

travel

# MATTERS

THE BUSINESS TRAVEL MAGAZINE FROM CHAMBERS TRAVEL GROUP

JANUARY 2016

## River deep, mountain high

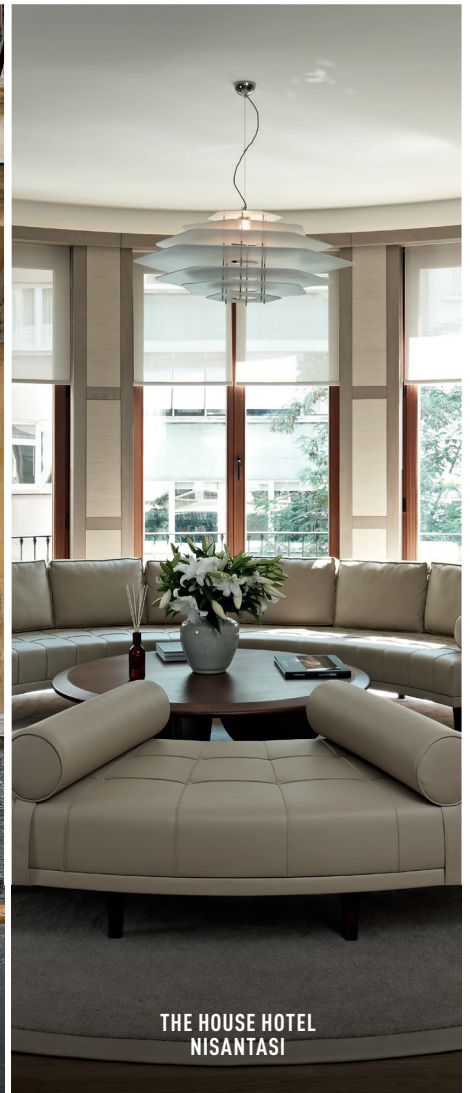
Vietnam delivers as an incentive destination

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corporate travel  
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**We begin 2016 on a high, having had an outstanding 2015 and with the momentum building. Last year we found a like-minded partner to see us into the future in the shape of CTM; we launched Cloud 9, bespoke servicing options for SME clients and, just a few months back, unveiled Smart, a ground-breaking technology suite for the corporate community.**

Smart will transform business travel processes, drive efficiency and influence behaviour, thus improving compliance. Decide for yourself on page 4.

We'll be demonstrating Smart, and our other cutting-edge technology, at the Business Travel Show next month (February), and on page 6 detail which business travel events you should attend.

One we've all been waiting for, the government's decision on airport expansion in the South East, was delayed yet again and so we sum up the arguments to and for Heathrow/Gatwick as the battle continues. Read the details on page 10.

Travel risk management needs improving in every business, advises a new report that we share on page 12.

Sharing best practice is already working in the event business, with the development of an Events Club in London. Find all the details on page 14.

We explain why Vietnam should be on your destination list for your next conference or incentive on page 16, and share news on page 18 about new faces, new events, our latest award nominations and a new branding exercise being unveiled in March. Watch this space.

**Chris Thelen**, Chief Executive Officer

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technology where it counts

**“It’s not about the tech anymore but the user, providing services at the touch of a button and making them as productive as possible”**

**Andy Slough** - IT Director, Chambers

# SO SMART

**Chambers’ record for developing relevant technology for customers is about to be augmented this month with the rolling out of a powerful new tool**

**Chambers** has done it again: made a quantum leap ahead of the curve with a customer-pleasing technology solution for bookers, travellers, travel managers and procurement folk alike that is fully customisable.

“It’s a big game changer,” sums up Chambers’ IT Director Andy Slough. The product is called Smart and has been tried, tested and perfected on the other side of the world over the last two years with some 150 clients of Chambers’ parent company Corporate Travel Management (CTM) in Australia\*.

Now it’s even better as over the last nine months Chambers has leveraged the expertise of its 18-strong Chambers London IT team to integrate all of Chamber’s services into the Smart eco system. Smart is now a ground-breaking toolkit for the corporate community.

“Chambers CTM is the only TMC in the market with a single technology platform and a single GDS,” claims Slough. Smart is not reliant on any third party services. “Other TMCs are bogged down with legacy platforms which don’t have the speed or flexibility or personalisation capability,” he says.

Smart requires no IT involvement; no installation angst or extra cost. First-time users just click a link from their PC, Smartphone or Tablet which takes them to a website and from there all they have to do is add the Smart icon to their desktop.

A single sign-on will reveal a personalised screen built around the user that can access all services at the touch of a button, no matter what device is being used.

**The Smart platform offers nine different services:**

- pre-trip approval
- traveller tracking
- pre-trip risk assessments
- bespoke messaging service
- travel management analytics
- traveller profiles managed centrally and securely
- a forecast of available fares and hotel rates up to 21 days before departure
- easy and quick booking capability
- online reference library for policy and documents

“The whole purpose of Smart is to have all the services in one place,” says Slough. “It’s built around speed, it’s intuitive to use and with bang up-to-date technology. There is no legacy platforms involved. It’s super, super easy and there’s nothing to learn. It’s a true piece of technology built around the user.”

Smart can be customised to different user needs – be it a booker, manager or financial director. “It feels like a bespoke service,” says Slough. “Not everyone has to consume the same information so we can add or remove ‘widgets’. Smart is a living and breathing technology.”

In the same vein, Smart can be deployed globally, regionally or nationally, tailored to the geographical need.

Smart Forecaster is a particularly useful service as the traveller is able to see a fares forecast on the three most frequent destinations visited to view the best time to travel there by price. “If they want to go

**DID YOU KNOW?**



...that 24% of companies have policies against ride sharing use, and 5% make them preferred, according to a recent GBTA survey.

to Berlin then the user can see that next Thursday is the best day price-wise," says Slough.

Bookers drastically reduce the amount of effort it takes to make a booking, while the big plus for travel managers is live availability from one platform which can include all the relevant documents such as the global travel programme, the regional hotel programme and storage of shared projects for example. It all adds up to greater productivity for all users, a much tighter rein on compliance and wider application no matter company size, industry vertical or device used.


"Smart is designed to empower the traveller as it gives them actionable insights and influences their booking behaviour," says Slough. "It's going to make it much less likely to have the unmanaged travel piece as travel has not had the visibility to make informed choices up to now."

Smart has also been developed with one eye on future travellers: the Millennials. With 30% of the workforce representing this demographic over the next three to

five years, Smart will meet their needs, in terms of access via all devices and information being pushed to them rather than requesting it.

"Millennials use technology differently," says Slough. "Someone under 30 is used to using technology in the consumer space so Smart is designed around them. Their more experienced colleagues are changing the way they use services as well – almost mirroring behaviour. It's not about the tech anymore but around the user, providing services at the touch of a button and making them as productive as possible."

Chambers is encouraging customers to migrate to Smart, having rolled it out globally - to "a super slick tech company" says Slough - and having introduced it to a wide range of businesses across the regions.

With an excellent track record of developing relevant technology, Smart meets the needs of different users in the business and the increasing number of pan European and global clients in Chambers' portfolio. 



## RESULT!

Australian investment management firm Challenger has been a CTM client since 2013 and was the first to purchase and implement Bed Forecaster and Fare Forecaster as part of a company-wide transition to Smart travel management platform.

The main objectives were the improvement of days booked in advance and fare category usage. With staff dispersed around the country, it was difficult to drive effective booking behaviour, meaning inefficiencies were being seen as well as inconsistencies with travel policy.

Deployment and take-up of the technology was rapid and required little to no training or persuasion.

Challenger started seeing real results in booking behaviour just three months into using the new technology, resulting in direct improvements to the bottom line.

- Average airline booking days in advance increased from 11 to 14 days within just three months
- Restrictive fare usage increased by 4%
- Domestic air expenditure decreased by 14% while the number of bookings remained level.

"Challenger continues to seek the best returns on its investments in technology. Partnering with CTM to implement Fare Forecaster and Bed Forecaster was a common-sense decision that met our needs in achieving this goal," said Sean Baker, Head of Performance Management, Challenger Limited.



## DID YOU KNOW?



...that London, Barcelona and Paris hold the top three spots on Cvent's list of the Top 25 Meetings Destinations cities in Europe, out of a list of 2,500.

# KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

The business travel industry showcases its wares multiple times across the year, offering buyers the opportunity of updating their knowledge.

**Mark Harris** has the lowdown

**Conferences.** Exhibitions. Seminars. Workshops. You could spend your entire working life at industry events. Whatever your reason for attending - to broaden the mind, brush up on areas where your grasp of the big issues is a tad shaky, or to raise your profile, there are plenty to choose from.

Nowadays, the only difference between most exhibitions and conference is the ratio of exhibition content to conference sessions. Organisers need the former to fund their events and the latter to attract the buyers who provided those exhibitors with the necessary return on investment. As a result, the pressure is on for organisers to find new features to differentiate themselves.

Here then is the Chambers' guide to the travel industry's leading events – and why you need to get some dates in your diary.

For some unfathomable reason the business travel calendar is front ended with events. First up is the long-running Business Travel Awards, which take place at London's Grosvenor House on Monday 18th January. Dinner jackets and posh frocks are the order of the day. Join 1,500 revellers as the winners of 20 awards are announced. [www.businesstravelawards.com](http://www.businesstravelawards.com) has more details.

The Business Travel Show – the sector's original exhibition and conference – takes place a little later this year (24th – 26th February) at London's Olympia. Claimed to be Europe's largest specialised exhibition and conference for buyers and managers of business travel, 2015's event saw 250 suppliers joined by 175

speakers in 50 free conference sessions and over 7,400 delegates. The Business Travel Show also offers a hosted buyer programme to qualifying travel managers. Go to [www.businesstravelshow.com](http://www.businesstravelshow.com) for more details.

The Institute of Travel & Meetings (ITM) runs excellent seminars, workshops and other educational events all year round. However, the centrepiece of the UK association's calendar is its annual conference. The 2016 event will be held at Celtic Manor, Wales on May 3rd to 5th and is attended by 350 – 400 delegates. Look out for more details at [www.itm.org.uk](http://www.itm.org.uk)

May brings the business travel industry's other awards event. The People Awards 2016 will be staged on Friday 27th May at the Grange Tower Bridge Hotel, when it's likely that 400 buyers and suppliers come together to recognise outstanding supplier individuals and teams whose professionalism and business excellence make them stand out from their industry peers. [www.thepeopleawards.co.uk](http://www.thepeopleawards.co.uk) has more.

Summer (well, 14th – 16th June 2016 anyway) brings The Business Travel Conference (TBTC), a smaller, more intimate alternative to The Business Travel Show. Held at the Novotel Hammersmith, this event combines workshops and plenary sessions in a two-tier education programme, complemented by a 60-strong supplier exhibition. It makes 200 free delegate places available as well as a hosted buyer programme. [www.thebusinesstravelconference.com](http://www.thebusinesstravelconference.com)

Frustratingly, for travel managers whose remit includes meetings, TBTC



**“Broaden the mind, brush up on areas where your grasp of the big issues is a tad shaky, or raise your profile”**



**DID YOU KNOW?**

**30.**

...that **30 Euston Square** won in two categories of the London Venue Awards held in October: Best Conference Venue and Best Board Room.



# WHAT 2016 COULD HOLD FOR BUSINESS TRAVELLERS

**Paul Wait**, Chief Executive of the GTMC, does some crystal ball gazing on what the New Year could bring for the business travelling community

As the voice of the business traveller, the GTMC has a unique insight into the needs of those who travel extensively for work so with a new year beginning, we wanted to take a look at what this year could hold for the business travel community.

Government investment in infrastructure in 2016 will be guided by the newly announced National Infrastructure Commission and its promise to spend £100bn on new roads, rail, flood defences and other vital projects over the coming years. The Commission includes Sir John Armitt – former chair of the Olympic Delivery Authority who becomes President of the Institute of Civil Engineers in 2016 – and Sadie Morgan, the Design Panel Chair of HS2, alongside Lord Heseltine, the former deputy prime minister who has long championed the regeneration of Britain's inner cities through infrastructure investment.

The National Infrastructure Commission's focus will include identifying priorities for future investment in the North's strategic transport infrastructure to improve connectivity between cities, especially east-west across the Pennines. They will also prioritise London's transport system, particularly reviewing strategic options and identifying priorities for future investment in large scale transport improvements – on road, rail and underground – including Crossrail 2.

There is also significant focus on growing a Northern 'powerhouse' – one of George Osborne's flagship policies. The plan to push decisions, including

around transport, to regional councils and mayors will bring both opportunities and challenges as it gets off the ground. This proposed devolution carries the risk that different cities and regions will place a different focus on infrastructure, and that the UK is inconsistent in its investment in major transport upgrades. However, the Government has clearly committed to infrastructure investment, and as enhanced transport drives business growth there will be a clear case for retaining spend on Britain's important connections.

While these large scale projects are the essential 'hardware' upon which the next generation of high speed transport links will be built, the 'software' will be just as important to business travellers in the coming year. Digital technology will continue to transform the everyday experiences of getting from A to B. E-boarding passes, in flight wifi, mobile hotel check-in apps, GPS-enabled service upgrades, and other innovations will all improve efficiencies when travelling on business and offer a more personalised service. Travellers will expect more than ever from the technology they carry with them and the most successful TMCs will harness these innovations and make them widely available to their clients.

The tech challenge for any business in any sector is that the pace of change and development is just so phenomenal. TMCs find that their clients expect to be able to control all aspects of their travel plans from the live-remote-control in the palm of their hands. While in most cases

TMCs can deliver for the on-demand world, the sector is faced with disruption from businesses that have proven success in the direct-to-consumer travel world, but have major hurdles to overcome when handling corporate travel. The sharing economy can be empowering and has many opportunities, but currently no one is taking responsibility. TMCs and corporate travellers take duty of care very seriously, they have to. In 2016 we predict that there will be great steps forward in the travel sharing economy meeting duty of care needs, but that there still won't be a perfect solution just yet.

Finally for 2016 the 'Bleisure' travel trend will take off. Perhaps thanks to the greater emphasis on 'work-life balance' in the work place these days, business travellers are combining more leisure into their business trips. Extending a work trip over the weekend and bringing the family along is increasingly common as is arriving at the airport earlier to hit the lounge for longer. Working from anywhere – the café, restaurant, hotel or the local park – the trend of mixing business and pleasure is here to stay. The GTMC's members are already responding to this new mindset but 2016 will surely reveal new challenges in keeping up with the demands of mobile working lives.

Business travel opens up new opportunities for productivity, opportunity and new experiences in everyone's working lives. We hope that 2016 brings more of these for everyone involved in the business travel industry. ☺

## DID YOU KNOW?



...that the world's largest hotel group was created last November when Marriott clinched a deal to purchase Starwood Hotels & Resorts, whose brands include W Hotels, Ritz-Carlton and Sheraton?



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# THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA

One of the most expensive and controversial infrastructure decisions by our current government was delayed yet again in December to consider far-reaching environmental concerns over Heathrow's plans to build a new runway. **Gillian Upton** has the back story

It has been a battle royal in all senses of the word: two protagonists fighting their corner, armed with large marketing budgets to drive the messages home of their respective suitability for expansion. At stake, government funds that would help secure their future.

The Heathrow v Gatwick airports decision has been a long time coming, and still it hasn't been made. To date, it's been some two and a half years of analysis, review, consultation and debate.

Yet the Airport Commission's report published last summer, post the election, was unequivocal: it recommended a third, full-length runway at Heathrow to the north-west of the existing runways as long as it was accompanied by new measures to cut noise and pollution and plans to be a better neighbour. And there's the rub.

David Cameron it seems, has caved into the incredible pressure from the environmental lobby since the report's publication, which claims that the Airport Commission's report was flawed in terms of the air quality tests used by Sir Howard Davies and his team.

The Commons Environmental Audit Committee has said that it makes no sense for public health to allow Heathrow to expand if it could not show that a revised air quality strategy can comply with EU air quality rules.

And so, here we are at the start of 2016 with no decision and a potential wait until this summer to see whether additional runway capacity will be built at Heathrow or Gatwick.

The Airport Commission's report did leave the door open for potential

expansion at Gatwick, something the Surrey airport seized upon as momentum accelerated after the report's July recommendation. Opponents only had a matter of months to sway opinion, ahead of the government's promised decision by the year-end, and it seems to have worked.

Opponents and pro-lobbyists came out from all corners of the community: business leaders such as the IOD and CBI backed Heathrow; residents vehemently opposed it, as did environmentalists over air quality and, naturally, so did Gatwick Airport.

Mayor Boris Johnson was in a corner all on his own, clinging on to the ill-fated plan of a mega new-build Boris Island in the Thames Estuary as "the only long-term solution", despite Sir Howard Davies ruling it out based on cost and environmental issues. In true Boris style, he announced that he would take direct action, threatening to lie down in front of bulldozers to stop any expansion at the West London airport.

A much quieter campaign centred around developing Northolt, the former RAF base, for short-haul flights only, but that didn't catch hold. The same fate befell former BA Concorde pilot Jock Lowe's radical runway idea, the Heathrow Hub. Rather than build new, his plan was to extend Heathrow's northern runway then divide it into two to allow aircraft to take off and land simultaneously from opposite ends. There would be a 600-metre safety gap between the split runways.

Lowe's runway extension was a much less expensive option too: more like £10bn rather than £18 bn for a new one, be quicker to complete and would have

**"Heathrow has promised to charge airlines higher fees for landing noisier & more polluting aircraft at the airport in future"**

involved less disruption to residents. Despite this, the Airport Commission ruled it out on the basis of noise and air quality.

But the loudest anti Heathrow arguments focussed on how Heathrow could meet EU air quality rules, and this is the last hurdle Heathrow has to face. Gatwick Airport has claimed that the Airport Commission's report did not recognise future levels of pollution from increased road traffic. Sir Howard Davies says Heathrow can expand without breaching the level of emissions recommended by the Committee on Climate Change. The government is on the horns of a dilemma.

Heathrow countered that the greatest contributor to local air pollution will come from non-airport related road traffic and has proposed measures to limit pollution and vehicles. Time will tell if these measures will be enough. Campaign groups such as Clean

## DID YOU KNOW?



...that correcting errors in expense reports remains one of the biggest pain points in the expense management process, says a GBTA report.

Air for London will be on to it in a jiffy.

Increased noise from more aircraft is the other anti Heathrow argument but over the years engines have become quieter and the night-flying hours reduced. Moreover, Matt Gorman, director for environment and sustainability, Heathrow Airport, claims that Heathrow is quieter than at any time since the Seventies and that "with new technology and proper planning, we will get quieter still".

Gorman also says that some 300,000 people would be removed from the airport's noise footprint if Heathrow expansion gets the green light. "This is because, with a new runway, flight paths could be redesigned and more noise relief provided through alternating runways and approach paths."

One new approach path revolves around the Ground Based Augmentation System (GBAS), which are curved approaches, flying over less-populated or no-populated areas to minimise the noise.

And in any case, one of the Airport Commission's caveats is a night ban on flights between 11.30pm and 6am.

Heathrow has promised to charge airlines higher fees for landing noisier and more

polluting aircraft at the airport in future. The idea is to encourage the world's quietest aircraft to use Heathrow, charging them less, and to introduce "green slots" so that only the quietest and cleanest aircraft can use the capacity provided by a new runway.

Gatwick countered with its scheme being cheaper (£8bn), quicker and with less impact on the local community, as the airport is located in a relatively sparsely populated area.

The pro Heathrow lobby also took the argument to a macro level, saying Heathrow expansion is good for Britain. They stressed London's pre-eminent status on the world stage as leverage, saying London would lose out to Amsterdam, Paris, Madrid and Frankfurt - as indeed it already is - as business travellers choose to hub elsewhere for their long-haul connections. An additional threat emanates from the Gulf States with their development of large transport hubs, such as Dubai.

A thriving aviation market is essential for a global city like London, and expansion is essential for London by 2030 if it is to retain the UK's position as a global hub for aviation. Heathrow's John Holland-Kaye

said the expansion would "keep Britain at the heart of the global economy". The government's decision will mean the new runway will be operational by 2030.

Heathrow airport handles 70% of the UK's long-haul flights and more arrivals and departures on its existing two runways than any equivalent airport in the world. It is managing to cope with increased passenger numbers due to the larger aircraft carrying more passengers.

Davies calls Heathrow "a national asset" and stresses that "any significant delay [to build a new airport] will be bad not only for London but also for the country as a whole.

"It would suggest that the UK is unable or unwilling to take the steps needed to maintain its position as a well-connected, open trading economy in the 21st century."

Business leaders are frustrated at the fresh delay; we need the decision so building work can begin. And just think, we'll have to go through all this tit-for-tat battle again as by around 2050 all extra capacity will have been exhausted. However, by then, the contenders are more likely to be Stansted or Birmingham if it is connected to HS2. [✈](#)



## DID YOU KNOW?



...that easyJet celebrated its 20th birthday last November, having commenced services with a Luton-Glasgow flight for £29, not much different to today's prices

# RISKY BUSINESS

A joint report on European trends in travel risk management highlights how best to manage health, safety and security risks to workers on international travel



**“companies need to be able to implement robust and scalable solutions to protect the health, safety and security of their travellers and expats”**

#### About International SOS

International SOS ([www.internationalsos.com](http://www.internationalsos.com)) is the world's leading medical and travel security risk services company. It cares for clients across the globe, from more than 700 locations in 89 countries. Its expertise is unique: more than 11,000 employees are led by 1,200 doctors and 200 security specialists. Teams work night and day to protect its members. It is passionate about helping clients put 'Duty of Care' into practice.

**Companies** who send workers on international assignments implement processes and solutions to fulfill their legal and moral obligations. European countries and European-based organisations sending workers abroad are increasingly aware of the importance of this topic but despite these efforts, they remain insufficient, believes Dr. Lisbeth Claus of International SOS.

In a joint ISOS study with FERMA\* on European trends in travel risk management, research identifies that although companies commonly conduct risks assessment and planning, advanced measures such as traveller tracking and pre-departure training are seldom implemented. These are often adopted once a serious incident or a “near-miss” has occurred.

Moreover, even if such capabilities are established as they are in most multinational companies, they are often isolated and incomplete. Providing Risk and Insurance managers with a legal framework relevant to their activities, combined with practical solutions designed by professionals, are some of the steps required to filling that vacuum.

In this effort to better protect international assignees, the Risk Manager has an ideal positioning in any internationally established company. His/her holistic perception of both the security and insurance aspects of Travel Risk Management is critical to evaluate and design efficient preventive solutions and practical responses to any situation an organisation might face when sending workers abroad.

In order to be successful, the strategy and the involvement of the Risk Manager must be understood by all key stakeholders and endorsed at the highest level of the company.

“European-based organisations with a successful Travel Risk Management

programme have board-level strategic backing of the Risk Manager,” concludes the report.

FERMA and International SOS conducted a one-minute survey to gather organisations’ practices and views of travel risk management. The results – based on responses from 191 people - demonstrate that only 27% of respondents were involved as leaders vs. 45% as stakeholders.

In this joint paper, FERMA and International SOS discovered that the importance of Travel Risk Management is not limited to compliance vis-à-vis legal and moral obligations, but that it also brings concrete business and reputational benefits to an organisation.

Many studies including ‘Return on Prevention’ have highlighted that the cost of a failed assignment far exceeds the price of effective training, risk assessments and overall, advanced Travel Risk Management. To the same extent, losing an employee due to a lack of care and/or preparation has a greater hidden financial cost that cannot be evaluated. This is due to reputational, emotional and psychological impacts on the company, their sub-contractors and partners.

International SOS & FERMA firmly believe in prevention, information and preparation of organisations, institutions and international assignees vis-à-vis their duties, obligations and responsibilities.

In this context, both International SOS and FERMA are joining their expertise and experience to promote a more responsible and people-focused approach to Travel Risk Management.

Source: The report outlined above has been compiled and produced jointly by International SOS and FERMA (The Federation of European Risk Management Associations). Download the full report here: <http://go.internationalsos.com/FERMA-Paper-2015>. 

#### DID YOU KNOW?

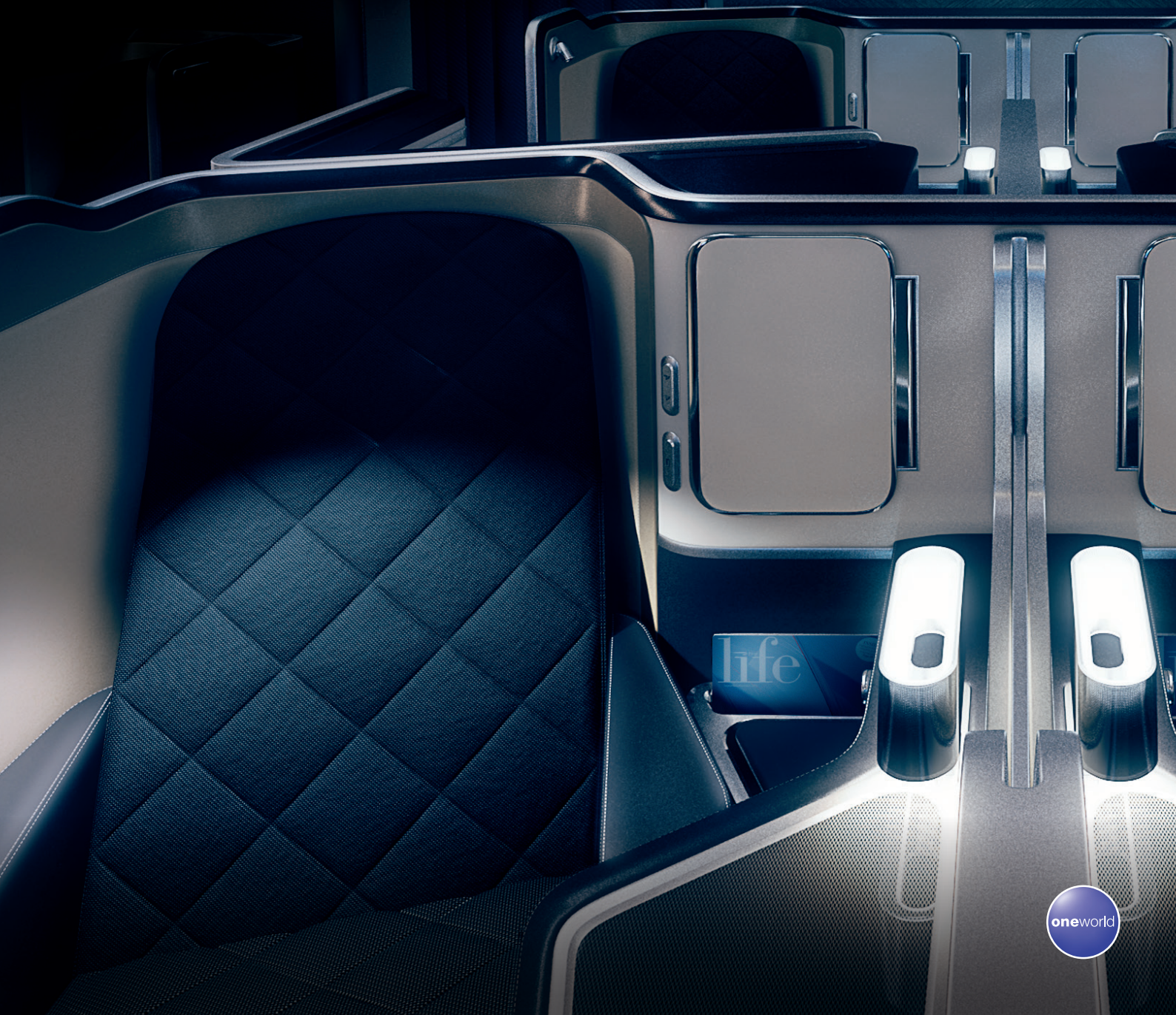


...that you shouldn't tip in **Japan** but you should in the **US** and **India**? Japanese are eager to provide great service so a thank you (arigatou gozaimasu) will suffice, says Crown World Mobility.

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# THE MAIN EVENT

An informal grouping of London events professionals is making headway as a **new networking club**



The founders Kate Bullard (left) and Michelle Rees pictured at last September's networking event

**“We felt there was a gap in the market for networking opportunities for event professionals”**

What better than to be able to share the challenges and successes of a job with like-minded peers? Thus the kernel of an events club was born last summer. The idea is for corporate event planners in London to network with contemporaries who have different levels of experience and who are from disparate industries.

Event Profs Live has been growing from strength to strength, through monthly meets hosted at different London venues and with a membership of over 40 events professionals. Companies represented include Linklaters, the London Chamber of Commerce, the Royal Society of Medicine and Baker & McKenzie. Members run the gamut of job titles, from events co-ordinator to director.

“We network over the trials and tribulations of event management,” explains Hannah Luffman, Senior Account Director at Chambers Travel Management.

The founders are Michelle Rees and Kate Bullard (pictured), who speak as one: “We felt there was a gap in the market for networking opportunities for event professionals that enable honest conversations to take place, for us to share our wealth of knowledge and experience while making connections within the events industry in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.”

As well as a networking function, the rationale is also to showcase the amazing event spaces in London. Last October's host was The Ritz, for example while the November venue was exclusive use-only event space Vanilla to coincide with Chambers' annual client party.

“London is the most amazing City in the world to be an event professional and we both feel so lucky to be able to manage events in the most amazing spaces from art galleries, museums and iconic hotels to the latest bars/

restaurants,” says Kate and Michelle.

Already, there have been numerous examples of the power of the network. “Recently, a member required a private dining space urgently and they Tweeted a couple of the members and within minutes members recommended venues and shared contacts,” explained Michelle and Kate.

“Our group also extends its reach back in the office too. What we see and do we take back to our own teams who then use the venues for their own events. We share our contacts so even more people benefit from our group,” explain Michelle and Kate.

Pressure on time is a constant challenge as event professionals are usually juggling multiple events, but job satisfaction outweighs the workload every time. “We have to say that there are not many things that we hate about our jobs,” say the founders but in the same breath admit that “we both thrive off pressure and love the fast pace of the events world!” 📸

**BE PART OF EVENTS PROF LIVE**

If you would like to be part of Events Prof Live, the contacts are:

Michelle Rees (@TheEventsGirl) and Kate Bullard (@LDNEventsGirl)

Twitter: @eventproflive #eventproflive

Instagram: eventproflive

## DID YOU KNOW?



...that delegate cancellation, hidden venue costs and poor wifi are listed as key **internal event problems**, according to Warwick Conferences Values of Expertise report

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER



# VIETNAM ADVENTURE

Filling eight days to see the best of north and south Vietnam was a tall order for an incentive group but one easily achieved by the **events team** at Chambers

It was an auspicious start: a throng of 35 high achievers and their partners jetted off in style on Qatar Airways from Madrid to Vietnam via the airline's hub in Doha. It was the beginning of an eight-day extravaganza of fun-filled time last November, spent exploring this culturally rich Southeast Asian country.

The employer rewarding its top staff is a Spanish-based global leader for the energy industry. It provides oil service equipment for sophisticated systems and products.

The company had dismissed the west coast USA as an alternative destination, swayed by the significantly reduced cost of the Asian destination and its vast array of activities. It also opted for a twin city Vietnamese experience rather than stay in one region of the country.

Of all the airlines in the frame, Qatar Airways offered a more competitive flight cost, particularly when considering the value on offer. Chambers secured a group fare – the group swelled to 80 including ten admin staff from the company – and Vanessa Hernando, Flight Manager at Chambers sums up that "Qatar offered the best balance of value vs. cost".

Chambers proposal was accepted in August and resource was swiftly allocated, in the shape of a dedicated team of Vanessa and Martha Allen, Event Manager, plus an additional two staff based in the office. Hannah Luffman was also on hand as the client's dedicated Account Director, while one of Chambers' native Spanish speakers also accompanied the trip.

While Martha flew ahead to check logistics for the trip, Vanessa manned the group's dedicated check-in area at Madrid

airport then accompanied them on the early afternoon group flight into Doha before transferring to the overnight leg into Ho Chi Minh City.

The size of the group – and the fact that it was a twin city tour – dictated that the group was split into two groups of 40 for transfers and most of the excursions. "The itinerary would have been a challenge otherwise," says Martha, who praised the knowledgeable DMC staff on the ground.

Two coaches took the group from the airport to their first port of call, the luxurious five-star Sofitel Saigon Plaza Hotel, their home for the next few days. A welcome desk had been set up, with pop-up banner, all agendas and lanyards, and the guests registered before enjoying a buffet lunch.

A quick freshen up before the incentive really began, with a Saigon City Tour followed by a Vietnamese feast on board the Dong Duong private boat for a floating dinner. Inbetween came a cocktail aperitif on the open-air rooftop bar of the Sofitel so guests could soak up the amazing view over the city.

The days unfolded with treat after treat: the group manoeuvred in and out of the famous Cu Chi tunnel system, they enjoyed an excursion to the iconic Mekong Delta to view the rice fields, canals and floating markets, took a sampan ride and explored the sights in Phan Thiet.

When they flew up to the north of the country, based in the urban resort that is the 4.5 star IHG Hanoi Westlake, they marvelled at a water puppet show and the caves at Tam Coc, visited the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum complex and sat back in a cyclo for a tour of Hanoi's Old Quarter.

**"The highlight, was cruising around the best of Halong Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site"**





The highlight, however, was cruising around the best of Halong Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site synonymous with towering limestone islands topped with tropical forests. Some guests got up close and personal on kayaks. All guests stayed overnight on the private sailing boats.

Of all the varied experiences the incentive offered, the visit to the Cu Chi tunnels was the most challenging, and satisfying, as the nature of the site limits numbers. "The local DMC made it work for the group," says Martha.

Food was a big part of the incentive, not just in sampling the best restaurants but sharing first-hand experiences of the distinctive Vietnamese cuisine, which makes extensive use of herbs, spices and aromatics. The cuisine is a balance of salty, sweet, sour and hot, in essence. Guests were shown how to make spring rolls, and sampled regional variations in the national dishes.

Guests spent their last night on Tiptop Island in Halong Bay, chilling on the beach and enjoying a classic BBQ. It was the

perfect, tranquil setting to the end of a busy trip.

Return flights to Madrid went via Bangkok and the Chambers team was content that the group had been justly rewarded. 🇻🇳



# NEW HORIZONS

By the end of March this year, the Chambers Travel Management name will disappear and the group will re-brand as Corporate Travel Management, the name of its parent company.

A full 15 months since the acquisition, it will be time to take on the new identity that will drive this former regional powerhouse into the future as the European anchor of a global travel management company.

"There was a strong heritage with the Chambers brand and a lot of kickback about re-branding straight away," explains Marketing Director Frits De Kok.


In the interim period, the marketing team have been communicating the rationale for the acquisition, the strategic goals for the brand for the next five years and, crucially, re-testing the company's core values with its client portfolio in client forums.

The first manifestation of the integration

surfaced last autumn with the launch of SMART technology which emanated from the parent company (see pages 4 & 5), the re-branding the company website to link the two brands and re-branding all collateral.

At next month's Business Travel Show, the name change will have evolved to combine both names but the final piece of the jigsaw will be in position in March with a formal launch party.

"This will maximise engagement with existing clients and potential clients and the industry supply chain", explains Frits. "That's hugely important."

The purple palette of Chambers will finally make way for the multi-coloured suitcase logo of Corporate Travel Management, which represents its global might and Chambers' new elevated status. 



Frits de Kok

# NEW FACES

Chambers has recruited a trio of new staff over the last quarter, all of whom add great expertise to the team.

We're delighted to announce that Scott Alboni has joined as Marketing Manager. He hails from a marketing and brand manager role in the private healthcare sector and previously worked for an international auction house Bonhams.

"Scott brings fresh eyes to our marketing department at Chambers as he has a wealth of knowledge in marketing strategies, brand integration, design and system automation," said Frits de Kok, marketing & events director, Chambers Travel Group.



Scott Alboni

"His energy, enthusiasm and experience in branding will benefit us as we integrate with our new owners, CTM in Australia."

Paul Coates joined the company from HRG in July as Fares Manager, a role that has been separated from Customer Relations to reflect the increasing importance of cost saving on air spend with clients.

"Airlines are very good at manipulating fares, the availability of booking classes in different GDSs and across different points of sale," points out Paul. As a 31-year veteran of the industry he reflects that, "Booking air travel today is more complicated as there are more channels to check and more airlines flying to more places



Paul Coates

but we are one step ahead of our clients.

"We can usually offer a lower fare long haul that's comparable and sometimes on the same flight.

"We can locate better fares from local markets from our different offices around the world, split tickets or offer savings by flying just one hour later, for example."

Shelley Matthews joined the senior management team from ATPi last autumn as UK Sales Director, and has been busy expanding the sales team. Her remit covers any potential business that originates out of the UK.

"It was a tough decision to move but it was the right time as Chambers is a fast-growing company with lots of exciting things going on. I can bring my experience to strengthen and grow the sales team and consolidate the global sales strategy in the light of the CTM acquisition." 



Shelley Matthews

# EYES ON THE PRIZE

This month Chambers will discover if the record number of award nominations for the UK Business Travel Awards will convert to prizes.

The company has been nominated in four categories, namely

- Best Travel Management Company (£50m-£200m sales annually)
- Best Travel Team
- Best Travel Technology Product

- **Best Sales Account Management Team**

"The fact that we have made the shortlist with all four of our submissions is testament to the calibre of our people and Chambers' innovative and bespoke approach to looking after our clients," said Chris Thelen, CEO, Chambers Travel Group. "Having won Best Travel Management Company for three years' running, I am hopeful of making it an astounding four years!" 📧



**Look** out for three dates in London this year for Chambers Chatter events. These will run in March, June and September and the specific dates, venues and themes will be flagged up in the next issue of Travel Matters.

Designed to facilitate education and thought leadership, Chambers Chatter certainly delivered on both those promises during the last UK event of 2015, in September.

Moderated by Martin Ferguson, and with the theme of Managing your TMC, the event was an animated discussion on all the hot topics currently vexing the corporate community.

Data and duty of care disgruntled the audience but perhaps the most useful debate focused on Lufthansa's €16 surcharge for fares booked via a GDS, as it helped to spell out the ramifications for the corporate community.

"A lot of people don't understand the full extent of it," said audience member Ken McLeod of Advantage Travel. He believes that TMCs should be doing more to explain the impact of the surcharge.

"If Lufthansa get away with it, it will spread to other airlines and the price of doing business will soar. The €16 charge could easily become €20," he says. "Corporates need to investigate more," he concluded.

Client delegates found the evening illuminating and these are some of their comments;

"Nice to have all parts of the travel management chain present. Honest and open discussions. The quality of attendees was very high; can't wait for the next one."

"The evening allowed me to talk to other travel managers and travel industry experts who I would not normally meet. These conversations expanded my network and travel industry knowledge."

"As a Travel Manager you can become isolated and set in your ways. The vibrant exchange of opinions encourages different ideas and approaches, as well as awareness of innovative technology and ideas/strategies." 📧

Any travel managers interested in attending this or future seminars or wishing to suggest seminar topics, should contact Scott Alboni on [scott.alboni@chamberstravel.com](mailto:scott.alboni@chamberstravel.com)

## SEE US AT THE BTS SHOW NEXT MONTH!

Plunge into a technological world on Stand No B520, see demos of Smart, experience our tech bars & discover what else is happening at Chambers.

# A TOUCH OF PURPLE

Chambers' annual client party at Vanilla in London was anything but vanilla. The company's purple branding imbued the venue, with liquid nitrogen cocktails and ice cream concoctions bubbling and smoking in the Purple Parlour and Virgin Atlantic crew creating their signature Redhead cocktails in their Upper Class Virgin Lounge.

Another hot party accessory - an ice sculpture incorporating a Vodka Luge - added a frozen fun factor. It drew in the brave with waiting mouths, with certain (anonymous) guests managing to drink for 22 seconds! Definitely an ice breaker.

Not to be outdone, The Voice hopeful Jamie Johnson belted out hits and filled the dance floor. 📧



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