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Avian Flu: Over-reaction could damage tourism industry says WTO



The WTO is to meet with the World Health Organization to combat the looming threat of an avian flu epidemic having a serious impact on international tourism.

"We must ensure that people are not deterred from travelling without good reason," says WTO Secretary-General Francesco Frangiali. "Unnecessary scaremongering can cause a sharp drop in tourism that squeezes the economies, especially those of developing nations and the incomes of millions of workers in this industry." He urged governments with their travel advisories and the media with their coverage of avian flu to "act responsibly to prevent a repeat of the SARS scare of 2003. We know that the avian flu epidemic is very likely to happen, but not what regions it could hit or for how long. But we do know from our previous experience with SARS that its

effect on tourism could be substantial. "The objective of our meeting with WHO is to help the tourism industry to be better informed and prepared. Our message is not to overreact or panic, but at the same time not to underestimate the problem." Recommending governments to follow WTO's crisis management guidelines, Mr Frangiali said international travel would be the first economic sector to be hit if people began to cancel holidays because of fears of visiting certain destinations. "With the media, we ask them to monitor developments on avian flu very carefully and refrain from any reporting that creates unnecessary panic," he says.

"Governments should issue travel advisories to citizens only as a last resort, and remove or modify them as soon as the situation improves." As one of the biggest sectors in the global economy, international tourism was worth \$US 622 billion last year – spent by more than 763 million tourists – and is currently expanding at an annual

rate of nearly six per cent. But industry growth could easily be hit by the outbreak of another epidemic, as happened when SARS reduced international arrivals to North-East Asia by 9 per cent and to South-East Asia by 14 per cent in 2003. "SARS is our point of reference as to just what can happen," says Mr. Frangiali. "And the effects on tourism then were more those of an 'infodemic' – too much news, often unsubstantiated and speculative – than an epidemic.. Among the points overlooked by the media at the time was that many of the deaths in the affected regions were the result of other, totally unrelated illnesses.

This only served to magnify the perceived threat of SARS and instil more fear among travellers. "There are still many questions to be answered with avian flu, such as whether it will ever become transmittable between humans, before we face the threat of an epidemic," adds the Secretary-General. (Source: WTO News Releases 18/10/2005)

New Airbus supersonic jet planned



The European aircraft consortium Airbus is planning a new generation of supersonic passenger jets, only two years after the last Concorde was retired. Designs are being drawn up by Airbus for a 250-seat plane with a range of up to 6,000 miles that could reach speeds approaching 1,500mph. The manufacturer believes that fast growth in the aviation market means that there could be demand for supersonic travel on hundreds of long-haul routes by 2050. According to Corinne Marizy, an Airbus researcher, by then supersonic travel could account for 10% to 20% of flights. Airbus's design is one of a number of proposals for supersonic jets being put together around the world, the first of which Marizy said could be in service by 2015. The market would be growing fast by 2025, she added. (Source: IAPA News 12/10/05)

Brazilians begin Fiji travel

The Fiji Visitors Bureau has recorded an increase in the number of visitors from Brazil, attributed to the marketing work undertaken by FVB and Kangaroo Tours, a travel agent specialising in tours from Brazil to the South Pacific. On November 3, Kangaroo Tours will host a workshop for travel agents in Brazil to educate travel agents about Fiji. (Source: Bula News 08/10/2005)



No passengers data exchange

The European Parliament rejected an EU-Canada deal that would allow authorities to collect passengers' personal data, after taking legal action against a similar unity between the EU and United States.

The European Union assembly last year took the bloc's governments to court over the US deal, which Washington says is aimed at fighting terrorism, but which EU lawmakers say violates privacy rights. The assembly's expert on the matter said it would be best to wait for the ruling from the European Court of Justice before going ahead with any more deals to exchange sensitive passenger data. (Source: IAPA News 12/10/05)

Pacific Blue to commence AKL/RAR services

Pacific Blue has announced the commencement of twice-weekly AKL/RAR/AKL services in November 2005. This will add to Air New Zealand's 10 flights AKL/RAR flights, one MEL/CHC/RAR and one AKL/NAN/RAR service. Introductory fare for the commencement of services went on sale

at NZ\$ 199 one-way plus taxed (\$61) for sales to 18th September 2005 with travel period 01 Nov-31 Mar 2006. Everyday fares start from \$249 one-way on-line. The airline will cease its CHC/RAR service in November and may offer this on a seasonal basis between April and October. (Source: *Drumbeats third quarter 2005*)

Destination marketing at work (Vanuatu)



After a period of consultation and exchanging of ideas the Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO) The Vanuatu Tourism Association (VTA) the Vanuatu Hotel & Resorts Association (VHRA) and the Airlines (Air Vanuatu and Pacific Blue) have launched a 40% off sale into the Australian and New Zealand Markets.

The program focuses on 40% off accommodation deals with substantial airlines savings on airfares. The program is designed to fill gaps in occupancy across the pre Christmas period and the period from the end of January until the end of March 2006. Funding will be provided by all parties to the agreement



to our Australian Wholesalers advertising through campaigns schedules on Sydney and Brisbane radio and a direct email campaign initiated by empowered in Australia. These two initiatives will be implemented from the week starting 25th October 2005. A TV campaign is planned for later in the year targeting the early part of 2006. The release of the special to the wholesaler's has had a significant effect on forward bookings already and VTA spokesman Bryan Death said "the whole destination would benefit greatly from the initiative". Mr Death said "the Destination Marketing model provided by a small country like New Zealand had worked wonders in that country and he hoped that all business that derived direct or indirect benefit from visitors to Vanuatu would see the value in supporting Destination Marketing as a concept in the future". John Cvetko, Marketing Manager for the VTO confirmed that Hotels participating in the program were receiving bookings and interest to fill the traditionally low season dates as a result of the 40% Off Sale message. Mr Cvetko added "that the VTO saw such combined efforts of the Tourism entities as critical to the ongoing increased destination profile of Vanuatu. The parties have already discussed the need for further collaboration to develop programs to mimic the success of the current campaign". Mr Cvetko said "with Vanuatu Tok Tok due to take place on Thursday 13th and Friday 14th of October at Le Lagon Resort it would be an excellent talking point to raise with the visiting wholesalers to emphasise the importance of the Destination Marketing thrust both now and in the future and the positive light in which the campaign cast the industry". (Source: *The Tribal Drum October 2005*)

The above news items have been compiled from SPTO (South Pacific Tourism Organisation) and VTO (Vanuatu Tourism Office) news updates, as well as other travel-related sources. Worawia Holiday Haven is a paid member of SPTO and member with VTO.

November 2005 Specials – Stay 7 nights, pay for 5

If you're planning to visit Vanuatu in November, be it for business or pleasure, then you can take advantage of our November Specials Deals. Get 2 free nights when you book a 7-night stay – pay only \$550 Australian dollars for 7 days, double. Free airport transfers included. Check this page for more details www.resort-vanuatu.com/nov2005specials.htm



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