



Virtuoso and qualia Release the Australian Luxury Travel Survey 2015

Providing Insight into Australia's Upscale Traveller Preferences and Trends

SYDNEY (18 February 2015) Australian travel culture is evolving and nowhere is this more apparent than in the luxury market, which is now seeing more people seeking out natural locations, bespoke and authentic experiences and personalised attention as the hallmarks of luxury, over and above opulence and expense.

The first ever, in-depth look into travel trends and preferences for high net worth individuals, undertaken by the world's leading luxury travel network, **Virtuoso**, and Australian resort, **qualia**, has found a significant shift with almost 60% of people believing luxury is no longer defined by price.

"The elements driving the luxury market are a feeling of connectivity, authenticity and a sense of place. People want genuine, personalised experiences and whilst this is a global trend, it is more prevalent in sophisticated markets like Australia," Virtuoso Chairman and CEO, Matthew D. Upchurch, said.

"Australians have always been big travellers with holidays being a critical element in their lifestyle. They often invest more time than others to explore the world and there is a clear movement towards cultural authenticity and connectivity."

The 2015 Australian Luxury Travel Survey asked Australian clients of **Virtuoso**-affiliated advisors and **qualia** to provide feedback on some of the key trends and issues shaping their travel decisions. The results of more than 2,500 respondents have provided solid insight into the state of Australia's luxury travel today.

Australians are having to manage their appetite to travel within increasingly busy and complex lives, and this is changing travel behaviour, destination choices and planning cycles.

"Now, more than ever, travellers are aware their most precious, non-renewable asset is their leisure time, and this is driving a demand for domestic luxury experiences, which is great business for Australia's amazing products like qualia and Southern Ocean Lodge and wonderful city hotels that deliver world-class offerings. Whilst Virtuoso offers incredible experiences all around the globe, our advisors are able to include rich domestic options to their time-compressed upscale clients."

Around 66% of respondents said they are taking more short breaks (2-4 days), and spending them in Australian luxury holiday destinations, than they were five years ago. Importantly, the data is suggesting that this is new, incremental sales volume in addition to the strong international business that **Virtuoso** enjoys.

"Personalised attention to detail is highly desirable in this 'new' luxury market, the individual needs of clients must be recognised – we are entering the era of bespoke tailored travel, away from the cookie-cutter programs sold on mass," Upchurch continued.

Australian luxury travellers are also well engaged with environmental issues, with almost 60% saying these issues have become more important in the past five years, with a strong pull towards issues such as protecting the Great Barrier Reef, wildlife conservation, climate change and pollution.

Another remarkable result in a modern world full of digital media is that the most powerful influence on decision making is word of mouth, with traditional media and travel advisors also ranking highly.

“People are mostly influenced by recommendations from a friend they know and trust. Luxury travellers are telling us they rank advice based on how well they trust the author. Given over 90% of Virtuoso’s business comes from repeat passengers and referrals, the creation of great travel stories told by our influential clients is key to our business.”

As the world’s leading network of luxury travel agencies and advisors, **Virtuoso** has a data warehouse of more than USD \$30 billion in current and past sales transactions, and this provides unrivalled insight into the nature of luxury, experiential travel internationally.

As part of its analysis, each year **Virtuoso** produces the *Luxe Report*, which reveals where, why and how consumers will travel in the year ahead. This year’s popular destinations are predominantly warm-weather, southern hemisphere locations with Australia ranking fourth place.

“Internationally we have seen remarkable growth into destinations such as Australia and New Zealand, which has grown 95% in the past year after Tourism New Zealand launched a focused campaign to gain a greater market share of the U.S. high net worth traveller. Cruising is another longstanding trend internationally and for Australian luxury travellers, with river cruising becoming the number one trend out of the U.S. and Canada, followed by multigenerational travel, while the most popular ‘Emerging Destination’ is Croatia.”

For more information on Virtuoso or to view its Advisor Catalogue, visit www.Virtuoso.com.

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About Virtuoso:

Virtuoso® is the leading network of luxury travel advisors and entities. This by-invitation-only organization comprises over 355 agencies with more than 9,000 elite travel specialists in 25 countries throughout North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific and Europe, as well as over 1,700 of the world’s best travel providers and premier destinations. The network’s member agencies generate over (US) \$14 billion annually in travel sales, making the group the most powerful in the luxury travel segment. Their relationships with the finest travel companies provide the network’s affluent clientele with exclusive amenities, rare experiences and privileged access. For more information, visit www.virtuoso.com. To view Virtuoso’s latest videos, go to www.youtube.com/user/VirtuosoTraveler.

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