

Media Release

Aussies stay @ home this Christmas

Sydney, 19 December 2002 – Australia is the place to be this holiday season with accommodation bookings to local destinations made via the Web rocketing to an all time high.

The country's largest accommodation e-wholesaler, Flairview Travel, reports this holiday season local destinations represent 90% of all hotel bookings made by Australians to the company's websites – RatesToGo.com and HotelClub.net which attract about 750,000 unique visitors a month from around the world.

The number of bookings to Australian hotels by Australians compared to international visitors is up 12% compared to the same period last year (66% versus 54%). This indicates foreign travellers are opting to stay away and locals are celebrating locally following recent terrorist activity in the region.

However, in the three months to mid December, Christmas bookings on both sites have skyrocketed by 400% on the same period last year with Australians spending almost \$4 million with HotelClub.net and RatesToGo.com, compared to just under \$1 million last year.

"This indicates Australians are growing much more comfortable with booking hotels online, and when compared with other online categories, travel now accounts for over 40 per cent of all sales," said Flairview Travel's director of marketing, Mr Tim Etheridge.

"In the Australian market alone, hotel booking sites now reap a larger volume of sales than airfare domains, when foreign sales are included."

Most Aussies will be spending their Christmas break in the country's capital cities, particularly Sydney. However regional destinations such as the Blue Mountains, Wollongong, Hunter Valley and Margaret River are hot on their heels.

Aussies planning to travel internationally are being beckoned by the tropical climates of Singapore and Hong Kong, followed by the prospect of a white Christmas in London and Paris.

For those who have left holiday plans to the last minute, there is still some accommodation available, however Mr. Etheridge reports travellers will have some searching to do.

"Travellers hit the web to make their Christmas bookings earlier than ever this year with activity ramping up more than four months ago. We saw a significant spike immediately following the Bali bombings in October and popular holiday destinations such as the Gold Coast are completely booked out. Now that foreign visitors are staying away, consumers can expect some good last minute release of rooms for the domestic market.

"If people are looking for one of these last minute bargains they should visit RatesToGo.com as some accommodation is still available, particularly for New Year's Eve. While those needing hotels, car rental and travel insurance later in the holiday season should visit HotelClub.net. They can expect to save at least 60 per cent off the cost of usual rates on both sites," he said.

Fast facts: Christmas holidays online

- Local destinations represent 90% of all accommodation bookings online this season
- Bookings by Australians to local destinations is up 12% on last year
- Travellers started booking online for Christmas as early as August
- Gold Coast is completely booked out

Source: RatesToGo.com and HotelClub.net sites

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