

in this issue february08

- ii **News briefing**
All change at London Heathrow
- iii New online booking tool set to revolutionise business travel
- iv Rooms with a view: unrivalled outlook for London's newest hotel
- v **Arrivals/Departures**
BA plans all-Business Class flights to New York
- vi **Travel deals**
Company rewards scheme relaunched

- viii **Airport briefing**
Munich: setting new goals
- ix **Destination briefing**
Berlin: responding to a burning issue
- x **Airline briefing**
SWISS: remarkable renaissance
- xi **Hotel briefing**
Accor: a brand for all seasons

Editorial

The countdown to the opening at the end of March of London Heathrow's fifth terminal has begun in earnest. Extensive passenger trials have been carried out in recent months to ensure signage is clear and in the right place, and more than 50 airlines are making the final arrangements to switch terminals.

It is the biggest upheaval in the airport's 60-year history. The largest free-standing building in the UK and its two satellites – the first of which is the same size as Terminal 4 – will absorb 30 million passengers from the existing terminals, easing congestion at the world's busiest international airport.

The enormity of the task is mind-boggling – the logistics far more complex than simply building a new airport and moving in.

Inevitably, there will be confusion among travellers who discover airlines are no longer where they used to be – although an extensive publicity campaign is promised. Let's hope that airport operator BAA's hope that this "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to redefine the airport experience" is fulfilled with the minimum of disruption. All we can do is wish them the best of luck.

- vii **Travellers' briefing**
Fares you can't afford to pass up



iv Rooms with a view



ix Berlin: responding to a burning issue



x SWISS: remarkable renaissance

newsbriefing

All change at London Heathrow



"The creation of Terminal 5 is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us to redefine your airport experience. Gone are the queues, the crowds, the stress. In their place find space, light and calm."

BAA, operator of London Heathrow

Numerous airlines will be switching terminals at London Heathrow from the end of next month, when the airport's fifth terminal opens.

The changes will affect a total of 54 airlines during the coming months in a series of phased moves.

The majority of British Airways' flights will switch to the new £4.3 billion (US\$8.37 billion) T5 immediately it opens on March 27. The rest of its flights will be moved to T3, to join other Oneworld airlines. Alliance partners American Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Japan Airlines and Royal Jordanian are already based at T3, and in September they will be accompanied by Finnair and Iberia. Qantas, however, will not join them until early 2009.

Other major movers will include Star Alliance airlines, which will use T1. United Airlines and Air New Zealand, for example, will operate there from June 10.

Carriers in the SkyTeam alliance will be based at T4. They include Delta, Continental and Northwest, all of which will launch new services from Heathrow this spring as a result of the recent US-UK open skies agreement. Another member, KLM, already uses the terminal. Five other SkyTeam carriers – Air France, Alitalia, Czech Airlines, Aeroflot and Kenya Airways – are scheduled to move there in February 2009.

Among those carriers which are not members of major alliances, Virgin Atlantic has confirmed it will remain in T3. But Jet Airways, Gulf Air and Malaysia Airlines are due to move from there to T4 in September.

Missed connections concerns

Problems experienced by passengers who miss connecting flights have been highlighted in a report by the UK-based Air Transport Users Council.

"Complaints to the AUC show that missing a connection between two flights can cause passengers considerable stress, inconvenience and expense," says AUC chairman Tina Tietjen. "Despite airlines encouraging passengers to take connecting services, not all carriers will commit to looking after their customers should they miss a

connection. Some airlines expect passengers to pick up the bill for any expenses incurred, such as meals or hotel accommodation, while waiting for the available flight."

In the report, *Missed Connections*, she urges airlines to look after their customers throughout their journey. "But if they do not, they should at least make it clear what their passengers can expect should they cause them to miss a connection," she adds.

Delta goes flat out

Delta Air Lines is to start installing full-flat seats in its BusinessElite cabins on Boeing 767s operating international services from the spring of next year.

There will be a total of 40 seats per aircraft, converting to 77-inch beds. The 1x2x1 configuration will give every passenger direct aisle access. The ergonomically designed seats will come with a full-size pillow, quilted duvet, 10.6-inch monitor, PC power and USB port for charging small electronic devices, plus oversized consoles providing generous work space.

Meanwhile, recliner seats in BusinessElite are being installed from this summer across Delta's international Boeing 757 fleet. These feature a 55-inch pitch and a 2x2 configuration, and will be available on routes from New York JFK to destinations such as Brussels, Edinburgh, London Gatwick, Manchester and Paris Orly.

News in brief

➔ **Aer Arann** has launched an invitation-only VIP programme, Silver Club, giving members Business lounge access in Dublin and Cork, recognition at check-in to get the best seats on the aircraft, extra checked-in baggage allowance of 25kgs, and a special section on its website enabling them to book, track, manage and change reservations.

➔ **British Airways** is introducing flights to a sixth destination in India this autumn. It will operate five departures a week between London Heathrow and Hyderabad, using Boeing 777s. BA already flies to Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai.

newsbriefing

New online booking tool set to revolutionise business travel

"OAG Travel Planner Pro is the first and only source of complete and unbiased information for planning and managing trips, using the same OAG database that keeps the global travel industry moving."

David Rosen, managing director, OAG Travel Solutions

A new online planning tool that is set to revolutionise the way people arrange and manage business travel is unveiled this month by OAG (Official Airline Guide).

Due to be launched in early April, OAG Travel Planner Pro enables business travellers and professional travel arrangers to plan, book and manage multiple trips for any number of travellers, and to create highly complex itineraries in an easy-to-use, intuitive and intelligent online environment.

The new service will be delivered in conjunction with FCm Bannockburn Travel Solutions, part of the FCm global management company. "It will take OAG into the transaction and fulfilment arena for the first time," explains David Rosen, OAG Travel Solutions' managing director. "For many years our customers have relied on OAG's electronic products for the most comprehensive and independent information to build even the most complex itinerary, but until now they have had to go elsewhere to make bookings.

"OAG Travel Planner Pro is the first and only source of complete and unbiased information for planning and managing trips, using the same OAG database that keeps the global travel industry moving," adds Rosen.

"They will have everything in one place. We are confident they won't need, or want, to go anywhere else to arrange business travel."

It is expected that travel management companies may want to 'white label' the new service for their own clients.

Business trips: now essential

Despite growing environmental concerns and advances in communications technology, business travel remains an integral part of working life.

According to American Express Business Travel's latest *Loves and Hates* survey, 93% of frequent flyers expect to travel on business as frequently, if not more than they did in 2007. "Whereas 10 years ago business travel was perhaps considered the preserve of main board directors and high-flying executives, it has now become

much less of a status symbol, more a corporate necessity in order to attend training courses (46%), conferences and seminars (46%), and conduct client meetings across the globe (43%)," it suggests.

The survey, which explores what motivates business travellers and what they like and dislike about travelling in general, also reveals the truth about corporate policy and compliance. Two-thirds of respondents believe that it is vital to be able to change their travel plans within at least 48 hours, with 16% needing to rearrange their schedules at least every other trip, increasing to 29% among board level travellers.

Only 45% of employees abide by their corporate policy all the time when arranging business travel. And where online booking systems exist, 57% of employees admitted that they still rely on some form of off-line assistance.

"Where companies have tried to exert some budgetary control over employee travel arrangements, many travellers are still going 'off-piste' when organising business trips," observes David Herrick, senior vice president of American Express Business Travel Europe. "The onus is on businesses not only to implement a travel management policy, but to ensure that it is adhered to and regularly reviewed. A centralised travel management policy is a win-win for both employers and employees."

The findings are from a survey of 500 European business travellers, conducted by independent research company, Loudhouse.

A380 for London route

Singapore Airlines is to introduce the Airbus A380 on the Singapore-London Heathrow route from March 18. The super-jumbo, which seats 471 passengers in three classes – 12 in First Class suites, 60 in Business (in a 1x2x1 configuration on the upper deck), and 399 in Economy – will operate one of SIA's three daily non-stop flights. The carrier currently has two A380s in service, with a third scheduled for delivery in mid-March. It has a further 16 on order, with options on six more.

newsbriefing

Rooms with a view: unrivalled outlook for London's newest hotel

“Park Plaza County Hall is a stunning mix of contemporary design, excellent business and leisure facilities and is an ideal living space for visitors to London.”

Boris Ivesha, president and CEO, Park Plaza Hotels

A hotel with some of the best views of London's most famous landmarks has opened on the banks of the River Thames.

Park Plaza County Hall, the Dutch-based group's largest hotel to date, has 398 rooms, most of which are suites with a fully equipped kitchenette, living area, work space and separate bedroom. Cable television, a desk, refrigerator, coffee- and tea-making facilities and a safe are standard features in all rooms.

Executive level guests have additional services, including luxury bathrobe and slippers, upgraded bathroom amenities, trouser press and a complimentary morning newspaper.

Located in a regenerated area of the South Bank, close to the London Eye and Waterloo station, the hotel has six function rooms, each with natural light and integrated technology, such as wi-fi and triple-glazed floor-to-ceiling windows, and can cater for up to 100 delegates. Seven top-floor penthouse suites, each with private balconies affording dramatic views of the London skyline, are also adaptable for smaller meeting groups and are ideal for receptions and private functions.

A fitness centre, complete with gym, sauna, steam room, monsoon showers and massage and beauty treatment facilities, is also available to guests as well as members.

Special introductory rates start from as little as £89 (US\$173) per night at weekends and £149 (US\$290) mid-week for a limited period.

Park Plaza, which currently has 25 properties, including five in London, is due to open hotels in Doha later this year, in Marrakech and Cologne (art'otel) in 2009, and a sixth London property – at Westminster Bridge – in 2010.

Citadines' Australian debut

The first Citadines brand of serviced apartments in Australia is scheduled to open in Melbourne's Central Business District in 2010.

Parent company Ascott International is investing A\$136.2 million (US\$117 million) in the 398-unit property – the largest in the Citidines portfolio of 49 serviced residences – which will be located at the heart of the CBD at 131-135 Bourke Street.

RFC for the UAE

The Rocco Forte Collection, one of Europe's leading hotel groups, is making its first foray into the Middle East. It is to manage a 282-room 5-star property, opening in Abu Dhabi in 2010.

Located in an area destined to become the UAE capital's new commercial centre, the hotel will have extensive meetings and leisure facilities, including a 25-metre pool and a 500m² health club and spa. There will be nine function rooms, the largest of which will accommodate up to 700 people for an event.

New heights for Hyatt

Hyatt is to open two hotels in China this summer, and both are set to become architectural landmarks. The Park Hyatt Shanghai, due to open in July in Pudong, will occupy the 79th to 93rd floors of the city's World Financial Centre, and, it is claimed, will be the highest hotel in the world at the time of its completion.

Later this summer, the group will open the Park Hyatt Beijing, opposite the China World Trade Centre. The group says its 66th-floor restaurant will be the highest in the capital, with 360-degree views of the city.

And the autumn of next year will see the opening of the Grand Hyatt Moscow within The Federation Tower Building, which the hotel group claims will be Europe's tallest tower at 448 metres.

News in brief

Marriott International is next year to open a 318-room Renaissance-branded hotel close to Amsterdam Schiphol airport.

Kempinski, Europe's oldest luxury hotel group, has opened a complex of serviced apartments in central Istanbul. Residences Astoria are available for mid- to long-term rentals.

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has opened a 247-room Towers property in the Heliopolis area of Cairo, its first in Egypt. A second property, the Nile City, also in Cairo, is due to open later this year.

arrivalsdepartures

BA plans all-Business Class flights to New York



“London City airport is located minutes away from some of our key corporate customers and is in one of the fastest growing areas of the capital.”

Willie Walsh, chief executive, British Airways

British Airways is planning to launch a Business Class-only service from London City airport to New York next year.

The twice-daily flights will be operated by an Airbus A318 with just 32 seats.

“This niche service will fly passengers between the heart of the two largest financial centres in the world,” explains Willie Walsh, British Airways’ chief executive. “London City airport is located minutes away from some of our key corporate customers and is in one of the fastest-growing areas of the capital.”

He says BA will offer a 15-minute check-in for passengers travelling in both directions. “Once on board, customers will experience all the benefits of our Business Class cabin, including a fully flat bed.

“The A318 is the perfect aircraft for these flights. It is capable of operating at London City and is large enough for us to provide the number of Business Class seats required to make this a viable operation,” says Walsh.

However, the aircraft will not be able to carry a full load of fuel at London City, necessitating a refuelling stop en route. BA says it is looking at various options, including Shannon. Return flights will not be subject to the same restrictions and will, therefore, be non-stop.

“The London-New York route is a key market for us and these flights will be in addition to our current Heathrow schedule, from where we fly eight times a day to JFK and three times a day to Newark,” adds Walsh. “As well as the business market, we are confident that there will also be a demand from premium leisure customers for this new service.”

Click again...

Spanish low-fare carrier Clickair is to operate services to a fifth destination from the UK. From March 30, it will take over Iberia’s daily flights on the London Gatwick-Bilbao route, with one-way fares from £32 (€43).

The airline already operates daily flights from Gatwick to Seville, as well as daily departures to both Valencia and La Coruña from Heathrow. It

also flies three times a week between Edinburgh and Barcelona.

Clickair, which is 20% owned by Iberia, will shortly launch its self-service online check-in process, Click&fly, for Gatwick passengers. Online check-in is already available for Heathrow flights.

Cost-cutting flights

The first low-cost flights between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur have been launched simultaneously by three carriers. AirAsia, Jetstar and Tiger Airways have all introduced services on the route following an agreement last November between the governments of the two countries to open it up to low-cost carriers. The new services increase the weekly total number of flights between the two cities to 254.

News in brief

➔ **EasyJet** has completed its acquisition of GB Airways in a cash deal worth £103.5 million (US\$201 million). The low-cost carrier claims to offer around 18% of all available short-haul seats from the UK and will now be the largest operator out of London Gatwick in passenger terms.

➔ **Abu Dhabi-based** Etihad Airways is planning to add four destinations on the Indian subcontinent – Chennai (Madras), Jaipur, Kolkata (Calcutta) and Kozhikode (Calicut) – following successful talks between the governments of the United Arab Emirates and India aimed at further liberalisation of air links between the two countries.

➔ **Air India** is poised to become the 20th full member of the Star Alliance.

➔ **Blue1** starts a daily direct service from Helsinki to London Heathrow on March 30, replacing its existing service to Stansted airport in Essex.

➔ **Qatar Airways** is adding a fourth daily non-stop flight between Doha and London Heathrow, increasing the airline’s capacity between Qatar and the UK to 42 services a week. From March 30, the new late afternoon departure from Doha offers passengers more choice above the early morning and lunchtime flights to Britain’s busiest airport.

traveldeals

Bmi relaunches online company rewards scheme



“Our goal was to develop a service and product which saves our busy customers time and money and gives greater flexibility when redeeming points.”

Kam Jandu, general manager - UK sales, Bmi

Small to medium-sized enterprises stand to gain more benefits from Bmi's relaunched Company Rewards loyalty scheme.

An updated and improved version of the former Company Returns programme, it is designed to make travel budgets go further with enhanced rewards, enabling users to redeem points at any time online. Uniquely, members can choose to redeem points in the form of an e-voucher (to exchange for flights, either as full or as part payment), cash or charity donation. Bmi claims that none of its competitors offers this choice.

Developed by the carrier's newly appointed business development executive, Graham Cook, the programme has taken into consideration the constraints of other reward schemes and the needs of SMEs to give a fully flexible and generous scheme.

New members can register following a quick and simple process online. Once enrolled, they have immediate access to their own personalised account with an up-to-date points statement and regular updates. By booking flights on any Bmi route and within any fare bracket, members can start earning points immediately. They can be redeemed online 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Furthermore, companies spending over £50,000 a year travelling with bmi will receive a 4% annual cash bonus.

At the end of last year, Bmi launched 17 new business and leisure routes from London Heathrow, adds Cologne this month, and Tel Aviv and Dammam in March.

Free stopovers

Thai Airways International is offering two nights' complimentary accommodation and free airport transfers for passengers flying from Dubai to destinations beyond Bangkok.

Valid for round-trip tickets booked before the end of March, the deal applies to those travelling to Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong, China and Australia. Accommodation is in a 4-star Bangkok hotel, with breakfast included, plus airport transfers.

Avis airport offer

Avis currently has a special UK airport offer available for those who need to rent a car for a minimum of five days.

Valid until March 14, rates are from £17 a day for a small economy car, from £30 for a large automatic, and from £34 a day for a Mercedes or similar. There is a minimum one-day advance booking requirement, and the offer applies to rentals for up to 27 days. It is available at selected UK airports.

In a separate initiative, Avis is promising renters in the UK that they can go through the pick-up process in just three minutes or less – failure to do so will result in the payment of £20 by way of compensation. To participate in what the company is calling its “Three Minute Promise”, renters are required to join the Avis Preferred programme.

Business Class sale

Austrian Airlines is offering special Business Class deals for travellers flying from London Heathrow. Round-trip fares to Western Europe are from £542, to Eastern Europe from £594, Middle East from £987, India from £1,298, China from £1,526 and Japan from £1,997.

For China and Japan, bookings and outbound travel have to be before the end of March; elsewhere, the booking deadline is April 30, with outbound travel completed by the end of June. Fares quoted are inclusive of taxes and charges.

Cut-price offer from Qatar

Qatar Airways is offering cut-price fares from the UK to the Middle East and beyond for bookings made before March 20. Selected flights from London Heathrow and Gatwick as well as Manchester to 14 destinations, including Muscat, Delhi and Mumbai, are available from as £220 return, plus taxes and charges.

The offer is valid for travel between February 25-March 14; from March 25 to March 31; and between April 21-June 30 on a number of routes across the Middle East and India.

Fares you can't afford to pass up



They can be difficult to access, but make the effort, and airline alliance passes can be the open sesame to excellent value business travel. Sheron Crossman reports

On the face of it, airline alliance passes are just too good to be true. With these dream tickets, you can circumnavigate the globe for a piffling sum and enjoy a generous allowance of stopovers. You can build an itinerary to suit your needs, stack up shed loads of air miles and – if you believe the hype – book your travel easily.

There's no doubt they represent great value and are available through the three major airline alliances – Oneworld, SkyTeam and Star Alliance – which between them include most of the world's major carriers. Nor are they just sold to backpackers; in recent years, they've become increasingly appealing for business travel.

"We sell hundreds of thousands of them a year," says Oneworld's corporate communications vice-president Michael Blunt. "Our round-the-world Explorer is the most popular and, interestingly, we sell almost as many for travel in First or Business Class as in Economy."

Oneworld features passes for every continent, except Antarctica, and is the only alliance incorporating airlines from South America,

Australia and the Middle East. The Visit Asia pass, for example, offers 50 cities in 19 countries, with the option to take as many flights as you want at a flat rate for each, based on the geographical zone. A Hong Kong-Tokyo-Bangkok-Singapore itinerary costs US\$850 (€581), a fraction of the price of individual flights.

SkyTeam offers similarly tempting passes for Europe, North America and round-the-world. Its Europe Pass allows travel through the continent at your own pace, booking a seat on any one of the 11 member carriers to Europe. There's no minimum or maximum stay, no need for advance booking, and each city can be visited twice.

The alliance's America Pass provides one of the most economic ways of getting around the US, Canada and Mexico, allows travel for up to 60 days, two stopovers in each city and requires no advanced booking. Fares depend on the number of coupons, but start at around US\$440 (€300).

SkyTeam's Asia Pass gives passengers the opportunity to purchase between three and eight discounted flight coupons. Again, the savings are

considerable. Starting in Beijing and travelling to Seoul, Noumea, Osaka, Taipei, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City and returning to Beijing would usually cost more than US\$7,000 (€4,800); with an Asia Pass, it is US\$1,848 (€1,263).

Star Alliance has over 10 fare products, including Circle Asia and RTW fares, and passes for Asia, Brazil, Europe, Africa, Japan, North America and the South Pacific. Meanwhile, its European air pass allows travel across 42 countries, and passengers can purchase between three and 10 coupons at a fixed rate, depending on the distance flown.

A Paris-Vienna-Munich-Copenhagen-London trip, for example, comes out at just US\$515 (€352), plus taxes and charges. Or in Africa, fly Johannesburg-Nairobi-Windhoek-Durban-Cape Town with an Africa Pass for US\$1,046 (€715).

Despite these knockout fares, there's surprisingly little enthusiasm for them in the business travel industry. "Distribution is a major problem: you end up having to process them manually because the GDS is far too complicated," says Steve Murray, IT Manager for Focus4Fares at UK-based Advantage Business Travel. "The fares are very good but how many business travel consultants are aware of the permutations? Unless you're a fares expert, it's far too complex."

In truth, the different fare structures, conditions and restrictions make the passes a logistical nightmare, and if they can't be booked by the experts, there's little hope for the lone business traveller, however accomplished.

And it's not simply the booking procedure that's the problem. "Due to the complexities, these tickets are not particularly well advertised, even though they represent good value, especially in premium classes," points out Diane McMahon, head of account management at FCm Travel Solutions. "The difficulty a travel management company (TMC) has is finding a client who can combine a journey in one direction within the time frames permitted to take advantage of them."

Air pass checklist

- Round-the-world fares are calculated differently by the alliances. Oneworld sets fares according to the number of continents you pass through, Star Alliance by mileage limits, and SkyTeam according to the itinerary
- Some regional air passes are only available in Economy Class
- These tickets are complex to book online. Go through an alliance member airline or travel agent
- Check out the deals at www.oneworld.com; www.skyteam.com; www.staralliance.com

Therein lies the rub. All round-the-world fares necessitate travel in only one direction, have limited numbers of stopovers, and need advanced booking.

"There's no question the fares are extremely attractive, but they're almost only usable by leisure travellers," says Michael Hare, managing director of UK-based Fleet Street Travel. "It's not that corporates can't have them, but the conditions attached simply make them unworkable. Although there are exceptions... the lack of flexibility doesn't suit business travel."

To be fair to the alliances, round-the-world deals have become increasingly attractive. Oneworld's Explorer fare offers travel in Economy, Business or First, plenty of stopovers, and only needs seven days' advanced booking. Star Alliance allows booking up to departure, and changes of flight dates at any time, while SkyTeam's ticket can be combined with its European, America or Asia passes.

The alliances have been woefully poor at getting their message across. The great deals are out there, but until they can be easily booked and are properly marketed, they are likely to remain one of the industry's best-kept secrets.

Munich

Setting new goals



The Bavarian gateway is gaining ground in the European airport league tables, with rapid expansion and high satisfaction levels among passengers. Colin Ellson reports

Germany may have finished third in the 2006 FIFA World Cup soccer tournament, but in terms of traffic volume in global airport competition, its second-largest gateway doesn't get as far as the quarter finals.

Munich Airport is ranked 30th busiest in the world, seventh in Europe. But it seems size is not everything to savvy travellers. Some eight million of them, representing every continent, voted it fourth best in the world in the Skytrax Airport Awards 2007, and the tops in Europe for the third consecutive year.

Passengers have also been voting with their feet. In 2006, there were 7.5% more than the previous year, in the first nine months of 2007, the year-on-year rise was 11%, with the airport subsequently recording 34 million for the 12 months, a jump of 10% over 2006.

That such increases are attainable with the minimum of fuss is attributable to the opening in 2003 of Terminal 2, dedicated to Lufthansa and its Star Alliance partners, which doubled airport annual capacity to 50 million. Which means Munich's target of 56 million by 2020 is feasible, particularly as the Regional Government of Upper

Bavaria has completed the planning process for a third runway and issued a positive assessment of the project.

Strategically located at the heart of Europe, with 91 airlines flying to 196 destinations in 67 countries, Munich has seen significant growth in airline services this winter. South African Airways, for example, has increased flights to Johannesburg from three to four a week, and Lufthansa has introduced a widebody Airbus A330 on its daily New York Newark route, offering a substantial increase in seats.

Meanwhile, within Europe, the German flag carrier has added the Romanian city of Sibiu to its network; Air Berlin has launched twice-daily flights to London and Milan; Tarom has doubled frequencies to two a day to Bucharest; Norwegian Air Shuttle has established a new service to Warsaw; and low-cost carrier Germanwings has expanded frequencies and added new destinations across its domestic network. In addition, Russia's Transaero has made its Munich debut, flying once a week to St. Petersburg.

All of which comes on top of the new records set in the third quarter of 2007, when there was a 19%

increase in passengers on intercontinental flights, and a 22% rise on Eastern European routes.

According to Dr. Michael Kerkloh, president and CEO of Munich Airport, the May 2004 accession of 10 new member countries to the EU (including the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, plus Bulgaria and Romania in 2007), has "boosted Munich Airport from a fringe role to the centre of the EU."

Dr. Kerkloh also has another aim in mind. "Our strong traffic growth has moved us a good piece along the road to our goal of making the airport Europe's most attractive and efficient hub by 2010," he adds.

His optimism is underwritten by current and planned developments at Munich Airport. In 2004, it was given the go-ahead by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to operate the 555-

seat Airbus A380, with the super-jumbo touching down last March as part of Lufthansa's route testing programme.

Passing the examination with flying colours, the airport now meets all the stringent requirements in relation to runways, taxiways and bridges to support the 600-ton aircraft, plus "species appropriate" de-icing for the giant bird in winter.

Shifting its focus from airside to landside, Munich's next challenge is improving the quality of traffic links to the airport. One solution is the proposed Transrapid or Maglev (magnetic levitation) train line, planned to speed travellers from the airport to Munich's Central Station in just 10 minutes.

Possibly up and running by 2011, the link is seen as rounding off the German gateway's overall impression of technological leadership and readiness to face the future – and would, no doubt, give it a deserved leg up in the airport league tables.



At-a-glance guide

Location: 28km/18 miles north east of the city

Transport links: trains (lines S1 and S8) every 10 minutes, with a journey time of 40-50 minutes (€8.80 single); airport bus 20-minute frequency (45 minutes/€10); taxi (45 minutes/€50)

Annual passenger throughput: 34 million (2007)

Minimum connecting time: 30 minutes (T2), 35 minutes (T1)

Executive lounges: Air France Salon, British Airways, Delta Crown Room Club, Lufthansa

(Business and Senator), Emirates; Atlantik and Europa lounges for passengers on other airlines, also available on a pay-as-you-enter basis

Facilities: internet café, wireless (WLAN) access for laptop and PDA users, internet luggage tracing service, SMS flight information; conference centre with 28 meeting rooms; showers; 24-hour medical centre, pharmacy; entertainment arcade; rooftop viewing platform; cafes and bars include Il Mondo, Barnee Asia takeaway, Kafer Bistro, Nordsee Restaurant, Burger King, Erdinger Sportsbar and Airport Pizza (T1), Seafood Sylt, Pizza Monaco,

Airbrau, Wiener's Café and Dallmayr (T2); duty-free shops (T1), duty-free shops, designer stores, bookshops, boutiques in Munchen Airport Centre Mall (T2); chapel; disco; post office

Banks/cashpoints: American Express, Hypo Vereinsbank (T1), bureaux de change and ATMs in both terminals

Airport hotels: Kempinski, Accor Novotel opening autumn 2009

Car rental desks: Avis, Budget, Europcar, Hertz, National, Sixt

Website: www.munich-airport.de

Berlin

Responding to a burning issue

Destination
(BER)

Celebrated for compromise, Berliners are accepting their city's smoking ban because it is not total. Jonathan Hart listens to the debate in the rebuilt German capital

Currency: Euro (€ 1=US\$1.45)

Tipping: optional as hotels and restaurants add a service charge; 5%-10% for taxi drivers or round-up the fare

Time: GMT + 1 (+2 summer)

Electricity: 220 volts (two-pin European-style plugs)

Public holidays 2008: March 21, 24; May 1, 11, 12; October 3; December 25, 26

Climate: winters can be bitterly cold – with temperatures often well below freezing – and damp, too. Summers tend to be mild, cloudy and often wet, but with the occasional heatwave. Spring and autumn are generally mild

Airport: Schönefeld (SXF) 18km/12 miles south east of Berlin. AirportExpress rail link (via shuttle bus to station) to the city centre, operating at 30-minute intervals, with a journey time of about 30 minutes. Taxis

typically take around half an hour and cost €30-€35. Tegel (TXL), (8km/5miles) north west of the city, has an airport bus connections to Kurt-Schumacher-Platz or Jakob-Kaiser Platz underground stations. A JetExpress airport shuttle bus takes around 30 minutes into central Berlin. Tempelhof (THF) is 3km/2 miles south of the city but is scheduled for closure in October

Hotels: Adlon Kempinski, Alexander Plaza, Concorde, Crowne Plaza, Grand Esplanade, Grand Hyatt, Hilton, Hotel de Rome, InterContinental, Kempinski Bristol, Palace, Radisson SAS, Steigenberger, Swissôtel, Regent, Ritz-Carlton, Westin Grand

Business hours: 08.00/09.00-16.00/17.00

International dialling code: 00 49

In emergency: 110 (police), 112 (fire and ambulance)

business do's and don'ts

Do be prepared for a fairly formal approach to business

Do make appointments and be punctual – good time-keeping is important

Do remember a ban on smoking in public places was introduced in January, although it won't be enforced until this summer

Don't suggest a breakfast meeting – lunch is generally a better option

Don't be tempted to cross the street against a pedestrian light – in Germany you run the risk of an on-the-spot fine

Don't attempt to get by in school-room German; cosmopolitan Berlin probably has more perfect English speakers than anywhere in Germany

The usually gruff faces adopted by Berliners mask a wry sense of humour and fiercely democratic spirit; inherent attributes facing a severe test with the introduction of a smoking ban in January.

The prognosis for what is famously integral to local culture was not good. Widely viewed as inveterate smokers – drink in one hand, cigarette in the other – this formerly divided but reunited city's proudly reactionary citizens were expected either to stubbornly ignore the ban or spark up a modern-day version of the Cold War.

In the event, the ban inside the cafes, bars, clubs and restaurants at the heart of a usually wild, carefree and smoky social life has been accepted with surprising equanimity. Chiefly because Berliners have been given choice. To smoke indoors with fellow smokers where outlets can provide separate facilities.

An added fillip is that the ban will not be strictly imposed until June; a period of grace that not only

rights in local fashion with their luminary guests.

In the same vein, a solution to the ban likely will be found for the popular beer-swilling, smoke-filled ECKKNEIPEN, or one-room corner bars, that have no space for separate sections. After all, the City on the Spree is principally a place of compromise, forced by history to change and change again; a city at the vortex of successive orders over the past century alone.

Albert Speer's 1930's visionary redesign of what was to become the futuristic world capital of Germania by 1950, came to nought because he was on the wrong side and the world decided otherwise. Then, divided by ideologies at the end of World War Two, two separate cities were imposed on bewildered locals.

The badly bombed western sector was fashioned into a new capitalist showpiece with broad streets for a future that was to be the motorcar, while the lesser damaged eastern sector retained the finest



allows these rooms to be put in place but also further to ease the ban through the summer, when the majority of smokers will be outside anyway.

Meanwhile, with a shrug of the shoulders and an understanding nod at such an infringement of liberties, the doormen at top hostels like Rocco Forte's Hotel de Rome – hangout for cigar-toting film stars, lawyers, politicians and well-heeled art dealers – politely provide highly polished ashtrays on a stand. Grateful, no doubt, to exchange more than passing pleasantries and put the world to

of old buildings, along with a stifling and ultimately bankrupt regime.

Change came again after the fall of the Wall and the costly process of German reunification through yet more construction or destruction: lauded, resented or argued over in equal measure.

Today, with the car the new pariah, and multiple theatres, opera houses and capital status they arguably can't afford, Berliners are still arguing the toss. Smoking ban included.

SWISS

Remarkable renaissance



Bankrupt six years ago, Switzerland's national carrier has been born again since its acquisition by Lufthansa. Sheron Crossman looks at the flight path to success

Who'd have thought it? In just six years, SWISS International Air Lines has risen phoenix-like from the ashes of bankruptcy to transform itself into an award-winning, financially successful carrier, with long-haul ambitions to catapult it into the airlines' premier league.

Thanks to parent company Lufthansa, which took over SWISS in 2005, last year was the carrier's most financially successful to date, allowing a massive \$835 million investment in its fleet and a slate of new routes and services.

All the old Airbus A330-200s are being retired, to be replaced with the bigger, more advanced A330-300s and two A340s, allowing SWISS to expand its long-haul routes. Delhi became the first last October, added for the winter timetable, the carrier's second destination after Mumbai in the rapidly growing Indian market. The new connection gives business travellers a much-needed direct, non-stop service – Switzerland's exports to India have more than doubled in the past three years, increasing by 36% in 2006 alone.

The additional aircraft have also given SWISS the flexibility to launch a service to Shanghai this summer, its first foothold in China. As the airline is a member of the Star Alliance, and with Air China

and Shanghai Airlines also now on board, there will be considerable opportunities for further links with Switzerland's second biggest Asian trading partner.

"We will operate the route daily from May 9, but during the Olympics over the summer, we'll extend the service to Beijing," says Gregor Koncilija, UK and Ireland sales manager. "After that, we'll evaluate the possibility of continuing the link to the Chinese capital."

SWISS has also increased capacity to Los Angeles, Johannesburg and Santiago de Chile (via São Paulo), all now served daily. Last summer, flights were boosted to Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia, from four to five a week. The additional service was operated by an all-Business Class jet, leased from PrivatAir. The same configuration has also been used from Zurich to Newark, proving a huge hit with business travellers, but its continuation is surprisingly uncertain. "The route to Newark has been immensely popular with our customers, but we are still in the process of deciding its future," says Koncilija.

While business passengers have been the backbone of SWISS's new-found success, the airline's primary focus is now on its First Class product. By replacing the A330-200s with the larger

A330-300, the airline can offer cabins at the front of the aircraft throughout its long-haul fleet to all its intercontinental destinations.

Meanwhile, back on the ground, a huge, new First Class lounge opened in Zurich in January, providing pre-flight dining, hotel-style rooms for rest, single working offices, and a conference room for meetings. The dedicated First Class check-in area has also been expanded, and two lounges are soon to be opened for Business Class customers and frequent flyer members of Miles & More Senators, both of whom benefited from a new ticket office with dedicated counters, introduced last December.

In addition, two lounges were also opened at Geneva airport last November, one for First Class customers, the other for Miles & More members. They supplement the Business Class facility opened in Geneva a year ago.

Back in the air, acquisition of four new aircraft has given SWISS the flexibility to expand its network in Europe. Two more Airbus A320s joined the fleet early this year, with two more planned for delivery in 2011 and 2012. The airline has increased its service from Zurich to Berlin from three to four flights a day, giving business passengers a convenient morning departure to the German

capital, and an early evening return flight to Zurich.

From March, a daily service will be launched from Zurich to St Petersburg, significantly expanding the airline's position in the booming Russian market. The city is second only to Moscow as a key business centre for Switzerland, with many Swiss firms recently opening branches there.

Ties with Italy are also to be strengthened this summer with the start of a thrice-daily service from Zurich to Florence. And from March, a daily flight from Zurich to Sofia will be welcomed by the growing number of business customers with branches in Bulgaria.

With passenger numbers up to 12 million last year, a 13% rise over 2006, and load factors increasing to more than 80%, SWISS is in a strong position for the coming year. But with typical Swiss prudence, Gregor Koncilija sounds a note of caution: "We've just had the best year in our history.

Our membership of Star Alliance is very important for reducing our cost base, and we have excellent synergies with Lufthansa. But in 2008 we need to be careful; it's going to be a tough year for all airlines. We're looking for organic growth. But, yes, I'd say we're very well positioned."



What you get with Swiss Business Class (intercontinental routes)

- Choice of five-course meal, or quick meal, available immediately after take-off to allow for work or sleep
- Welcome glass of champagne or orange juice and snacks
- Telephone at every seat
- Laptop connection (via cable on A330), SMS – write texts, send e-mails
- Extensive in-flight entertainment programme, including games, music, and 35 film and TV channels

Website: www.swiss.com

Accor Group

A brand for all seasons



With 11 brands in some 100 countries and growing, the unassuming French group seems set for world domination in the hospitality sector. Jonathan Hart reports

The French, it is sometimes argued, have always hidden their colonialist tendencies under a bushel, quieter or less spotlighted than other nationalities.

Similar qualities might be argued for Accor, a dominant force in the global hospitality industry but not generally recognised as such. A name that sits somewhere near the surface of the subconscious, and purposely so in an era where globalisation with brand-first identity is the accepted corporate norm.

The recent launch of Pullman Hotels brings the Paris-based conglomerate's brand portfolio into double figures in almost 100 countries, the average traveller expected to absorb little more than the fact that with all the familiar business trappings, it is fashioned around an updated, hi-tech interpretation of the luxurious steam trains of a bygone age.

The fact that Accor is the parent company of Pullman or any other of the French company's brands that might be tailored to his or her needs, budget or location at any particular time, is frequently overlooked.

Yet delve beneath the surface and you'll find Accor's central aegis stamped all over more than 4,000 hotels, ranging from budget motels to upper upscale palaces. And not just in occasionally

apparent French style or touches. In an industry that confusingly can be segmented between investors, owners, managers, franchisees or providers, Accor is the whole global ball of wax. Hotel conceptualist and designer, too, plus plenty more besides.

Accor modestly describes itself as Europe's leading hotel group and global provider of corporate services. In fact, only 50% of the group's properties are in Europe, split roughly half and half between France and the rest of the EU.

With a further 28% in North America and 11% in Asia/Pacific, you'll find few hotel groups represented in so many countries, with more than 170,000 employees across the world. Or discover few, if any, with separate services feeding business and public institutions with expense management systems, voucher schemes and environmental programmes in more than 40 countries.

Accor's hotel division alone operates on a non-stop roller coaster, creating fresh ideas, developing and tweaking concepts, identifying new areas of opportunity, maximising returns, buying and divesting itself of real estate, and frequently retaining management contracts and investing in new properties. All in a 36-hour week. An example

of this was the group's takeover of the 52 hotels in Germany's Dorint group early last year and feeding them into its network, before later divesting itself of 57 of its properties in France and Switzerland to invest elsewhere, while retaining management of the sold hotels.

Largely shielded by its well-known brands, Accor operates by constantly shuffling, repositioning, upgrading or adding to its multi-tier pack to feed forecast market demands. As a new hotel business model recently presented to investors and analysts shows, it has five current priorities. These include adding brands to further segment and increase market share in the European mid-scale sector;

doing the same in Europe's budget sector; expanding franchises and capitalising on a new motel room concept in the US; growing the parent company's footprint in emerging countries with more economy and mid-scale hotels; and further segmenting upscale and luxury brands worldwide to cover more fragmented demand for products and services.

Allied to this is a plan to double the pace of growth to add a further 200,000 rooms to the portfolio by 2010. All suggesting that a swathe of new travellers will be joining the new French revolution. Even if they don't know they're staying at an Accor.



Accor brands

Hotels

Sofitel: defined as upper upscale with all luxury amenities; 190 properties in key locations worldwide

Pullman: new business savvy/ meetings brand; convivial, stylish, hi-tech; 45 in 23 countries, being expanded to 200 properties by 2015; ultimately 300 or more

Novotel: contemporary business/leisure hotels close to transport networks; 388 in 39 countries

Mercure: all-purpose, flexible mid-market brand; 750 in 49 countries

Suitehotel: recently introduced three star chain with low-cost

Internet access; rooms designed to be privatised and/or adaptable to customer needs. Up to 100 hotels in Europe by 2012

Adagio: mid-market, fully equipped, hi-tech apartment brand; 21 in four (European) countries; 50 by 2012

All Seasons: launched in Australia; non-standardised economy chain of 50- to 100-room hotels in city centres and key locations; 40 in Europe by mid-2008, 10,000 rooms by 2010 and further expansion planned worldwide

Ibis: budget, 24-hour service hotels; 761 worldwide

Etap: budget hotels with unlimited breakfast buffets, 24-hour vending

machines; 366 in 11 European countries

Formule1: budget chain; 373 in 14 countries

Motel 6: budget motel chain; 850 in North America and growing

Travel Brands

AccorThalasia; Compagnie des wagon-lits; GR Servicios de Alimentacao; Club Med; Pullman Orient Express; Groupe Lucien Barrière; Lenôtre; plus travel agencies, restaurants, casinos

Accor Services

Ticket Restaurant (vouchers); plus others

Website: www.accor.com