during the festive season to make your itinerary even more appealing

Photo: Christmas Market - Tallinn Town Square by Toomas Volmer

On The Road

in Mid September - Mid October

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Mair Mair

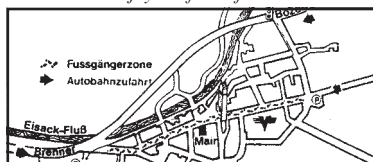
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Travel Club launches

Late September sees the launch of The Travel Club. The new private members only club in London's historic St James Square. It will be 'the place' for travel industry professionals.

A range of facilities is offered in a friendly, like-minded environment, and it will offer business opportunities for the industry under one roof.

Club Facilities

The place to eat

- Fine dining a la carte in the elegant Coffee Room, lighter meals in the informal 'Down & Out' Bar & Brasserie or al fresco in the Courtyard,

The place to meet

- Meeting rooms, functions suites and business lounges

The place to relax

- Private members bar, restaurants, library and private secluded courtyard

The place to unwind

- Swimming pool, billiard room, gym and squash court

The place to stay

- 49 rooms from suites to doubles and singles ranging from £95

There is an annual fee for membership - for those members living or working overseas (outside the British Isles & Eire) £250 per annum. There will also be an initial joining fee for those joining after 25th September.

Tel: 020 7827 5727 Email: info@theclub.travel

Web: www.theclub.travel

Forthcoming events

2009

28/09/2009 CPT Conference, Creiff Hydro Hotel, Perthshire - www.cpt-uk.org

ukinbound

01/10/2009 General Meeting, Wimbledon all England Lawn and Tennis Club London

22/10/2009 Tour Operators Margin Scheme Business Update, Saffery Champness, London

08/12/2009 General Meeting, Wellington Arch, London - www.ukinbound.org

05-09/10/2009 Britain Market Place USA/Canada 2009 New York and Toronto
www.visitbritainmarketplace.com

06-08/10/2009 Tourism Management Institute Annual Conference, Liverpool - www.tmi.org

06/10/2009 Paris Trade Workshop, Covent Garden, London

07-08/10/2009 Coach and Bus Live NEC, Birmingham, UK - www.coachandbuslive.com

16/10/2009 IRU 6th European Bus and Coach Forum, Kortrijk Expo, Belgium - www.iru.org

European Tour Operators Association

05/11/2009 Annual Conference, Tara Hotel, London

06/11/2009 Workshop, New Connaught Rooms, London

07/11/2009 Gala Dinner, The Sheraton Park Lane Hotel, London - www.etoa.org

09-12/11/2009 World Travel Market, Excell, London - www.wtmlondon.com

16-17/11/2009 Buy Tourism Online, Florence, Italy - www.buytourisonline.com

08-10/12/2009 USTOA Conference and Market Place Banff, Canada
www.ustoa.com/conference

2010

International Association of Tour Managers

12-15/02/2010 AGM, Convention, Regional Meetings, Gala Dinner, Marmara Hotel, Istanbul

15-22/11/2010 Tour of Turkey, various locations - www.iatm.co.uk

18-21/02/2010 BIT Milan, Italy - www.bit.fiermilanoexpos.it

23-25/02/2010 CONFEX London - www.international-confex.com

01/03/2010 ETOA Hoteliers European Market Place - www.etoa.org/hem.aspx

02-03/03/2010 Travel Trade Britain - www.traveltradebritain.com

10-12/03/2010 ITB Berlin, Berlin Germany - www.messe-berlin.de

16/03/2010 Britain & Ireland Marketplace London UK - www.bim.travel

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PEOPLE UPDATE.....

AMA Waterways

Ron Santangelo, former North America President for Peter Deilmann Cruises, which is winding down its river cruise operation, has joined AMA Waterways as Vice President of Business Development.

Santangelo has joined former competitor AMA Waterways, a newer entrant into the river cruise market compared to Deilmann, which was founded 26 years ago and was among the pioneers in the market. AMA Waterways entered the market in 2002.

CHI Hotels & Resorts

Geoffrey Breeze joins them in the senior position of Vice President Strategic Marketing and Brand Management. Initially he will concentrate on further developing CHI's strategies across the brands that it operates and will be particularly focused on the further progression of the Corinthia brand and the Wyndham Grand Collection.

Geoffrey's most recent senior marketing positions were with Sabre Travel Networks and Neos Interactive. For fourteen years, Geoffrey was the worldwide Vice President for the Hilton International Company

And....

Corinthia Hotels has announce the appointment of Matthew Dixon as General Manager of the Corinthia Hotel in London, which is scheduled to open late 2010. His track record includes positions with Savoy, Mandarin Oriental and Rocco Forte.



Matthew Dixon

Carlson

Carlson Hotels Worldwide has named Gordon McKinnon as Executive VP and Chief Branding Officer. He joins the US group from The Rezidor Hotel Group where he was Executive VP of brands. Carlson is the main shareholder in Rezidor.

Estonia TB

For the first time the Republic of Estonia will be represented by a UK based Director of Tourism, following the appointment of travel PR and destination specialist Mary Stuart-Miller of The Creative Connection UK Ltd.

The new appointment, which takes effect immediately, encompasses arranging press and travel partner familiarisation trips, promoting the country to tour operators, agents and travel partners, the public and the travel press. Mary Stuart-Miller,

01403 738844, mary@mstuart-miller.co.uk

ABTA

Has made two new senior appointments, Head of Public Affairs and Head of Destination Strategy and Services. These appointments to key positions follow a restructuring which took place earlier this year.

Luke Pollard will take up the role of Head of Public Affairs, strengthening ABTA's increasingly important lobbying activity.

Nikki White joins as Head of Destination Strategy and Services. Nikki has gained an impressive grasp of travel and tourism strategy over her years as Head of Strategy and Development at travel and leisure Marketing experts Fox Kalamaski.

Eurostar

Eurostar, has confirmed its plans for senior management changes that will take place in early 2010 at the same time as the launch of a new, single corporate entity that will replace the current joint venture structure.

Richard Brown, Chief Executive of Eurostar since 2002, will step up to become non-Executive Chairman of Eurostar, replacing Guillaume Pepy who has been non-Executive Chairman of Eurostar since 1998 and who became President Directeur General of SNCF (French Railways) in February 2008.

Nicolas Petrovic, who joined Eurostar in 2003 and is currently Chief Operating Officer, will take over as Chief Executive. The planned changes are expected to coincide with the 'go-live' date for the single Eurostar company at the beginning of next year.

Eurostar's new, single corporate entity, to be known as Eurostar International Limited, is expected to follow the conclusion of discussions between the shareholders in the current joint venture structure. It will continue to market itself and operate under the 'Eurostar' brand.

NBTA

The National Business Travel Association has named Michael McCormick as NBTA Executive Director and COO. McCormick joins NBTA with more than 20 years of travel industry experience, having most recently served as Managing Partner of travel advisory Hudson Crossing.

VB

VisitBritain, has appointed Laurence Bresh as Marketing Director. Laurence has been Regional Director, Europe for the past year at VisitBritain, and prior to that, General Manager England Marketing at VisitBritain, in which he led the 20-strong team responsible for the EnjoyEngland brand, marketing strategy and website.

GNTO

Klaus Lohmann has joined the German National Tourist Office UK & Ireland (GNTO) as the new director.



Klaus Lohmann

Prior to his new position, Klaus was Head of Sales & Tourism at Wolfsburg's "Autostadt". With a background in cruise travel, he has also worked for Peter Deilmann and cruise operator Transocean Tours in sales and for German tour operator Studiosus in product management.

GNTO - London

German National Tourist Board PR Manager in London, Barbara Geier, is leaving at the end of September to go freelance. Barbara's new contact details are: barbara.geier@web.de, phone 07983 24 21.

Until a new appointment is announced the Press Office contact at the GNTO is Christian Kupsch, lon.office1@d-z-t.com

PLACES...

China

From September 15, nine countries are added to the list of China's outbound tourism destinations for group tours. These are Guyana; Ecuador and Dominica; Mali; Cape Verde, and Ghana; Papua New Guinea; Montenegro and the United Arab Emirates.

According to some professionals, due to problems of visa, flights and product knowledge, it will be difficult for travel agencies and operators to organize tour groups for the other eight countries. However, UAE has long been promoting its tourism in China. With direct flights from Beijing to Dubai, UAE will be a valuable market for tour groups.

Northern Germany

The Wadden Sea has now been added to the World Heritage List, becoming Germany's second Natural UNESCO Site. The Wadden Sea comprises the Dutch Wadden Sea Conservation Area and the German Wadden Sea National Parks of Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. It is a large temperate, relatively flat coastal wetland environment consisting of tidal channels, sandy shoals, sea-grass meadows, mussel beds, sandbars, mudflats, salt marshes, estuaries, beaches and dunes. This area is home to numerous plant and animal species and one of the last remaining natural, large-scale, intertidal ecosystems where natural processes continue to function largely undisturbed.

Spain Cabo de Palos

On 11 October Mar Menor Scuba Diving School in Cabo de Palos will attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the largest number of simultaneous dives. Mar Menor aims to smash the current record set this August by a group of 2,562 scuba divers in Indonesia. From 10 - 12 October various events will be held including diving exhibitions, music concerts, children's entertainment and other sport activities. www.enmarmenor.net

Soria Románica

www.soriaromanica.es, a new web-

site reveals Spain's Soria's rich and diverse heritage and Romanesque art that is characteristic of the province. Soria's variety of influences from neighbouring Spanish regions such as Logroño, Madrid and Zaragoza are reflected in the region's architecture, historic paintings, and magnificent porticos.

The website provides visitors with key information and ideas on where to stay, where to dine and where to enjoy the tranquillity of the area. The aim of the project is to preserve the region's heritage and raise awareness of this hidden gem.

Natural Park Delta del Ebro

In Tarragona has won the 2009 EDEN prize (European Destinations of Excellence), for Tourism and Protected Areas. The judging panel chose the Delta for its creation of a tourist destination based on conservation and the use of sustainable, natural resources that respect the natural environment.

Orkney

Archaeologists excavating a farmhouse have found Scotland's earliest human figurine from Historic Scotland's excavation at the Links of Nolthland on the Orkney island of Westray - a find of astonishing rarity and estimated to be 5,000 years old.

Measuring just 3.5cm by 3cm it is the only known Neolithic carving of a human form to have been discovered in Scotland - with only two others in the whole of the British mainland. The carving, just discovered, is flat with a round head on top of a lozenge-shaped body. Careful examination reveals a face with heavy brows, two dots for eyes and an oblong for a nose. Other scratches on top of the skull could be hair.

A pair of circles on the chest are being interpreted as representing breasts, and arms have been etched at either side. A regular pattern of crossed markings on the reverse could suggest the fabric of the woman's clothing. It bears some resemblance to the prehistoric carvings from elsewhere in Europe - often referred to as Venus figurines - which have rounded heads, large breasts and exaggerated hips.

Reykjavik

A new website has been launched showcasing activities in and around Reykjavik which visitors can enjoy for free. Former economist and local Reykjavik resident Inga Jessen created the site after becoming unemployed following Iceland's recent financial crisis when she started to look for free activities that she could participate in to pass her time. www.freecitytravel.com

Budget conscious travellers can now get more value during a visit to Iceland's quirky capital thanks to the new and improved Reykjavik Welcome Card, which now offers free admission seven of Reykjavik's thermal swimming pools and museums including the National Museum, the Reykjavik 871 +/-2 Settlement Exhibition, Culture House, Reykjavik Family park and farm animal zoo, Arbæjarsafn- The Reykjavik City Museum and The Reykjavik Maritime Museum – Víkin.

The Tirol this winter

- A new biathlon centre will open in Seefeld this winter. This exciting winter sport combines cross country skiing and shooting, skiers race with rifles strapped to their backs stopping at a target range every few kilometres ready to shoot their targets.

Containing 10 of the most modern and newest shooting targets, the facility has been built as a training centre for the Youth Olympic team, in preparation of the first Youth Winter Olympic games, which will be held in Innsbruck in 2012. Guests will be able to try biathlon on Fridays, two hour lessons from noon to 2pm www.xc-academy.com

- The Tirol's SkiWelt Wilder Kaiser-Brixental has been awarded the best winter ski resort in the world by 'Ski Resort Service International'. Recognising the continuous improvements and modernisations both to the ski runs and lift infrastructure the SkiWelt came top over 70 resorts in 8 countries above Val Gardena in Italy, Val D'Isere in France and Mammoth in the USA.

They also gained three further award for 'Best Information', 'Best Lift System' and 'Best Parking' www.skiwelt.at.

- In St Anton the new Rendlbahn, will open for December 2009. The key improvement is that the base station has been moved to a new location at the existing bus station close to the Galzigbahn. The new 8-seater gondola, with heated seats, will carry up to 2000 people an hour in only seven and a half minutes, making it over a third faster than the original.. Linking both the Galzigbahn and the Rendlbahn from a central location in the heart of the resort www.stantonamarlberg.com

- For 2009-10 both drag lifts on Rohnspitze in Zöblen have been replaced with a new modern 4-seater chairlift. Meanwhile the ski area at Rifflsee on the Pitztal glacier boasts a new lift system, taking skiers from the valley station up to the top at 2350m in only 4 minutes. From the top skiers can experience a new ski run, which has been specially designed for slalom training for race teams. The run has been graded a red to black but for those less experienced there is also an easier blue to follow. www.pitztaler-gletscher.at

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What's new from Tour Operators?

- Thomson has introduced the new resort of Bergwang, a quiet and traditional village close to the Bavarian border. Great for beginners and intermediates with access to the Zugspitz Arena and Garmisch-Partenkirchen.
- Neilson has introduced the resort of Seefeld, just a short transfer from Innsbruck and great for families and beginners.
- Crystal has introduced the resort of Itter, linked to the huge Ski Welt circuit - Austria's largest, fully integrated, ski area and offers a quieter alternative to Söll.

The Tirol region – www.visittirolo.co.uk



Having fun in the Tirol © copyright 2004 Tirol Werburg

2009's largest ski project

A new 2km long gondola lift, one of the world's largest ski construction projects this year, is underway in Slovakia's largest ski resort of Jasna and is due to open in time for the start of the 2009/10 ski season.

Construction on the new €13 million, eight passenger Grand Brhliska gondola began in May 2009. It will rise from close to the Grand Hotel Jasna, 320 vertical metres from 1100m to 1420m and has a capacity of 2,400 skiers per hour, double that of the older four passenger lift it replaces.

To accommodate the new gondola the access road to the nearby hotels will be diverted under the ski slope through a new tunnel and the lower parts of the ski slopes Biela Pút and Vrbická will link the resorts Biela Pút and Otupné.

There will also be a completely new 700m long ski slope in the Otupné sector, which will be located to the east of the ski run Vrbická. The new run will provide a bypass to a steep part of the Vrbická piste. www.jasna.sk



Jasna GrandJet mix

The card also allows unlimited travel on Reykjavik's buses, free ferry rides to Viðey Island, discounts at selected shops, tour operators and restaurants as well as complimentary internet access in the Visit Reykjavik Tourist Information Centre. www.visitreykjavik.is

Rotterdam

The Tour de France comes to Rotterdam! From the 1st until the 4th of July 2010 Rotterdam will be the hosting city of the Grand Départ of the 97th Tour de France. A large number of events will be organised to mark this historic Tour Start for the Netherlands, for instance the exhibition 'Tour Experience'. From

the 19th of June until the 29th of August 2010 this can be seen in the Kunsthal Rotterdam.

Les Menuires

A new 6-seater easy access chairlift the Sunny Express will replace 4 old lifts situated in the Reberty- Les Bruyeres area There is improvement of the pistes system and creation of a new beginner's area in Les Bruyères. There will be a better artificial snow network with new generation machines.

The resort with the 'Famille Plus' label, the main chairlifts used by children in Les Menuires will be fitted with a guard-rail safety system

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Slovenia – markets winter sports

With its beautiful alpine settings Slovenia is promoting – particularly for novice/first time skiers About 40% of Slovenia is mountainous so skiing is a national sport. The country hosts the men's and women's World Cup slaloms every year (at Kranjska Gora and Maribor-Pohorje respectively) and offers dozens of other ski areas. From the award-winning Krvavec (identified by one UK national newspaper as 'the best ski short break resort in Europe') to the charming little resort of Cerkno,

Slovenia ranks among Europe's most affordable skiing. The World Ski Lift Ticket Price Report (2009) reported that last season, Brits paid an average of £168.98 for a six-day lift pass across all destinations, with prices in Europe reaching an average of €245 in Andorra. By comparison, the price of a six-day pass at Slovenia's top resorts Kranjska Gora and Maribor was €147 (approximately £128)

Also on offer is snowboarding, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, dog sledding, ice-skating and ice-climbing.

The country's compact size (Slovenia is slightly smaller than Wales) means that visitors can be on the top of a mountain within 45 minutes of leaving the airport in Ljubljana. Combine a ski break with a city experience – either by staying in the mountains and heading to the city at the end of the day, or by using Ljubljana as a base for skiing and other outdoor activities.

The ski season in Slovenia begins as early as November and in resorts such as Mount Kanin – the highest in the country – the snow remains well into the spring. <<http://www.slovenia.info/skiing>>

...continued from page 4

to make the use of lifts in the resort even safer. The new system requires no special equipment for children. At the top of the Roc des 3 Marches cable car, visitors can enjoy the new tobogganing slope 4 km long with 22 bends winding their way down a total vertical fall of 450m. This is essentially an after-ski activity. www.lesmenuires.com - Tel. +33 (0)4 79 00 79 79

Paris

It is not quite a return to the days when dolphins and even whales were seen making their way upstream to Paris, but the Seine is welcoming back at least one long-lost visitor - the Atlantic salmon.

A fish that in the Middle Ages abounded in the river is returning in healthy numbers after efforts to clean the polluted waters.

It may be a while, however, before 'le pave de saumon Notre Dame' becomes a local delicacy. Salmon may be allowed to frolic in the Seine but levels of pesticide, lead and bacteria remain too high for people to risk it. Even overheated patrons of Paris Plage, the summer beach on the Right Bank, are warned to stay clear of the waters in which Louis XIV used to take his mistress for moonlight dips. Those who ignore the rules are taken to hospital for checks once the police have hauled them out.

Not so long ago, the Seine was connected to the famed sewers that the writer Victor Hugo called "a world of slime without human form". Efforts have been made in the past 30 years to end the fouling of the Seine with organic pollution and chemical runoff from industry and agriculture. Most species of fish had disappeared from the city's waters by the 1920s.

Today the surface is cleaned regularly and there is a system that pumps oxygen into fish-friendly stretches

when floodwaters run into the river. The gradual return of about 30 species of fish - the Atlantic salmon made a tentative appearance a few years ago - has encouraged an urban angling boom. At weekends the Ile Saint Louis, opposite Notre Dame, and the Left Bank by the Eiffel Tower are thick with anglers casting for bream, carp, pike, perch, catfish and sea trout.

Central Paris hosted the world angling championship in 2001. No salmon were caught and few have since been hooked by the registered 7,000 fishermen in Paris.

The return of the salmon was spectacularly illustrated last October when a 15½lb (7kg) fish was caught in Suresnes, on the western downstream edge of the capital.

From genetic samples and age measurements, the INRA reported that all the Atlantic salmon were found to have swum up, or back up, the Seine via the estuary to the Channel in Le Havre after months or years in the sea. Some were born in French rivers, others farther afield.

Researchers say that the return was significant because the Atlantic salmon were bioindicators - creatures whose choice of habitat indicate a healthy environment.

Bath

To mark the celebration of the first day of this year's Jane Austen festival, hundreds of Jane Austen fans from across the globe headed to Bath to set an official world record for the largest gathering of people dressed in Regency costume.

A total of 409 participants came together in the city for 10 minutes - to set the record that was previously held at Ham.

Men were required to wear knee-high boots, tails or long great coats, tall neckties, floppy shirts and tight breeches to qualify for the event. Strict guidelines stated that women

Turkey

- A team of archaeologists from the University of Toronto has uncovered a store of ancient cuneiform tablets dating to the Iron Age period between 1200 and 600 BC whilst working at the 2,700-year-old remains of an ancient Turkish temple that began as a holy Neo-Hittite site, named Tell Ta'yinat. The Tell Ta'yinat site is located in the Hatay province of south-eastern Turkey not far from the City of Antakya. The area has long served as an archaeological hotspot of ancient history since the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute discovered an ancient temple that mirrored the descriptions of King Solomon's Temple in the Old Testament. Several palaces designed in the Bit-hilani style were also uncovered. Numerous artefacts were found inscribed with the ancient languages of Luwian/Neo Hittite, Neo-Assyrian and Aramaic, which identifies the site as ancient Kunulua, the capital of the Neo-Hittite/Aramean kingdoms of Unqi and Patina.
- The newly opened Dekamer Centre's in Delaman's mission is to protect and nurse endangered turtles back into their natural habitat on Iztuzu Beach. The centre has released the first female patient back onto the beach. The centre is also planning to receive its first green turtle which it hopes to eventually release back into the wild.
- 'Land of the Lakes', The dramatic story of the taming of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Eastern Turkey, "Land of the Lakes", is out now, written by David Barchard, this book highlights the dazzling cultural legacy of south-eastern Turkey, sometime home of Hittites, Assyrians, Parthians, Sassanids, Byzantines, Syriacs, Caliphates, Armenians, Kurds, Seljuqs and Ottomans. Land of the Lakes shows the region's regeneration and its aspirations as an exciting new tourist region.

had to wear full-length dresses with a high waistline, low cut neckline and a bonnet.



Austen look-alike

is in crisis for a second year with 90% of baby and juvenile oysters succumbing to a mysterious disease in some waters.

Scientists suspect that a combination of a virus, called Ostreid herpesvirus 1, and various kinds of bacteria may be to blame, but other causes, including rising sea temperatures driven by climate change, have not been ruled out. The industry suffered a similar disaster last year, when oyster beds suffered between 40% and 100% mortality rates, and had to be bailed out with €32m in public money, but this year could be even worse. "This year is different, as it has come in two waves," according to Sebastian Chantereau of the national shellfish producers' body. "If we have one more wave between now and September, it will be a total catastrophe." The first oyster deaths were reported in the Mediterranean, but they have now spread as far as Normandy.

Portugal

Azores campaign

The Portuguese National Tourist Office is launching a new campaign in cooperation with the Azores Regional Tourist Office and UK tour operators to promote the Azores islands to British tourists. With SATA International now flying to the archipelago on a weekly basis from both London and Manchester.

Miguel Perestrello, Portuguese Director for Tourism in the UK, said: "The Azores archipelago is a unique destination which, until now, has been almost untouched by British tourism. Our aim is to raise awareness and open up this beautiful group of islands to British tourists."

The Azores are a picturesque archipelago of nine emerald green islands located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Discovered by Portuguese navigators in the 15th century and once thought to be the remains of the legendary lost continent of Atlantis, the islands combine beautiful natural landscapes and a rich cultural heritage.

Wellington's find

Archeologists have found the headquarters of Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington in the early 19th century at the Alqueidao Forte between Mafra and Torres Vedras. The fort housed General Wellington's Luso-British troops defending the Torres Vedras line during the Napoleonic Wars between 1807 and 1814. Wellington's private quarters, a store room, a warehouse and a weapons locker were unearthed during excavations. The Torres Vedras Line was made up of 152 forts built between Torres Vedras and Vila Franca de Xira, between 1809 and 1812 to protect Lisbon from invading French troops.

Lowest inflation

So far this year Portugal has registered the lowest inflation rates in Europe, at 0.5%, 2% points below the European average of 0.7. The 27 EU nations average annual inflation stood at 0.2% in July this year, with prices falling significantly compared to the 0.6% inflation registered in the previous month of June.

London

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has announced that the capital is to get its own version of Paris's hugely successful bike-hire scheme next summer. The scheme, to run under a six-year, £140m contract with the Docklands Light Railway operator, Serco, will make 6,000 bikes available from 400 docking stations in central London. They will be released by swiping a prepaid smart card - but not, Serco says, the Oyster card.

Brittany

French authorities have admitted that the toxic carpet of green algae covering the beaches of northern Brittany is getting worse, and that they don't have the resources to remove it. Scientists say the disaster has been caused by nitrates used in livestock farming being washed into the sea, and warn holidaymakers to avoid affected areas, which are mostly on the Cotes d'Armor.

France

It would seem that humans are not the only species under threat from a virus. France's shellfish industry

Stratford-upon-Avon

The beam that supports the roof over the grave of William Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon is rotten, and the church where he lies is seeking £50,000 for repairs.

The Rev. Martin Gorick, vicar of Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon, said that the problem was discovered three weeks ago by workmen on the roof of the church, who were alarmed to find bits of the beam falling off. The beam supports the roof of the chancel, the part of the church where the altar stands and where Shakespeare is buried.

The church has raised nearly £1 million (\$1.6 million), in the past seven years for restoration work on the building, which is about 800 years old.

Munich

An Australian tourist died after being hit by a train as he headed back to his campsite from the Oktoberfest, the police in Munich said.

The police said the accident hap-

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pened as the inebriated Australian and a fellow tourist from New Zealand walked along commuter train tracks in the early hours of the

morning.

A police statement said the two apparently failed to notice an approaching train, which hit the Australian. His companion was not injured.

Venice

Renato Brunetta, Italy's civil service minister has accused the mayor of Venice, Massimo, Cacciari, of selling out the city by allowing 'vulgar' advertisements to be hung over many of its famous buildings.

"We need to make Venice not a Disneyland, but a centre of culture and technology," said Brunetta.

The adverts include one for the fashion chain Sisley on the Doge's Palace and a watch commercial portraying Richard Kiel (Jaws in the James Bond films), at the Correr Museum in St Mark's Square.

The minister also accused Cacciari of "selling the family jewels", including Palazzo Grassi, on the Grand Canal, which has been turned into an exhibition space, and the Punta della Dogana custom house. He compared the mayor to the Venetian nobles who surrendered their city to Napoleon without firing a shot.

The mayor defended the advertising hoardings, saying he had little choice. "They're the result of turning to private sponsors to pay for restoration," he said. The buildings are covered to protect the public during the restoration work.



The changing face of Venice

EUROPEAN ECCENTRICS

Wrong instructions

Terrified French passengers on an Aer Lingus flight from London to Paris prepared for the worst after cabin crew accidentally played a pre-recorded message warning that the plane was about to ditch. While English-speaking passengers were advised to return to their seats and fasten their safety belts due to mild turbulence, French passengers were told to prepare for an emergency landing, note where the emergency exits were and await instructions from the captain. "The French freaked out," said an Irish passenger. "It was some minutes before bemused cabin crew realised the error and played the correct message."

Cell questionnaire

Suspects held in cells by Devon and Cornwall Constabulary are being handed a questionnaire on aspects of their stay such as food, ventilation and cleanliness, and whether their rights were made clear. Chief Inspector Ivan Trethewey said: "The results will be analysed to see whether there are areas of our service that we can improve. It does not mean we will be providing steak dinners."

High wire priest

According to The Brighton Argus, a priest has walked across a high wire

80ft up. Father Jerome Lloyd should have been carried on the back of a circus performer, to re-enact a stunt by Charles Blondin, who walked along a tightrope across Niagara Falls with his manager on his back. The trick had to be adapted after the tightrope walker, Chico Marinhos, was unable to lift Father Lloyd.

RESPECT!

The Jewish Chronicle reports that Radlett synagogue leaders are clamping down on the use of electronic devices during services "to bring some respect back". Members and guests have been using mobile phones, BlackBerry devices and even laptops in synagogue. At a recent morning service, one visitor was seen trying to order a takeaway.

Singing Pope

Geffen Records has a new star signing - Pope Benedict XVI - who is recording a CD, featuring sung prayers and spoken litanies, which will be released in time for Christmas.

"Baaa - Pass the salt"

The Westmorland Gazette writes that British Farmers have criticised the trial use of a gritting salt on road surfaces because it is addictive to sheep. Cumbria County Council

hopes that molasses will prevent salt stocks depleting during winter weather, but farmer Elfed Evans said: "As soon as the gritter truck had gone past sheep would flock down from the hills to the road and start licking. It was delicious to them."

In your shoes

Three British, female officers from the South Yorkshire Police were ordered to wear burqas for a day, as part of an 'In Your Shoes Day', designed to improve relations between police and the local Muslim community. A spokesman described the exercise as "just one of many" the force had planned, "to celebrate diversity and encourage integration".

Hitching a ride

The British Border Agency had a red face after an illegal migrant hitched a ride from Calais to Folkestone via the Channel Tunnel by hiding underneath one of its coaches. The coach was full of immigration officers at the time.

The worst place to live in Britain

A complaint has been brought against the Channel 4 TV programme 'Location, Location,' for branding Middlesbrough - 'the worst place to live in Britain'. But Ofcom, the government body responsible for policing British television, found that the description, based on figures for crime, ill health and drug abuse, was "not all unfair".

It's the playing - not the winning that counts

Britain's worst football team has finally ended its losing streak. Harraby Athletics under-14 squad has come bottom of the Longhorn Youth Football League table ever since the team was formed in 2006. The team lost its first match 19-0, and has since been trounced in a further 89 games. The sole time it picked up a point was when the opposing team failed to turn up.

But in early September Harraby triumphed 3-2 over Edenvale Hawks. "Pure determination has got us there," said Coach Brett Preston. "All week I've had other managers phoning to congratulate us."

No to BO

The British theme park attraction in Thorpe Park in Surrey has placed signs imploring visitors to keep their arms down while on rides, having received complaints about body odour. The new rule will apply whenever the temperature exceeds 25C as a director at the park notes that above this temperature "the level of unpleasant smells can become unacceptable". Anyone caught waving due to an excess of adrenaline could be escorted off the premises.

The unlucky Samaritan

A friendly favour turned sour when a kind German man was landed with a £6,500 bill for the treatment of a woman he drove to casualty. Resul Mor, 39, was driving home from work when a man who asked

him to take his desperately ill wife to hospital in Hamburg flagged him down.

On arrival, casualty staff asked Mor to sign a registration form. Unknown to him, this signature committed him to paying any outstanding fees. Judges ruled that despite not knowing the woman, Mor was legally liable and therefore must pay the bill.

Rich pickings

A group of 20 former pickpockets have turned over a new leaf. Targeting the busy areas of Covent Garden and Trafalgar Square the group of "put pocketers" plan to sneak £5, £10 and £20 notes into the un-guarded handbags and open pockets of unsuspecting "victims". The initiative, funded by a broadband provider, will give away £100,000 in an attempt to cheer people up during the recession.

Prago! Prago!

Three speeding nuns were pulled over on a dual carriageway near Turin after they were caught travelling at more than 180kmph (110mph) in a maroon Ford Fiesta. The driver, 56-year-old Sister Tavoletta, explained that they were hurrying to see Pope Benedict XVI after hearing that he had fractured his wrist in a fall. "We were on our way to make sure he was OK," she said.

"Hopefully Sister Tavoletta will confess to her bad driving the next time she goes to confession," commented a police spokesman. "But in the meantime she will have to pay the €375 fine."

What a way to go!

A sea lion has died of a heart attack after a marathon mating session at his zoo in Nuremberg. Mike, a 19-year-old, 45-stone father of 12, collapsed in his private pool after a long morning romp with females Farah, Tiffy and Soda. The zoo said that the "good natured" beast had lived a long life and that deaths were common during the mating season: "For sea lion bulls with a harem this is the most exhausting time."

Snuffed out by a python

A cat called Wilbur met a terrible fate when he strayed into the garden next door to his Bristol home - and came across a hungry 13ft python. Wilbur's owners, the Wadeys, said that they heard a "terrified scream then all was silent". His remains were identified when the RSPCA scanned the snake and found his micro-chip inside. The Wadeys have launched a 'Justice for Wilbur' campaign to prevent snake owners from allowing their pets to roam freely. "Wilbur's little life was brutally snuffed out," they said. "We don't want it to have been in vain."

What's in a name?

Tourists posing in front of their road signs, and even stealing them have driven the residents of the Austrian village of Fucking to distraction. "We just want to be left alone," said former mayor Siegfried Hauppl.

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"There is nothing funny in the name to us. After all, Fucking has existed for 800 years, probably when a Mr Fuck moved into the area." However, residents of the German town of Wank have advised them to relax and cash in. The Wank guest house does a roaring trade, said an official, and there are Wank postcards on sale, though many people prefer to take their own Wank holiday snaps standing beside 'Welcome to Wank' signs.

Marcus gets the chop

A UK school project designed to teach children about the food chain has run into controversy. Pupils at Lydd primary school in Romney Marsh, Kent, reared Marcus the sheep for meat. But when the time came for him to be slaughtered, animal lovers condemned the scheme as "heartless" - hundreds signed a Facebook petition to save Marcus, and the Liverpoolian comedian Paul O'Grady offered to give Marcus a home. But the school children voted in favour of turning Marcus into lamb chops and raffling the meat at the school fair, to raise money to buy more animals.

British wartime heroine will not get a penny

Dame Vera Lynn, who at 92 became the oldest recording artist ever to top the album charts. We'll Meet Again, a compilation of her wartime hits, beat off competition from The Beatles and Jamie T.

Unfortunately performers' rights to royalties expire after 50 years, so she is not entitled to any of the profits from the album.

Swine of a deal!

A man telephoned an undisclosed West Country guesthouse. "I'm dreadfully sorry, but I'm cancelling my reservation," he told the lady proprietor. "I've contracted swine flu, you see." "How awful," she replied. "Poor you." The man thanked her for her sympathy and asked for a refund. "I'm sorry," the landlady said, "but you need to cancel at least seven days in advance to get your money back." The caller pondered this for a moment. "In that case," he said, "I'll take the room." - He got his money back!

Unusual Suspect

The Spanish Supreme Court acquitted Henry Osagiede, a Nigerian facing ten years in jail after being found guilty of physical and sexual assault, after it was found that he had been the only black man in an identity parade.

Fact of life: Hotel style

"Mummy, how did I get here?" "Well, mummy and daddy went for a romantic break at the Westin resort on Aruba, in the West Indies. And the hotel had just put on a special offer - \$300 off your next stay if you conceived a child while you were there. They called it the 'Conception Credit. And we thought, yes, it's incredibly tacky, and yes, you have to have a certificate from your doctor to claim it, but ... well, \$300 is \$300. So we had a grown-up cuddle. And that's how we made you." "Thanks mum. I feel so special now."

(With acknowledgement to the Sunday Times)

Space - the final frontier

A group of cheese makers in the West Country of England claim to have sent the first piece of cheddar into outer space.

Their idea was that a slice of Somerset cheddar tied to a weather balloon and launched in Wiltshire, would soar 19 miles above the Earth, then float down on a parachute when the balloon burst. In the event, they lost track of the balloon after their GPS systems failed, but the cheese was later found near High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire and taken to a police station.

"We wanted to take a photo of a piece of cheddar floating majestically in the firmament with the curve of the Earth below it," said a spokesman for the cheese makers, "but sadly the camera also failed."

An ill wind

A 20 year old man has been fined Euro 50 (£44) for breaking wind while being questioned by police. The officers in Graz said they felt humiliated by the laughter of passers by. "This was no accident" said a police spokesman. "He clearly wanted to make a laughing stock out of the officers and deserves what he got"

MICE NEWS....

Corporate events with NTS

The National Trust of Scotland offers a host of venues steeped in history, myth and legend. Their castles and stately homes are set in stunning countryside and city locations, surrounded by enchanting gardens and rolling estates, from Pollok House hidden away in a 450-hectare country estate only a few miles from Glasgow city centre, to Culzean Castle perched on its cliff-top location overlooking the Isle of Arran, from Hill of Tarvit near St. Andrews to Haddo House and Crathes Castle in Aberdeenshire. For more information email - traveltrade@nts.org.uk

GCB launches CO2 calculator

The German Convention Bureau (GCB) has launched a calculator to measure the carbon footprint of events and conferences. Working with Co2OL, a company involved in gauging CO2 emissions in the MICE industry, the GCB said the new tool could be used by any meeting planners or evaluators. The new software will also offer advice on how to cut CO2 emissions and how to offset those used. www.germany-meetings.com

New MICE Bureau

To help boost this growing sector the Moroccan Convention Bureau has just been created to help strengthen and raise awareness of Morocco's MICE offering.

The new Bureau also aims to cen-

tralise Morocco's MICE competencies and provide structure for the sector. It will also be able to offer impartial assistance and advice to event organisers and professional associations and help them choose the ideal Moroccan city to hold their event based on their needs and objectives.

The founding members of the Moroccan Convention Bureau are the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts, the Moroccan National Tourist Office, La Société Marocaine d'Ingénierie Touristique, the National Office of Airports, the National Federation of Tourism and the Regional Tourism Councils of Marrakech, Casablanca, Rabat and Agadir.

UK - 'cohesive voice'

More trade and professional event associations are joining the Business Visits & Events Partnership. These include the Event Industry Forum, Site Global and the International Special Events Society.

They are recognising the importance of presenting a cohesive voice on key industry issues, according to the partnership.

Chairman Michael Hirst said: "At a time when all sectors of the visitor economy need to work more closely together to optimise strategies and policies that will improve business prospects, it is gratifying that so many event industry representative bodies are recognising the need for collective action in order to create a more effective voice to government."

FAITH BASED TOURISM

WRTA - headline speaker

One of North America's top authorities on faith-based marketing and word-of-mouth marketing will address the travel industry, for the first time ever, at the World Religious Travel Expo 2009. The World Religious Travel Association (WRTA) just named Greg Stielstra, the Marketing Director behind The Purpose Driven Life, one of the fastest-selling books in American history and a faith-based marketing guru, as the headline speaker at this autumn's event. Stielstra is also best known as the author of Faith-based Marketing: The Guide to Reaching 140 Million Christian Customers and PyroMarketing: The Four Step Strategy to Ignite Customer Evangelists and Keep Them For Life www.WRTAreligioustravel.com

New Vatican web site

The Vatican's revamped website about Catholic pilgrimages is up and running. www.orpnet.org <http://www.orpnet.org> shows

trips offered by the Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi (ORP) agency, and there is a section in which pilgrims talk about their experiences. (Italian only)

Portugal's 4 New Heritage tours

Portugal has four new world heritage itineraries for visitors: - 'Templar's Treasures,' 'Paths of Faith', 'The 4 Elements' and 'The Path of the Graal,' all feature monuments listed as World Heritage by UNESCO. These include the Monastery of Alcobaca, Battle Abbey at Batalha and the Templar's 12th century Convento de Cristo in Tomar. The project are an initiative of Turismo de Portugal. The powerful and wealthy Knights Templar, a Medieval order featured in Dan Brown's novel, The Da Vinci Code, were disbanded by Pope Clement V in 1307. King D. Dinis of Portugal petitioned the Pope to found a new order of religious knights, the Order of Christ. The Pope agreed. Dinis quietly spread the word that Templars were welcome, and restored their castles.



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CRUISE NEWS

New cruises option

German specialist tour operator, Dertour has launched a new 'Sea & Music' cruise of the Baltic Sea for 2010 featuring the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

The cruise will take place between the 7th and 17th of July 2010 and its itinerary includes Kiel, Tallinn, St Petersburg, Helsinki, Stockholm, and Kaliningrad. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra's conductors will be Valery Gergiev and Christian Thielemann, and will feature soloist performances by pianist Rudolf Buchbinder and soprano Ildiko Raimondi.

Highlights will include three concerts – one in St Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre; the second in Helsinki's Finlandia Hall and the final one in Kaliningrad, which was the birthplace of the German composer and conductor, Otto Nicolai, who founded the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Classical music's rising star, Christian Thielemann will be conducting works by Nicolai and Beethoven to mark this occasion. www.dertour.co.uk

Pets on board

Following a 13% year-on-year increase in transportation of pets on its North Sea route, ferry operator Stena Line is looking to woo further pet owners with a brand-new step-by-step video guide to taking pets on holiday by ferry.

The short guide, which appears on Stena Line's website at www.stenaline.co.uk/pet-travel, explains the legal and practical requirements of taking pets to Holland and back into the UK.

New 2010 cruises for groups

Group Travel Wholesaler ICT in conjunction with their sister company South Quay Cruises, have announced the launch of a new two ship ex-UK cruise operation for 2010 from the new Cruise & Maritime Voyages brand.

In addition to the Marco Polo, (popular with Coach Operators), they are also including a new cruise vessel, the Ocean Countess, which is due to undergo a £3m refurbishment this winter, offering even more itineraries and sailing from ports around the UK, which will be a bonus for operators looking for a shorter transfer time to and from the cruise departure point.

Advantages when booking with ICT / South Quay Cruises include guaranteed net fares, a simple booking

process, flexible cabin allocations, deposits paid only when a booking is confirmed and there are currently no fuel or currency supplements.

These cruises are, as always, excellent value for money, offering full board with British and international cuisine, onboard entertainment, a wide range of leisure facilities, first-rate service from an attentive crew, plus exciting cruise itineraries and interesting ports of call. T0845 375 2318

Record for Lisbon

Last year Lisbon harbour recorded its greatest number of cruise liner stopovers in its history, with a total of 310. The previous records had been 274 in 2006. Stopovers in 2008 were up 18.3% from 2007. In 2008, those stopovers included a total of 395,000 passengers, which was 90,000 more passengers than seen in 2007.

Grand Prix cruise 2010

For the first time, the 170 passenger 'Star Flyer', (www.starclippers.co.uk) one of the world's largest and most luxurious tall ships, will be anchored in the bay of Monaco on the day of the 2010 Monaco Grand Prix. The ship will anchor outside the harbour at Monte Carlo within easy reach by tender of all the action.

Star Flyer is scheduled to depart from Cannes on 22nd May 2010 for the glamorous four night jet-set itinerary, sailing along the Cote d'Azur to Monte Carlo for the day of the race, after which she sets sail for Calvi, Corsica, an historic port surrounded by craggy, pine-clad mountains, before continuing her Mediterranean voyage to Portofino, with some fine lunch spots and designer shopping. The jet-set break ends in Cannes on May 26.

www.starclippers.co.uk

Uniworld offer bonus commissions

In conjunction with the launch of the 2010 Europe brochure, Uniworld is offering travel partners a \$50-per-cabin bonus commission for booking 2010 Europe River Cruises made from August 1 through September 30, 2010. Additionally Uniworld Boutique River Cruises is launching a travel industry electronic communication program, ePartners, to help agents who actively sell its products.: www.uniworld.com.

New cruise line

The founder of Orient Lines and

Ports News - Turkey

Cruise passenger numbers swell with ports investing to increase capacity. Izmir, Kusadasi and Bodrum ports are increasing capacity this year. Visitor numbers to Izmir port are up from 3,000 in 2003 to 321,000 last year and are expected to receive 400,000 this year and plans are afoot to build a new port in Uckuyular with 12,000 sq terminal with shopping, catering, hotel and exhibition area.

Kusadasi also has a new cruise terminal and visitor numbers are expected to reach 644,000 this year compared with 562,000 last year. Bodrum has also seen passenger numbers to its port rise from 12,550 in 2007 to 93,680 in 2008 and has a new 240m long pier with further plans for expansion with catering and shopping facilities.

Istanbul is also planning to build new port facilities for cruise ships, hoping to double capacity for cruise passengers.

The long-awaited D-Marin Yacht Marina in Altinkum-Didim, is due to open this month. The 70,000m² marina will be the second largest in Europe, with a capacity to hold over 600 yachts, both large and small, plus its own pier and facilities. A shopping mall, a yacht club and all the practical amenities such as shopping centres, cafes, bars and restaurants will also be opened in and around the marina.

Discovery World Cruises will launch a new cruise line centred around Mediterranean history and culture, called Voyages to Antiquity. Plans are to launch the new operation in May 2010

The 11,563-ton vessel was built in 1973 and has been sailing for Golden Sun Cruises. It previously was operated by Renaissance Cruises. After an extensive refurbishment, the ship's capacity will drop from 560 passengers to 380.

Voyages to Antiquity has planned 16, two-week itineraries, with port calls and shore excursions based on the history of those civilizations. The cruise experience will be focused on enrichment and will feature guests lecturers. Details of those cruises would be released in the next few weeks, along with a website.

Astoria to go

SAGA is to replace Saga Rose with the former 446-passenger Astoria for the summer season 2010 and rename it Saga Pearl II. During the winter the ship will undergo a £14m refit in Europe. The extensive refurbishment is expected to include the addition of new balcony cabins; upgrades to the show lounge, spa and two swimming pools; and the creation of a library and a new Veranda Restaurant. www.saga.co.uk

Crystal makeover

CRYSTAL SYMPHONY is to undertake a major makeover much in line with the successful refreshment of its slightly larger sister ship Crystal Serenity last year. In order to fit into

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the ship's programme the work this time will be carried out in Boston towards the end of September. Costing upwards of \$25m work on the 922-guest, 50,000-ton ultra-luxury ship will include redesigned penthouses suites, pool areas, Prego Italian restaurant, Lido Cafe as well as new guest elevators and numerous behind-the-scenes upgrades. www.crystalcruises.com

MSC certification

MSC Fantasia has received certification from the Associazione Italiana

Celiachia (AIC) to serve gluten-free products. On board the ship all coeliac passengers can follow a proper diet in all the ship's restaurants: 17 special menus are available, from breakfast through lunch to dinner. The Bar Fantasia also has a special 'gluten free' list. The same Memorandum of Understanding signed by MSC Fantasia is already valid for three other of the company's ships: MSC Orchestra, MSC Poesia and MSC Musica. Training courses on celiac disorders will be launched on board the new flagship MSC Splendida. www.msccruises.co.uk

News from the Danube

Golf exclusive

In 2010 the Premicon Queen, the grand hotel of Europe's river cruise ships, combines a great cruise experience and the lure of the greens. Two of the most exclusive golf clubs on the Danube are highlights of special theme cruises to be offered for the first time next year. Between October 14 and 19 Premicon Queen passengers can visit the Colony Club Gutenhof in Himberg and St. Pölten Golf Club in Neidling during the cruise from Regensburg to Vienna and back. Aboard ship, golf concierge Arno Ahrens, and seasoned golf pro Jim Graham, stand ready to help guests with golfing tips and advice. Tel. +49/221/2088560, www.premicon-line.com.

Advent season with Viking

Tour Operators and Travel Agencies and can now take advantage of especially attractive group rates for pre-Christmas cruises, including on the Nuremberg-Passau route. For groups of 15 or more, discounts of up to 30% are available, of which up to 20% can be passed on to the customer. Group Travel Department, gruppen@vikingflussskreuzfahrten.de, Tel. +49/221/2586-294

A-Rosa award

A study just published by the German Institute for Service Quality in Hamburg ranks A-Rosa Flussschiff GmbH as 'best river cruise company of 2009'. In a comprehensive survey conducted by internet, twenty-five cruise ship companies were analysed and their products compared in terms of ship infrastructure, cruise offers, and price models. Second and third places were taken by Peter Deilmann Reederei and Premicon Line respectively. service@a-rosa.de, www.a-rosa.de

TRANSPORT

Flying fags

Ryanair has launched a new range of Smokeless Cigarettes to ensure passengers get their required nicotine

"hit" without breaking the law by "lighting up" onboard their aircraft. Ryanair's Smokeless Cigarettes deliver a similar level of nicotine to traditional cigarettes and are available

Greyhound for the UK

Familiar on the US roads, but actually owned by the British bus company FirstGroup, Greyhound is now on the roads of the UK. The 95-year-old iconic American brand was launched mid September at Victoria Coach Station initially serving Portsmouth and Southampton. Tickets cost as little as £1, with the average journey around £7. It plans to roll out more routes next year. The hourly bus services takes just under two hours non-stop to both cities (journey times will be up to 40% shorter than rival coach operations on the two routes) Also on offer free Wi-Fi, power sockets for each passenger, air conditioning, complimentary newspapers and leather seats. Each bus is named after women from popular American songs including Peggy Sue, Billy Jean and Barbara Ann.



Its first week was a little embarrassing for the company with a system failure en route – unfortunately BBC Radio 4 where on board doing an interview with passengers and driver about the new service. Everyone was offered taxi's to London and will receive some form of compensation for the inconvenience. www.greyhounduk.com

Flight plan

AEGEAN will move its two daily non-stop flights from Athens to Heathrow from Stansted on October 25th

Air Europa is reintroducing three weekly flights, from London to Salvador de Bahia via Madrid on 3 November 2009. The airline is also launching a weekly transatlantic flight between Tenerife North and Miami, securing its position as the only carrier to offer a non-stop service to the US from either of Tenerife's airports.

American Airlines is adding a new non-stop daily summer seasonal service between Manchester and New York (JFK), scheduled to begin operation on May 16th until September 30, 2010.

BMI, now owned by Lufthansa, is to withdraw its Heathrow to Palma (Majorca) flights on 3 November and the parallel service to Venice on 15 November.

bmibaby is to expand its operation at the East Midlands Airport: Alghero, Barcelona, Bastia, Cork, Dubrovnik, Malta, Newquay and Venice. The carrier, part of the bmi group, also said it planned to increase frequency on several routes, including Prague, Geneva, Malaga, Faro and Alicante. www.bmibaby.com

Delta is to drop its daily Manchester to Gran Canaria, May 2010 – 30 October 2010. And new routes for Lanzarote and Tenerife from East Midlands Airport. www.jet2.com

Jet2.com has a new route from Manchester to Gran Canaria, May 2010 – 30 October 2010. And new routes for Lanzarote and Tenerife from East Midlands Airport. www.jet2.com

Jetstar will launch its first services into mainland China from December this year. Four weekly services between Singapore and Haikou, the capital of Hainan Province, will begin on December 16.

Eastern Airways UK regional airline is to launch two new direct services to Bergen from Aberdeen and Newcastle on 5 October 2009

Easyjet adds three new Spanish destinations this November - Fuerteventura and Madrid from Liverpool; Fuerteventura and Madrid from Stansted and Lanzarote from Liverpool.

Icelandair has re-launches its service from Glasgow with two flights per week to/from Iceland. On 25 September, flights will increase to four flights per week, will operate as a 'triangle route' Reykjavik (KEF) – Manchester (MAN) – Glasgow (GLA) – Reykjavik (KEF).

LUFTHANSA is boosting its services to Africa and increasing the number of flights it operates to Nigeria from ten to 14 per week from 25 October 2009, with these four additional flights, passengers will be able to fly daily from Frankfurt to the Nigerian capital Abuja. www.lufthansa.com

Monarch has added new flights to Fuerteventura and Gran Canaria for summer 2010 Two flights a week will operate from Manchester to Fuerteventura plus weekly services from Birmingham, Gatwick and Luton. Gran Canaria will be served by two new flights a week from Birmingham and Manchester and a weekly connection from Gatwick. www.flights.monarch.co.uk

Oman Air will start a four times a week service from Muscat, to Frankfurt this month. Then three times a week service to Munich and a four times a week service to Paris, both due to start in October. The airline is also launching new services from Muscat to the Maldives and Sri Lanka. www.oman-air.com

Ryanair will open 39 new routes to the Canary Islands from October 2009. This will comprise of 16 new routes to Gran Canaria, 15 to Lanzarote and eight new flights to Tenerife. Expansion is due to 'zero' tourist taxes in Spain and the 100% discount on airport charges this winter.

From March 2010 Leeds Bradford is named as its tenth UK base. It will launch 14 new routes. They are: Carcassonne, Faro, Ibiza, Knock, Krakow, Limoges, Malaga, Malta, Montpellier, Murcia, Nantes, Palma, Pisa and Venice Treviso.

Bristol International Airport will also gain additional flights to Malaga, Arrecife, Las Palmas and Tenerife South. Starting in October. www.ryanair.com

SkyEurope goes bust

At the beginning of September, the Slovakian based low cost carrier, SkyEurope, a low-cost carrier based in Slovakia, suspended operations. The airline operated short-haul routes from bases in Slovakia, Czech Republic and Austria.

The carrier advised customers who purchased flights with a credit card to seek a refund from the card issuer. SkyEurope said customers who purchased tickets by other means probably wouldn't get a refund.

SkyEurope launched in 2002 and at the time of its demise flew 13 Boeing 737s and served 38 destinations in Europe.

in packs of ten for £6.

As these cigarettes are smokeless they cause no discomfort to other passengers and can ensure a more enjoyable and stress free flight for all passengers, as non-smokers will no longer have to cope with moody smokers in need of nicotine.

Free bus

Guests of Aquaworld and Hotel Ramada Resort Budapest can use a bus service free of charge leaving from Heroes' Square throughout the year

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...continued from page 9

between 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. The free bus service leaves Heroes' Square in front of Múcsarnok (Art Hall) and returns from Aquaworld arriving back to Heroes' Square. You can de-board in front of Szépművészeti Múzeum (the Museum of Fine Arts). www.aqua-world.hu

Swiss award

Zurich Airport has another prestigious award: 8.6 million air travellers participating in surveys to determine the winners of the World Airport Awards named it the Best Airport in Europe and fourth-best worldwide after Seoul-Incheon, Hong Kong and Singapore. The Skytrax surveys gather input from travellers from almost 100 countries on their experiences at 190 airports around the world.

Barcelona T1

Barcelona Airport has opened its 5.8 million-square-foot Terminal T1, expected to serve 100,000 passengers a day. Services at the \$1.7 billion facility include a spa, fitness centre, hair salon and four VIP lounges as well as 51 shops and 30 bars and restaurants.

Business travellers will have access to a 28,000-square-foot business centre, and there is WiFi connectivity throughout the terminal.

NSHispeed

From mid September there is a faster way to travel between Amsterdam, Schiphol and Rotterdam through the Highspeedline (HSL). With a maximum speed of 160 km an hour, the train takes 26 minutes between

Rotterdam and Amsterdam Schiphol. Almost twice as fast as before. www.nshispeed.nl/en

Helsinki-Vantaa goes live

The first phase of a new €150 million terminal has opened at Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. The terminal serves long haul flights and those bound for other destinations outside the Schengen area.

The airport said new service areas would make passenger connection times shorter. Phase two opens this month with more shops and a restaurant added to the new building. The final stage, to be completed in December, will see the opening of the Via Lounge and spa. www.helsinki-vantaa.fi

Bendy buses going

London will see the demise of its much criticised 'bendy buses' over the next two years as they are progressively withdrawn from the route network. As predicted they proved to be impractical bearing in mind the narrowness of many major thoroughfares in the capital. Transport for London (TfL) claims passengers will now see more buses with a more frequent timetable. www.tfl.gov.uk

AF backs off

Air France KLM has withdrawn its interest in purchasing Czech Airlines (CSA) from the Czech Ministry of Finance noting that current economic environment has significantly impacted upon the airline business. However AF says it wishes to further strengthen the existing partnership between the two groups and to

continue to explore with CSA any new areas of cooperation. Unimex and Travel Service, a consortium of Czech companies, remains in the tender, but the lack of a competing bid will affect the price. In April a bid from a Russian consortium including Aeroflot was turned down. Passenger numbers have fallen by around 10% so far this year and first quarter losses widened to US\$51m from US\$44m the year before. www.csa.cz

BA cuts more costs

British Airways has scrapped free meals after 10am on flights under two-and-a-half hours, in a bid to save £22 million per year. The move, which applies to economy passengers departing the UK, sees the carrier replacing a sandwich with bags of nuts or similar snacks. They will continue to offer all passengers a free breakfast before 10am, as well complimentary drinks throughout the day. Passengers on flights of more than two-and-a-half hours will still receive a meal service.

And...

British Airways may begin tourist flights from London City Airport next year to exploit the longer range of a new fleet of regional aircraft and increase volumes in the quietest months for business travel.

Destinations served using five E-190 jets on order from Embraer could include Majorca and Ibiza, British Airways have said.

The carrier's CityFlyer unit would operate the aircraft. CityFlyer currently offers nine routes from London City, including Edinburgh, Amsterdam and Frankfurt.

easyBus at Gatwick North Terminal

Low-cost airport transfer coach operator, easyBus, will be the only direct public transport link from Gatwick's North Terminal to London for a period of over seven months, from Monday 28th September 2009, when the airport's terminal transfer transit is taken out of service for a major overhaul lasting well into the summer of 2010.



Passengers who might otherwise have used the rail service to London, which operates from the South Terminal building, can enjoy a massive fare saving too, if they take advantage of easyBus' lowest online fare of £2, available to early bookers - a saving of nearly £15 on the rail fare. BAA Gatwick are quoting connecting times of 20 minutes for the replacement bus service to the South Terminal, so there is no real time disadvantage to passengers opting to take the easyBus instead of the so-called express rail option. Journeys can take less than an hour to London, though slightly longer times can be expected during busier periods.

The new inter-terminal transit system at Gatwick Airport is being installed as part of the airport's £1 billion investment programme. From 28 September 2009 until May 2010, a replacement bus service will operate between Gatwick's North and South Terminals. The service will run every three minutes during the day (04.00 to 18.00) and every six minutes at night. South Terminal passengers still wishing to take advantage of the cheaper easyBus fares can still do so by taking the airport's bus shuttle to the North Terminal. BAA advises passengers to allow 20 minutes to transfer between terminals during this period.

Tickets can also be purchased from the easyBus ticket desk located conveniently at Gatwick North arrivals or, if travelling to the airport from London, from the easyBus driver at their Fulham Broadway terminus. easyBus have recently revamped online booking service and one of the quickest and simplest online booking processes takes about two minutes to complete.

The best fares are available to early bookers and if your flight gets in late, you can hop on the next service with available seats. Services operate up to every 20 minutes from the stop which is just seconds from the arrivals hall in the North Terminal.

easyBus also offers airport transfers between London Victoria and both London Stansted and London Luton airports, with online fares also starting at just £2. www.easyBus.co.uk

Radical flight plan

The Times reports that the Scandinavian airline, SAS, has announced a radical flight technique to save fuel and cut carbon-dioxide emissions - by effectively switching off the engines as aircraft come in to land. The new method, in which planes will glide into airports along a satellite-mapped flight path, could save about 100kg of fuel on a twin-engine jet.

Online tickets

The DB Online Ticket is now also available for travel from Belgium, France, Switzerland Austria, and the Netherlands, to Germany. For the direct ICE services from Brussels, Paris (also on TGV to Stuttgart and Munich), Zurich, Vienna and Amsterdam to Germany the convenient print at home solution is offered. Up until now it was only possible to book Online Tickets from Germany to the neighbouring countries. Those who prefer can also book travel insurance when purchasing their ticket at www.bahn.co.uk or www.bahn.ie. The Online Ticket can be printed out and has a 2D-barcode that can be read by the conductors' handheld device on the ICE trains.

Investment for Piraeus Port

The European Commission has approved the public financing of improvements to the passenger section of the Port of Piraeus. The Greek authorities plan to build a pedestrian bridge to provide safer passage between the port and Athens-Piraeus railway station, and new jetties to accommodate more ships serving the Greek islands. The construction

continued on page 11...

Baggage allowance changes

British Airways

From 7 October, Economy Class passengers can check in just one bag, weighing up to 23kg, free of charge. Additional bags will be charged from £35 minimum a piece at the check-in desk. For those travelling with skis or a snowboard, the cost will be £56 return if you pay online, or from £70 at the airport. Gold and Silver card holders gain certain benefits.

Continental Airlines

With immediate effect, Economy Class passengers will be able to check one bag for free and will pay \$50 for a second checked bag. Customers checking in and pre-paying for bags at continental.com receive a \$5 discount. The service fee will not apply to EliteAccess customers, including those seated in BusinessFirst, and OnePass Elite and SkyTeam Elite members, nor customers travelling on full-fare, EconomyClass (Y) tickets. www.continental.com

Virgin Atlantic

From 25 November 2009, Virgin Atlantic will be introducing a 'piece system' across its network for all tickets booked after that date.

Economy 1 - passengers can check-in 1 bag weighing up to 23 kilos. Premium Economy 2 - passengers can check-in 2 bags each weighing up to 23 kilos. Upper Class 3 - passengers can check-in up to 3 bags each weighing up to 23 kilos.

Virgin Atlantic is also continuing to offer a sporting bag allowances, enabling all passengers to check-in one additional bag weighing up to 23 kilos that contains sporting equipment, such as a golf bag, scuba diving equipment, or ski equipment.

In addition, Flying Club Gold Card holders are entitled to take one additional bag on top of their free allowance, in any cabin. If travelling in Upper Class, this means Gold Card passengers can check-in up to four bags. Passengers wanting to check-in extra bags will pay for each piece, with each extra bag costing £32/US\$48 if paid for online. Higher charges will apply at airport check-in.

Economy passengers travelling between Heathrow and Nairobi, and Heathrow and Lagos, will continue to be able to check-in two bags if travelling in economy. Any passenger holding a ticket booked and ticketed before 25 November 2009 will be entitled to Virgin Atlantic's existing baggage allowance. Any bags weighing over 32 kilos will not be accepted. www.virginatlantic.com

...continued from page 10

project is likely to cost about €5 million. The Commission said the works are in line with EU transport policy and would improve links between the mainland and the Greek islands, and so no issues of state aid for commercial enterprises were raised.

UA - cards only

United Airlines is to accept only credit and debit cards for most

onboard purchases on transatlantic flights and on flights to and from Brazil and Argentina. To speed cabin service, provide receipts and increase efficiency, cash will no longer be accepted onboard these flights, except for duty-free purchases.

All major cards are accepted. United will continue to accept cash in addition to credit and debit cards on flights to and from Asia. www.united.com

HOSPITALITY

Amsterdam

The new Fashion Hotel is part of WestCords Hotels and offers 260 design rooms all styled with a fashion touch. The hotel offers a range of facilities, such as a swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, gym and solarium for both business and private guests to enjoy. Other facilities include a restaurant, terrace, various meeting rooms and SKYY bar - a cocktail bar on the 11th floor with stunning views of the city.

www.westcordhotels.nl



Fashion Hotel Amsterdam

Barcelona

Barcelona is preparing for a battle royal as two of this year's most desirable hotels open in quick succession. On October 1, it's the weird, sail-shaped W (whotels.com), a sleek modernist tower on the dockside, with a 26th-floor rooftop bar from Ignite (the folks behind the royal fave Boujis) - while November sees the debut of the Mandarin Oriental (mandarinoriental.com), smack in town on the Passeig de Gracia, with ice-cool white interiors and a rooftop infinity pool. You pay your money -, a pretty hefty starting rate for double rooms of £280 and £265 respectively - and you takes your choice.

Benidorm

The boutique hotel Villa Venecia, which opened in Benidorm this July, has joined the Luxury Lifestyle Club,

a members-only club that offers an exclusive collection of luxury resort style residences and amenities in highly desirable holiday destinations worldwide.

Villa Venecia is part of the Magic Costa Blanca hotel chain. Located at the highest point of Benidorm's old quarter. Set in a building dating back to 1867 the interiors have been designed with a contemporary feel. Facilities include a spa and Jacuzzi, gym, swimming pool and the restaurant, 'Llum de Mar'. www.hotelvillavenecia.com

Culloden

Situated only 5 miles from Inverness, is the new 120-cover restaurant at Culloden Battlefield (5-star visitor attraction) now offers private dining areas for groups of up to 60. From September to December 2009, they are also offering a 20% discount on selected menus, including:

Traditional tea/coffee and shortbread: £2.50 per person (9-11 am)

Tea/coffee and sandwich selection: £6.80 per person (11 am-2.30 pm)

Scottish afternoon tea/coffee with cream scone £2.50 per person (2.30-5 pm)

Available only to the travel trade, prices are based on minimum groups of 12, with pre-booking essential. Offer includes free coach parking and driver refreshment vouchers. email-traveltrade@nts.org.uk

Estonia

Pädaste Manor on the Estonian island of Muhu has become the first Estonian hotel outside Tallinn to be awarded 5* status by The Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association and only one of four in the country to have attained the certification.

Global hotel price fall

The average price of a hotel room around the world fell by 17% in the first six months of 2009, according to the latest Hotels.com Hotel Price Index.

Hotel prices in June 2009 were more than one sixth lower than they were the year before and room rates were just 1% above their level in January 2004, when the Hotel Price Index was started. The 17% fall in room rates* was driven by price drops across every continent.

Prices in Latin America fell by the greatest extent, down 18% in the first half of 2009 compared to the year before. Prices for hotel rooms in North America were down 17%, with rates in Europe faring little better, dropping 16% during the same period.

Asian hotel rates, which had been holding up better than those in the U.S. or Europe, tumbled in the first half of 2009 dropping an average of 17% compared to the same period one year earlier.

Hotel rates in the Caribbean only saw a single digit fall with rates dropping just 2% in the first half of the year.

*The Hotels.com HPI tracks the real prices paid per hotel room rather than advertised rates. It is based on prices actually paid by customers at 78,000 hotels across 13,000 locations around the world.

Turkey - recent hotel openings

Ankara

The 5* Rixos Grand Ankara. The 215-room building is a city landmark, located on prestigious Ataturk Avenue in the heart of the capital city, close to the Parliament building and major shopping areas. <http://www.rixos.com/index.aspx>

Antalya

Ultra-luxurious Mardan Palace, considered one of the most expensive hotels in Europe. The 560-room hotel, located 10 km from Antalya International Airport, overlooks the beautiful shores of Lara Beach. With architecture that takes inspiration from Istanbul's famous landmarks including Dolmabahçe Palace and the Grand Bazaar; the largest swimming pool in the Mediterranean; a beach with sand imported from Egypt; and a sunken aquarium with over 2,000 fish. www.mardanpalace.com

Çe me

Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, located on the Aegean Sea just 88 km from Turkey's 3rd-largest city Izmir. The hotel has 312 guest rooms along with a spa and wellness area, indoor and outdoor pools and a nightclub. <http://www.radissonblu.com/resort-cesme>

Dalaman

Hilton Golf Resort & Spa, - location 10 minutes from Dalaman Airport, with a view of the mountains and the Mediterranean. The 410-room hotel features a luxury spa, 7 outdoor and 3 indoor pools, and an aqua-park for children; a gold course is set to open for the 2010 summer season.

Istanbul

Courtyard Marriott, Istanbul - 17-floor hotel, located just 4 km from Istanbul's main airport and 25 minutes' drive from Istanbul's city centre and old city, has 262 rooms and 770m² of meeting space.

Pädaste Manor is an island hotel and spa retreat with picturesque sea views and is an innovator of modern Estonian cuisine and known for its natural spa treatments. They have in total 24 rooms - 14 rooms in the Manor House, 9 rooms in the Carriage House and then we also have a Private Farm House for up to 8 guests.

Budapest

Expo Congress Hotel, located immediately next door to the Budapest Fair Centre, has opened. The four-star

hotel has 160 rooms and conference facilities for up to 250 people. www.expohotel.hu

Galicia

This old Benedictine monastery is located in one of the more picturesque areas of Galicia, the Ribeira Sacra. The existence of the Monastery dates back to the 10th century, although its origins appear to be from the 6th and 7th. Declared an 'Historic and Artistic Monument' in 1923, The Daily Telegraph has praised the time

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Willi's Uhrenspiel

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and careful work that has gone into restoring the monastery's original features to their former glory.

Each of the hotel's 77 rooms has been individually designed and fit into one of three overriding themes – romantic, gothic and renaissance. The hotel has a restaurant with a terrace by the chestnut forest and specialises in locally-sourced dishes and fine dining. www.paradores.es

Gran Canaria

The five star Lopesan Baobab Resort opens on 1 October 2009. The group's third resort in the south of Gran Canaria has a striking design inspired by African Art.

Guests will enter the hotel over an impressive wooden bridge across a private waterway. Other highlights include the tropical gardens, ponds and waterfalls and the African-themed beach huts. There are also bars, restaurants and a café conveniently located in one building which is also designed in keeping with the African theme.

For young guests the Lopesan 'Panchi World' features a broad range of supervised adventure and leisure activities to ensure that parents have ample time for rest and relaxation. The hotel's function rooms have each been installed with the latest technology and state-of-the-art equipment. www.lopesanhoteles.com

Kiev

InterContinental has opened of a 272-guestroom property in the Ukraine capital. Situated in the heart of the city the 11-storey hotel, all guestrooms and suites are classical in style and are equipped with the

latest business and entertainment technology including high speed wireless internet access, Philips plasma TVs and iPod docking stations, and Cisco IP telephones. Also home to the capital city's largest and most technologically advanced pillar less Grand Ballroom, for receptions of up to 450 guests. The hotel also has a state-of-the-art conference centre, a spa and health club plus indoor swimming pool. www.ichotelsgroup.com/intercontinental

France – star rating

The new star rating system requires a lengthy French Ministry of Tourism audit consisting of 240 criteria related to guest expectations of comfort and hygiene, as well as new aspects such as hotel services, sustainable development and new technologies.

The new classification program, replaces the system in force since the 1960s that classified hotels in France from zero to four stars, with luxury hotels receiving the 'palace' designation. The five-star hotel rating existed everywhere except in France, and this was confusing for international hotel guests used to staying in five-star hotels. By the end of the year, the Ministry estimated that 100 - 150 hotels will receive the five-star, luxury hotel designation, and the 'palace' classification will disappear.

New diploma course

The UK's Chartered Institute of Marketing has announced the launch of a new syllabus for its popular diploma in tourism and hospitality. Beginning October, tutorials are at The Institute's own Academy or its accredited study

Glasgow

The Town House Collection, will open the five star hotel, Blythwood Square in November 2009. Formerly headquarters to the Royal Scottish Automobile Club, the hotel will have 100 bedrooms including four spacious suites and a top floor penthouse complete with rooftop hot tub. It will also house a luxury spa offering indigenous Scottish treatments, a restaurant, bars, a private screening room and event facilities. www.blythwoodsquare.com



Blythwood Hotel

centres throughout the UK.

The new diploma encompasses not only travel and tourism, but hospitality too and is extremely practical with a clear focus on the promotional mix by including; advertising, PR, and digital aspects. The diploma is assessed completely by work-related projects, with no exams. It has two specialist travel industry and one marketing communications module which make up the full course: Tourist Behaviour and Motivation; Hospitality and Services Marketing, and Marketing and Consumer Behaviour. To learn more T01 628 427 120 <http://www.cim.co.uk/learningzone>

Steigenberger

The Steigenberger family headed by Anne-Marie Steigenberger, the founder's wife, and her daughters Christine Steigenberger, Claudia Stei-

genberger and Bettina Leitgeb, has sold 99.6% retaining only three hotel properties: the good old flagship of the group Frankfurter Hof in Frankfurt, the Steigenberger Airport Hotel and the Hotel Belvedere in Davos.

Travco Group International Holding S.A.E. headquartered in Cairo, got the deal. It is Egypt's leading tourist conglomerate, owner of a fleet of Nile ships and three hotel brands with 43 hotels.

Moldova

Wyndham Hotel Group said the first internationally branded hotel in Moldova would be a Ramada.

The Hotel Codru in the capitol of Chisinau will become the Ramada Chisinau City Centre in late 2010. The 140-room hotel will undergo a multimillion-dollar renovation before reopening as a Ramada.

Investors ready to pounce

A group of investors is pooling up to €500m to buy troubled European hotels in the belief that the hospitality market is poised for a rebound. Avingstone Financial has earmarked its intention to buy a series of four and five hotels across Europe over the next two years.

The group has been put together by hotel developers David Mongeau and Piers Tallala. They have so far raised €300m from two undisclosed entrepreneurial families, according to the Financial Times. The pair, who have advised on \$19bn of hotel deals since 2005, are also in talks with North American institutional investors and a sovereign wealth fund on committing a further €200m.

The move comes after a year of intense pressure on European hotel owners who have responded to steep falls in demand by slashing room rates. The hotel transaction market generated \$75bn of deals in the three years to 2008 in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, but shrank to \$12bn last year, according to Jones Lang LaSalle.

Avingstone believes a sizeable number of owners who borrowed heavily in the boom period to buy hotels at top prices will be struggling to service their debt and will face foreclosure.

The hotel industry has largely stayed intact in the past 12 months as lenders chose to work with owners on restructuring deals to prevent foreclosures. Few assets have gone into receivership.

Some deal activity has already begun to return in Europe. Last week UK hotel group Daniel Thwaites sold the luxury Stafford Hotel in London's Mayfair for £77.5m to Egypt's El Sharkawy family.

Yesterday, Accor said it had sold 158 of its Formule 1 budget hotels for €272m, and leased them back, to pay off debt. The group cited a "renewed interest of investors for hotel real estate".

PwC's UK hospitality and leisure division said in its September overview that the rate of decline in revenue per available room (revpar) would start to decline after Christmas.

If and when the hotel market does bottom out, the luxury end is the place to be, according to Mr Mongeau. "When you look back at previous cycles, as GDP growth returns, growth at the luxury end of the hotel sector accelerates at an even greater rate."



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GROUP OPTIONS/ ATTRACTIONS

NTS update

Brodick Castle bonus

Following discussions between the National Trust of Scotland and Calmac Ferries, Ardrossan Harbour to Isle of Arran crossing, Calmac has agreed to consider reduced rates for 12 metre-coaches crossing at less than 100% occupancy. Crossing discounts are entirely at the discretion of Calmac Ferries and subject to confirmed group bookings to Brodick Castle. Contact Robbie Brown Calmac Ferries 01770 303985/302166. To book your groups into 800-year-old Brodick Castle, its famous gardens and estate.

Bannockburn battlefield tour

Just 2 miles from Stirling Castle, Bannockburn is immortalised in Scottish, European and world history by Robert the Bruce's famous victory in 1314.

The National Trust for Scotland is offering coach and tour operators the unique opportunity to experience a guided tour of the battlefield by 'Thomas Randolph', General to Robert the Bruce, an interactive medieval weapons display, and the Trust's gripping new short film depicting the dramatic events of June 1314 – (includes cast members from the Hollywood blockbusters Braveheart, Gladiator, King Arthur and the new Robin Hood movie, all for the special introductory rate of £4.50 per person.

Available only to the travel trade, prices are based on minimum groups of 12, with pre-booking essential. Available Monday to Friday during June, July and August 2010, tours last approximately 1 hour. Offer includes free coach parking.

RBBM

The countdown continues towards the opening of the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum (RBBM), which is to replace the existing Burns National Heritage Park from summer 2010. The NTS have confirmed prices for this great new attraction from only £5.25 per person (group rate), or free with a valid Discover Ticket. www.nts.org.uk/burns

traveltrade@nts.org.uk or telephone UK 0844 493 2104 (+44 131 243 9304 overseas)



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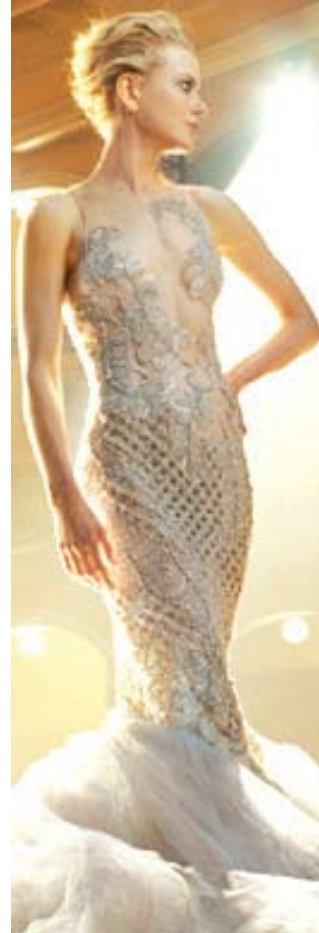
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CHINESE AND INDIAN CUISINE



Annie Leibovitz

In the exhibition 'Annie Leibovitz: A Photographer's Life 1990 – 2005', Vienna's KUNST HAUS WIEN presents the works of one of the most celebrated photographers of our day - 30 October to 31 January 2010



Nicole Kidman, New York, 2003
Photograph © Annie Leibovitz
Courtesy of Vogue

This exhibition encompasses a total of over 150 photographs, many of them large-format works, as well as a number of private family photos and small-format black and white

portraits. Numerous sequences of photographs focus on her parents and her extended family, with images of family reunions and trips to the sea. And again and again we find ourselves face to face with the celebrities whom Annie Leibovitz portrays with such startling immediacy: Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, Demi Moore, Jack Nicholson, William Burroughs and many others. Leibovitz' works in this exhibition emanate an emotional power that eclipses everything the photographer has done before. T +43 1 712 04 95 – 24

New group rates

Visitor attractions creator and operator, The Continuum Group, has announced its new group visits rates for 2010/2011. The rates, which are valid on visits from 1 February 2010 to 31 January 2011, apply to Kent Life, Portsmouth's Spinnaker Tower, The Real Mary King's Close in Edinburgh, The Canterbury Tales and Oxford Castle – Unlocked. For companies or organisations looking to bring large numbers of visitors, or for UK based schools, further discounts are available on application. For all group bookings enquiries, please call 0845 070 6255

Free in Vienna

The city of music has a new attraction – for the first time selected performances will be broadcast live on a giant screen in front of the State Opera House.

The new attraction for friends of the Vienna State Opera is called Oper live am Platz. Around 60 opera and ballet performances are being shown at a series of free open-air broadcasts on Herbert-von-Karajan-Platz next to the Opera House until end of this year. The performances are broadcast live on a 50 square meter LED video screen mounted on the side wall of the building. Where applicable, all pieces include subtitles. Information about the piece, the performers, the Vienna State Opera and its work is provided 45 minutes before the concert starts and during the intervals.

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Moctezuma: Aztec Ruler

Rediscover the world of the Aztecs and trace the foundation of modern Mexico in the British Museum's next major exhibition on great rulers. Opens 24 September 2009 to 24 Jan 2010. This major exhibition explores Aztec civilisation through the divine, military and political role of the last elected ruler, Moctezuma II (reigned AD 1502–1520).

From his capital in Tenochtitlan (the site of modern Mexico City), Moctezuma's empire comprised much of modern highland Mexico, stretching from the Gulf Coast to the Pacific Ocean. His power was reflected in the splendour of his capital's architecture, his command of the prestigious Jaguar and Eagle military orders, and his sacrificial rituals to the gods. Moctezuma's world was unrivalled, and this remained so until the devastating arrival of strangers – Cortés and his Spanish fleet.

The legacy of this tumultuous event and the semi-mythical status of Moctezuma will be reassessed through the display of imposing stone sculptures and rare gold and turquoise objects, many of which will be seen for the first time in the UK. www.britishmuseum.org



Turquoise Mosaic Mask, Aztec - Mixtec AD 1400 - 1521, Mexico. © The Trustees of the British Museum

...continued from page 14

In October the billing features Giuseppe Verdi's Nabucco (October 3 and 10, 2009), Richard Wagner's Lohengrin (October 4, 2009) and Mozart's Marriage of Figaro (October 20, 25 and 29, 2009). www.wiener-staatsoper.at

1000's of ticket reductions

Autumn promotion sees Hairspray, Jersey Boys, Sister Act, Billy Elliot reduced. A major new promotion has been launched by London theatre website westendtheatre.com offering thousands of reduced-price tickets to see West End musicals this autumn (average £25 reduction)

To celebrate the start of the new season of plays and musicals launching in London, westendtheatre.com has also reduced tickets on new shows including The Rise and Fall of Little Voice starring X-Factor runner-up Diana Vickers, Joe Orton bio-play Prick Up Your Ears starring Little Britain's Matt Lucas, Sean Mathias' major new production of Breakfast At Tiffany's starring Anna Friel and a new stage adaptation of The Shawshank Redemption starring The Wire's Reg E. Cathey. www.westendtheatre.com

Queluz Palace gardens

After years of being closed for renovations, the gardens of the Portugal's Queluz Palace have reopened. New plants were added to the landscaping, fountains were restored and a freshly tiled canal that extends for 110 meters was also given a shiny new look. The majority of the work was done on the numerous statues dotted around the garden. The newly opened Palace also includes a restored statue by renowned British sculptor John Cheere that has not been on public display since

1967. These historic formal gardens, which today look as they did when opened centuries ago, surround one of Portugal's most beautiful palaces. Built in the 18th century, Queluz Palace was built outside of Lisbon as Portugal's own scaled-down version of Versailles.

Fly To The Moon with Haydn

Nikolaus Harnoncourt will be premiering Joseph Haydn's best-known opera, Il mondo della luna, to mark the 200th anniversary of the composer's death.

Haydn's evocative description of the lunar landscape substitutes rocks and dust with fragrant flowers and green forests. Instead of an eerie silence there is the tweeting of birds and arias with superb lyrics. The plot, a typical opera buffa of the time (first performed December 3, 1777), was penned by Italian comic poet Carlo Goldoni.

The opera is produced by Tobias Moretti and conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt. Dates will be Dec 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 22, 2009 in Italian at the Theater an der Wien www.theater-wien.at

Micropolix - Madrid's city within a city

An educational theme park recently opened in San Sebastián de los Reyes. Micropolix, a mini city covering 9000m² has been specially designed for children aged between five and thirteen to encourage learning and development in a fun environment.

This innovative project enables young people to fully engage with education while they play. Children can discover, investigate and develop their skills with almost 100 different activities in 54 themed areas. Micropolix was developed from a child's perspective of life.

Amsterdam Museums

Hermitage Amsterdam

Exactly a month after opening the Hermitage Amsterdam welcomed its 100,000th visitor. The overwhelming interest in the new museum and its opening exhibition 'At the Russian Court' is a very positive start. Ernst van der Veen, director said: "It is amazing, this many visitors in such a short space of time has even surpassed our expectations". The exhibition runs until 31 January 2010.

www.hermitage.nl

Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

The main building of the Rijksmuseum has been closed for renovation, reconstruction and restoration since December 2003. The builders have started their work and the museum will reopen to the public in the first half of 2013 - exact date still to be clarified.

Until reopening, the Rijksmuseum shows the very best of its collection in an exhibition called The Masterpieces. This presentation in the Philips Wing provides an opportunity to see the highlights of the Golden Age: the beautiful doll houses, a wealth of silverware, the best Delftware, the spectacular civic company pieces, icons of Dutch history and of course the public's favorites like the famous paintings by Jan Steen, Frans Hals, Vermeer and Rembrandt, among which The Nightwatch. Over 400 masterpieces are on show www.rijksmuseum.nl;

Best of British - in Amsterdam

To 21 February 2010 the exhibition "Made in Britain" can be seen at the Museum of Bags and Purses in Amsterdam. English designers are renowned for their craftsmanship, quality and respect for tradition, combined with modern design. This exhibition provides a comprehensive overview of their unique creations.

Designers such as Paul Smith, Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen, Stella McCartney, Lulu Guinness Anya Hindmarch, together with traditional English brands such as Burberry and Liberty are also featured in the exhibition. www.tassenmuseum.nl

Christmas update

Christmas past

Each year, London's Geffrye's Museum in Shoreditch produces a Christmas Past exhibition. The museum's period rooms are decorated in authentic festive style to evoke some of the rich and colourful traditions of Christmases past which are often forgotten amid the hubbub of the modern festive season.

In tune with the current economic climate and to complement the museum's special Eco Home exhibition, this year's programme of related events will embrace 'make do and mend' and all things home-made. Throughout the exhibition, festive food will be served in the restaurant and visitors can hunt for original gifts, decorations, cards and books in the shop. Free admission 24 Nov to 3 Jan 2010. T020 7739 9893.

Web: www.geffrye-museum.org.uk

A German Traditional Christmas

This is the seventh year of opening the East Wing of the Waddesdon House at Christmas and this year we have sought inspiration from a country where one of the five founding brothers of the Rothschild dynasty made his fortune, Germany.

The House reopens on Wednesday 11 November, where beautifully decorated rooms will resound with seasonal music and carols to conjure memories of Christmas past. Elegance, opulence and a hint of humour intertwine with music and celebration. Children will enjoy recognising a number of very well known stories.

For the first time this year both the House and Gardens will reopen on Sunday 27 December until Thursday 31 December The Manor Restaurant will also be open as usual together with the Wine Cellars and the Manor Shop sale will start on Monday 21 December. www.waddesdon.org.uk

Chatsworth by Candlelight

1 November to 23 December 2009

Beautiful traditional decorations in grand rooms on the two lower floors of the house. In 2009, the inspiration is taken from candlelight, and specifically from the intriguing tales of Hans Christian Andersen. Some of the enchanting displays are interpreted by local schoolchildren and both the Duchess and her grandchildren are decorating Christmas trees to enhance this special experience.

There will also be Christmas evening openings and Christmas markets and shopping with over 60 stalls. To ensure better viewing conditions, all groups planning to visit the house during our Christmas season must book a time slot in advance. T01246 565300, or visit www.chatsworth.org

Novel features includes its own currency - the 'eurix', being able to pass a driving test, renting a 'car' and even opening a bank account! www.micropolix.com

The Art of Fashion

Rotterdam Art City - Museum Boijmans van Beuningen exhibits 'The Art of Fashion'. From 19 September 2009 till 10 January 2010 the museum investigates the borders between fashion and art. Today's fashion designers use installations and performances, and their designs are often more sculptural than wearable. Viktor & Rolf, Naomi Filmer, Hussein Chalayan, Anna-Nicole Ziesche and Walter Van Beirendonck have been commissioned to make new work specifically for the exhibition. www.boijmans.rotterdam.nl

Immigration museum - Portugal

The city of Ribeira Grande in Portugal has opened a new Museu da Emigração Açoreana, Immigration Museum. The new museum is located in the former fish market. Exhibits will rotate and each is a celebration of the Azorean past in immigration: sadness and joy, hopes and aspirations, as well as dreams ended.

There are displays reflecting immigration to all the continents where Azoreans have gone to in the past centuries. The United States was the main destination for more than 100,000 Azoreans between the 1850s and the 1980s. Many settled in New England and the Bay Area of California.

Spring dance

Following The Royal Ballet's first visit to Cuba in July this year, principal guest artist Carlos Acosta will appear with Ballet Nacional de Cuba in London as part of Spring Dance at the London Coliseum in 2010. It will be the first time the Cuban company has performed at the London Coliseum and the first time Cuban superstar Carlos Acosta has performed with the whole company in the UK.



Mark Morris Dance Group

The company will perform two programmes as part of Spring Dance at the Coliseum from 30 March to 11 April 2010; Magia de la Danza, a mixed bill which brings together extracts from seven of the company's most famous ballets and Swan Lake. Carlos Acosta will perform with the company on 30 March and 1, 7 and 8 April.

The 2010 Spring Dance at the Coliseum season will also include performances from Mark Morris Dance Group and Birmingham Royal Ballet. Mark Morris Dance

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Group will return to London to present *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* for the first time in ten years. Following a successful debut season in 2009, Birmingham Royal Ballet will return next year to present the timeless family classic, *Sleeping Beauty*. Spring Dance at the Coliseum runs from March 30th. Tickets available from:

London Coliseum www.eno.org and Sadler's Wells www.sadlerswells.com

Bavarian trail

The Bavarian Forest National Park, on the German-Czech border has opened a new 2.5 km tree top path. Visitors observe the wild life from a bird's-eye view. A highlight of the new path is a giant dome-shaped wooden structure of 43 meters, offering a striking view over the entire park. www.nationalpark-boyerischerwald.de

Schlosshof

Now available are the 2010 group options for Austria's largest countryside Palace and grounds.

A guided introductory tour goes back to the fascinating world of the Baroque. Offers include culinary exploration of the horticultural world of the Meierhof Manor Farm, tasting of fine schnapps and fruity jams, or creative workshops in the Pottery can be combined.

Choose from a reasonably priced meal in 'The White Peacock' Restaurant at the Meierhof Manor Farm, a hearty snack or afternoon tea or coffee with sweets at the 'Prince Eugene' Patisserie in the Palace's Arcaded Courtyard www.schlosshof.at

Bargain in Budapest

Several cultural attractions have come together in Budapest to offer visitors a 'combi discounted ticket' Buda Castle, Budapest History Museum, the Royal Wine House and cellar Museum and the National Dance Theatre have joined forces to offer excellent Hungarian wines, dance performances and exhibitions. (discounts are about 25%) 'Wine and Dance' Days and 'The Treasures of the Castle' can be purchased at www.btm.hu and www.kiralyiborok.com

Face lift

The MHKA museum in Antwerp has reopened. The Museum for Contemporary Art (Museum voor Hedendaagse Kunst or MuHKA as it was known in the past) not only changed its name, but also its look and the former MuHKA media has now become Cinema Zuid, with new opening hours. www.muha.be

Great Tower opened

English Heritage has painstakingly recreated a magnificent 12th-century palace, built by King Henry II to showcase his power and wealth, at popular group destination Dover Castle.

Groups visiting Dover Castle will be as impressed today as the international pilgrims en route to

Canterbury who were once royally entertained within its mighty walls. Filled with the technicolour decoration, furnishings and furniture of the period – all carefully recreated by contemporary craftspeople – and with costumed interpreters on certain days as well as 3D-holograms the Great Tower provides a truly 'immersive experience'.

Groups will discover that the middle ages were far from drab as they see startling 12th century psychedelic colour schemes and meet equally colourful characters, portraying key people from the royal court – from King Henry himself to his favourite jester, Roland the Farter!

The sights, sounds and smells of his royal court are recreated as groups can witness the merriment of a feast in the banquetting chamber and unravel the story behind the dynastic struggles between one of the most powerful and enigmatic kings in English history and his two sons Richard the Lionheart and 'Bad' King John.

traveltrade@english-heritage.org.uk

Venice openings

The magnificent area of Punta della Dogana is now open. Overlooking the lagoon, this dependence of Palazzo Grassi for contemporary art and former industrial building from the XVII century is rich in history. Punta Dogana, together with Palazzo Grassi, is a large new museum that enhances Venice cultural offer with the creation of the 'Art Mile' along the Grand Canal. www.palazzograssi.it

The University of Venice, located in the historic palazzo Ca' Foscari has opened. The magnificent building in Venetian Gothic style, which overlooks the Grand Canal, now reveals its gardens, the beautiful Aula Magna, the frescoes of Sironi and De Luigi and other treasures recently found during its restoration. Guided tours in Italian and English. www.unive.it/visita

New attraction – Berlin

The Deutsches Currywurst Museum sets the stage for the many facets of the popular Currywurst in a unique exhibition. The urban snack with a cult following has countless fans: in Germany, about 800 million portions of Currywurst are consumed per year – with 70 million Currywürste p.a. eaten in Berlin alone. The exhibition is designed as a walk-in, interactive experience in three dimensions T+49 30 88718645 info@currywurstmuseum.com

Darwin Centre

London's Natural History Museum's new Darwin Centre is open. A state-of-the-art scientific research and collections storage facility, and an inspiring new public space inviting visitors to explore the natural world in an exciting and innovative way. Visitors see some of the Museum's scientists in action, working in high-tech laboratories, preparing real specimens and working among the 3.3 kilometres of cabinets that hold the millions of plants and insects.

Visitors have an uninhibited snapshot

into these once concealed spaces at the Museum as they travel through the new Cocoon experience and share the excitement of exploring, studying and preserving the world around us. www.nhm.ac.uk

Ghost Tours

From 31 Oct to March 2010

The ever-popular evening Ghost Tours at Hampton Court Palace will return again for Halloween through the winter months. A State Apartment Warder is your guide through the shadowy Baroque State Apartments, Henry VIII's Tudor apartments and the dark courtyards. Tour includes a glass of mulled wine and a warm mince pie. Public tours available on Friday and Sunday evenings from 7.30pm, duration 1.5 hours. Max 36 people per tour, £25.00 per person. Private ghost tour on another day of the week can do so for £1000.00 + VAT. www.hrp.org.uk

Enchanted Palace

From March 2010 to 2012 Kensington will become the an Enchanted Palace, as visitors travel through the State Apartments they will encounter a surprising and magical Palace, filled

with stunning cutting-edge fashion installations, inspired by royal dress and tradition. Representing different fairy tales from around the world, these will be woven with dress from leading designers and up-and-coming fashion talent. Take a journey through the spellbound palace and explore the tale of transformation that lies within. www.hrp.org.uk

RAF in Concert

Musicians of the Bands of the RAF will be touring the UK from October to December, presenting a mix of popular classics, rousing military music plus big band numbers. There are two bulk buying options on all the RAF in Concert Tour tickets – at all venues except for Gateshead there is a 10% discount for groups of 10 or more tickets bought and at Gateshead if you buy 10 tickets, you get one free. Tickets need to be purchased directly from the relevant box office. Tickets are now on sale priced before discounts are from £13.50 to £19.50 (£15 to £25 for London) and full concert tour details are available on the website at <http://www.airtattoo.com/events/RAFInConcert/>

TRAVEL INDUSTRY NEWS

Saga Price Promise

Saga Holidays has announced the Saga Price Promise, which guarantees that customers will always get the best deal.

If Saga Holidays reduce the price of a holiday from their new range of worldwide, European, UK or River Cruising brochures after customers

holidays are confirmed, then Saga will automatically pass this reduction on ensuring that everyone will benefit from the lower holiday price.

The Saga Price Promise also includes the no surcharge guarantee – so that increases in fuel prices or changes in exchange rates won't result in a surcharge being added to the bill. Saga Holidays believes they are the

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Delays in 12-Day Rule for coach operators

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The industry bodies say that the 12-day derogation is of vital importance for European competitiveness in world tourism markets. This new delay postpones its implementation beyond Easter 2010, which will harm inbound tourism and related jobs.

"Operators are paid to plan. Planning is impossible if the foundations of what you do shift. The ending in April 2007 of coach drivers' ability to work for 12 days was a major blow to the tourism industry: it increased prices and caused big logistical problems," said Tom Jenkins, ETOA Executive Director. "We were led to believe that this was going to be lifted by 1st January 2010. People have planned tours and sold them throughout the world on this basis. Now we understand that this is stalled because of translation problems."

The European Commission, Parliament and Council agreed on the wording of the 12-day derogation in spring 2009. The European Parliament quickly and formally adopted this in April 2009. Yet the EU's current Swedish Presidency is still trying to find an opportunity to have the EU Council formally adopt the agreement.

"The situation is both absurd and damaging. Even if the proposal is published this week, if the normal timetable of gestation is kept, it will be late April before the industry can benefit. It will miss the peak period of Easter," said Jenkins. "This law reintroduces a measure which was in force 15 months ago. It is beneficial. Why does it need a delay of nearly seven months before implementation?"

The law-making procedures of the EU require that only after adoption in Council can the text be published in the EU Official Journal. They then specify a 20-day pause before the new rules come into force, followed by a six-month wait before any new provision, such as the 12-day derogation, can be used operationally.

UK 'challenging period' for inbound travel could be mitigated

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Mary Rance, Chief Executive of UKinbound said, "There is a danger that inbound travel to the UK could continue to fall. Consumers globally are looking for value. People do not mind spending money on quality products, but they do not want to pay higher taxes. Government must remove the barriers of high taxes to ensure the UK tourism industry can remain internationally competitive in terms of price and accessibility, and to enable business to compete effectively in the international market."

Mary Rance went on to welcome the campaign launched by Mayor of London Boris Johnson in New York:

"UKinbound applauds the Mayor's support for tourism and his recognition of its potential for assisting economic recovery, which Government is yet to embrace. The US is an incredibly important inbound market and overseas marketing of UK destinations is more important than ever. It is important that London is able to invest in promoting to our main inbound markets, while also highlighting the fantastic value still on offer in the UK for visitors from the US and other markets, because of the strength of the dollar."

Inbound tourism generated £16.4 billion in export earnings from 31.9 million international visitors to the UK in 2008 (ONS International Passenger Survey). www.ukinbound.org.

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only tour operator in the UK to currently give this guarantee.

TTB unites with BoBi

Expo Management, the organiser of last March's inaugural Travel Trade Britain (TTB) show, has "pledged its full support" for Best of Britain & Ireland 2010 (BoBi), scheduled for 17-20 March 2010 at London's Olympia. Next year's Travel Trade Britain, due to take place at the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) in March, will now be withdrawn.

New initiatives at BoBi 2010 include a Hosted Buyer Programme, senior volume buyers from the largest coach operators and group travel organisers will be offered tailored packages including accommodation, familiarisation trips, dinner and entertainment during the trade-only element of BoBi A coach industry reception at the House of Lords will also allow coach operators to talk to ministers and others about the key issues affecting coach tourism and group travel.

Bakers Dolphin new partner

Somerset-based coach Operator of the Year, Bakers Dolphin Coach Travel, has become the 31st tour operator to promote their touring programmes through the marketing portal Door2Tour.com!

Packages in demand next year

The Thomson and First Choice Trends Report 2009 reveals that, despite the current economic climate, 80% of respondents plan to take a 2010 holiday and similar numbers say the recession will not lead them to change their holiday plans.

Around half the people surveyed are planning to spend the same as this year, while 24% will spend more. Next year will see a rise in demand for package holidays and all-inclusives, according to TUI.

Of those people who said the recession had changed their holiday plans this year, 6% said they had consid-

ered package holidays because of the extra security in the event of something going wrong.

For 2010, that figure has more than doubled to 13%, while the proportion of people saying they would consider booking all-inclusive holidays is expected to jump from 10% to 16% for next year.

Travellers are indicating they will go further afield in 2010, with 23% saying they are looking to buy a longer flight for the same price as one nearer to home and 18% saying they will look for flight upgrade offers from airlines keen to fill premium seats.

Nearly half (46%) said they would use the recession to book five-star hotels at three- or four-star prices.

Joining forces

The Tourism Society and The Tourism Management Institute (TMI) unveiled their plans to join forces following a unanimous vote by TMI members to fully integrate with the Tourism Society. Integration will be effective from 01 January 2010. Integration will increase membership of the joint organisation by 20% and ensure a significant representation for destination managers within the association.

TMI members will automatically be offered full membership from 01 January 2010 of the Tourism Society as well as of the autonomous TMI sector group giving them the added benefit of the Tourism Society's infrastructure, journal and events, whilst ensuring a continued destination management focus.

The new TMI Sector will be an autonomous group of the Tourism Society in the same way as the Tourism Consultants Network and regional Tourism Society chapters in Scotland, Wales, Cumbria and Yorkshire. www.tourismsociety.org

Is this the end of the guide and the guidebook?

It could herald the end of the guidebook - or even the Guide. Visitors to historic monuments will be able to travel back in time to experience the sights and sounds of their surroundings using a mobile phone.

China Holidays award

Sir David Brewer presented the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise to China Holidays earlier this month in recognition of their pioneering work in building tourism and business links between the UK and China.

The award was presented following the growth of in-coming Chinese groups to the UK, and the increased co-operation between China Holidays and its partner attractions and tourist and regional development authorities in this country.



Right to Left: Sir David Brewer with Stephanie Cheng and Carey Fletcher of China Holidays

In the last three years alone, China Holidays has brought in over 40 groups of Chinese visitors into the UK per month, which includes over 870 Chinese business delegates and has resulted in some major business activities between the UK and China.

Clients will be able to call up images and video footage recreating what attractions looked like in their heyday - seen from the spot on which they are standing.

As tourists move around a site, the scene displayed on their phone will change.

The software - based on a technology called 'augmented reality' - is being jointly developed by a British firm and a German company and could ultimately make the guidebook redundant.

Digital guides to a number of attractions, including St Paul's Cathedral and Edinburgh castle, are in the pipeline. Users will be able to download them onto a smartphone for as little as £3.

The application, which has received European Union funding, uses global positioning technology and image recognition software to identify the user's location when a phone's camera is pointed at an historic attraction.

Images of the site, restored to its original splendour, will be overlaid onto the screen, as well as options for other features such as dramatised video footage.

The creators of the software, BMT Group, called iTacitus - after the Roman historian - and claim it will eventually be able to show tourists around an entire city.

Trials have been conducted at the Great Hall in Winchester, allowing visitors to see images of King Arthur and his knights at the round table.

Libyan visas change in London

Libyan authorities have stopped insisting that potential visitors attend the London embassy in person to apply for visas, after tourist numbers fell well short of its targets. The adventure tour operator Explore (0845 013 1539, www.explore.com).

co.uk) says it can now offer visas on arrival, through its handling agent in Tripoli, for British tourists travelling from the UK.

Two awards for Gap Adventures

Gap Adventures has scooped two prestigious awards for its commitment to sustainable tourism: The World Tourism Award and the Conde Nast Traveller World Savers Award. Celebrating its 12th year, the World Tourism Awards were set up to recognise extraordinary initiative and outstanding accomplishment in the travel industry. Gap Adventures is being honoured for its commitment and vision to 'give back' by creating and supporting Planeterra - its non-profit organisation dedicated to sustainable community development worldwide through travel and voluntourism.

The Conde Nast Traveller World Savers Awards credit companies that excel in taking social responsibility in the following areas: poverty and health issues, education, wildlife conservation and cultural and environmental preservation.

Amadeus - IPO rumoured

Amadeus, the travel IT company - the dominant GDS in continental Europe, has declined to comment on reports that it is preparing to float in the New Year.

The Madrid based company also declined to confirm that it had hired Rothschild to advise on any IPO (initial public offering).

The company, which was listed on continental stock exchanges including Madrid, Barcelona, Paris and Frankfurt before becoming a private company in 2005, was founded in 1987 by four airlines. In 2008, Amadeus with 8,700 staff, reported revenues of €2,861m.



Group options – hotels and eateries

These have been recommended by Basel Tourism as being 'group friendly'

Hotel Schweizerhof*** The charm of the 19th century combined with modern comfort and latest technical equipment. Business corner free of charge. 83 rooms. Beautiful hotel-bar with snacks and large terrace. www.schweizerhof-basel.ch

Hotel Victoria**** 107 quiet rooms and suites in Victorian style, but with modern comforts. Fitness room, own car park, and banqueting facilities. Universum Lounge on the upper floor, with a unique view over the city. Restaurant Le Train Bleu. www.victoria.balehotels.ch

Hotel Dorint an der Messe*** 171 rooms and apartments. All rooms offer internet access, Covered car parking. Restaurant 'Côté Jardin' with international and Swiss cuisine. Lobby Bar is opened 24 hours a day. Fully equipped meeting rooms for up to 120 persons, all rooms with daylight. Conference terrace. www.dorint.com/basel

Hotel Ramada Plaza**** 224 first class hotel rooms with cable TV, office desk, modem, air-conditioning and safe. Meeting rooms for events up to 500 people. Wellness and fitness centre with sauna and steam-bath. Restaurant Filou with 140 seats, spacious lobby bar on the ground floor. basel.plaza@ramada-treff.ch www.ramada-treff.ch

Radisson Blu Hotel**** 205 rooms, including eight suites. Restaurant Filini and Oval Bar. Eight event rooms for up to 400 persons, pool-inn club, catering. info.basel@radissonblu.com www.radissonblu.com/hotel-basel

'Local' Restaurants

Restaurant Zum Braunen Mutz

Two restaurants under one roof... traditional in the Brasserie with Swiss specialities, refined in the Au Premier with fish and meat specialities. info@brauner-mutz-basel.ch www.brauner-mutz-basel.ch

Restaurant Löwenzorn

Historic restaurant with typical Swiss food. Beautifully carved club tables in the restaurant. Two superb guild rooms from the 16th century. A romantic garden in the courtyard. halle@loewenzorn.ch www.loewenzorn.ch

Brasserie Baselstab Mövenpick

Classic brasserie with French and Swiss specialities. Specialities include beefsteak Tartar, "Züri Geschnätzelt" and seasonal offers. restaurant.baselstab@moevenpick.com www.moevenpick.com

Restaurant Schnabel

Traditional restaurant with charm and character in the historic centre of Basel. Enjoy a typical meal in this convivial place with friendly atmosphere. info@restaurant-schnabel.ch

Basel - at the heart of Europe, trinationl and cosmopolitan

As the daughter of a Royal Artillery – Liverpool Irish division man, I am ashamed to say that I have never yet visited the Edinburgh Military Tattoo. So when invited to visit Basel for their equivalent it seemed an opportunity not to be missed.

The Swiss city is nestled on both sides of the Rhine, embedded in the triangle between the Swiss Jura, German Black Forest and the French Vosges mountains, Basel is a traditional traffic junction. For this reason, international, cosmopolitan attitudes characterise the city. It has a very different 'feel' to other Swiss Cities.

Basel enjoys the warmest climate in Switzerland, and has the least fog and rain. And it's on the banks of the river – or "Riviera", as locals call it – where the city comes out to play. It all exudes a certain Mediterranean charm.

What to do in Basel

- Every June 'culture vultures' of the art world descend for **ArtBasel**, one of the biggest art shows in the world. For the rest of the year the city keeps the art theme going, with stunning galleries. www.artbasel.com
- **Kunsthau Baselland** is a large exhibition space that specialises in contemporary shows with between seven and nine curated exhibitions taking place at all times. (kunsthaubaselland.ch)

- For those with more traditional tastes, head to the **Kunstmuseum** where works by a diverse collection of artists including Rubens, Mondrian, Picasso and Klee hang alongside changing exhibitions by contemporary artists. (kunstmuseumbasel.ch),
- In the district between the St. Albantor, the Kunstmuseum and the Rhine, **St. Albantal** is a 'must see'. The area blends old and new seamlessly, traditional crafts and the first industrial buildings, ancient half-timbered buildings and modern architecture, the mediaeval paper mill where visitors make their own paper, try their hand at writing with a quill, have their own personal seal made, watch letters being handmade in moulds, or become a printer. Or just drink in the atmosphere in this quiet haven in the City
- For the quirky alternative visit the **Tinguely Museum**. This museum is unlike others: here, things rattle, squeak, crash and thump. Colourful scrap rotates, multi-coloured lights flicker. It is a place full of vitality, laughter, amazement and discovery; a place that sets the feelings in motion www.tinguely.ch
- **Puppenhausmuseum** There were more adults than children at this extraordinary collectors and enthusiast haven. More than 6,000 exhibits are on display, occupying four floors of the museum, which is the largest of its kind in Europe – showing the world of teddy bears, dolls, doll houses, toys and miniatures, arranged in imaginative scenes. www.puppenhausmuseum.ch
- If avant garde theatre is an option consider **Teufelhof Basel** - cabaret and satirical programmes as well as theatre and concerts this hotel-cum-theatre-cum-art gallery-cum-restaurant offers all. The hotel has a beautiful restaurant with courtyard gardens – great for a celebration meal. www.teufelhof.com
- A total of four **ferries** ply between the various Rhine bridges in Basel. Take this public mode of transport, and cross the Rhine without an engine, just the power of the river's current. A ferry ride is a real pleasure, not only for tourists, but also for the locals. www.faeabri.ch
- July sees the annual **Basel Tattoo** which boasts an interesting history. Top Secret Drum Corps is a precision drum corps based in Basel. The corps became famous for its demanding six-minute routine performed at the Edinburgh Tattoo in 2003. Top Secret became one of the first non-military, non-British Commonwealth acts to perform at Edinburgh Castle. They were a tremendous success and have been invited back repeatedly. Under the leadership of Erik Julliard, the band is also responsible for the founding of the now annual Basel Tattoo, a military tattoo show similar to Edinburgh's. The Basel Tattoo brings bagpipes, brass bands and folklore dancing from around the world to the city. Watch the parade through the old town or book tickets for the open-air shows which take place in the grounds of the Basel Barracks. At its first Tattoo in 2006 there were 38,000 visitors, the following year there were 66,000, and in 2009 85,000 and anticipated numbers will rise to 100,000 next year. Dates 2010 are 17 – 24th July. Book early as tickets sell like hot cakes. www.baseltattoo.ch

By Karen Kelly-Moore

Thanks to partners
Switzerland Travel Centre free phone number 00800 100
Basel Tourismus www.basel.com
Switzerland Travel System
SWISS airlines
www.mySwitzerland.com



St. Albantal

AUSTRIA

Concerts

Sound of Salzburg Dinner Show
Office:
Zwieselweg 10, A-5020 Salzburg
Tel: +43 662 826 617
Fax: +43 662 826 617-1
E-m: reservation@soundofsaltzburg-show.com
www.soundofsaltzburgshow.com
Performance takes place at the Sternbräu Dinner Theatre with special net rates for Tour Operators & Groups.



Sound of Salzburg Dinner Show

Sound of Vienna
Strauss & Mozart Concerts
Kursalon Wien
Johannesgasse 33
A-1010 Wien
Tel: +43 (0)1 512 57 90
Fax: +43 (0)1 512 57 91
E-mail: sound@soundofvienna.at
Concerts performed daily at 8.15 pm.
Concerts at 6.00 pm on request. You can also have lunch or dinner at our Johann Cafe Restaurant or on the lovely terrace overlooking the City Park.

Tyrolean Evening with the Gundolf Family

Gasthaus SANDWIRT
Innsbruck
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Tyrolean Evening with the Gundolf Family

An authentic Tyrolean Evening with the Gundolf Family at the Gasthaus SANDWIRT located near the heart of beautiful Innsbruck. Your guests will enjoy folk dancing, brass band music, yodelling and typical songs of the Region. The performers have travelled internationally as musical Ambassadors of the Tyrol. Daily 20.30 – 22.00 April – October, out of season – on request

Vienna Residence Orchestra
Palais Auersperg
Auerspergstrasse 1, 1080 Wien
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Fax: +43 1 813 28 65
Email: konzert@residenzorchester.at
www.wro.at



Mozart & J. Strauss Concert
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Imperial Dinner before or after the concert.

Crystal & Glass

Swarovski Crystal Gallery
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Fax: +43 512 57 3530
e-mail: swarovski.innsbruck@swarovski.com
www.swarovski.com/innsbruck
Crystal, Glassware, Jewellery

Swarovski Crystal Worlds
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Fax: +43 5224 510 80 3831
e-mail: swarovski.kristallwelten@swarovski.com
www.swarovski.com/crystalworlds
Contact: Christiane Gasser
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Museums

Old Vienna Schnaps-Museum
Wilhelmstr 19-21
A1120 Vienna
Tel: +43 1 815 7300
office@schnapsmuseum.com
www.schnapsmuseum.com
A museum and working distillery, original furniture from the 1870's – 1920's. Visitors can tour the distillery and taste and buy. Coach parking

Technisches Museum Wien
Mariahilfer Sraße 212, A-1140 Wien
Tel: +43 1 899 98 1720
Fax: +43 1 899 98 1111
email: museumsbox@tmw.at
www.technischesmuseum.at

Exhibits range from the original Imperial Salon carriage of Empress Elizabeth 1 to the modern TV studio. Interactive presentations and "hands on" experiments – a unique experience

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Salzburg
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info@sternbraeu.at
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Geiger Hut-und Trachtenmoden
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BELGIUM

Museums

Choco-Story
Sint-Jansstraat, 7b
8000 Bruges
Tel/Fax +32 50/61.22.37
info@choco-story.be
The museum opened in March 2004. Tells the story of the transformation of cocoa into chocolate and to promote the health and quality aspects of Belgian chocolate

Gifts/Souvenirs

Käthe Wohlfahrt - Kerstfeerie N.V.
Walplein 12/Wollestraat 29
Tel: +32-(0)50/330604
Fax: +32-(0)50/346313
E-m: kerstfeerie.brugge@pandora.be
Experience the real authentic German Christmas in Bruges. Käthe Wohlfahrt, the German Christmas specialist, have two 'year round' Christmas stores in Brugge

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Perfumerie/Museum/Boutique

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20 Rue St Francois de Paule, 06300 Nice
Tel: +33 (0) 493 62 90 50
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GERMANY

Gifts/Souvenirs/Hotels

Hofgut Sternen
An der Ravennaschlucht (B31)
79874 Breinau/Hollsteig

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Fax: +49 7652 1031
E-m: info@drubba.com
Contact: Jurgen

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Black Forest Clock Centre
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Tel: +49 765 198 1200
Fax: +49 765 188 142
E-m: info@drubba.com

Cuckoo clocks (demonstration), Biersteins, Hummel figures, Swarovski crystal, boat trips.
Contact: Alison or Peter

House of the Black Forest Clocks
Landsraß 7, D-78132 Hornberg
Niederwasser
Tel: +49 7833 8037
Fax: +49 7833 7724
Web: www.house-of-black-forest-clocks.com
Contact: Jurgen Herr
Black Forest Clocks

Gifts/Museums

Käthe Wohlfahrt - "Weihnachtsdorf", (Christmas Village & Christmas Museum)
Hermgasse 1
91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber
Tel.: 09861 - 4090

Christmas novelties, and museum
Museum Contact: Mrs Felicitas Höptner
Tel: +49 (0)9861 409 365
E-mail: hoeptner@wohlfahrt.com
Shop Contact: Andrea Rank
Tel: +49 (0)9861 409116
E-mail: rank@wohlfahrt.com
Fax: +49 (0)9861 409 366
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Destination Greece
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Glyfada 16673
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Fax: +30 210 9651493
Mob: +30 6944 825251
email: julie@cruise-greece.com
Tour Operator

ITALY

Travel
Blue Star Italia
V. Filippo Corridoni 15, 1/c 00195 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 063 723487
Fax: +39 063 728573
Contact: Giancarlo Starocchia
E-m: bluestartv@tiscalinet.it

Gifts/Souvenirs/Leather

Mair Mair
Alstadt No 1, I- 39049 Sterzing, Vipiteno
Tel: +39 472 765 386
Fax: +39 472 766 386
Contact: Mr Mair
Souvenirs, Leather, Wine, etc

NETHERLANDS

Souvenirs/Restaurant

De Simonhoeve
Wagenweg 2
1145 PV Katwoude/Volendam
Tel: +31 299 36 58 28
info@simonehoeve.com
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Museums

Het Loo Palace
Koninklijk Park 1, 7315 JA Apeldoorn
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NORWAY

Clothing

Oslo Sweater Shop
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Fax: +47 22 11 06 48
Contact: Yonna Johnsen

SWITZERLAND

Restaurants

Swiss Folklore Restaurant Stadtkeller
Sternenplatz 3, CH-6004 Lucerne
Tel: +41 0 41 410 4733

email: info@stadtkeller.ch
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8045 Zurich
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E-Mail: info@albisguetli.ch

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Shopping

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E-m: info@etoea.org
Web: www.etoea.org
Contact: Tom Jenkins
European Tour Operators Association. Representing the interests of European and international tour operators at a political level in Europe and providing commercial opportunities for suppliers.

International Association of Tour Managers (IATM)
397 Walworth Road, London SE17 2AW
Tel: +44 020 7703 9154
Fax: +44 020 7703 0358
E-m: iatm@iatm.co.uk
Web: www.iatm.co.uk
Contact: Ron Julian
The Association for all professional Tour Managers.

Regions
UK: iatmbr@iatmbr.co.uk
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