

Arnie Weissmann:

Geoffrey Kent is an industry paradox: a travel expansionist and environmental advocate. 12



IN OTHER NEWS:

Travel experts assess Sabre data breach 6
ASTA assails Marriott on marketing claims 7
Crystal lays out river plans at Virtuoso 66

Danny King

Hoteliers' opposition to the Expedia/Orbitz deal belies their market realities. 65



WWW.TRAVELWEEKLY.COM

SECTION 1 OF 2

AUGUST 17, 2015

TRAVEL WEEKLY

THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY'S TRUSTED VOICE

[TRADE GROUPS CALL FOR U.S., E.U. REGULATORS TO STEP IN]

Flouting objections, Lufthansa to implement GDS fee on Sept. 1

By Robert Silk

Lufthansa Group said last week it would begin levying a controversial 16 euro GDS booking fee on Sept. 1 as scheduled, even as trade groups representing leisure and business travel agencies in the U.S. and Europe continued pushing regulators to block the charge.

"The introduction and calculation of the surcharge is in compliance with legal regulations," Lufthansa Group spokeswoman Claudia Lange wrote in a brief email last week.

Agency groups disagreed.

The latest salvo in the fight over Lufthansa's distribution cost charge was fired

stateside last week when the Business Travel Coalition (BTC), backed by 134 signatories from around the world, sent a letter to Lufthansa Group CEO Carsten Spohr informing him that "a high-level industry delegation" will be sharing their concerns with competition authorities in Germany, the E.U. and the U.S.

At stake, said the letter, whose signatories include travel agencies, Lufthansa customers and other travel industry stakeholders, is the very underpinning of the travel sales industry's business and distribution models.

"Without any collaboration whatsoever, you are forcing a choice between highly inefficient processes for managed-travel programs or paying significantly higher fares," the letter stated. "This is a bad choice, and we do not welcome your unilateral approach."

See **LUFTHANSA** on Page 8

Boom in Cuba tourism has operators scrambling to secure qualified guides

By Gay Nagle Myers

HAVANA — It was mid-May, and independent tour consultant Frank Slater found himself leading his 22nd tour of Cuba, guiding a group at Vinca La Figia, Ernest Hemingway's home from 1939 to 1960 in the village of San Francisco de Paula, about nine miles outside Havana. Now a museum, it is a popular tourist stop for most visitors to Cuba.

Slater was serving as tour director on Friendly Planet's nine-day people-to-people Colors of Cuba program, similar to the company's popular Discover Havana program but a few days longer, with more stops.

Although Slater consults for multiple tour operators, this was his second Friendly Planet Cuba tour in May, with two more slated for

June. His travels in 22 years have taken him to 90 countries, and Cuba has become a special favorite. He recently calculated that in the previous 30 months, "one out of every six days of my life has been in Cuba. I love it here. ... I take photos on every trip, and I always see something new."

Over his almost three years visiting the island, he has seen the Cuban market grow to the point that qualified tour guides are getting much harder to find. As more tour companies come onboard, he said, they are "driving up the need for more certified tour directors to accompany these tours, plus the additional need for Cuban professional guides."

The most recent entrants in the crowded See **GUIDES** on Page 68

SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION

2015 CONSUMER TRENDS

Our annual take on how consumers are researching, choosing and booking their travel products.

ILLUSTRATION BY SHUTTERSTOCK

IN THE HOT SEAT

Eric Danziger on becoming CEO of Trump's hotels as the candidate stirs controversy. 4

DESTINATION: NEW ZEALAND

During the Trenz conference, the country touted its wide variety of attractions. 58

POSTCARD FROM ASIA

Yeoh Siew Hoon tries Samsung Gear VR glasses for virtual tours of Mongolia and Tibet. 64

MARK PESTRONK

When dealing with government contractors, pay attention to anti-discrimination laws. 14

A whirlwind tour of New Zealand

By Bart Beeson

With my heart still pounding after completing my first bungee jump, I found myself being harnessed in to the “cliffhanger” swing chair and attached to a small crane that dangled me over the 150-foot-deep canyon. Suddenly my stomach was in my throat and, after a brief but heart-stopping freefall, I was careening in a smooth arc over the river below.

Cathedral Cove is a popular destination on the Coromandel Peninsula.



I had taken the plunge in Taupo, New Zealand, as my event-sponsored activity during the annual Trez tourism conference, held this year in the city of Rotorua. At this year’s meeting, more than 300 exhibitors from throughout the country came to highlight New Zealand’s wide variety of tourist attractions.

Speaking at the event, New Zealand Prime Minister John Key highlighted the country’s efforts to increase tourism, particularly in the shoulder seasons outside of the peak summer months. Saying he wanted to “help unleash its enormous potential,” Key cited Air New Zealand’s new direct flight from Houston, starting in December, as a huge step toward bringing more U.S. visitors to the destination.

During my time at Trez, I spoke with dozens of exhibitors and was impressed by the range of available activities for a country

roughly the size of Colorado.

I started my travel with a whirlwind tour of the more-visited South Island, including an overnight stop in scenic Queenstown, a stargazing session and glacier tour in Mount Cook National Park and a visit to the city of Christchurch, still rebuilding after devastating earthquakes four years ago. I then headed up to explore the North Island, and after the thrill of my bungee jump, I wanted more adventure.

My first stop was in the Northland region, to scuba dive the Poor Knights Islands, once rated by famed diver Jacques Cousteau as one of the top 10 dive sites in the world. I booked a trip with Dive Tutukaka and headed out to see the islands, which lay about 15 miles off the coast. I swam through natural stone arches filled with huge swarms of fish, ventured into underwater caves and inspected crevasses in sheer rock walls hiding moray eels and colorful nudibranch sea slugs. During a break between dives, I spotted a large fin circling the water where I had just dived, which belonged to a massive (and nonthreatening) ocean sunfish, or *mola mola*.

My next stop was to the Coromandel Peninsula, known for its picturesque beaches and rugged topography. I checked in at the



Bungee jumping in Taupo.

Grand Mercure Puka Park Resort, comprising 48 secluded chalets tucked into the hillside above a beautiful beach, and headed out to my last adventure, Cathedral Cove, one of the more popular destinations on the peninsula. I decided the best way to see the natural limestone arches and rock spires that dot the coast was from the water, so I booked a tour with Cathedral Cove Kayak Tours. My guide filled me in on the local history of the Maori settlers as we paddled our way along the coast, spotting fur seals lounging on island rocks.

Visit www.newzealand.com.

PHOTOS BY BART BEESON

INSIDER JOURNEYS
Imagine the stories

DISCOVER ASIA AS AN INSIDER

INSIDER JOURNEYS 22 YEARS ASIA EXPERTS

Imagine the stories

VIETNAM | CAMBODIA | LAOS | THAILAND | BURMA | CHINA | INDIA | BHUTAN | SRI LANKA | JAPAN | MONGOLIA

www.insider-journeys.com/agents
agents@insider-journeys.com

CALL: 1-800-342-1957
Order Brochures Today

AMAZING THAILAND 2015 Discover Thaiiness

ASTA TOP
Tour Operator Program

Pacific Holidays
800-355-8025

www.pacificolidaysinc.com