

# Early bird deals pay dividends, with sales 'exceptionally' strong

Demand has once again been strong for early bird deals, with many wholesalers releasing offers to the market earlier than normal in a (successful) bid to increase sales.

By Jenny Burns

**E**ARLY bird deals are again in great demand, with all major wholesalers and airlines reporting strong support for their specials and deals.

According to Globus marketing manager Christian Schweitzer sales are up across all of the Globus family of brands, with Avalon Waterways, Globus and Cosmos all experiencing solid growth this year.

"Demand is exceptionally strong for Avalon in Asia with operations increasing by 380 per cent compared to last year," he said.

"Since the new *Avalon Mekong* cruise ship came online, it has sold to capacity dozens of times over."

Avalon's Europe program has also been selling well, up 44 per cent this year as Australians' love affair with river cruising and the new luxury 'Suite Ships' *Avalon Panorama*, *Avalon Visionary* and *Avalon Vista*, intensifies.

"Generous early bird deals and a growing enthusiasm from agents to sell river cruising has also helped boost sales," Schweitzer said.

Demand for coaching touring has been just as strong.

"In North America Globus' sales are up 75 per cent on this time last year and the Europe program is performing 14 per cent better this year," he said.

"This can largely be contributed to the strength of the Aussie dollar coupled with generous flight discounts and tours an average 10 per cent cheaper than competitors without sacrificing on quality or content."

Cosmos' North America sales have increased 70 per cent this year while Europe remains steady.

"Price reductions for the North America product have really driven sales with value taken to the next level thanks to the consistently strong dollar," Schweitzer said.

Rail Plus is reporting strong sales of all products, especially the Eurostar early birds.

"Eurostar is unique for European train services as it is available to be booked six months ahead," said Rail Plus sales and marketing manager, Greg McCallum.

"We are also finding sales for Europe in traditional off-peak seasons are significantly up, with people planning a return to Europe for a particular event or region after previously going on a more typical broader summer experience.

"The France pass is an increasingly popular product."

Trafalgar managing director Matthew Cameron-Smith is reporting a huge surge in bookings for Trafalgar's 2012 Europe and Britain guided holiday itineraries.

"Due to such a strong response to our

early bird season, Trafalgar is leading the market with over 2600 definite departures secured for 2012 Europe and UK itineraries," he said.

"By locking in such strong sales levels so early in the season, we are providing both agents and clients alike with the confidence that their holiday is a definite departure."

While all Europe and UK regions have exceeded the regular number of definite departures, a stand-out destination for Trafalgar is Italy, with more than 500 definite departures secured.

DriveAway Holidays national industry sales manager Nathan Baber is also reporting strong demand for early bird deals.

"Since October we have seen a lot of forward enquiry from agents and their clients," he said. "We therefore made it our number one priority to have rates loaded earlier than last year to service our agents' enquiries."

Baber said France, Italy, Germany, UK, Ireland were again very strong performers.

Motorhomes which were in great demand in 2011, especially in France, Germany, Italy and Spain, were again very popular.

"We are seeing a lot of early bird rates on offer for motorhomes, more so than previous years," Baber said.

"Peugeot Leasing has gone off with

a bang. Enquiries have exceeded our expectations."

Creative Holidays managing director Paul McGrath said UK and Europe sales have started strongly on the back of early bird offers in the market.

"Following a year of growth, and with a vision to support our 2011 and 2012 early bird fares, this year we launched our first ever Europe and UK Preview brochure," he said.

"The Preview program was released to provide agents, and clients alike, a head-start on Europe and UK bookings for 2012 in line with early bird deals."

The brochure includes accommodation, sightseeing tours and transfers and Alamo car hire in the hot-spots of London, Paris and Rome, as well as stopover packages incorporating accommodation, sightseeing tours and transfers in a range of cities including Bangkok, Hong Kong and Dubai.

"Early birds are a critical part of our business, underpinning the start of the long-haul selling season," McGrath said.

"The combination of our early bird deals with the strength of the Australian dollar means a European holiday has never been better value.

"These factors have added up to a hugely successful early bird season and given the current market trends alongside the success of early bird initiatives, we expect the region to continue going strong in 2012."

## Save with LH deals to 52 destinations

LUFTHANSA'S early bird deals valid until December 16 cover 52 destinations around Europe and are valid for travel from January 1 to September 30. Fares start at \$1290 gross, commissionable at seven per cent.

Passengers taking advantage of the fares may fly on Lufthansa's new A380 as a result of the aircraft being introduced on the Singapore to Frankfurt route from October 31.

"This means Australians now have access to our latest aircraft and product on their favourite gateway," said Lufthansa and Austrian general manager, Marlene Sanau.

Five out of Lufthansa's 12 gateways are now served by the A380. In addition to Singapore those ports are Tokyo, Shanghai, Beijing, San Francisco.

Sanau said early bird offerings had traditionally played a major role in Australians' travel planning.

All 52 destinations offered were popular with Australian travellers. As well as Frankfurt they included Paris, London Heathrow, selected Scandinavian and Eastern European cities.

## Free days with DriveAway leasing specials

DRIVEAWAY Holidays has released a range of early bird deals covering car rentals, motorhomes and Peugeot leasing.

Car rental early bird deals are available on selected vehicles in the United States, United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands.

Motorhomes offered in early bird deals include two to five berth vehicles, four wheel drives and luxury six and seven berths. Countries covered include the United States, Canada, France, Australia and New Zealand.

Car rentals generally include unlimited kilometres, Collision Damage Cover, theft protection, local taxes, third party insurance and 24 hour assistance.

Many of the deals are on offer until December 31.

Early bird Peugeot Leasing deals for 2012 include nine free day's hire on 3008, 5008 and 508 models, seven free days on 207, 308, 807, Partner Tepee, Expert Tepee, RCZ and 4007 models and three free Loyalty Bonus Days for previous Peugeot Leasing customers since 2005.



There is also 50 per cent off Europe/UK delivery and return fees.

As a result of the deals, a Peugeot 207 Economy 1.4L is available from \$1250 based on a 28-day lease (which

includes the seven free day hire offer).

Vehicles are valid for collections from January 1, 2012 to December 31 2012 and bookings must be made by February 29.

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Emirates' 29 European destinations now on sale in Economy Class. Available until 30th November 2011.

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London	from \$1,964*	Rome	from \$1,805*
Madrid	from \$1,798*	Sr.Petersburg	from \$1,808*

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Up to 1,200 entertainment channels | 30kg luggage allowance | Gourmet food and wine | One-stop to 29 European destinations

Air Transport World 2011 Airline of the Year. \*Airlines quoted are from Perth departure and are inclusive of taxes and surcharges correct at 16 September, 2011. Offer ends 30 November, 2011 for travel between 1 February, 2012 and 30 September, 2012. Prices quoted are for the low season. Flight restrictions apply. Amendments and cancellation fees apply. ^Prices are per person, per night for a two night stay on a twin-sharing basis and subject to currency fluctuations and changes to the tariffs payable to hotels. Valid for bookings made for travel between 1 May, 2012 and 30 September, 2012. For bookings made for travel up to and including 30 April, 2012 prices start from US\$57 and from 1 October, 2012 up to and including 31 October, 2012, prices start from US\$60 per person, per night stay on a twin-sharing basis and subject to currency fluctuations and changes to the tariffs payable to hotels. Rooms subject to availability. For more information contact your Emirates' Sales Team or the Emirates' Contact Centre on 1300 880 599.

## Creative packages London deal

CREATIVE Holidays is offering a number of early bird deals.

These include a Creative Holidays Emirates early bird airfare which is priced from \$2469 ex Perth and Melbourne and \$2489 ex Sydney and Brisbane per person (twin share). The price includes return economy airfares to London flying Emirates, two-night stopover in Dubai, full breakfast daily, return airport transfers in Dubai, arrival transfer from London Heathrow to the hotel, four nights in London at Barkston Gardens including continental breakfast daily and a River Red Rover Hop On Hop Off pass.

The deal is on sale until December 7 for travel from February 1 to 29.

The deal is valid for other travel dates and into other ports including Amsterdam, Athens, Copenhagen and Glasgow.

Creative's Singapore Airlines early bird airfare is priced from \$2255 ex Melbourne and Perth, \$2259 ex Adelaide, \$2269 ex Sydney and \$2279 ex Brisbane. It includes return economy airfares to London flying SIA, four nights' accommodation and continental breakfast daily. Early bird fares are available into other European ports.

# Globus brands release early booking offers



The new "Suite Ship" Avalon Panorama has wall-to-wall panoramic windows.

A NUMBER of early bird deals are on offer across the Globus family of brands.

Avalon early bird deals include a saving of \$600 per couple on any 2012 cruise aboard Avalon's new 'Suite Ships' – *Avalon Panorama*, *Avalon Visionary* and *Avalon Vista*.

There's a \$500 per couple saving on bookings for any 2012 European cruise

of 12 days or more while \$400 per couple is on offer for any 2012 European cruise combined with Emirates airfares from Australia to Europe. There's also a saving of \$300 per couple on any 2012 European cruise of up to 11 days. The deals are on sale until December 31 or until sold out.

Globus is offering early bird savings

of 10 per cent for Europe and North America tours booked and paid for 12 months in advance. Travellers can save \$300 per couple when they combine any Globus Europe tour with an Emirates early bird airfare. Return economy flights are available from \$1630 to Rome or Dublin from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, or from \$1570 from Perth and from \$1730 from Adelaide.

A free extra night's accommodation in Rome is on offer with any booking of the 13-day "Italian Mosaic" itinerary made by December 31, 2011.

A free extra night's accommodation is on offer in Madrid with any booking of the 14-day "Spanish Fiesta" itinerary made by December 31, 2011.

Cosmos is offering couples savings of \$300 when they book a Europe tour with an Emirates airfare. The early bird deal applies to all tours booked before November 30, 2011.

Cosmos and Singapore Airlines are offering return flights to India from \$1490 including taxes when booked with any of the five Cosmos itineraries in India, and booked and paid by March 31, 2012.

## GMTC launches dedicated Greece and Turkey specials brochure

GREECE and Mediterranean Travel Centre (GMTC) has released a 28-page brochure highlighting a range of early bird deals in Greece and Turkey.

The brochure, Early Bird Greece and Turkey Specials 2012, includes accommodation offerings in Athens, Santorini and Mykonos (pictured), Greek Island hopping flexi passes, Greece escorted coach tours, Greek Island programs, Greece cruise and stay packages and Louis and Star Clipper cruises.

In Turkey the brochure includes coach touring, Turkey self-drive and trips between Greece and Turkey.



The brochure also includes several new products including the luxury

programs – "Greece in Style" and "Santorini Indulgence". Both packages feature upmarket accommodation. Early bird deals offer savings of up to \$1100 per couple on the "Greece in Style" package and \$850 per couple on "Santorini Indulgence".

Most accommodation featured in the brochure offers savings of between 10 and 15 per cent with bookings required either by December 31 or January 31. Room upgrades are also on offer with several properties.

GMTC's Halina Kubia said the brochure complimented the many early bird airfares currently in the market.

## Save 25% with Rail Plus Australian train deals

RAIL Plus early bird deals include up to 25 per cent off the gold services on the Indian Pacific and Ghan services. Also on offer is 20 per cent off Britrail Passes valid until the end of February. On offer until November 28 are Thalys early bird / off peak specials, Eurostar early bird deals, 20 per cent off France rail passes and Eurail select pass extra day promotions.

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# Early bird deals stimulate solid forward bookings for Emirates

EMIRATES is reporting strong demand for its early bird deals.

"We are seeing strong growth in passenger numbers compared to the same period last year," said Victoria, South Australia, Tasmanian and Northern Territory sales manager Dean Cleaver.

Cleaver said Emirates' European network of 29 destinations, multi-daily

frequency from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth, sophisticated Dubai hub stopover packages and the strong Australian dollar were all contributing factors to this result.

The early bird deals were a priority in establishing strong forward bookings through most of next year.

"They are good as part of our value proposition to consumers. Consumers

are now well educated that if they book early, they will receive the best value airfare," Cleaver said.

Valid for sale until November 30 and valid for travel between February 1 and September 30, the early bird deals cover Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Early bird fares from Melbourne to Emirates' newly announced European destinations start from \$1805 to

Dublin, \$1808 to St Petersburg, \$1807 to Copenhagen, and \$1835 to Geneva.

Lead-in return airfares to destinations of the Middle East include \$1650 to Dubai, \$1642 to Muscat and \$1653 to Cairo.

Cape Town, Durban or Johannesburg early bird fares ex Melbourne start from \$1832 return and Nairobi from \$1779 return.

## Strong demand for Renault Eurodrive deals

RENAULT Eurodrive is reporting strong demand for its early bird deals valid until December 1.

"Business is good with enquiries and bookings for 2012 strong," said Renault Eurodrive managing director Paul Hodges.

"We expect a good year again in 2012 and the exchange rates for the Australian dollar versus the euro continue to be in customers' favour.

The 2012 Advance Purchase early bird deals include seven free days on all vehicles, a 50 per cent discount off delivery and return fees outside France, plus three free days as a bonus for past clients.

The commission applicable for agents is 17 per cent and the offer is based on book and deposit by December 1 with full payment due six weeks prior to vehicle collection. Vehicles can be collected between February 1 and December 31.

In December, Renault Eurodrive will release its full range of vehicles and further early bird specials.



## Insight's early release of deals pays dividends

INSIGHT Vacations managing director Lorraine Sharp said the company's decision to launch its 2012 Europe and Britain program and thus early bird specials earlier than in previous years had reflected extremely positively on sales. Both were released in early September.

"Our forward bookings are demonstrating an increase of over 20 per cent on last year," she said.

"Early birds are without a doubt our busiest time of year. They give travellers a great incentive to book early and also provide agents with a fantastic way of securing 2012 sales."

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## Save with Alamo, VIA Rail specials

MOMENTO Travel has released early bird deals from Alamo Rent a Car and Brewster/ VIA Rail.

Alamo special early bird incentives offer travellers a complimentary upgrade on select categories for all rentals booked before March 31 for travel between April 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013.

The special is applicable for all rentals collected at any of Alamo's 280 locations throughout the US.

Rates are fully inclusive of Collision Damage Waiver, minimum third party liability insurance and unlimited mileage, \$US1 million liability cover, sales and state taxes/surcharges, airport fees and customer facility charges. A peak

season surcharge applies from July 15 to August 31 and December 16 to 31.

As a result of the early bird deal, visitors to California can hire an intermediate car for \$63 for a day, \$325 for a week and \$60 for each extra day. A full size car costs \$80 for a day \$383 for a week and \$76 for each extra day.

Brewster/ VIA Rail early bird deals specials cover a number of tours which must be booked by December 15.

These include the eight-day "Western Circle Explorer" tour which costs from \$2160 per person, a saving of \$361. Departing from Vancouver the tour includes Jasper Banff, Lake Louise and Kelowna. The tour departs Sundays and Tuesdays from May 1 to October 9.