

Adventure travel operators are hoping to put the spotlight back on experiences and product strength, and move away from the discounting that dominated the industry during 2009.

ADVENTURE TRAVEL OPERATORS KEEN TO SHELVE DISCOUNTING

By Jane E. Fraser

ADVENTURE travel operators are anxious to move away from discounting and put the focus back on products and experiences as the economy continues to recover.

While the sector has been performing strongly compared to most, tactical discounting has played a large role in keeping sales up through the downturn and operators are uncomfortable with this emphasis on price.

"We've always thought that the strength of our product spoke volumes and until the GFC hit we hadn't been into broad discounting," says James Thornton, general manager global sales for Intrepid Travel.

"It's definitely a challenge; something we're trying to find the balance on at the moment.

"2009 was very discount driven."

GAP Adventures general manager Pete Rawley says GAP had also traditionally steered away from discounting but was forced into it during the downturn.

"It (the adventure travel sector) has been a very aggressive space in the

market," Rawley says. "I think we're all to blame for that.

"We've built a rod for our own backs and I don't think it's good for any of us, including our trade partners."

Rawley says while operators are unable to collude on pricing strategies, he believes there is general consensus on the need to get back to marketing products and experiences.

"I think there is a want amongst our competitors as well, that we want to try to move away from it being price all the time," he says.

"We need to get back to core values and focusing on building a culture that people will see as more valuable than the lowest price in the market.

"It's a re-education process for the consumers: that cheapest price is not a long term strategy."

Rawley says apart from taking the focus off experiences and values, the widespread discounting has caused a further shortening in the booking pattern, with consumers waiting for last-minute specials.

James Thornton says Intrepid took the decision about six months ago to step back from discounting and towards product-based marketing but

it proved to be too early. The company has since released many more tactical deals into the market.

"I think the market is still demanding strong tactical offers, in order to drive the sort of sales required," he says.

Thornton says it is important to note that while strong tactical offers draw in consumers, there has still been a "huge" volume of sales at full price.

People are often enticed by a discount offer but want to travel on a specific dates, on a specific trip, and will pay full price to get the trip they want.

Regardless of discounting, the adventure travel sector has been recording strong results throughout the GFC.

Profits have been dampened by events such as the Iceland volcano, South American floods and Bangkok riots but growth has still been very healthy.

Thornton says Intrepid recorded 15 per cent year-on-year growth for the year ended June 30, although it would have expected more.

Natural disasters and political upheaval took a huge toll in the latter

part of the financial year, dampening what had been strong sales to that point.

"We were having a really strong nine months but we certainly noticed a slowdown in the last quarter," he says.

Thornton says the slowdown was very regionalised, rather than a global trend, and the market has bounced back strongly in the new financial year.

"We'll be gunning for at least 25 per cent (year on year growth) this year," he says.

"Our style of travel is one of the fastest growing styles of travel in the industry, along with cruising."

Pete Rawley says many people affected by events such as the South American floods and Thai unrest had transferred to other trips, although this had been very labour intensive to manage.

Overall, GAP has been "very happy" with its bookings.

"We've been growing pretty quickly over the past two years... we've recorded triple digit growth (off a small base)," he says.

"The new financial year has been very solid."



Let **Air Niugini** show you
the real Papua New Guinea.

FROM ONLY

\$513 rtn*
ex BNE

\$470 rtn* ex CNS **\$801** rtn* ex SYD

Air Niugini can show you the wonder of
Papua New Guinea and beyond to Asia and the Pacific.



Call toll **FREE 1300 361 380** or book online at **www.airniugini.com.pg**



Air Niugini

BRISBANE - CAIRNS - HONG KONG - HONIARA - KUALA LUMPUR - MANILA - NADI - PNG - SINGAPORE - SYDNEY - TOKYO

*Fares quoted are to Port Moresby and include all taxes and surcharges but are subject to currency fluctuations and are based on lead in prices.
Availability is limited to selected departure periods. Other terms and conditions apply. All flights operate via Port Moresby.

AIR92463_PNG

Sutera resort provides luxury base for adventurous pursuits



THE Sutera Harbour Resort in Sabah, Malaysia, is well placed to cater for growing numbers of travellers combining adventurous pursuits with luxury and pampering.

With the World Heritage-listed Mount Kinabalu as its backdrop, the resort offers a good base for activities including orang-utan encounters, scuba diving, hiking and jungle adventures.

The 956-room resort incorporates the five-star accommodation of The Pacific Sutera and the Magellan Sutera, along with the Sutera Harbour Marina, Golf and Country Club.

The resort is also affiliated with the five nature resorts known as Sutera Sanctuary Lodges, as well as the North Borneo Railway vintage steam train and North Borneo Yachting luxury

cruises. The 500-room Pacific Sutera has panoramic views of the South China Sea.

The top two floors are 'Pacific Club' rooms, where guests are offered complimentary continental breakfast and evening cocktails in the Pacific Club lounge, which looks out over to the five islands of the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park.

The Magellan Sutera is slightly smaller, with 456 rooms, and features a native longhouse-style lobby.

Most rooms have private balconies and the Magellan Club offers guests personalised butler and reception services, along with complimentary breakfast and evening cocktails.

For those looking to combine their outdoor pursuits with a bit of pampering, the resort has two spas, and golfers can make the most of a 27-hole championship golf course that includes 20 holes that are lit for night golf.

Qantas Holidays is offering a seven-night package for the Magellan Sutera from \$677 per person (twin share), including transfers and full breakfast daily, valid for travel until the end of March.

Aurora Expeditions introduces diving on Arctic voyages

AURORA Expeditions has launched the High Arctic 2011 brochure with voyages to Spitsbergen, Greenland and Iceland, with a diving option on selected voyages.

The brochure also includes a new voyage, the "Iceland and Greenland Explorer" focusing on Greenland's stunning south east coast.

Under sea divers will delight in a realm of huge kelp forests alive with crabs, sea butterflies, sea hedgehogs, jellyfish and arctic fish. Those who would prefer to stay above the sea can opt for the ever-popular sea kayaking, available on most voyages.

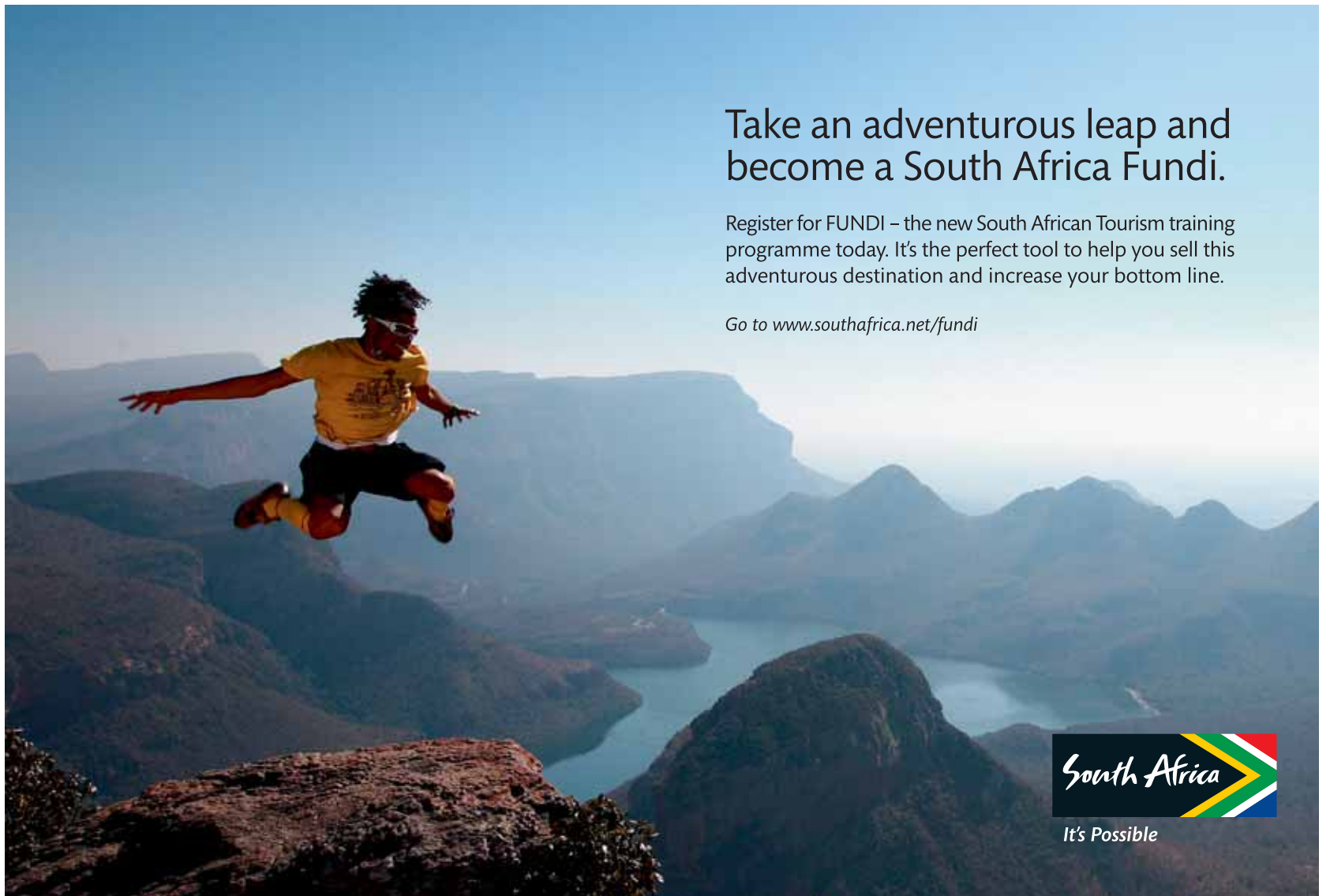
It's the magic of the regions that surprises adventurers to the region, whether it is a walrus swimming in the wake, a polar bear stalking a seal in the pack ice or the midnight sun breaking through the clouds. The kingdom of the polar bear is best reached by Aurora's *Polar Pioneer*. This small ice strengthened ship takes a maximum of 54 passengers.

Three voyages are available, including the Spitsbergen Odyssey (11 days from \$6080 including ship accommodation, all meals onboard, all shore excursions, lectures, medical services, port charges and taxes).

Take an adventurous leap and become a South Africa Fundi.

Register for FUNDI – the new South African Tourism training programme today. It's the perfect tool to help you sell this adventurous destination and increase your bottom line.

Go to www.southafrica.net/fundi



It's Possible

Vanuatu

We know our Islands better than anyone!



Vanuatu photos courtesy Kirkland photos

A short nonstop flight from Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne aboard our new Boeing 737-800 takes you to a different world, with so much to see and do!

Be sure to visit our outer islands where traditional customs are still observed; we offer special discounted fares to overseas visitors arriving with Air Vanuatu. And we're a full-service airline, serving complimentary drinks and meals.

The friendliest smiles in the Pacific await you!

Vanuatu Tourism pushes enhanced soft adventure offerings in Vila, Tanna

VANUATU Tourism is actively promoting the destination as the South Pacific's leading soft adventure capital with an array of new adventure activities recently introduced in Port Vila and Tanna.

Hydro zorbing, Zego Sports crafts, Tropic Thunder Jetboating and kite surfing are among the new adventure activities launched within the past 12 months in Port Vila. New adventure activities on offer on Tanna include sandboarding and ash trekking tours at Mt Yasur Volcano.

Vanuatu Tourism Office marketing executive Jackie Lau says that Vanuatu offers more adventure based activities than other South Pacific destinations.

"Vanuatu truly is the adventure capital of the South Pacific – from sandboarding down the fiery Mt Yasur volcano to the ever increasing range of heart thumping water sports in Port Vila," Lau says.

"Vanuatu Tourism is constantly on the lookout for new and innovative adventure activities to actively promote to Australian adventure seekers.

"Just 2.5 hours from Brisbane, 3.5 hours from Sydney and four hours



from Melbourne, Vanuatu is positioned well to cater for the increasing number of Australian's looking for fun-filled, affordable overseas holidays."

Not for the faint-hearted, a range of adventure based water activities are new to Port Vila. Slide down the picturesque Mele Hills in a 2.5m giant hydro ball, known as Hydro zorbing or jump on a Zego Sports craft, similar to a jet ski, on Port Vila Harbour for an action packed adventure.

Port Vila also offers a large range of well-established land based and water based activities including abseiling, scuba diving, big game fishing charters, kayaking, snorkelling, horse riding,

quad buggy adventures and stand-up paddle boarding.

On Tanna, a new range of volcano based recreational tours have been established within the past 12 months – a short 35 minutes south of Efate. Mt Yasur Volcano is one of the few places in the world where adults and children alike can sandboard down the ash planes of an active volcano.

Ash trekking tours are also new to Tanna along with sunset and sunrise tours to the rim of the volcano.

Tanna also offers adventurers underwater caves to explore, snorkelling over some of the best coral in the South Pacific and untouched waterfalls.

Air Vanuatu adds direct flights from Melbourne

AIR Vanuatu is operating direct flights from Melbourne to Port Vila each Thursday. The non-stop services will cut down the travelling time to three hours 45 minutes to Port Vila from the previous six hours-plus via Sydney. The return flight from Port Vila direct to Melbourne has flight time of about four hours and 30 minutes.

Air Vanuatu also flies non-stop from Brisbane and Sydney, and offers the only direct International flights to Espiritu Santo as well as Port Vila. International passengers arriving on Air Vanuatu benefit from special domestic fares to the outer islands. Meals, beverages and inflight entertainment on flights from Australia are complimentary.

BFirsttravel

LATIN AMERICA

A journey of discovery

BFirst Travel will show you the Latin America only locals know!

explore ★ dream ★ discover

1300 763 338 (Australia wide) or **+61 2 9232 0048**

www.bfirsttravel.com



South African adventurers to benefit from upgraded infrastructure

SOUTH Africa is banking on strong interest from travellers in the wake of the FIFA World Cup, which drew global television audiences in the hundreds of millions.

South Africa Tourism (SAT) says improved tourism infrastructure and the upskilling of workers in the tourism and hospitality sectors have been among the many benefits of hosting the Cup and will result in an improved visitor experience.

When it comes to adventure-minded travellers, South Africa is best known for its safari experiences, but offers a huge range of activities, from shipwreck diving to riding ostriches.

Underwater adventures include diving with Great White Sharks in the Western Cape region, diving with tiger sharks in KwaZulu

Natal and shipwreck diving off the Eastern Cape coastline. On top of the water, popular activities include big wave surfing and kite surfing in the Western Cape region and whitewater rafting in the Blyde River Canyon in Limpopo.

For adrenalin junkies, there is skydiving, canyoning, caving, paragliding, abseiling, sandboarding and bungee jumping. SAT says the world's highest bungee jumping site can be found at Bloukrans River Bridge on the Storms River, Eastern Cape.

Those interested in hiking will find good walking in the Drakensburg Mountains (KwaZulu Natal) and along the spectacular Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape, while those who enjoy flying can opt for bi-plane flights, hot air ballooning or aerobatic flying.

Enjoy the best of South America flying LAN Airlines

With six weekly flights from Sydney to Santiago, Chile and connections from Santiago to over 50 South America destinations, LAN will take you to all the wonders of the region in award-winning* style.



* LAN Airlines winner of the 2008, 2009 & 2010 prestigious Skytrax award for Best Airline South America.
For more information contact LAN Airlines on 1800 221 572

Sri Lanka luxury tour to ignite senses

ADVENTURE travel doesn't have to be without indulgence, says Seven Skies Luxury Adventure Travel, citing its upmarket 14-day escorted tour to experience "the beautiful tear-shaped island of Sri Lanka".

The company is promising travellers "regional cuisine, stylish boutique hotels, ever-changing landscapes and rich colonial history".

Staying at a range of hotels created from colonial buildings and plantation houses such as The Wallawwa, The Kandy House, Ceylon Tea Trails and Amangalla, the trip has been designed around the country's small, friendly scale to immerse travellers in its diverse cultures and regions through cycling, trekking and bungalow hopping. Highlights include:

- Cycling through paddy fields, temples and villages to UNESCO World Heritage-listed Sigiriya Rock;
- Trekking across green tea plantations of Bogawantalawa Valley;
- Climbing sacred Adam's Peak, (Sri Pada) Sri Lanka's holiest mountain; and
- Exploring 400-year-old Galle Fort by foot and bicycle.

The 14-day package for late 2010 is priced from \$8995 per person (twin share), excluding airfares from Australia, and is commissionable to agents.

Northern Territory visitors staying longer, spending more

THE Northern Territory is renowned as an adventure destination, with everything from challenging four wheel drive tours or quad biking, through to camel riding or scenic helicopter flights.

The variety on offer is key to its appeal, from the Red Centre with its impressive ancient wonders including Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) and Uluru (Ayers Rock), through to the tropical city of Darwin and impressive nearby Kakadu and Litchfield national parks.

Tourism Northern Territory is proactive in ensuring there is an expanded range of commissionable product available to travel agents to sell, as well as making agent education a priority.

This focus includes the annual trade event, the NT Muster, which visited four capital cities in February, giving agents the chance to meet suppliers representing 60 NT products.

Tourism NT has also launched a new Online Training Program, with fact sheets, downloadable maps and the latest information on Tourism NT's brand marketing campaigns also available for agents online.

The NT has reported a jump in the number of tourists visiting the



Airboating on Kakadu floodplains

region, which is good news for travel agents, with recent figures showing in the year to March 2010, seasonally adjusted takings from hotels, motels and serviced apartments increased by 2.3 per cent while the number of guest nights grew by 4.5 per cent.

"This is a fantastic result and once again indicates the rest of Australia and indeed, the world have well and truly discovered the unique attractions of the Northern Territory," NT Minister

for Tourism Malarndirri McCarthy said. "The Territory has bucked the national trend with takings from tourist accommodation increasing by 4.3 per cent in the year to March.

"Importantly (the) figures also confirm that tourism across the Territory is growing with takings increasing in Darwin by 13 per cent, up by 5.8 per cent in Alice Springs and grew by 1.1 per cent in Katherine in the year to March."

LAN Peru announces new Lima to Iguazu flights

LAN is continuing its expansion within South America, announcing plans for new nonstop flights between two of the most popular destinations, the city of Lima, Peru, and Iguazu in Argentina, gateway to the breathtaking Iguazu Falls.

Subject to regulatory approvals, LAN Peru will introduce four weekly flights between Lima and Iguazu, starting in January 2011.

A UNESCO World Heritage attraction, Iguazu Falls are located at the junction of the Iguazu and Parana rivers, on the border of Argentina and Brazil.

Depending upon the water flow, Iguazu features as many as 270 waterfalls, the tallest of which is about 80 metres high – more than Niagara Falls on the US-Canada border.

Created by a geological fault some 200,000 years ago, the Iguazu Falls were first seen by Spanish explorers in 1541.

Today, not only are they a major tourism drawcard for daylight and even moonlight visits.

Since 1991, the Iguazu Falls have also helped to power the huge Itaipu hydro electricity plant, a significant provider of power to Argentina and Brazil.

The proposed Lima-Iguazu route is the latest in a series of new services by the LAN group of airlines, with LAN Airlines preparing to start Lima-Easter Island flights and LAN Ecuador preparing to fly from Quito to Galapagos Islands.

LAN has also just launched Lima-San Francisco services, and is extending its current European flights with a new onward flight from Madrid to Paris.

For the third consecutive year, LAN recently was named "Best Airline – South America" in the global Skytrax Awards for airline excellence.

From Australia, LAN – a member of the global oneworld airline alliance – offers six weekly Airbus A340-300 flights to Santiago, Chile, via Auckland, New Zealand, with onward connections to destinations throughout South America.



New True North cruise explores pristine Solomon Islands

NORTH Star Cruises has announced a new opportunity for adventure with the inaugural "Solomon Sojourn" itinerary on board the *True North* ship. The eight-day "Solomon Sojourn" cruise will depart Brisbane in November 2010, with a second cruise running back-to-back.

North Star general manager Peter Trembath said the stunning Pacific Island Solomon Island region was virtually untouched by tourism.

"We're offering a truly unique opportunity to experience the beauty of this place and its people," said Trembath.

The "Solomon Sojourn" features a mix of "culture, vibrant coral reef, history and the stunning South Pacific – as well as *True North's* revered line-up of snorkelling, diving, fishing and helicopter exploration".

Highlights include:

- Exploring the volcanic Savo Island;
- Fishing, diving and snorkelling at Russell, Uepi, and Kennedy islands;
- Discovering fascinating US war time history; and
- Soaking up the culture and vibrant atmosphere of local markets and villages.

Prices start at \$10,995 per person.

Simply Memorable...



27-hole Championship Golf Course



Mandara Spa



104-berth Marina

THE MAGELLAN SUTERA (5-STAR RATING)

For great rates and packages for Sutera Harbour Resort,
contact your preferred Sabah wholesaler or
visit www.suteraharbour.com

SUTERA HARBOUR RESORT

| The Pacific Sutera | The Magellan Sutera | Sutera Harbour Marina, Golf & Country Club |
| Sutera Sanctuary Lodges | North Borneo Railway | North Borneo Yachting |


Sutera Harbour
SABAH MALAYSIA
RESORT • GOLF • MARINA • SPA • COUNTRY CLUB

Kokoda Track demand prompts PNG 'one-stop shop' website launch

MORE than 5000 Australians a year are now trekking Papua New Guinea's challenging Kokoda Track, prompting the launch of a one-stop-shop website aimed at keeping the industry and consumers well informed.

The site, www.kokodatrackauthority.org, offers reliable and regularly updated information on the track and conditions, as well as information on planning and fitness training.

It also has a focus on responsible trekking and provides contact details for all tour operators licensed to operate on the track (trekkers can also do the trek on their own, so long as they apply for a trek permit).

For other adventure experiences in PNG, wholesalers Niugini Holidays and PNG Holidays have options including diving some of the world's best dive sites, canoe treks on the Sepik River, trekking in other parts of PNG, deep sea fishing, surfing and sailing.



A popular accommodation option is Madang Resort, which is the country's longest established hotel, having originally operated as a guest house

during PNG's days under German colonial rule.

The resort now has more than 100 rooms, all with private balconies, air

conditioning, satellite televisions and mini bars. There are four pools, three restaurants, a tennis court and other services and facilities including a hair salon, gymnasium and PADI dive shop.

Guests can hire bikes, cars, canoes and sailing boats and the resort is only 500 metres from the centre of Madang.

Meanwhile, Air Niugini has taken delivery of a second Boeing 767-300ER, which joins an existing 767 and a 757 in the airline's international fleet.

The new aircraft has been configured with 46 business seats and 148 economy seats, with greater seat pitch in both cabins, and features the airline's new livery, with a plumed bird of paradise.

Air Niugini operates to 10 international destinations including Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Honiara, Nadi, Singapore, Manila, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and Narita.

South America destinations remain major drawcard for adventure-minded travellers



The Salar de Uyuni, a salt desert, in southwestern Bolivia (image credit: Bfirst)

LATIN America specialist BFirst Travel says South America remains one of the least-known and least-explored areas of the world, making it a drawcard

for adventure-minded travellers.

BFirst director Marcos da Silva says it is a continent "open to our imagination", with volcanoes, salt flats,

1000-year-old forests, lakes and rivers.

"At the same time, South America offers a journey through history, as the cultures that originated here thousands of years ago have maintained their way to this day," da Silva says.

BFirst Travel offers a range of South American tours that combine adventure with comfort.

"Our adventure tours involve some physical activity with some cultural experiences during the day, and comfort in the evening – a nice hotel or lodge with gourmet meals and nice wine in good company," says da Silva.

An example of a BFirst tour is "Crossing to Salar De Uyuni", which da Silva says is "one of the finest treks on the globe". The trip is a seven-day traverse of the Bolivian and Chilean altiplanos to the Uyuni sand flats.

Trekkers pass through stark land-

scapes of white earth and boiling geysers and wander through shepherded villages.

"The first thing travellers will notice about the altiplanos is the elevation – walks typically range from 10,000 to 14,000 feet," says da Silva. "The second is the steadfastly sunny weather, which highlights the desert sky's immensity."

Da Silva says passengers on the trip stay in ancient stone-and-straw homes that have been refinished with local textiles and hardwood flooring, and a chef prepares open-air meals with fresh seafood flown in from the coast.

Another BFirst offering is Patagonia Camp, which da Silva says is the first luxury camp in South America.

Located at El Toro Lake, the camp has 18 luxury tents with twin or king beds – each with mountain and lake views and private bathrooms.

Be captivated by Tempo Holiday's Cuban discovery

TEMPO Holidays says it has packaged a Cuba tour combining culture, beaches and vibrant nightlife. According to the company, the eight-day adventure will enable travellers to "explore the delights of modern Cuba, indulging in the pulsating city of Havana with its love for music and dance and kick back in the oastal city of Varadero with its relaxed Caribbean vibe".

Priced from \$1243 per person (twin share), the "Flavours of Havana and Varadero" experience includes three nights' accommodation in Havana, four nights in Varadero, seven breakfasts, six lunches and seven dinners, coach



excursions with bilingual guide and compulsory Cuban handling fee. The special offer is valid for sale and travel to October 30, 2010. Conditions apply.

KWA offers \$2000 Kimberley discount in Spring

THE Kimberley region has experienced unseasonal rains during recent months, and consequently the waterfalls, waterholes and gorges have been replenished. This is now an ideal time to travel to the Kimberley for a once in a lifetime opportunity to see thunderous falls, lush vegetation and wildflowers, reports small group 4WD tour operator Kimberley Wilderness Adventures (KWA).

As a result, KWA has launched discounts up to \$2000 a couple on its 13 and 15-day packages in September and October.

The discount price on the 13-day "Kimberley Complete" tour Broome-Broome is from \$5395 per person (twin share) while the 15-day "Top End and Kimberley Discovery" Broome-Darwin package is from \$6195. Prices include meals, guided touring in 20-seater air-conditioned 4WD vehicle, accommodation (including nights in APT-owned wilderness lodges), cruises, helicopter flight over Mitchell Falls and sightseeing excursions.

