

travelbulletin

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Giving agents the edge

AGENT INSIGHT

Sandra Murray on agents getting back to work

PUZZLE BULLETIN

Win a £50 M&S voucher with the Su Doku game

TRAINING

The growth of online training and why it's here to stay

HOTELS, RESORTS & SPAS UPDATE

Grand reopenings across the globe

EASTERN PROMISE

Safely selling holidays to the Asia-Pacific region



BELLEAIR ⁵⁰TH ANNIVERSARY
HOLIDAYS

Malta International Airport opens to UK visitors on 15th July 2020. Air Malta, British Airways, easyJet, and Ryanair aim to resume services from 17 UK airports.

CHEERIO LOCKDOWN - VIVA MALTA

Welcome to Safe Malta

Malta is a destination that successfully managed Covid-19 to keep the pandemic under control, implementing effective measures acknowledged by the likes of the European Commission, the Commonwealth, the World Health Organisation and the UNWTO. Having carried out major improvements to ensure holidays in Malta are enjoyable and safe, the destination is ready to welcome visitors from the UK and Ireland once again.

To learn more: www.visitmalta.com



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Valid for NEW confirmed bookings made between 1st July & 31st August 2020. Love2shop vouchers applies to any cruise holiday (must include flights) for any duration and any packaged holiday (must include flights). Bookings under £500 will not qualify for Love2Shop vouchers. Vouchers cannot be exchanged for cash. Vouchers codes can take up to 30 days to be sent from day of incentive claim. All new claims must be sent via the new form - www.belleair.co.uk/incentive. For more information on this incentive, please contact sales@belleair.co.uk

THIS WEEK



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AGENT INSIGHT

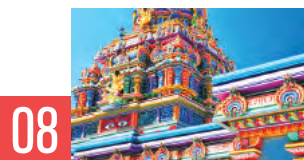
Sandra Murray reflects on travel agents emerging from lockdown.



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AGENT BULLETIN

Agent incentives and destination training opportunities.



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PUZZLE BULLETIN

Win a £50 M&S voucher with the Su Doku puzzle.



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AGENT TRAINING

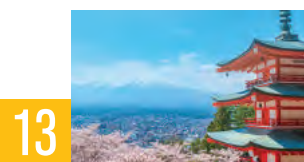
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As Asia-Pacific reopens, there are great selling opportunities.

CRUISE CHALLENGES

The cruise industry took a serious hit in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, but industry leaders are determined to show resilience and encourage bookings. Georgia Lewis reports.



Cruise industry leaders are seeking science-based solutions for safe sailing.

AT THE beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the cruise industry was in the spotlight after infections were reported on some ships and thousands of stranded passengers faced onerous repatriation journeys home. But as the travel industry seeks to reopen, the cruise industry is determined to rebuild consumer confidence and attract bookings.

Royal Caribbean Group and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings are collaborating to develop enhanced cruise health and safety standards in response to the pandemic. The two companies have formed an expert panel which has been working since last month. The panel will offer its initial recommendations by the end of August. The work will be open source so it can be adopted by any company or industry that would benefit from the group's scientific and medical insights.

"This unprecedented disease requires us to develop unprecedented standards in health and safety," said Richard D. Fain, chairman

and CEO, Royal Caribbean Group. "Bringing aboard these respected experts to guide us forward demonstrates our commitment to protecting our guests, our crews and the communities we visit."

Meanwhile, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and Carnival Corporation will host the WTTC/Carnival Corporation Global Science Summit on COVID-19 on July 28 from 2pm-5pm BST. The summit, which is open to the public, will share the latest science and evidence-based best practices related to prevention, detection, treatment and mitigation of COVID-19. The event will see global tourism leaders, WTTC members, government agencies, destination partners, trade and businesses, share information that can be used to inform practical, adaptable and science-based solutions.

To find out more, go to www.covidsciencesummit.com/

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Iberostar rolls out 45 hotel reopenings globally

IBEROSTAR IS starting its delayed summer season for 2020 with a staggered roll-out of hotel reopenings across multiple markets.

The schedule of reopenings commenced last month with the Iberostar Cristina (Majorca) welcoming its first local and international guests since lockdown. With this experience, the hotel group put into practice new hygiene and safety measures and protocols, which it has developed in partnership with a medical consultancy.

The company is operating again in Montenegro and Tunisia, as well as Spain, with its properties in Majorca and Andalusia; while in the Americas, it has reopened four hotels across Cancún, Riviera Maya and Riviera Nayarit (all in Mexico) and one in Jamaica.



Family fun awaits at Iberostar Alcudia Park in Majorca.

Over summer, Iberostar plans to open a further 45 hotels in destinations such as the Balearics, Canary Islands, Majorca, Montenegro and Tunisia. Hotels in Europe and North Africa, Greece, Portugal and Morocco will re-open, along with Cuba in the Americas.

Working closely with a medical consultancy comprised of experts in

public health, health security, virology and epidemiology, the Majorcan company has designed more than 300 sanitary safety measures to protect guests. During lockdown, the group also took the opportunity to focus on sustainability and is working with the World Tourism Organisation, the World Economic Forum and One Planet.

Agents invited to partner with currency supplier

A NEW foreign currency supplier is incentivising travel agents to form partnerships, with incentives such as an extra margin for selling currency to clients and access to cash at cost for their own trips.

Spendology is being promoted as a supplier of hygienic, secure currency with all notes delivered in mint-sealed bricks; all cash handled in sterile areas by staff wearing PPE; serial numbers for each bundle of cash; and bundles dispatched by Royal Mail Special Delivery in sealed envelopes so it is trackable.

Karen Gee, marketing and business development director of Spendology, said, "I am delighted to invite the travel trade to partner with us to access a welcome extra margin to top up their financial year, as to do so requires only minimal integration with most activity outsourced to us. We are also keen to get everyone back travelling, so travel professionals can source Clean Currency mark-up-free for their own trips." *Agents interested in partnerships should email love@cleancurrency.co.uk*

Advantage launches an app to boost appointment booking

ADVANTAGE TRAVEL Partnership has launched an app for its members and formed a partnership with Silver Travel Advisor.

The app, Appoint.Travel, is to assist agents in making bookings for face-to-face and virtual appointments, so that they can reach all customers, regardless of whether or not they are still self-isolating because of COVID-19. Members who sign up will receive a unique link that they can share with their clients through their websites, social media and email. Clients can click through to the booking page which will show the agents' availability of face-to-face, video or phone appointments which can be booked.



Agents will be able to manage their appointments online as well as input their hours of business, block out time slots as required and supply customers with business information. The customer will be able to select holiday preferences in advance of the appointment, such as the destination, departure date, party size and duration to help the agent prepare for the meeting.



Donkeys declared safe on Blackpool's beaches

VISIT BLACKPOOL is ready to welcome staycation visitors with upgraded safety guidelines covering everything from hygienic hotel stays to the seaside resort's famous donkey rides, which have received We're Good To Go accreditation. Other measures include: Accommodation providers introducing deep cleaning regimes between guests; Meal services to be pre-booked and timed; Shared facilities only accessible to one group at a time; Timed tickets for some indoor attractions; One-way systems, floor markings and queue management systems; and encouragement of cashless payments. (Image credit: Dave Nelson Photography)

Air optimism despite Portugal air corridor exclusion

THE DECISION by the UK government to exclude Portugal, apart from Madeira, Porto Santo and the Azores, from the air corridor policy, has been criticised by the Portuguese Tourism Board, but a number of airlines remain optimistic and still have flights scheduled to Portuguese airports for the rest of July.

Alexandre Abrantes, from the Public Health Research Center, NOVA National School of Public Health, which consulted with the tourism board on post-lockdown travel safety protocols, said, "Portugal has good COVID-19 epidemiological indicators, has a national health system with good capacity to respond to the pandemic, good transportation system by air, road and train, and is



Flights are still departing for Lisbon despite quarantine restrictions.

a state where law and order are practiced. The United Kingdom decision to exclude Portugal from its safe tourist corridors lacks technical and scientific rigour and transparency."

Despite this criticism, data from travel and aviation analytics company, Cirium, found that 1,005 flights between July 10 and July 31 have been scheduled from

UK airports to Portuguese destinations, including Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton, Stansted and Manchester. The top four Portuguese destinations for flights in this period are Faro (the Algarve), Lisbon, Funchal (Madeira) and Ponta Delgado.

The top five airlines flying these routes are easyJet, Ryanair, Jet2, British Airways and Wizz Air.

A&K's demand for bubble holidays is not set to burst

WITH PRIVACY and limited exposure to the general public becoming major holiday priorities, especially at the premium end of the market, Abercrombie & Kent (A&K) is reporting increased demand for "bubble holidays", where guests are prepared to pay for privacy on luxury tours.

The company is offering a range of private tours across different destinations. Private sailing experiences include a luxury yacht cruise of the Galapagos islands for a maximum of 14 guests; and a cruise along Italy's Amalfi coast, taking in the stunning island of Capri (pictured).

Private island holidays are also experiencing a surge in demand for A&K with destinations such as the Maldives, Indonesia and Cambodia on offer in this exclusive segment.



The Galapagos islands, along with Ecuador, can be visited by private jet, or guests can book a wildlife safari world tour, including the Philippines, Kenya, Rwanda, Malaysia, India and Madagascar.

www.abercrombiekent.co.uk

Hard Rock is rocking safety all over the world

THE HARD Rock Hotel group has implemented strict safety protocols for all its properties worldwide. All hotels have implemented SAFE + SOUND, a programme developed by a team of hospitality and gaming experts in collaboration with worldwide health and sanitisation specialists, including Ecolab and NSF International. Under the new standards, each hotel is independently assessed by NSF International and required to pass a rigorous 262-point inspection before reopening.

Just in time for summer travel, all-inclusive Hard Rock Hotel properties in Cancun, Los Cabos, Riviera Maya, Punta Cana and Vallarta have reopened. Additionally, Hard Rock Hotels open around the globe include Dublin, Davos and the new waterside hotel in Amsterdam. Asian properties are open in the Maldives, Desaru Coast, Singapore, Shenzhen, Penang, Pattaya and Goa, while the coastal resort in Dalian had its grand opening on July 1. Hotels in Ibiza, Tenerife and Bali are slated to welcome guests back by August 1.



Small and safe: Cruising adapts with private voyages

AQUA EXPEDITIONS is offering savings of between 10% and 15% on private charter cruises. With the choice of sailing the Mekong River (pictured), Peruvian Amazon, and the coastal waters of Eastern Indonesia, on a variety of itineraries ranging from three to 12 nights, guests will embark on private journeys to some of the most remote locations in the world. Highly tailored expeditions are created for each group, with a strong focus on getting close to nature and enjoying gourmet cuisine for every meal. To find out more via the company's agent portal, log on to www.agent.aquaexpeditions.com/



AGENT INSIGHT

SANDRA MURRAY
NORMANTON, YORKSHIRE

I DON'T think anything like COVID-19 has affected so many different industries. It affects everyone from every walk of life and, of course, the travel industry has been hit in so many ways that no one could have guessed – flights, cruising, hotels, swimming pools, museums, restaurants, pubs and many more sectors.

It was surprising to see so many people still going to parks and beauty spots when we were supposed to stay inside, and it would not surprise me if there is a second wave of the virus. But we need to focus on positive thinking – things are moving in the right direction for travelling, so let's hope it continues!

I asked a few people if they had been doing any training during the lockdown and found two trains of thought – some thought as they were furloughed they couldn't be bothered, while others said they have done Zoom training and webinars when they had time.

But for those who were still working, they didn't really have the time to do any training, as they were too busy changing holidays, chasing refunds, and hanging on the phone for hours on behalf of their clients. It was all very frustrating, especially while not really earning much money. There is still plenty of doubt as to what is safe to book this year and quite a few people want to wait a bit longer before making decisions for 2021, while certainly for some clients, the lack of prompt refunds is causing concern and anger.

It was sad to hear about Shearings and Funway, but it is good news that Leger plans to relaunch the Shearings brand. I hope the rules for cruising change soon so that cruises can go ahead – the government needs to get a grip on helping out the travel industry.

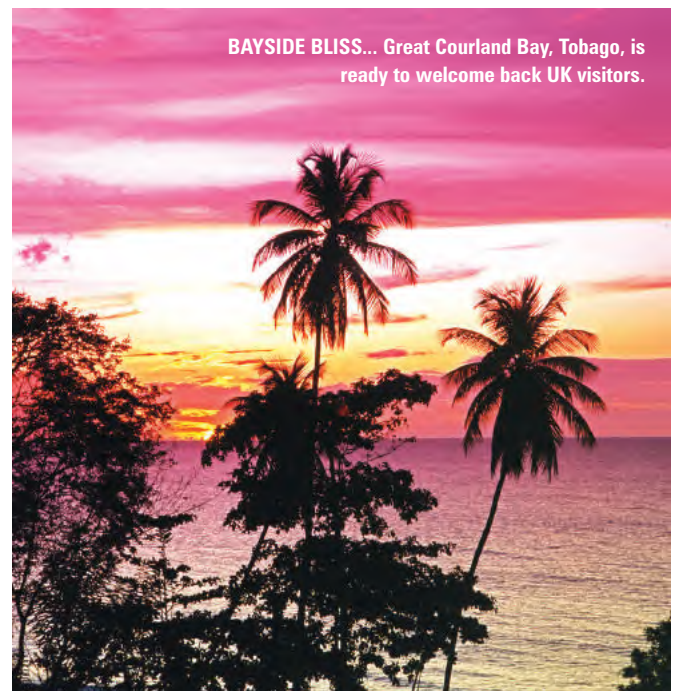
In events news, I have moved the Yorkshire Travel Ball to November 19. WTM is the week before and I think by the 19th, we will be ready for a good Yorkshire party. Hopefully, things will have improved by then – there's that positive thinking again! I didn't want to cancel as the animal charities have been badly affected by COVID-19 and they are desperate for help. If anyone is interested in joining the fun, please email me on s.murray922@btinternet.com

Caribbean destinations ready for UK visitors

WITH 19 Caribbean destinations included in the UK government's initial list of countries exempt from quarantine restrictions, the tourism boards from the region are ready to welcome back visitors. Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Bonaire, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Curacao, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Grenada, Montserrat, St Barts, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands are on the list released by the government.

"Our countries can now go back to offering their visitors the remarkable experience of a Caribbean holiday, whether it be beaches, music, rum cocktails, birdwatching, diving or sailing," said Carol Hay, business development director, Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) Chapter, UK and Europe. "The Caribbean economy is heavily dependent on tourism and everyone from the bar staff to the boat captains will be happy to welcome UK visitors back."

Ms Hay urged consumers to book via travel agents and tour operators: "Travel agents and tour operators will have absolutely up-to-date information and be able to offer excellent advice to reassure and guide people through the booking process."



Dominic Fedee, tourism minister for Tobago, said a new online campaign is the first step for welcoming visitors back.

"As we diligently work to jumpstart our hospitality industry and support our local citizens who depend on tourism for their livelihood, our efforts to build back our tourism industry will be ongoing," Mr Fedee added.

Ian Kerr, managing director for Sunset Resorts, Jamaica, commented, "We've spent these past few months focused on all the positive changes we can make to ensure that everyone who comes here to escape the pressures of daily life – and those stressors have multiplied tenfold in the past several weeks – can enjoy a worry-free vacation."



OH, CANADA! Learn more about the spectacular Rocky Mountains with Destination Canada's new online training portal. See below for more information.

AGENT TRAINING

- **MALTA REOPENED** its borders to UK travellers on July 15 and, with expectations of increased bookings, the tourism board has launched a new agent training programme. The Malta Tourism Authority UK trade team has created a 'Reopening Course' for agents, which includes eight modules, covering arrival, the 'Certified Compliant' concept, dining, accommodation, getting around the archipelago, and more to make sure agents are up to date with the latest changes. For more information visit www.malta-training.com
- **DESTINATION CANADA** has launched a new Canada Specialist training portal. Pulling together various training schemes of commercial, provincial, city and territory partners, travel agents can now go to just one website to find these Canada training programmes, all in one hub. Initially agents will find training programmes from Air Canada, Rocky Mountaineer, Vancouver, Montreal, Ontario and Alberta. The site links to virtual Canada, featuring information on attractions, landmarks and festivals, as well as the latest videos. To find out more, go to www.travelbulletin.co.uk/travelgym
- **THE ADVANTAGE** Travel Partnership has expanded its partnership with the travel website for the over-50s, Silver Travel Advisor and, as part of this partnership, Advantage members will be able to become an 'Accredited Agent' with Silver Travel Advisor by completing a training course which will help members understand the mature market. Agents will be able to choose from training via an online platform or attending one of three virtual training sessions. The online training is split into five modules, including the nine different market segments. The online courses will go live on July 17. The virtual training will be hosted by Jennie Carr and Jane Silk from Silver Travel Advisor. The virtual sessions will be spread across two days and will take approximately four hours. The first virtual course takes place on 29 and 30 July 2020, with additional ones scheduled for September and October. For more information, go to www.silvertraveladvisor.com

AGENT INCENTIVES

EXPEDIA IS launching a new incentive programme for UK travel agents to help maximise their commission in the wake of COVID-19. Through its Travel Agent Affiliate Program (Expedia TAAP) agents will be able to earn up to 42% more in booking revenue. Expedia TAAP operates four tiers – Standard, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Ordinarily agents work their way up the tiers, starting at Standard, unlocking greater benefits as they grow their business.

Under the new scheme, any agency based in the UK joining Expedia TAAP, as well as existing partners that haven't used the tool for over 12 months, will automatically be enrolled as a Silver partner for the rest of the year. To find out more, go to www.expediapartnersolutions.com/

REGENT SEVEN Seas Cruises has launched a booking incentive for travel agents called Sell & Sail, where UK travel partners will have the chance to enjoy a luxurious cruise.

Any agent who makes three new bookings on voyages scheduled between 2021 and 2022, will earn a free cruise for two people, sailing a 2021-2022 voyage for up to 14 nights.

All eligible bookings must be registered at www.rssc.com/2020SellandSail by August 15.

CYPLON HOLIDAYS' incentive programme for 2020 is continuing as planned for the rest of the year. Incentives include free week-long half board stays on Adriatic Cruises, as well as top properties across Cyprus, Greece and Morocco, and additional discounts for selected hotels when clients book the same hotel, through the same travel agent.

For more information, go to www.cyplon.co.uk/agent-incentives-2020

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COMPETITIONS

Watch a recent webinar hosted by Hummingbird Travel and The Maldivian High Commission to the UK, then answer 2 simple questions to be in with the chance of winning one of 3 bottles of champagne.

For all competitions visit

http://www.travelbulletin.co.uk/component/rsform/form/1607-Hummingbird_Competition

SUDOKU

Win a £50 M&S voucher in the **travelbulletin** Su Doku prize puzzle

Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, column and each of the 3 x 3 squares contains the digits 1-9.

Once you have completed the puzzle, simply identify the numbers that relate to the letters, A, B, C and D then e-mail the solution, with your name, company name, and full postal address plus phone and ABTA number if applicable to:

competition@travelbulletin.co.uk

Closing date for entries is Thursday, July 30th. Solution and new puzzle will appear in our next issue.

The winner for July 3rd is Muriel Morgan, Travel Counsellors.

July 3rd Solution: A=4 B=7 C=9 D=8

A		4	1	9			7	3	6
	7		9						
	5	3							4
B	9		3	5	8			4	1
		2	4		3		5	8	
C	6	5			4	9	2		3
	4							1	8
							4		7
D	8	9	7			4	3	6	



WHERE AM I?

LOCATED ON the main island of an archipelago country, this city features a luxury resort area, international airport, golf course and marina and is home to a large population of Indian heritage. Sri Siva Subramaniya Swami is the city's large Hindu temple.

CROSSWORD

Fill in the crossword to reveal the mystery location highlighted by the green squares.

1	2	3	4	5
6		7		
	8		9	
10	11		12	13
14				15
		16		

Across

- Carrier with a Helsinki hub (7)
- France's intercity high speed rail service (3)
- Kiev is the capital (7)
- Popular Norwegian cruise port (9)
- Castle and tourist town in Anglesey (9)
- Canada's capital is in this province (7)
- Star sign (3)
- The Space Needle is an iconic landmark in this US city (7)

Down

- Period drama featuring a priest with detective skills (6,5)
- Twin islands in the Caribbean, Saint Kitts and ___ (5)
- P&O Cruise ship (5)
- Nickname of Geordie musician who was born Gordon Sumner (5)
- Freetown is the capital (6,5)
- By way of (3)
- Empire that dominated Mexico from the 13th to the 16th century (5)
- Province of Spain famous for a wine of the same name (5)
- Historic city on the Dalmatian coast (5)

Mystery word: FARO Where Am I? - Nadi, Fiji

Solution:
 Across: 1. FINNAIR, 6. TGV, 7. UKRAINE, 8. STAVANGER, 10. ONTARIO, 15. LEO, 16. SEATTLE.
 Down: 1. FATHER BROWN, 2. NEVIS, 3. AZURA, 4. STING, 5. SIERRA LEONE, 9. VIA, 11. AZTEC, 12. RIOJA, 13. SPLIT.

STAYING ONLINE

COVID-19 has shown how online training is effective for increasing agent knowledge.

THE TRAVEL industry is a sociable industry and face-to-face contact has always been important. But the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown made physical events, including in-person training sessions, unfeasible.

While online training was already growing in popularity before the pandemic, 2020 has been the year where online training came into its own out of sheer necessity. Whether it is a webinar, online modules that can be undertaken at the agent's own pace or sessions of varying degrees of formality over programmes such as Zoom, few of us have gone through lockdown without participating in web-based training.

On the Travelport blog, JP Ephithite wrote of using online training: "The best way for your agency to maximise efficiency



during this time is to ensure you have the correct tools in place, and that your agents are trained to use them. Training will also help agents to come out of this crisis in a stronger position both professionally and personally."

Even with travel agencies reopening across the country, this is a trend that is here to stay, as non-essential travel is still being avoided by many. This reflects a broad trend across the employee training sector, regardless of industry.

At the start of the pandemic, international consultancy firm McKinsey reported that "a substantial increase in the use of digital delivery globally is under way across all segments of the workforce", concluding that "learning doesn't stop when travel is curtailed."

Island delights: Jersey training online until October

VISIT JERSEY is running a series of agent training webinars featuring important areas of interest from the island and selling tips for agents, enabling them to increase their destination knowledge. With the island now open to visitors, it is being promoted as a staycation option which still offers the opportunity to travel overseas, with families and couples as the main target markets.



The webinar series will take place every other Wednesday at 3:30pm, with each session lasting 30 minutes. The themes have been chosen based on agent feedback from a survey and will cover health and wellness, family adventure, luxury Jersey, the island's heritage and culture, along with its culinary delights, active experiences and nature. The webinars will be recorded and shared with all agents who have registered their details.

The schedule includes: July 22: Family adventures; August 5: Luxury Jersey; August 19: Jersey's heritage and culture; September 2: Active Jersey; September 16: Culinary delights of Jersey; September 30: Natural Jersey; and October 14: Magical Jersey experiences.

To register, visit: <https://forms.gle/en9vxvDNT2EhDhfjF8>

SLH keeping agents updated on safety

TO ENSURE travel agents provide their clients with the latest health and safety information about their properties, the Small Luxury Hotels (SLH) group has launched the Stay Small, Stay Safe initiative, which includes a training module for the travel trade.

In readiness for welcoming visitors back, the SLH initiative was developed as part of a partnership with the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) for its hotels to attain the council's accreditation.

To do so, SLH hotels are adhering to a strict performance-based cleaning, disinfection and infectious disease prevention programme to minimise the risk of infection.

To help travel agents, SLH has added a Stay Small, Stay Safe module on its website to provide all the information needed to guide their clients into making informed decisions when booking accommodation in the group's properties. The module includes the latest updates on border openings where SLH operates, quarantine regulations, COVID-19 best practices and updates, and information on the 700-point mystery inspection checklist, which now has an extra 136 checkpoints in relation to health, safety and cleanliness across all 520 hotels.

To find out more, go to www.SLH.com



USING TIME WISELY

For agents still on furlough or waiting for bookings to pick up, the enforced downtime can be a good opportunity for refresher training.

WHILE MANY agents are back at work and bookings are looking promising, for many, pre-pandemic business levels have not yet returned or they have been unable to return to full duties. With this in mind, there are training opportunities which help keep agents in the loop and motivated for better times ahead.

Visit Britain has launched a training module for offering COVID-safe customer service as lockdown restrictions continue to ease. It is an e-learning programme aimed at anyone in the travel industry who works in a customer-facing role. To find out more



about the course, go to www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/find-training

CLIA encourages member agents to undertake its training annually to maintain

Ambassador or Master status. Agents need to start with the compulsory introductory modules to attain Ambassador certification, before moving

on to Master certification training, which includes elective subjects in cruise sales. To find out more about CLIA training and certification, go to www.cruising.org/en-gb/travel-agent-centre/professional-development

Newmarket, meanwhile, permanently offers six free online training modules for registered agents. New for 2020 is training on the Exclusively for Solo Travellers Collection, which covers a range of the company's holidays and tours. To find out more, go to www.training.newmarketholiday.co.uk/

CANADA[★] BECOME A CANADA SPECIALIST

www.canadaspecialist.co.uk

Singapore steps up travel trade training with marketing and destination courses

THE SINGAPORE Tourism Board (STB) has launched an online course for travel professionals interested in learning more about marketing effectively to potential customers, as well as hosting a destination webinar on July 22.

The six marketing training modules cover 20 capabilities, including understanding customers, using data and analytics effectively, planning marketing campaigns for your target clients and using social media to win new business and retain existing customers. All modules are free of charge and include real world case studies to demonstrate the benefits of professional marketing strategies.

To register for the modules, create an account by logging on to www.learning.stb.gov.sg/stb/login.aspx



On July 22, meanwhile, the tourism board will be hosting a webinar to update the travel trade on the latest destination news. The webinar commences at 2pm BST. Speakers include Lisa Tang, senior manager, Northern & Western Europe, STB; and representatives from Sentosa Development Board, Wildlife Reserves Singapore and Gardens By The Bay. To register and be in the draw to win a Singapore goody bag, go to www.us02web.zoom.us/join/register/WN_rsriG4ohSDahK4S5Cw2LRw

THE NEW SPA EXPERIENCE

When spas reopen, there will be new protocols in place which will alter the experience, but wellness-focused properties are hopeful that guests will still emerge refreshed and relaxed.

AS HOSPITALITY and tourism businesses reopen in the UK and around the world, spas are among the last of the facilities allowed to welcome guests again. Given the close physical contact involved in many spa treatments, this is understandable, but now many hotel and resort operators are confident they can reopen safely.

One such operator is Sandals Resorts which has included its spas, pools, Jacuzzis and fitness centres in its All-Encompassing Eighteen Touch Point Practice system. The company has completed an in-depth assessment of all points of guest contact, resulting in the integration of advanced hygiene practices

across 18 touch points. This includes a triple-check system for all cleaning processes, the wearing of face and hand protection for all staff, the use of hospital-strength disinfectant, all medical stations staffed with a registered nurse and 24/7 on-call medical services.

Agents with clients who are seeking a spa experience but are still wary of using shared facilities should consider recommending high-end villa holidays. CV Villas, for example, is offering luxury villas that replicate the five-star hotel experience on a personal level with in-house chefs and spa treatments conducted without coming into contact with other members of the public. This is in addition to

all the company's properties being deep-cleaned between bookings and housekeeping staff wearing PPE when cleaning villas during stays.

Tourism boards are stepping up to ensure spas are reopened responsibly. The Spanish Tourism Quality Institute, for example, has released extensive guidelines for spas. The 24-page document covers a range of subjects including PPE use; protocols for disposal of single-use waste in spa facilities; training in cleaning and sanitising for in-house and contracted staff; no shared hairdryers; readily available hand sanitiser; and compulsory use of bathrobes or towels when guests are using shared beds, chairs or loungers.

For staycations, Spabreaks.com has conducted research on protocols which guests can expect to follow when spa facilities are fully reopened across UK properties.

According to the research, guests can expect a longer turnaround between appointments to ensure treatment rooms are properly cleaned and sanitised; hand sanitising as part of spa welcome rituals; social distancing in waiting areas; masks worn by therapists during treatments; pre- and post-treatment showers for all guests; and steam rooms, saunas, inhalation rooms, ice rooms, Jacuzzis and indoor pools to be shut again if there is another COVID-19 outbreak.



VILLA REVIVAL

Luxury villa holidays are being heavily promoted as an alternative to crowded hotels and resorts, while still offering experiences such as spa treatments and personalised service.



VILLA HOLIDAYS could experience a resurgence as cautious travellers seek out safer ways to enjoy luxury holidays in the coming months, and into 2021. This trend could have a positive impact on bookings for villa-style accommodation within resort-and-spa-style settings.

Rocco Forte Hotels has aimed for a best-of-both-worlds experience by opening eight new luxury villas at the Verdura Resort in Sicily. The villas are set on a hillside overlooking the resort's private beach. Guests will be taken by private transfer from Palermo or Trapani airport and can check in directly at the villa on arrival. They will have access to bikes and gold buggies to move around the estate, and can speak with expert concierge to select the best experiences to try on the island.

On the Greek island of Crete, Elounda Beach Hotel & Villas (pictured above) has reopened with newly renovated villas and bungalows offering direct views of the sea. Most accommodation options allow guests to

stay distanced from others, particularly those with terraces, gardens, and private pools.

The Advantage Travel Partnership has anticipated the increased demand for villa-style accommodation by rolling out new product partnerships to support its members in making bookings. Partnerships have been established with suppliers including Ocean Florida, which specialises in flight-inclusive villa packages to Florida with 18,000 hotels and villas, as well as options for car hire and attraction tickets, and The Villa Collection which offers villas and apartments worldwide. Additionally, Advantage is already working with its existing partners, including Gold Medal, to increase villa offerings.

"To support members to capitalise on an increase in demand for staycations and villa-based holidays, we have partnered with some fantastic brands which we believe will help our members deliver what the British travelling public really want this summer," said Kelly Cookes, leisure director, Advantage.

Palma hotels on track for majority reopening by August

THE PALMA Hotel Association and the resort city's tourism board anticipates that 70% of Palma's hotels will have reopened by August, with further reopenings anticipated for September and October. By the end of this month, 60% of hotels will be again welcoming visitors.

President of Palma and Cala Major's Hotel Association, Javier Vich, said that the Balearic island capital has one of the highest percentages of four- and five-star properties in Spain; partly thanks to the development of the city's tourism infrastructure.

Four- and five-star properties account for more than 90% of the city's hotel inventory with a total of 10,560 hotel beds.



Mr Vich commented, "Of course our hotel sector has been hit significantly by this crisis, but we are reassured by the rate at which our properties are reopening and their rapid adaptation of new measures and protocols to ensure the safety of guests and staff."



Mind your manors with a luxury gourmet staycation

FOOD-LOVING clients keen for a gourmet staycation might be tempted by Whatley Manor Hotel & Spa, located in the Wiltshire countryside for a break with a celebrity touch. Fresh from winning the BBC's Great British Menu 2020, Niall Keating achieved a second Michelin star in October last year for his innovative cooking in The Dining Room at Whatley Manor. Now that the hospitality sector is reopening, the hotel is welcoming back guests with an overnight Michelin Star Experience from £504 per room/£252 per person (two sharing), including a chef's menu for two, bottle of Gusbourne Brut NV, full English breakfast and use of the Aquarias Spa with indoor and outdoor hydro pools. To find out about the hotel's agent commission scheme, go to www.whatleymanor.com/travel-trade/

SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE

While many far-east destinations emerged successfully from the COVID-19 lockdown, a cautious approach is being taken to reopening, but bookings are encouraged. Georgia Lewis reports.

A REPORT in May from the UNWTO noted a 22% fall in international tourist arrivals during the first quarter of 2020, with the Asia-Pacific region hit the hardest in absolute terms with a 33 million passenger fall. However, a survey of the UNWTO panel of experts found that half of those questioned expect demand in the region to recover by the end of this year.

A possible earlier rise in demand compared to other regions has been attributed to a few factors by UNWTO. An early return to demand could be the result of the pandemic hitting Asia before other regions and because seasonality in Asian travel is less significant than in other regions where the bulk of demand takes place in June to September, such as Europe, the report found.

APEC, the organisation for economic cooperation in Asia-Pacific has a tourism working group which has been holding virtual meetings to determine a multi-country strategy for rebuilding tourism sensitively and sustainably.

“It will take a long time before people have the confidence and trust in

travelling again. Even when the situation gets better, it will take a while for global travel to pick up the pace,” said Dr Rebecca Sta Maria, the APEC Secretariat’s executive director. “We must fine-tune our approach to provide the people in our communities with the support they need in navigating through these difficult times.”

APEC is promoting sustainable and inclusive tourism by aligning policies among member economies, and exploring the best solutions to conform to the “new normal”. The group aims to boost the resilience of tourism by incorporating risk and emergency management measures, and sharing best practices between countries.

The Pacific Asia Tourism Association (PATA) is reflecting the cautious approach in its rescheduling of international events that were due to take place this year. The PATA Travel Mart 2020, originally scheduled to be held in Leshan, Sichuan, China from September 3-6, will now be organised as a virtual event in late September this year. Meanwhile, the PATA Destination

Marketing Forum 2020 has been postponed to November 24-26, 2021 and will still take place in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, featuring discussion on marketing and managing tourism growth to lesser-known destinations.

But the hotel sector for the far-east is already showing signs of optimism. Accor, for example, is adding 20,000 rooms to its portfolio this year, with two new hotels opening in Japan, more than 30 across south-east Asia, and 94 in China.

For more news on hotels in the region, turn to page 15.



Wendy Wu looks ahead to 2021

WITH THE UK government opening up travel to South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong, Japan and Vietnam without the requirement to self-isolate for two weeks upon returning home, Wendy Wu is promoting these destinations, particularly for 2021 bookings.

For bookings made in July for Japan, China, India and Sri Lanka, agents can pass on savings of up to £2,599 per person on solo traveller holidays, as well as free UK airport transfers and lounge access with a £99 deposit.

Flight upgrades have been discounted, including business class upgrades for flights to Japan and China. The Japan Uncovered itinerary for solo travellers includes business class flights and guaranteed private rooms for the tour.

The tour operator's flexible booking guarantee means the final balance does not have to be paid until six weeks before departure, and one free amendment to the booking can be made before the last payment.



Agents who make bookings by July 31 will receive an extra incentive of £20 per booking, as well as commission.

For more information, go to www.wendywutours.co.uk or call 0808 239 5707.

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HOTELS OF HOPE

Across the far-east, hotels are leading the way when it comes to reopening and expanding in the region as tourists return post-lockdown. Georgia Lewis reports.

HOTEL OPERATORS are being optimistic in the far-east, despite the serious impact of COVID-19 on tourism across the region.

Business is returning strongly to Rosewood's hotel and resort properties in mainland China and Hong Kong, with room occupancy rates trending positively since mid-May 2020. The brand's "Summer at Rosewood" campaign includes a range of promotions, such as Rosewood Hong Kong offering sailing classes at the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, cheese and wine tutorials with the hotel's sommelier, and exclusive experiences with luxury brands such as Cartier and Christie's.

Kew Green Hotels, a UK hotel management company, is expanding into the South East Asia market, launching

seven properties, with four under the Wyndham (pictured above) and Ramada brands in Bangkok, from early 2021.

EDITION Hotels will be expanding into Japan in September with the planned opening of The Tokyo EDITION Toranomon. Centrally located near the metro stations of Kamiyacho, Roppongi-Itchome and Toranomon, the property will have 206 rooms, including 22 suites with views of the Tokyo skyline. This will be EDITION's third hotel in the east Asia region.

In a further sign of optimism in the luxury accommodation sector in the region, premium tour operator Carrier has added two private islands in the far east to its collection. In Indonesia, Bawah Reserve, only accessible by seaplane

from Singapore is available for agent bookings. It features six lodges with butler service and 13 beaches. In Cambodia, meanwhile, Song Saa is a luxury beach resort set on two private islands in the Gulf of Thailand. There are 27 villas on the island, including jungle villas, stilted over-water accommodation and ocean view options.

The slower period during lockdown has also been an opportunity for hotels and resorts to make improvements to sustainability. Chiva-Som, in Hua Hin Thailand, for example, has received Organic Agriculture Certification in accordance with Agriculture Certification Thailand for its extensive gardens where 80 different food plants are grown. The resort was able to reopen to guests on June 12.

Solo savings for selected sailings

CRYSTAL CRUISES has reduced single supplements to 105% for six Crystal Getaways cruises aboard Crystal Symphony. The applicable voyages – abbreviated segments of longer full itineraries – sail in November and December 2020 as well as January and February 2021 and range from seven to ten nights. Guests will be able to explore temples, modern sights and the landscapes of India, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Abu Dhabi, Oman and Sri Lanka.

Voyages include: November 21-30: nine-night sailing from Mumbai to Yangon. Solo fares from £2,186; December 7-15: eight-night sailing from Singapore to Ho Chi Minh City. Solo fares from £1,908; December 28, 2020 to January 6, 2021: nine-night New Year sailing from Ho Chi Minh City to Bangkok. Solo fares from £2,587; January 27, 2021 to February 4, 2021: eight-night sailing from Singapore to Ho Chi Minh City. Solo fares from £2,629; and February 19, 2021 to March 1, 2021: 10-night sailing from Singapore to Malé. Solo fares from £2,505.

www.crystalcruises.co.uk



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