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Wednesday 12 December 2012

Issue 2521

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DL Buys SQ's 49% Shareholding Of VS

Delta Air Lines has confirmed it will purchase Singapore Airlines' 49% stake in Virgin Atlantic for USD360 million.

DL and VS have signed a joint-venture agreement to create an expanded transatlantic network and enhance competition between North America and the UK, subject to regulatory approval.

VS chief executive Steve Ridgway says the deal will deliver more effective competition at Heathrow.

"The transatlantic market is VS's heartland—it's where we started. By aligning with DL we can continue to grow our North American network and offer greatly enhanced connectivity across the US," he says.

. . . Branson Keeps Stake

Under the deal, the Virgin Group and Sir Richard Branson will retain the majority 51% stake and Virgin Atlantic Airways will retain its brand and operating certificate.

Key features of the agreement include cost and revenue sharing, a combined transatlantic network with 31 peak-day roundtrip flights, cooperation on NYC-LON services, reciprocal frequent flyer benefits and shared access to lounges.

The venture is expected to be implemented by the end of 2013, if all approvals from US and European authorities are gained.

. . . And From SQ

In a statement, SQ says it had been looking to shed its stake in the carrier for 'some time' as the investment had not performed to expectations. The carriers will continue to honour commercial agreements, including codesharing and frequent flyer programme ties, says SQ.

CX Strikes Off, A Twist

Cathay Pacific flight attendants have voted not to strike over pay during the festive period, but reports say the union members are planning a work to rule—which may include no smiling, not serving some beverages or meals and offloading over-sized bags.

While there's no official release on the work to rule claims, a union spokesperson is quoted as saying 'in a nutshell it means passengers will still be able to reach their destinations except they are paying a five-star price to get a three-star service'.

Meanwhile, CX has welcomed the crew's decision not to strike. Talks between the two parties are said to be continuing.

Webjet Buys Zuji

Webjet has today announced it will acquire rival on-line travel agency Zuji in Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore for USD25 million.

Zuji, which is a subsidiary of Sabre Holdings' Travelocity.com, is the top OTA in air tickets in Hong Kong and Singapore, and is the official packaging partner for Virgin Australia's Blue Holidays. The acquisition is expected to boost Webjet's total transaction value by around 30%. The deal, if it passes regulatory scrutiny, is expected to wrap up in Q1 2013.

South Pacific Cyclone

Meteorologists are warning that a cyclone has formed north east of Fiji—forecast, on its current path, to head towards Samoa and past Fiji towards New Zealand. Winds of up to 185km per hour and a 4m swell are expected. An advisory for small crafts remains in effect, says Polynesian Explorer.

Travelpport: Extra NZ Bags

Travelpport-connected Kiwi agents can now book Air New Zealand's prepaid extra bags service through Galileo using Electronic Miscellaneous Documents (EMD). The service can be purchased at the time of booking, up to three hours before departure for international flights or up to 30 minutes prior for domestic flights.

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World's End Top Picks

Doomsdayers that believe the world will end on 21 Dec are reportedly buying up one-way tickets to towns believed to be safe havens—says Skyscanner.

However, they appear to be getting mythology mixed up with the Mayan calendar by buying tickets to Sirince, Turkey, which is said to be the birthplace of the Greek goddess Artemis or where the Virgin Mary ascended to heaven. Meanwhile, others are travelling to the southern France town of Bugarach, which has a mountain believed by some to be an alien 'garage' where extraterrestrials will apparently ditch earth when Armageddon comes, taking a select few humans with them. Sirince has seen a 30% increase in one ticket purchases, while Bugarach saw a 40% jump, says the poll.

HA Tops OTP In Oct

Hawaiian Airlines has again topped the US Department of Transport's on-time-performance statistics, with HA flights arriving on time at a rate of 94.8% in Oct. HA cancelled only 0.2% of its flights, representing 12 cancellations out of more than 6200 flights.

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New 72-Hr Visa-Free Beijing Stopover

Kiwis transiting through Beijing will be able to stay in the city for up to 72 hours without a visa from 01 Jan, saving them around \$140pp, as it looks to ramp up its tourism industry.

The Beijing Tourism Development Committee has announced the '72-hour visa-free stay' policy for residents of 45 countries including New Zealand.

Once the policy comes into effect,

Hue Airport Closure

Phu Bai International Airport in Hue, Vietnam will be closed Mar-Nov next year for renovations and upgrades, HG Travel has advised. Any clients who have bookings to Hue in this time will need to take a flight to Da Nang and then overland transfers (which take around two hours) from there to Hue; or take the overnight train to Hue.

New DXB Airport Delayed

After a lengthy delay, it is expected passengers services to/from Dubai's second airport, Al Maktoum Airport, will commence late next year. Chairman of Dubai Airports Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed al Maktoum says the terminal will hopefully open before the next Air Show in Dubai, reports *Reuters*, and is designed to handle 160 million passengers each year.

KE's Korea Discounts

Korean Air passengers can receive discounts and bonuses at tourist sites, theatres, restaurants, shopping malls, banks and transport in Korea through the carrier's Excellent Boarding Pass promotion. Passengers need to hold on to their pass (with KE flight number) and present it, along with their ID, within seven days of the departure date at any of the 27 partners that are taking part in the programme. The airline plans to accept more partners to the programme.

the government will look to support it with plans including expanding shopping channels for transit tourists, promoting the development of night markets, upgrading the airport transfer convenience centre and introducing safety management measures.

The move has been welcomed by local China specialist wholesaler Acrossia and couldn't be better timed following the launch of its new stopover programme, says general manager commercial Wendy Stanton.

"Clients wishing to stopover in Beijing immediately reduce their cost by \$140 per person as they no longer require a China Tourist Visa for a stay of up to 72 hours, and this re-affirms Beijing to be a 'good value for money' stopover city en-route to UK/Europe," she says.

... And PVG Too?

Unconfirmed reports claim Shanghai authorities have also moved to introduce a 72-hour visa free option for selected travellers to the city. There is no official word on the move, but local sources believe any such extension to its current 28-hour visa free policy would include countries such as New Zealand. It would also make the city a more attractive stopover option for Kiwis travelling to UK/Europe on NZ's services via Asia.

LH Premium Economy

Lufthansa says it will fit its entire long-haul fleet with premium economy product. "The substantially upgraded economy product will appeal to both leisure travellers seeking additional comfort and business travellers," says the carrier in a statement. A team will be formed early next year to design and implement the product.

AF's PAR-SXB Train

Air France will link Strasbourg to Paris Charles de Gaulle by high speed rail from 02 Apr, offering four daily services for connecting passengers. Customers travelling on AF short- and medium-haul flights make one reservation and have one ticket for the flight and rail service, and in the train they will be seated in first class. The service, in collaboration with SNCF French Railways, is available for purchase from 13 Dec.

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Hello Tomorrow



10% Off Exodus

Exodus has launched its 2013/14 Discovery, Culture and Wildlife brochure, featuring destinations including Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, the Americans and Asia—and to celebrate, the company is offering 10% off tours booked by 31 Jan, says New Zealand representative Adventure World.

Exodus offers small group tours for all ages, comfort levels and clients, with a focus on experiencing each country's unique identity from local traditions to lifestyle and cuisine, says Adventure World's Dave Nicholson.

Trips featured in the brochure include Walking the French Riviera, eight days from \$1585 (with discount), a relaxed walk exploring the Cote d'Azur.

The nine-day Ancient Algeria, now from \$3169, sees clients experience some of the most interesting archaeological sites that still remain in the area. A 13-day cycling trip through Namibia (now from \$3069) also includes game drives in the Etosha National Park.

Merry Christmas

our last issue for the year is **Thu 20 Dec** and the first issue for 2013 is **Mon 21 Jan**

Holiday Updates or **Stop Press** e-mails will be published in between these dates should the sky fall on Chicken Licken, or when there are other important breaking news stories.

Contact
tony@tabsontravel.co.nz
or 021 388 315



Sofitel Wellington Is Coming In 2014

Sofitel has announced the development of the first internationally-branded five-star hotel in more than 20 years, the Sofitel Wellington, which will open in 2014.

Located on Bolton Street, the property will be within walking distance of the Beehive, Te Papa, the harbour and the capital's shopping, dining and entertainment precinct.

"The development of the Sofitel will play a major role in further elevating Wellington's international profile," says Wouter de Graaf, area general manager Sofitel New Zealand. "It is a long time since a hotel development of this status and quality has been announced in the national capital and it will help attract significant



increases in tourism, business travel and conferences to the city."

The announcement currently makes Sofitel the only international five-star brand to be present in New Zealand's three most important destinations; Auckland, Queenstown and Wellington, it says.

Peugeot Reminder

Peugeot EuroLease reminds agents that their pre-Christmas prices and deals, including free fees outside France in selected models, seven-nine free days (depending on the model) and special pricing for leases of 100 days or more expires 15 Dec. However, as EuroLease staff won't be working 15 Dec, bookings received on that day will be honoured and processed Mon 17 Dec.

Star's New LHR Home

Star Alliance carriers will be located together in Heathrow Airport's new Terminal 2 when it opens in 2014, allowing easier and more varied connections.

Star airlines currently operate from T1, 3 and 4. Having the airlines in one place allows the minimum connecting time between flights to be halved to 45 minutes and increases the number of possible flight connections by 31%, says the airline alliance.

The new terminal, which will also be home to Aer Lingus flights and Virgin Atlantic's new domestic routes, is the latest phase of a GBP11 billion transformation of the airport.

Moving the airlines to the new terminal enables the early closure of Terminal 1, meaning all passengers will be travelling through new or refurbished terminals from 2016, says LHR.

EK Arrives At HKT

Phuket welcomed its first Emirates flight yesterday, becoming the airline's 128th destination. The daily Dubai-Phuket service is operated by a three-class A340-300 aircraft.

Sheraton Bali Kuta

Sheraton Hotels & Resorts is celebrating the opening of the Sheraton Bali Kuta Resort. Part of PT Indonesian Paradise Island, a retail complex with more than 200 shops, the resort will offer 203 guest rooms and suites, three dining venues and nine event spaces. Opening rates start from USD225 plus taxes per night in a deluxe guest room, breakfast and a one-way airport transfer.

British Open Packages

The Events Travel Office has seven-night land packages to the British Open Golf Championship packages including accommodation 15-22 Jul, a season ticket for the Open Championship at the Muirfield Golf Course in Edinburgh in Jul, priced from \$3199pp s/t. Price also includes three dinners at the hotel, packed lunches for championship days, transfers and full Scottish breakfast daily.



Twelve Days Of Christmas: DAY SIX

Question: Name the airport in Shanghai, served by Air New Zealand?

Correct answer: Pudong.

Winner: Jodie Robertson, Orbit Corporate Travel Parnell.

Prize: Bubbles and Chocolates.

Day 7 question now viewable on www.acrossia.com entries close 1pm Wednesday.

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Tassie's Tourism Focus

The Tasmanian Government has added AUD1 million into marketing the state through partnerships with key airlines. "We're currently seeing record flights to and from Tasmania," says Minister for Tourism Scott Bacon upon the release of the *Tasmanian Access Report*. Tourism officials are also seeking to level the peaks and troughs the state experiences in tourist numbers by increasing the number of events held there, which include the V8 Supercars, the AFL and high-profile events at MONA. An access development advisor will also be appointed to work with stakeholders and airlines on access, by sea and air, in the future.

Star Lounge At EZE

A new Star Alliance lounge opens this month at Buenos Aires Pizarini International Airport, located on the second floor of Terminal B and offering a 'uniquely local flavour'. Open 24 hours, seven days a week, the lounge offers 130+ seats, free Wi-Fi, business centre, showers and a variety of hot and cold snacks and beverages.

WA Whale Sharks Safe

Whale sharks and their migration patterns aren't affected by eco-tourism, as long as it is well regulated, a new study has reportedly found. Tourism has little effect on whale sharks and their migration patterns, with those that encounter tourists just as likely to return to the reef as those that don't, according to research conducted over five years at Ningaloo by the Australian Institute of Marine Science and University of Western Australia. The study found that the Ningaloo ecotourism industry in its current form is ecologically sustainable into the future, the *West Australian* reported.

Egypt Vote Protests, No Tourists Targeted

As Egyptians prepare to vote on the country's new constitution Sat, international media reports suggest protests in major cities could become intense—however Innovative Travel says since the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak's regime earlier this year, no anger or violence has been aimed at tourists visiting the country.

There will be a period of increased protests over the next two or three days, however this is not a time when New Zealanders traditionally visit Egypt.

"Our own feedback from clients con-

tinues to be positive," says Innovative managing director Robyn Galloway. "We have an advantage in that our head office is in Tahir Square, so our local drivers and guides know when to avoid traffic or 'people jams'."

Galloway emphasises that the company's Egypt-based business partner, Elhamy El Zayat, has been voted chair of the Egyptian Tourism Authority, and is playing a key role in discussions with the Muslim Brotherhood-led Government about the future of tourism in the country. "The rules have not changed for tourists," she says.



Record A380 Day For Auckland Airport

Auckland Airport saw a record three A380s through on Mon after China Southern Airlines flew a superjumbo carrying 250 travel agents as well as airline executives into the city on a massive famil. The A380 received a water arch salute while the delegation was greeted with a traditional Maori welcome. The famil is part of efforts by the airport and other Kiwi tourism groups to promote New Zealand in China.

EDI Tattoo Packages

Edinburgh's famous military tattoo is on 02-24 Aug and Showbiz Events and Travel has tickets and packages to the show. Tickets start at \$150pp and packages are from \$379pp s/t including top category seats and overnight accommodation with full Scottish breakfast.

New At CWT AsPac

CWT Meetings and Events has appointed Steven Smith as senior director for Asia Pacific, based in Singapore. CWT AsPac says the MICE market in the region has significant growth potential and it is committed to investing in its meetings and events organisation.

Topdeck Africa Offer

Youth-travel brand Topdeck is offering 5% savings when clients book at least six months in advance on the 19-day Desert Tracker Africa trip from Cape Town to Livingstone, Zambia, priced from \$1639pp s/t plus USD650 local payment. Highlights include a cultural tour of Cape Town, the Fish River Canyon, Namib Naukluft Park, game drives in Etosha National Park, a walk with Kalahari bushmen and canoe rides in the Okavango Delta. The itinerary is available as a 25-day itinerary Cape Town-Johannesburg.

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Industry Diary

JANUARY 2013

Tourism Malaysia Discover Malaysia and Sarawak
Christchurch: Mon 14,
The George Hotel, 50 Park Terrace 1800-2030.

APRIL 2013

Asia Now 2013 Seminars
Hamilton: Mon 15.
Tauranga: Tue 16.
Napier: Wed 17.
Palmerston North: Thu 18.
Whangarei: Mon 22.
Auckland: Tue 23.

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Tempo's Spain & France

Tempo Holidays has added new journeys in Spain, France and Italy to its just-released 2013 France and Spain programme. The new additions include an eight-night Cycling in Provence tour, priced from \$1233pp s/t; an eight-day Monaco on the Romantic Rivas cruise, priced from \$3674pp s/t; and a three-day Pamplona Tapas Experience for food lovers, from \$253pp s/t. The operator also has 10% earlybird discounts on select tours.

News & Product

What's New For GO Samoa 2013/14

GO Holidays has released its 2013/14 Samoa and American Samoa brochure, featuring new accommodation and sightseeing options.

The newly-introduced Orator Hotel on the outskirts of Apia features standalone villas, pool, restaurant and bar, while next Jun the new Saletooga Sands Resort & Spa will open in a secluded sheltered bay on Upolu.

In American Samoa, clients can opt for an Aoloaufou Tour into the mountains of Tutuila Island; take a Mount Alava Wilderness Excursion begin-

ning on the National Park tramway trail head and hiking past waterfalls and pre-historic sites; or on a Round Island Safari, they can explore American Samoa from the ocean.

Element Pedal Power

Guests at Starwood's eco-friendly Element Hotels can charge their smartphone or tablet by hooking it up to a stationary bike attached to a generator and pedalling away in each of the properties' fitness centres. The hotel chain has a focus on both eco design and healthy living.

Kangaroo Is. Festival

Chefs George Calombaris and Maggie Beer are two of the big names confirmed for the second annual Kangaroo Island Feastival next Apr (25-30 Apr), says South Australia Tourism Commission. The six-day programme features 15 events including themed dinners, table surfing parties for visitors hosted by local chefs at their own homes, a Utes and Boots picnic and the secrets of making gin revealed over dinner with distillery owners Jon and Sarah Lark. On Sun 28 Apr, there's the Feastival Big Day Out, with stalls, the Kangaroo Island Signature Dish Competition and demonstrations. See tourkangarooisland.com.au

New For Vic Zoo

A new giraffe and ostrich attraction has been opened at Victoria's Halls Gap Zoo in the Grampians—the state's largest regional zoo. The new attraction will give visitors a closer encounter with animals including a new platform for hand-feeding giraffe Sumari.

Four-star Franz Joseph

The Scenic Hotel Franz Josef has achieved Qualmark four-star accreditation, and a new Qualmark Enviro-Silver rating. Hotel general manager Maree Welgus says the rating comes in time for the completion of the final stage of the multi million dollar refurbishment "It's great to have the final 28 rooms of the hotel up to four-star standard," says Maree. "All 130 rooms are refurbished and refurnished, ready for the coming summer season."

All beds at Scenic Hotel Franz Josef Glacier now have the signature Scenic bedding system that utilises feather and wool mattress toppers, a pillow menu and feather and down duvets.



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The Anaheim Insider



Here we are another year and the next column will be written in 2013.

Hope you've all had a great year, it's been wonderful for us, we have been able to welcome many of you to re-visit Anaheim OC, or come for the first time. There are always changes.

The exchange rate NZ dollar versus US\$ has made our destination even more affordable, and we are definitely seeing the effects of that, plus the great fares and packages being put together by your wholesale partners. Anaheim LOVES kiwis – so keep sending them ☺

We have a large team coming down for Visit USA 21 February. Only Auckland this year I'm afraid, as they are doing 4 centres in Australia first, and so the time for us is very limited sadly ☹. Why is Australia so BIG! 2014 we will try to get in first and see more of you.

Thank you all of you for your support, it is a pleasure working with you all.

The Anaheim team wishes you a fabulous Christmas and I look forward to "talking" to you all again in the New Year.

Travel safely and enjoy yourselves,

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Pip



★★★★★

PO Box 25-482, St Heliers, Auckland 1740



Celebrity Solstice Today



Unprecedented Luxury On Solstice

From the 7.6m tree suspended in the atrium and half acre of real lawn to the two-storey wine tower and Bulgari amenities, once on-board the Celebrity Solstice the reason for the hype around her arrival downunder is obvious.

Solstice is the highest rating ship in Australia according to the *Berlitz Guide to Cruising* and *Cruise Ships 2012*, and Celebrity describes her style as 'modern luxury'—or five-star service without the fuss.

"It's a major milestone to introduce a ship of this size and calibre to our market, which you could only previously experience in European or Caribbean waters," says Celebrity Cruises Australia commercial director Adam Armstrong.

The ship's style is evident from her furniture to her fittings, in the displays of art and blown glass sculptures created in the on-board glass show, and the clever use of space. A record 85% of staterooms have balconies, 90% have ocean views, and all boast Egyptian bed cotton linen, LCD screens and Wi-Fi access.

"She's a cruise ship like no other cruise ship, and she's clearly going to redefine cruising in the South Pacific," says Royal Caribbean International sales manager New Zealand Mark Kinchley. "It's down to the quality of the amenities and facilities on board, the cuisine, it's positioned so there is such a difference in the product."

... Agent Feedback

A group of Kiwi agents who were lucky enough to take part on a one-night sailing on the weekend were blown away by the experience.

"It's by far one of the best large ship experiences I've ever had. It was really open-plan, the lighting was

Spa Holiday At Sea

The Solstice boasts 130 AquaClass staterooms which are designed as 'mini-spas' located close to the AquaSpa by Elemis. Guests are given unlimited access to the Relaxation Room and Persian Garden; exclusive access to restaurant Blu; personal spa concierge; aromatherapy-fragranced rooms; custom-blended bath products and other luxuries.

Mark's Top Tips

Solstice tips from RCI's New Zealand sales manager Mark Kinchley.

- The most spectacular viewing point for sailaway is Sunset Bar or The Lawn Club.
- Entertainment isn't restricted to the theatre—check out the hot glass show or Molecular Bar, or the mixologist in the Ice Bar.
- If you want a quieter area the Solstice deck, the highest point of the ship, is a nice place to get away.



Cuisine Of Kings

Solstice's style extends to its dining options, with 10 restaurants on-board and specialty dining options like Murano (a USD40 cover charge will get clients a three-course silver service menu with options like lobster bisque and chateaubriand)—urge clients to pre-book as they fill up quickly. Meanwhile the steak at Tuscan Grille came highly recommended by one agent who said it was 'the best I've ever had—and I eat a lot of steak'. The main dining room, The Grand Epernay, lives up to its name with an impressive two-storey tower of wine bottles while the Oceanview Café buffet is divided into different stations with a set-up that Cruiseabout Takapuna agent Jaimie McDonald described as one of the best he had experienced.



The Grass Is Greener

They say the grass is always greener—and in this case, it's true. Celebrity Solstice boasts New Zealand's first lawn at sea, half an acre of real grass on the top deck which is an ideal spot for a game of lawn bowls, picnic or a spot of sunbathing. Pictured enjoying the lawn at sailaway on Sun night are Royal Caribbean's national sales manager Australia and New Zealand Peter McCormack; and local RCI team Kate Ogg and Mark Kinchley.



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Fares	\$2,329	3,029	3,729	6,729

Fares are per person twin share.

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7 Mar 14 & 20 Mar 14

	Interior from*	Oceanview from*	Balcony from*	Mini-Suite from*
Fares	\$2,299	2,999	3,699	6,699

Fares are per person twin share.

New Zealand

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Fares are per person twin share.

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