Weathering the storm

Cost-reduction measures to protect business in difficult environment

As the airline industry reels from the continued impact of high fuel prices, Cathay Pacific will be taking a total of six of its older aircraft out of service in the coming months.

The airline will be temporarily trimming some of its ultra-long-haul routes to free up more of its fuel-efficient 777-300ERs to replace the older Boeing 747-400s.

At the same time, the Group will continue to increase capacity in its regional network, with Dragonair adding six destinations – four of which have already been launched.

On the fleet side, three BCF freighters that are not covering their cost of operation in the current fuel-price climate are being withdrawn from service as a near-term capacity-management measure.

And the retirement plan for the passenger Boeing 747-400s is being stepped with three leaving the fleet by September.

The schedule and operations changes are part of a raft of measures the airline has introduced in a response to the difficult business environment it is now facing.

A trading statement was issued to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on 9 May warning that CX’s profit for the first half of 2012 would be disappointing.

Chief Executive John Slosar highlighted the fact that what Cathay Pacific is facing is “clearly an industry-wide issue”.

“We have no option but to take concerted action to adapt to this volatile operating environment. We need to do this to protect our business in the short-run and to protect the Cathay Pacific team,” he said.

- Operation/schedule changes – page 3
- Major cost reductions – page 3
- Chief Executive update – page 2
A decade of caring

Cathay Pacific’s CSR programme was recognised on 3 May with the awarding of the 10 Consecutive Years Caring Company Logo 2002-12 from the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS).

Several active CX Volunteers were present to accept the award on behalf of the airline.

CX has been awarded the Caring Company Logo every year since the scheme was launched in 2003, with the airline taking the top honour, the “Total Caring Award,” in 2010.

As part of the decade celebration, the HKCSS launched a thematic ad campaign featuring senior executives from the companies who received the 10 years logo, including Chief Executive John Slosar (left).

New video highlights range of CX’s sustainable development efforts

Spreading the word

Passengers are now able to learn more about Cathay Pacific’s sustainable development (SD) efforts via a new video being shown in-flight.

Called Working Towards a Sustainable Future, it covers a wide range of activities from new aircraft technology to help reduce emissions to maintenance, inflight catering and recycling, community engagement, carbon offsetting and sustainable biofuels.

“We wanted passengers to get an insight into what goes on behind the scenes in terms of the planning and preparation of their flight as relatively few people who fly really know how complex it is,” says Head of Environmental Affairs Mark Watson.

Mark says with the rollout of CX’s SD strategy last year, this was a good time to further reach out and share the journey with passengers.

“We also timed it to fit in with the last phase of the People and Service marketing campaign and it was a great opportunity to ask the cabin crew stars of that campaign to be the face of our new video,” he says.

Although considerable effort has been put into reporting CX’s sustainability efforts to investors, governments and civil society groups, “we wanted to do more to engage with our customers. The aim was to avoid being overly corporate, but to be insightful, truthful and authentic,” says Mark.

According to Mark, customers now have a greater understanding of sustainability issues, sometimes asking difficult questions and expecting companies to be open and responsive.

“Environmental issues are becoming ever more important and part of the mainstream. It is vital for us to demonstrate how much effort and resources are being directed into addressing climate change and sustainability. And we have a good story to tell,” he says.

“I would hope passengers find the video genuinely informative, to gain a better understanding about the issues and scale of the challenge CX is facing but appreciate that we are also serious about becoming a sustainable business in the long term,” Mark adds.

The video can be found in the About CX category in the Infotainment section of Studio CX.

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* Figures to Oct 12

LOOKING AHEAD: New aircraft technology (above) is just one of the areas covered in new video. (Inset) Head of Environmental Affairs Mark Watson.

Update from the Chief Executive

Issuing a trading statement to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange is not something we do lightly. On 9 May, however, we announced to investors that our results for the first half of 2012 were likely to be disappointing given the pressure our business was coming under from a number of factors.

The most pressing factor is the persistently high price of jet fuel. In addition to this we are contending with a continued slump in the cargo markets and the increasing pressure of dwindling passenger yields, which are having a significant impact.

The simple fact is that fuel prices have been at crippling highs for more than 12 months now. True, we haven’t seen the US$147-a-barrel spike we saw in 2008, but then the price went back down quite quickly. Even though prices dipped a little at the beginning of this month, the average price we’re paying now is higher than it was in 2008 and fuel costs are forming a higher proportion of our total costs than ever before.

We have got to the point where operating the older 747-400 aircraft on long-haul routes is no longer profitable. It was clear that something had to be done, so straight after the trading statement was issued we announced a number of measures to deal with the difficult business environment we face.

The main thrust of these measures is to get the 747-400s off long-haul routes where possible, which will entail reducing some services to North America for a short time and making better use of our superbly efficient 777-300ERs.

We will speed up the retirement of the 747 passenger fleet, with three going this year, and take three of our BCF freighters out of service as a temporary measure. The savings we will make on heavy maintenance from not flying these six aircraft will be significant.

Other important cost-reduction measures, ranging from a reduction in marketing and IT spend to cutting non-essential duty travel, are already in effect. From 1 June we will be introducing a voluntary unpaid leave scheme for cabin crew in line with our reduction in flying.

I should stress, though, that the freeing these reductions will be focused on long-haul. We are actually strengthening our presence in the region, where the economic situation is more stable and demand is growing.

It is clear that we are not facing this current problem in isolation: carriers around the world are suffering, with some taking fairly drastic action to address the situation. At Cathay Pacific we will adhere to three principles we have adhered to in previous downturns: to keep the network together, never compromise service or the brand, and to keep the team together.

We’ve been through this before, and I’m sure that like before, we will come out stronger than ever.

John Slosar
Flexibility key as capacity adjustments are made

Older aircraft removed from service, no change to order book

The core element of the recently announced cost-reduction measures is a significant adjustment to the schedule and operation of Cathay Pacific.

While the Group will retain its focus on meeting robust demand within the region, with Dragonair’s capacity actually growing by 2 per centage points this year, CX will see its own passenger capacity growth fall from the original target of 7% to 2%.

Freighter capacity, meanwhile, will now see zero growth in 2012. The airline has made it clear that the network will remain intact – “the network and hub is our entire business and we should never compromise that,” says Chief Executive John Slosar – but to address the current issue it will reduce frequencies on some long-haul routes in response to high fuel costs and declining yields. It will also deploy more fuel-efficient 777-300ERs on long-haul flights to destinations such as San Francisco and Paris, speed up the retirement of older 747-400 passenger aircraft, and temporarily withdraw three BCF freighters from service.

Director Corporate Development James Barrington says flexibility was always a factor in CX’s long-term fleet plan. “If the world was up and fuel prices down, we could keep the older aircraft for longer,” says James. “Now with the market softening and oil prices way up, routes opera-ted by the 747s are really struggling to make cash, especially the long-haul routes to North America and Europe where fuel is such a big part of the overall cost and the impact of high fuel prices is more severe.” The team wanted to get the 747s off long-haul routes as much as possible. “That’s why we’re robbing North America of some 777s and putting them on Europe, and at the same time bringing forward the retirement of the 747s by a few months,” says James. It’s a similar story on the cargo side, where the Boeing 747-8Fs, of which five are in service and five more arriving this year, are making a contribution to the cash margin.

“On the flip side the BCFs don’t even cover costs under this fuel-price regime so we’re pulling three of them out of service as a temporary measure,” he says. “As for the future, we are not cancelling any orders for new technology aircraft – the quicker we get them into the fleet the better,” says James.

With the market flat, “the time is right to cut back on loss-making capacity and put some certainty back into the system.

Now that we have announced our intentions for schedule changes and fleet deployment it means our teams can make clear plans in areas such as rosters and maintenance, leading to greater efficiency and more cost savings.” In terms of product rollouts, there will be no change regarding new cabins going into new aircraft. “In the -400s we are only putting in Premium Economy, cabins going into new aircraft. “And in the -400s we are only installing Premium Economy, where the payback is fast. We’ll keep that in the plan for now but continue to review the situation,” James adds.

Cash is king in difficult times,” John Slosar told managers at a briefing, explaining why cost re-ductions were essential in the current business climate.

The Chief Executive outlined all the key areas where money can be saved, ranging from putting more 777-300ERs on long-haul routes to reducing the marketing and IT spend and introducing voluntary unpaid leave for cabin crew.

But he stressed that the biggest savings of all would come through reduced engineering costs, thanks to the retirement of three Boeing 747-400 passenger aircraft, the withdrawal of three Boeing Converted Freighters from service, and an overall reduction in flying.

The ENG team swung into action as soon as the Planning team had confirmed all the schedule changes. “The team has a good understanding of what’s happening in the company and they were able to respond quickly,” says Christopher Gibbs, Engineering Director. “We have a standard playbook for such situations and we came up with a detailed plan almost overnight.”

That plan involves three areas of saving: the first due to retiring the passenger 744s and tempo-rarily taking the BCFs out of service; the second through reduced flying; and the third from deferring expenditure wherever possible without compromising on safety in any way.

“The biggest savings will come from reduced shop visits for these six aircraft,” says Chris. “The team is working with Planning on which 744 tails to retire, and where possible we’ll select those that are scheduled to go through heavy maintenance, which will save big sums on ex- pensive D checks.” The team was quick to contact key suppliers, who also need to be nimble in these situations.

At the same time they began to make the necessary arrangements to take the freighters out operation for a while.

Chris stresses that ENG “will not mortgage the future” and will stick to its fundamental strategy of progressing with projects that fundamentally improve efficiency and/or quality and where the costs of stopping then restarting are high.

“We will still continue with our cabin programmes, though the team will look for ways to work smarter,” he says.

High fuel price an industry-wide concern

The high price of jet fuel, which has persisted for more than a year, is hurting airlines around the world. Industry body IATA says that demand is not the problem.

Passenger demand is holding up well, but “this is bringing little relief to the bottom line because yields are not keeping pace with the continued very high price of oil. We have not seen such sustained high oil prices previously,” said IATA Director General and Chief Executive Tony Tyler.

In recent weeks, announcements from a number of airlines have highlighted the extent of the problem.

In the Asia Pacific region, CX’s strategic partner Air China posted a first quarter loss of RMB313m, down 85.7% year on year, while China Southern’s first quarter result was down 74.2% for a loss of RMB313m. Singapore Airlines said that “high fuel prices and an uncertain global economy” served to push net profit down 69% to S$336 million for 2011-12 and result in a loss in the last quarter.

The carrier has already announced measures such as cutting back cargo capacity by 20% and offering two years’ voluntary unpaid leave to pilots.

Emirates is also offering unpaid leave as well cutting 500 jobs, eliminating non-profitable routes and delaying two A380 deliveries by four years, while Cathay Pacific has announced it will slash 3,500 jobs.

Emirates, meanwhile, said that its profits had dropped by 72% in the latest financial year.

Engineering team swings into action

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“We will still continue with our cabin programmes, though the team will look for ways to work smarter,” he says.
Agent events help to strengthen relationships

A colourful ‘Thousand-Hand Guan Yin’ dance jointly performed by CX staff and travel agents was a highlight of the 2011 Top Agent Awards Presentation Dinner held on 16 April.

As a sign of how important agent relationships are to CX and KA, the event was hosted by Chief Operating Officer Ivan Chu with Director Sales & Marketing Rupert Hoog, Dragonair Chief Executive Officer Patrick Yeung and General Manager Sales PRD & Hong Kong Chitty Cheung, present to welcome the more than 80 guests.

Chitty says: “Travel agents still play an important role in generating business and they contribute quite a large portion of our revenue in Hong Kong. This dinner has been running for more than 20 years and is a well-known event in the industry.”

This year’s theme was China Night to reflect the launch of Dragonair’s new destinations in Mainland China and Chitty says the eagerly anticipated performance took several hours to perfect.

“We started including staff performances about 10 years ago and we usually have about four to five sessions to practice,” she says.

Cargo’s Hong Kong Sales team also held its annual Top Agents Award Dinner on 27 April with Chief Executive John Slosar and Director Cargo Nick Rhodes present, and a vibrant dance performance from staff.

Paving the way to help

Airline charitable fund begins to support diverse community projects

Six community and charitable efforts which CX staff are involved with are already benefiting from the Cathay Pacific Charitable Fund (CCF).

These include a charity concert for the Arts with the Disabled Association in Hong Kong; a fundraising effort for a ‘community health day’ organised by the Kowloon Chung Service Centre; and an effort by a non-governmental organisation to build a library in the Philippines.

Marketing Manager Camilla Taylor says knowing there was a possibility of a grant made it easier to proceed with plans for the charity concert.

“We would go ahead in terms of booking the venue, publicising the event and printing pamphlets,” she says.

The concert, held in early February in Hong Kong, was a tie-up between alumni from the Royal Academy of Music and the Malta Arts with the Disabled Association who also helped identify disabled musicians in Hong Kong to perform.

“The chairperson of the alumni association is a school friend and we had been talking about holding a charity concert for some time. The money from the fund helped overcome one of the hurdles,” says Camilla.

“The concert aimed to use music to integrate all the performers, as well as to help overcome preconceptions of people with disabilities.

“I hope it will grow and become an annual event. In that way, the fund has helped kickstart some thing which can develop and grow over the years,” Camilla adds.

Another successful applicant, Flight Purser Ada Tang, has been involved with the GoServe Foundation since 2008.

The members raised funds to build an orphanage for mainly disabled children in Sichuan, and Ada applied to the fund to help build a greenhouse.

Between 40-50 children now live in the orphanage where they live in comfort and are well fed,” she says.

“The greenhouse will provide fresh vegetables for the children throughout the year as well as teaching them about organic farming,” Ada adds.

Applications for the CCF are accepted throughout the year. When looking at the applications, the committee is looking for specific information on how the fund will be used to support a particular project with precise objectives and usage.

More information is available on IntraCX.

Lovers of Bordeaux reds can now enjoy six kinds of Grands Crus Classés in addition to the regular wine list when they travel First Class with CX.

Among the new additions are the full-bodied Château Lagrange 2006, the silky yet subtly spicy Château Giscours 2008, the fruity Château Pontet-Canet 2007, the complex Château Cantenac Brown 2005, as well as the popular Château Branaire-Ducru 2004 and Château Lynch Bages 2004.

At a lunch to introduce the new selection, CX wine consultants Roy Moorfield and Lau Chi-sun noted that travellers are increasingly adventurous with their wine choices.

“Most of the critics like the Lagrange quite well. The wine is surprisingly good and very well-rounded,” says Manager Catering Services Charles Grossrieder. “The Cantenac Brown is more robust and masculine.” Charles also praised the Pontet-Canet, noting that the vineyard’s biodynamic farming methods created the wine’s refreshing aroma.

The six Grands Crus Classés will be served on flights across the CX network on a rotation basis for a year.

CX currently carries around 70 inflight wines from around the world including France, Italy, South Africa, Australia, the United States, New Zealand and Argentina. In 2011, CX served approximately 1.6 million bottles of wine inflight.
Enhancing service delivery

A special enrichment programme started this year for the Premium Services Team at Hong Kong International Airport, providing them with opportunities to learn from other service providers and acquire new skills.

The team has around 150 staff including Supervisors and Customer Services Officers, primarily working in the First Class area and lounges. However, only 12 staff participate in the monthly activity each time.

So far, staff have visited counterparts at the Venetian Macau and Taipei Airport as well as taking part in a makeup, hairstyle and etiquette workshop.

Communication & Development Manager Carry Chan says: “Our commonality is providing professional services to customers and this programme is a great opportunity to learn from each other. They have a chance to observe the other company, share their service experiences and, later on, discuss how they can bring what they learned back to a CX context,” she adds.

Carry says the team was very impressed with the Venetian hotel staff and how passionate and resourceful they are in responding to customers’ requests.

“They have a chance to observe the other company, share their service experiences and, later on, discuss how they can bring what they learned back to a CX context,” she adds.

Future activities include meeting with ISD’s Premium Service Ambassadors and the Marco Polo Club Diamond Plus team as well as visits to high-end retailers or banks.
I was wondering why airport check-in staff provide conflicting answers for holders of ID50 confirmed and FOC tickets.

Over several occasions, in spite of holding an FOC confirmed ticket or ID50 confirmed tickets, I have been told to go to the staff standby counters and then told to return to the normal passenger counters where I have been passed on from one check-in staff to another.

This is despite having a printed copy of my confirmed status.

ID50 confirmed or FOC confirmed tickets are supposed to give us peace of mind, but with the new system and lots of confusion check-in staff, it seems to be causing the opposite effect and giving a lot of unnecessary stress.

Please explain what the policy is regarding ID50 and FOC tickets to help avoid confusion.

Joy Spanhoff

Bob Nipperess, Employee Services Manager, replies: I hope the following information will be of help in clarifying the issue.

When we had ID50 tickets (with the introduction of Journey they have now been replaced by the new confirmed bookable fares) they carried different priorities.

For example, Economy Class ID50 was Priority 4 and this offered the same boarding arrangements as full-fare customers.

However, there were other ID50 tickets for Business and First Classes which had a different (lower) boarding priority of 10 or 11.

Although bookable, these tickets were subject to offloading or downgrading.

With the new system, all confirmed bookable fare tickets are now at the passenger priority of 4 so, if confirmed, there should be fewer offloads than previously.

We shared your comments with the Airport team and it would appear there was confusion on the times in question which led to the frustration you experienced.

They extend their apologies for being less than clear in their handling of the matter.

With any change such as Journey it does take some time for staff to get used to the new features and I suspect the incidents you describe are isolated ones.

Send us your feedback

We welcome feedback from anyone in the CX network on any issue affecting the airline or the industry. Please email your letters to CCF@CST. Not all letters will be published but those that are will be edited for length and to comply with the CX style.

The sender of the star letter each month will win 3,000 Asia Miles. The Feedback page is sponsored by Asia’s leading travel reward programme.

Email archive problems

Even though I delete unnecessary email messages on a daily basis as well as archiving other items regularly, I still occasionally exceed the 1GB limit placed by the Microsoft Outlook email system.

When the mailbox size is over the limit, the user is then blocked from sending emails, which causes massive inconvenience.

However, I have noticed the time taken to archive emails varies enormously from several minutes to 24 hours.

If it ends up taking longer than 24 hours, the process actually malfunctions and you have to start all over again. This is not very helpful when you need to archive in a hurry in order to free up space and not be blocked from sending out emails.

Unfortunately this is due to a couple of months ago:

To alleviate your existing problem, please contact the Service Centre again and request the Desktop Support team to visit your location to troubleshoot your issues and suggest a workaround once your situation is fully understood.

On-board censorship is needed

I was disappointed to see the response by Gloria Chow in March CX World on the increasingly explicit sex and violence shown on some of the inflight movies.

I am also wondering what aircraft she has been on that has private screens no other passenger can view – unless of course she only travels in First Class.

The new Business Class product means what you are viewing can be seen by the person across the aisle, while Economy Class passengers can easily view what the passenger in the adjacent seating is watching.

There are many scenes that are truly disturbing for many passengers to see even in passing.

Whether you like it or not, an aircraft is pretty much a public forum and to have no censorship in place for inflight entertainment is extremely irresponsible.

There was a time when the movies on board were always safe viewing, but now there appears to be no censorship at all.

If there are scenes you would not be comfortable having your children see they should not be on the aircraft – either save those movies for home or cinema or cut them out.

We should either tone down the scenes and make the viewing okay for all ages or come up with a way that stops passengers in adjacent seats from being able to watch along.

Seeing a blast from the past

Will we be painting some of our aircrafts with retro liveries similar to what other airlines have been doing?

I personally favour the green-white stripes, since I grew up in the 80s – CX’s golden age of mass expansion.

It would be nice to see the stripes return to one of our 747s before they retire from service.

Gilbert Hui

Daniel Heung, Marketing Services Manager, replies: We don’t have a plan to introduce the retro livery for the time being.

But we might consider it if there is a strong rationale behind the idea – for example, a company anniversary event.

PAST REVISITED? A reader longs for the “lettuce sandwich” livery.

Flight Purser Pui Yee Tam was praised for the care and attention she gave to a passenger from Hong Kong to London.

“As a frequent flyer who travels often on multiple airlines, I am familiar with the extra attention given to top-tier loyalty members.

But on a flight to London I encountered a cabin crew who is one of the best I have ever come across.

Flight Purser Pui Yee Tam went well beyond her normal duties, while her attitude and the extra effort she put in and the other passengers was exemplary.

While I expect that type of service in First Class, I was lucky enough to be under her care on Economy Class where she offered the exact same level of service.

It was plain that her service attitude was not superficial and I wish everyone could be like that.”

Hong Kong Customer Services Officer Yvonne Ng showed her efficiency and service attitude to help a Marco Polo Club member.

“I wish to praise Customer Services Officer Yvonne Ng for her pleasant attitude, initiative and good service.

After I had trouble getting through to the Marco Polo Club customer service hotline, she helped me with my redemption ticket by doing the rebooking and making the seat reservation.

Yvonne turned me into a happy passenger and treated me the way a loyal customer should be treated.”

Los Angeles Manager on Duty Diana Bachman helped ease a passenger’s concerns after his luggage had been broken.

“I arrived at Los Angeles airport in a bad mood after my bags has been broken on a previous flight from Sao Paulo.

Even though I was promised a replacement bag before I left for Hong Kong, I was still concerned about the way they would be treated.

At the airport, I was fortunate enough to be able to speak to Manager on Duty Diana Bachman, who reassured me my bags would be well taken care of and arrive safely.

I greatly appreciated her positive attitude and professionalism which helped calm me down.

She has a very good understanding and knowledge of her job which I have to commend.”
KA spreads its wings across the region

These are busy times for Dragonair as the airline begins to operate to six new destinations.

Flights to Jeju in South Korea, which started on 1 May, are doing well with strong support from the Hong Kong market and tour groups.

“The advanced load factors in May and June are quite healthy at around 80%,” says Manager Alliance & Revenue Planning Katherine Lo.

Katherine says while the majority of ticket sales are currently coming from Hong Kong and Korea, the team expects to see growing demand from other markets.

“The tactical fares to Jeju have attracted strong bookings from individual travellers in Hong Kong,” she says.

The daily service to Guilin, which also started on 1 May, is popular with travellers from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan.

But the airline also expects to see more sales from Europe and the United States in the longer term.

“Leisure travellers typically plan their trips months in advance and special fares introduced to the Hong Kong market before the summer peak are expected to boost demand,” says Katherine.

To generate consumer buzz, a multimedia advertising campaign has been launched.

“In April, we highlighted the launch of six new routes while, in May, the focus will be on individual destinations and providing tactical information,” says Grace Cheung, Manager Marketing Communications.

“The first tactical ad was for Jeju and we hope the beautiful imagery and special introductory fares will make the destination difficult to ignore,” she adds.

Dragonair’s new service to Xi’an started on 1 April, Taichung came online on 14 May. Services to Clark in The Philippines will begin on 29 May and to Chiang Mai in Thailand on 1 July.

IN DEMAND: High load factors for new routes as ad campaign launches.

Dragonair passengers can now sample dishes created by some of Hong Kong’s best-known restaurants after three menu promotions were rolled out in quick succession in April and May.

These include a collaboration with the Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong, which also marks the first time the hotel has partnered with an airline, and a menu created by the Man Ho restaurant at the JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong.

Finally, the Asian Delights menu features signature dishes from nine different Asian countries, including curries and rice dishes.

The catering initiatives were introduced to uphold KA’s industry standing, says Manager, Catering Services Kim Chong.

“We hope the innovative menus will excite passengers and encourage customer loyalty,” says Kim.

She says the new menus are part of a brand-building exercise to enhance the image of Dragonair as an iconic Hong Kong airline.

“The operating environment changes every day, as do the passenger profiles, and we need to think of ways to align our catering services with our passengers’ lifestyles.

“These new promotions means passengers can enjoy authentic dishes which were created by high-class popular restaurants in Hong Kong,” Kim says.

The Mandarin Oriental menu is available to First and Business Class passengers on flights from Hong Kong to Beijing and Shanghai.

The menu has 23 appetisers and entrees including dishes from the Michelin-starred Grill + Bar and The Chinnery.

The Man Ho restaurant promotion, which includes delicacies such as chilled fish maw with cucumber, will be served in all classes for flights ex-Hong Kong.

The Asian Delights menu, which is available on flights to and from Hong Kong to Beijing and Shanghai, includes more than 80 dishes from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, India and the Philippines.

All three menu promotions will run until mid-April 2013.

Innovative menus are a foodie’s dream

Drake Cheung

MOUTHWATERING: JW Marriott Hotel Executive Chinese Chef Ip Kwok Fai at the launch of the Man Ho menu.

Two great new destinations – Guilin and Xi’an

Departure date: Now to 28 June 2012

Guilin

3-day/2-night package HK$9000p
3-day/2-night private guided tour HK$15,500p

套餐包括：3天2夜私人小团，可选私人导游、酒店升级及交通保险。

X’ian

3-day/2-night package HK$11,600p
3-day/2-night private guided tour HK$20,500p

套餐包括：3天2夜私人小团，可选私人导游、酒店升级及交通保险。

Packages include roundtrip air tickets on Dragonair, hotel accommodation, 50% Asia Miles and travel insurance.

Private guided tours also include private guide, round-trip transfer, meals and 1,000 Asia Miles. Book now at cxworlddays.com

ON THE RUN: Jacky takes advantage of Xiamen’s mild climate to build up his running skills.
The Flight Technical team in Flight Operations will be working at full tilt this year, with Cathay Pacific set to take delivery of no fewer than 15 new aircraft and also bring two new simulators – the first Boeing 747-8F and a third 777 – into the Flight Training Centre.

The 10-strong team has a vital role to play in each delivery, flying to Toulouse or Seattle to conduct a test flight during which they’ll take aircraft to limits that won’t be experienced in regular operations. Their aim is to ensure the new arrival meets both CX and Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department (HKCAD) specifications in terms of airworthiness.

In February, Flight Technical Officer John O’Halloran and Manager Flight Technical Services Steve Smith were at the Boeing Everett plant to accept two aircraft on consecutive days: the airline’s 25th Boeing 777-300ER, B-KPY, and fifth Boeing 747-8 Freighter, B-LJG.

Before CX could take the decision to accept both aircraft, and hand over a significant sum of money to Boeing, John and Steve were tasked with performing the customer acceptance flight on behalf of the airline.

In doing the test flights, the Flight Technical team confirms to management that it is buying a sound aircraft, and also acts as an agent of the HKCAD as part of the process for issuing the Hong Kong Certificate of Airworthiness.

“We are checking that the aircraft is representative of the type design and that it adheres to a strict set of airworthiness regulations. We need to convince the authorities that it’s safe,” says John. Each customer test flight will see four people on the flight deck.

In February, John took the left-hand seat with a Boeing pilot on the right. Steve was in one jump seat, acting as flight test observer, while the other was taken up by a Boeing systems specialist.

In Seattle, the customer acceptance flights usually take place two or three days before the scheduled delivery date and involve a three-hour flight over the picturesque Pacific Northwest in Washington State. Climbing initially to 39,000 feet, the flight includes landings at Moses Lake airfield.

“One of the key things we do is look at the systems that normally don’t get used such as back-up systems and warning systems,” says John. “For example, we exceed the normal speed limits to check the warnings and handling. We also shut down the engines individually and start them at the most demanding flight conditions.”

The team tests procedures such as a rejected takeoff, and at one stage in the flight will conduct a rapid and steep descent, a manoeuvre used for real if the cabin loses pressure and the oxygen masks come down. Sometimes the team will discover issues that haven’t been picked up by Boeing.

While John was at the controls for the test flights in February, Steve sat behind in the observer’s seat going through the flight test schedule – a detailed HKCAD document that was developed by the CX team. “The observer dictates the pace of the testing, recording all the data and checking that all conditions are satisfied,” says Steve.

After the flight, climb performance data collected during the flight will be crunched using special software provided by the Flight Ops, Operations Engineering team. All involved will then attend a debrief session led by the Boeing test pilot where any defects identified are discussed. If anything is amiss the team might need to get the aircraft back in the air – “though that rarely happens,” says Steve.

After any defects from the test flights are rectified, the Cathay test pilot will sign the Flight Test Certificate which is part of the paper trail required before the HK Certificate of Airworthiness can be issued. A detailed report will be completed on return to Hong Kong.

“Professionally speaking, it’s a fulfilling and satisfying experience to get into a new aircraft and be involved in these tests and with the Boeing team,” smiles John.
The “new Niki” has been the Cathay City gate guardian since 2006, welcoming staff and visitors as they turn the corner into the facility.

Originally a C47 freighter, the plane was repainted in the silver and white CX livery from the late 1940s to replicate CX’s second aircraft, which was a DC3 and the C47’s passenger-carrying cousin. Niki was set up in front of Cathay City in 2006 to mark the airline’s 60th anniversary.

To ensure the old plane stays strong against the elements, a team of six Engineering Trainees gave the plane a thorough body check on 1 April.

The visual inspection was led by Quality Assurance Engineer Mark Stafford.

“The DC3 is the plane that put CX on the map,” says Mark, who also flew the same plane type three decades ago. “It was great to fly this plane – it’s very slow and you really had to fly her because there was no auto pilot. But it responded well.”

Engineering Trainee Martin Ng says: “The plane has become the symbol of Cathay City. Although we see it every morning when we go to work it is always fenced off, and this project gives us a rare opportunity to observe the aircraft from the inside out.”

As the day wore on, the volunteers tirelessly looked for holes that required patching up by HAECO and knocked at the fabric ailerons to detect delaminated parts. Peeling paint will cause rust, and oxidised screws also need replacing because rust from them spreads.

“By the end of the day, we were surprised by the extensive corrosion found beneath the floor panels inside the plane,” says Martin. “It also highlighted the work required to preserve Niki.”

CX’s first aircraft, Betsy, now hangs in the Hong Kong Science Museum and underwent a similar inspection last year.
Pilot book continues to inspire new aviators

Captains share insights on professional lives in popular publication

It is a testament to the success of the Cathay Pacific Pilot Book 1, first published in 2004, that it is now in its 16th reprint. Pilot Book 1, a Chinese-language book about aviation penned by CX pilots, is used as an educational text in local schools and has proven hugely popular among the young students.

Captains and co-authors Antony Fung, Patrick Lau and Reggy Pong were introduced to local media during an informal press event at Cathay City on 23 April.

They provided tips on how to perform during a pilot job interview and shared other insights about their professional lives. “The ability to learn quickly and work hard are qualities that we look for in pilots,” says Patrick, who is a Senior Training Captain.

He adds that enthusiasm and personality matter a great deal in the selection process. “Hong Kong has no shortage of young people who are suitable for the job, but potential candidates face two problems – some are simply unaware they have potential and miss out on interview opportunities, while others have the potential but arrive at the interview unprepared. “This book helps candidates understand what they need to be aware of when they apply for a pilot position,” Patrick adds.

CX has now published three books written by its own pilots, all of which have been reprinted a number of times. The airline receives an average of 2,400 pilot applications a year.

F1 race cars get a lift

Two Formula One race cars and four security cars made their way from Shanghai to Bahrain on 17 April onboard charter flight CX2059. This is the first time the Shanghai cargo team has operated a chartered flight for a F1 event.

“The entire Shanghai Cargo Services team was deeply involved in coordinating the charter, organising everything right down to the smallest detailed pre-flight procedures,” says Cargo Services Manager Hunter Chen.

CX2059 departed Shanghai at 5:41am local time, with the race cars, security vehicles, tyres and other spare parts on board.

Deborah Leung, Inflight Service Manager/Trainer

What is your training and background?
I joined CX in 1983 as cabin crew, so I guess you can call me a dinosaur! I was lucky to join CX during a period of expansion, so I took on a leadership role quickly.

I was promoted to Inflight Service Manager in 1996, and in 2003 I applied to join the Inflight Service Training Department because I wanted to try new things.

What is the main part of your job?
My main duties are to teach induction and conversion courses for cabin crew as well as training Inflight Service Managers. I also fly as crew once I complete my teaching duties and the dual role means I get to practice what I preach.

For crew, the training mainly revolves around how to provide quality service in different types of aircraft. But for the ISMs, my role is to help them look at situations from a managerial angle and be independent decision makers.

What do you like best about your job?
The enjoyment that comes from helping people succeed. Teaching is not easy and a lot of preparation goes on behind the scenes.

Seeing my students pass their assessments gives me a sense of satisfaction that is hard to describe.

What is the most challenging part of your job and how do you tackle it?
Allocating my time between family and work. Once a course starts things get intensive, and I have to host lessons from 9am to 5.30pm for periods ranging from one to 18 days.

We also have to update our training materials to keep up with the evolving aviation industry. I’ve learnt that it is important to let my family know beforehand whenever I’ve got a busy period coming up.

Giving my family members adequate preparation is just as important as preparing my students for their jobs.
Containing the issue

Shanghai team wins WeSuggest! with idea for ULD management

Unit load devices (ULDs) are the containers or pallets used to load freight and passenger luggage onto planes, and are crucial to cargo operations. But despite the essential role they play, ULD management does not receive the recognition it deserves, according to the winners of the 2011 WeSuggest! staff competition.

The winning team of Cathy Xiao, Hunter Chen, Ellen Liu and Lisa Zhu, all from the Shanghai Cargo team, would like to change this. Their winning suggestion includes a company-wide action day of forums, contests and on-site inspections to promote better ULD management.

The Shanghai team, along with other finalists, presented their ideas to Chief Operating Officer Ivan Chu, Director Personnel William Chau, Director Corporate Affairs Quince Chong, Engineering Director Christopher Gibbs and KA CEO Patrick Yeung at a thought-provoking final presentation on 18 April.

Other pitches include an award scheme for non customer-facing staff, providing tablet PCs as an inflight entertainment system, and an initiative to encourage staff to design corporate social responsibility programmes for their local communities.

Ivan said the teams had selected some “very important issues” to talk about. “Ideas and staff innovation will give us an edge in the future as we face more and more competition,” he said.

Hunter says: “The idea will help raise awareness about ULD administration in Cathay Pacific. “The joint-action day will reduce unnecessary costs associated with ULDs, increase the accuracy of IT systems and ensure passengers and our cargo business will benefit from a stable ULD supply.”

“We feel we did CX Cargo and our station and region proud by winning this competition,” he adds.

The winners receive 188 CX WINNING SMILES: The Shanghai Cargo team hopes to raise awareness about ULD use with their idea.

Airport awards spotlight great team

Two CX, HKIA staff received a Team Award at the annual HKIA Customer Service Excellence Programme in recognition of the help they gave two transit passengers when they arrived in Hong Kong.

The awards, presented at a ceremony at Hong Kong International Airport on 18 April, are organised annually by the Airport Authority Hong Kong to recognise frontline staff who have demonstrated exceptional customer service throughout the year.

Service Leader Jaime Shek and Supervisor Louis Cheung helped a transiting passenger who was suffering from air sickness.

Jaime accompanied the passenger and his companion to the airport clinic, helped them rebook their flights and arranged hotel accommodation.

The next day, Louis took over and assisted the pair from arrival at the airport right up to the aircraft.

CX also won the top Corporate Award, voted on by over 200 organisations based at HKIA, for the fourth consecutive year.

Director Service Delivery Philippe de Gentile-Williams accepted the award on behalf of the airline. “This is a remarkable achievement which demonstrates once again the high level of customer service CX is offering at HKIA,” says Manager Planning and Performance Gabriel Lee.

Another five CX HKIA staff – Customer Services Officers Eva Siu, Lori Wong, Penny Cheung, Shannon Bae and Supervisor Vincent Yip – all received individual Customer Service Excellence certificates.

CX catering ‘one of the world’s best’

Cathay Pacific has been named by American food website Epicurious as one of the five best foreign airlines in terms of the dining experience onboard.

While acknowledging that the culinary perks are usually aimed at premium passengers, Epicurious said that on the five airlines listed, “economy passengers also benefit from the attention to quality food service”.

“Such an article in a world-renowned site is always motivating, rewarding and a boost to the Catering and Service teams,” says Manager Catering Services Charles Grossrieder.

The article also highlights CX’s 20 special meals including options for Muslims, Hindus, Jews and raw foodists.

Briefs

Fuel surcharge up

The Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department approved an increase in passenger fuel surcharges for May.

The surcharge was increased to HK$263 for short-haul services and HK$1,164 for long-haul – respective increases of 2% and 2.8% on the previous month.

LEAP flag day

The Life Education Activity Programme (LEAP) is holding its annual flag day in the New Territories on Saturday, 2 June. Some 2,000 volunteers are being recruited to help – including a number of CX Volunteers. The aim is to raise up to HK$600,000 to expand the CX-sponsored organisation’s work on health awareness and drug prevention programmes for children.

A special CX Taiwan Facebook campaign has resulted in more than 4,000 new “likes” for the page.

Disney fun inflight

New Disney packs have been introduced for youngsters aged 3-6 on all routes except Taipei and Manila.

Out of Hong Kong, the Cutie Mickey pack features colouring pencils and a colouring book along with a number of items to keep young minds entertained.

Return sectors feature a Winnie the Pooh box with a folding box in which everything can be kept.

New counter closing times

The check-in counters at Jeddah and Riyadh Airport are now closing punctually 60 minutes before the scheduled departure time.

There are now five airports in the system that have adopted a 60-minute closure time for check-in counters – Beijing, Dubai, London, Jeddah and Riyadh.

CXworld 11
Nagoya route in recovery as demand rises

Nagoya started strongly in 2011 with revenue for the first quarter growing by more than 10% over 2010. Then the earthquake hit the country, with a subsequent significant impact on travel to and from Japan, resulting in a double-digit drop in the second quarter. “Nagoya has been recovering and we are on target for the first quarter of this year. The recovery has been particularly noticeable amongst our corporate customers,” says Nagoya Sales Manager Osamu Nitta.

Nagoya is a manufacturing centre for Japan, especially for the automobile industry, which includes production plants for Toyota, Honda, Suzuki and Yamaha. Last year, the industry suffered a double hit from the earthquake and the Thailand floods.

“This year the automobile manufacturers are back in full swing as they have managed to recover from lost production and clear the backlog in demand,” Nitta-san says.

The revival of automobile production has meant good news on the cargo front with strong shipments to Southeast Asia and North America.

The CX539 flight which departs at 16.20 each day also ensures next-morning deliveries to many overseas factories.

“The yen’s appreciation has eased off which further helps exports. So we can expect travel demand to Southeast Asia and India to be healthy this year,” Nitta-san says.

Passenger flight frequencies have moved from 17 per week to triple daily, with two of them being non-stop services and one via Taipei.

“This comprehensive schedule is particularly valued by our corporate clients in Nagoya and the surrounding areas,” says Marketing & Sales Manager Japan James Evans. “Visitors from Hong Kong also now have a daily morning departure which is good news for tourists.”

Nitta-san says there are many things for tourists to enjoy in Nagoya.

“The city is at the start of the ‘Dragon Route’ that takes visitors right up through many scenic parts of central Japan to Kanazawa, as well as being the home of several World Heritage sites,” he says.

To highlight the new schedule, the team have launched special tactical fares in Nagoya emphasising the smooth connections to Southeast Asian destinations.

With the passenger business seeing a sustained recovery, Nitta-san forecasts that the second quarter of 2012 will see demand back to pre-earthquake levels.

Nevertheless, James warns the competitive environment on the route presents a challenge.

“All Nippon started flying daily between Nagoya and Hong Kong from the winter schedule last year and while business demand is looking robust, leisure is looking softer than we had expected,” James says.
Recognition given to staff veterans

The Mumbai Town Office hosted a reception on 10 April to celebrate 11 staff receiving long-service awards, including four for 30 years. The presentation ceremony was hosted by General Manager South Asia, Middle East & Africa Tom Wright, Director Service Delivery Philippe de Gentil-Williams, who was visiting Mumbai at the time to talk to the teams, joined him to present the awards.

Three staff received awards for 10 years, one for 15 years, two for 20 and one for 25 years. A further four staff – Manager on Duty Juliana Spencer, Customer Services Supervisor Nargis Salian, Assistant Financial Services Manager Niranj Hamaday and Account Manager CG Johnson, who have been with the team since the inaugural flight to Mumbai in 1982 – received 30-year service awards.

The ceremony began with a presentation of photos of each of the staff’s careers at CX and each awardee received a pin and a framed collage of favourite memories. Philippe also took the opportunity to brief the team on future developments for the airline.

Golf gathering for loyal members

The CX and KA Taiwan teams hosted a golf event for Marco Polo Club members on 12 April.

Around 50 members joined the gathering with General Manager Taiwan & Korea Vivian Lo playing alongside them.

At the presentation dinner afterwards, Vivian thanked the members for their long-term support for Cathay Pacific and Dragonair.

Teams gather for kickoff conference

The morning session started with teambuilding games and breakout sessions with staff joining in focus group discussions for different OAS projects. Regional General Manager Southeast Asia Wilson Yam updated the team on the major changes and challenges the airline is facing in 2012 along with new developments in the pipeline.

Staff from Personnel, Sales & Marketing, Revenue and Asia Miles from Head Office also provided updates from their respective areas, as did Dragonair CEO Patrick Yeung.

In the evening, Country Manager Philippines Marvin Xu joined Wilson and General Manager Personnel Albert Wong on the stage to thank staff for their hard work.

A special ceremony was also held to farewell Personnel & Administration Manager Eileen Zamora who was with CX for 24 years.

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Happy arrangement

Customer Sales Agent Seema Dhingra was born and raised in Holland, so it is hardly surprising that she was sceptical of the Indian tradition of arranged marriages at first.

The 25-year-old cast her doubts aside to marry a groom that her parents chose in March this year, and she is now a happy convert.

“At first, I didn’t believe in arranged marriages, but I have to admit that I do believe in them now,” she adds.

Seema’s parents, who moved to Holland from India three decades ago, started looking for a respectful, well-educated groom for their daughter when she turned 24.

Raman Kumar Gumber, a young man who moved to Ireland from India eight years ago, was the perfect candidate. Through the matchmaking efforts of Seema’s grandmother and Raman’s aunt, the pair met for the first time in India in February 2011.

The couple went through their “Rokha” pre-engagement ceremony two days after their first meeting, and were officially engaged by the end of the year after a “Mangni” engagement ceremony. The actual wedding, which took place in Jalandhar in India, spanned five days.

“We had a ceremony full of tradition, festival, dance, music and rituals,” says Seema.

“Ever since I was a kid, I loved being at the airport,” she says. “When CX offered me a job two years ago, it was a dream come true.”

Flying dancer

Life is a balancing act for San Francisco-based Flight Attendant Masataka Aita, who is a professional dancer on top of having a full-time career in the skies.

Masataka began his formal training in ballet, modern and hip hop dance after high school, honing his skills at prestigious performance arts schools in New York and California.

“There are many things that I enjoy about dancing— the discipline, the relevance to daily life, and communicating with the physical body,” says Masataka.

He admits that juggling a regular performance schedule and his cabin crew career is a huge challenge.

“Since I joined Cathay Pacific in August 2011, most of my time has been dedicated to the airline,” he says.

The time off from dancing has allowed him to reflect meaningfully on his relationship with dance.

“While it is at times disheartening to see my dance clothes and shoes collect dust, there will always be a time and place,” he says.

Masataka finds similarities in his dual roles, observing that both require sensitivity and acute observation.

“Body language and non-verbal forms of communication are qualities that are pertinent to both cabin crew and dancers,” Masataka says.

As his career with Cathay Pacific takes off, Masataka says he looks forward to encountering people from different backgrounds, as well as visiting relatives and extended family members in Japan more often.

JUGGLING ACT:
Masataka combines a dance career with flying.
Attendant camera and tripod are still with directions. And make sure my a new city? you do when you arrive at 10. What is the first thing from Asia are interested in that Egypt. More and more travellers fly to next?

9. Which place should CX you like to go to?

7. Which city/place would as a photographer? I treat my camera as a toy and play around with the buttons. I save my money for travelling instead of photography training.

6. Have you been trained as a photographer? No country is at the bottom of the list. I always learn from the people, the culture, the place and, most importantly, the food.

5. Your site has many lovely photos – which is the best one you’ve ever taken? Kienmochschwangau Castle in Germany which I took last February.

4. Least favourite and why? No country is at the bottom of the list. I always learn from the people, the culture, the place and, most importantly, the food.

3. What is your favourite place and why? Indonesia – and not just because it is my home country!

2. How many countries/cities have you visited? As of April 2012, I’ve been to 19 countries and 131 cities.

1. Why and when did you start up the website? I started it a year ago as a travel tracker. Now it is more of a platform to create awareness for people to travel more.

Shining a light

Dennis Owen has made a number of humanitarian trips to Asia over the years, often combining business trips with visits to different orphanage projects, but he never expected to be involved in helping people in the Caribbean.

In February, however, Dennis made his first trip to the island of La Gonave, off the coast of the Haiti, following a request from his church to be on the board of an aid organisation called Shine.

“I jumped at the chance as I knew it was a great way to make a difference in the lives of children in need,” says Dennis, Vice President Marketing Americas.

The first project they are involved in is being coordinated through a co-op called Okipe.

“We are working together with several entities around the world to build a new children’s village on La Gonave,” says Dennis.

Since the devastating January 2010 earthquake, the number of orphans has skyrocketed and living conditions have seriously deteriorated. The children are working with on this project live in an overcrowded rented home with no electricity, only two bathrooms and very few beds.”

Dennis says that a great amount of credit for taking care of these orphans must go to a lady named Madame Sollette (pictured left), who grew up on the island and saw the needs of orphan children in her hometown.

“Through donations over the years, Madame Sollette has been not just feeding and clothing the children, who now number 75, but providing them an education for their future.”

Shine is part of the co-op that has purchased five acres for the new children’s village and is beginning the construction of new homes for up to 150 children – but it’s not just about infrastructure.

“The project has evolved into taking better care of the children, community outreach and training locals in the trade of construction,” Dennis says. “Part of our goal is to help people help themselves.”

Discussions are also taking place about providing a vocational school for the children when they grow up.

“While it’s wonderful to provide adequate housing, we also want to look long term and provide a hopeful future for the children of La Gonave,” says Dennis, who has just returned from Bali and will be looking to get CX people involved in his next project to help others.

Find out more about La Gonave at www.okipe.org

Calling all female footie fans

Women football players from all departments in CX are being invited to strengthen the ranks of the ISD Ladies Football Team.

The team, which has been in existence for seven years, wants to bring more players on board to ensure it can maintain a decent squad.

“We are looking for players who enjoy football and want to take part in regular training sessions and friendly matches,” says a team representative.

“Football experience is not essential – we’re looking for people who are enthusiastic, energetic, have some form of fitness and who want to have a bit of fun.”

Training sessions during summer are usually indoors due to the heat, but the team will be back in action outdoors during the winter season.

Anyone interested in joining the team should email CCASVJ OR APTD7L

New Joiners

CX World welcomes all new staff. Here is a selection of the newcomers who recently came on board...

Ricky Cheung, Solution Architect, IMT

Ricky says he is excited to join the airline he is a “regular customer of”.

“My new position fits very well with my previous background when I worked for Royal Bank of Canada. I hope to continue to excel in developing my architecture skills and provide the best solution to this company,” Ricky says.

Ricky likes to play the electone in his spare time. “This electronic musical instrument is not well known in Hong Kong but it is very popular in Japan, around Asia, Europe and the US,” he says.

Andrew Atkinson, Simulator Instructor, FOP

Andrew was previously a pilot at CX flying “everything from the Classic, the 777 and finishing on the 744,” he says.

He rejoined CX earlier this year after several years in Singapore. “I am sure I will miss the flying and the camaraderie down the line that makes flying the special job that it is. But one thing I won’t miss is being away from home,” he says.

“Cathay Pacific will always be the best airline in my eyes and it is great to be back living and working in Hong Kong,” Andrew adds.

Rita Chan, Marketing Officer, MKT

Rita was a cabin crew based in Toronto before moving back to Hong Kong.

“It’s a challenge to move back and start a new life. I’m glad I can stay with CX which seems like a big family to me,” Rita says. “I have gained lots of frontline experience and will try and bring what I have learned to the back office,” she adds.

Rita loves to travel and explore new places.

Alex Woo, Business Analyst, IMT

Alex previously worked in e-recruitment for the technology industry for two years before joining CX.

“I am hoping to challenge myself to help CX improve its recruitment process using the latest HR technologies,” he says.

In his spare time, Alex likes playing basketball and his PS3.

“I also have two lovely ginger cats,” he adds.

Note: These staff were hired before the recruitment suspension. This will be the last new joiners roundup while the suspension is in place.
Pilots putt in Portugal

While professional golfers and fans looked forward to The Masters at Augusta in April, two intrepid CX golfers were busy preparing for the World Airline Club Association (WACA) 25th Passeola Golf Competition in Portugal from 18-21 April.

Hosted by the Portuguese WACA club, this annual golf event, held alongside a tennis tournament, attracted 60 players from airlines all over the world.

Participant Captain Mark Hudson (pictured right) says: “Good weather and challenging golf courses combined with social evenings ensured a great time was had by all.”

Captain Alistair Bell (left) won the Longest Drive prize while Captain Hudson bagged the trophy for the Best Net Score.

WACA sports and social events are held globally and, as CX is a member, any staff can attend – more information can be found at www.waca.org.

Any staff interested in playing in either the tennis or golf competitions next year can contact Mark at CRWMAH to be put on the calling list for the event.

The Quiz

The first prize winner this month will receive a HK$1,000 voucher from Dining Concepts.

Dining Concepts operates 14 high quality fine-dining establishments of varying cuisines throughout Hong Kong including the new Italian Lupa restaurant in the heart of Central; BLT Steak (pictured above), which offers a range of prime steaks from the US and Australia; BLT Burgers, which has put a twist on the classic American burger joint with beef; turkey and Atlantic salmon burgers; and the Soho Spice restaurant (pictured below), offering contemporary Vietnamese and Thai cuisine.

Diners can also enjoy Greek & Middle Eastern cuisine at Olive and Argentinian food, including seafood, pasta and steaks, at Tango.

For more information, visit www.diningconcepts.com.hk

The second prize winner will receive a 29-piece Shanghai dinner set (below) and a 22-piece dim sum set (right) from Maxwell & Williams.

The classic fine-quality porcelain collection is dishwasher, freezer, microwave and conventional oven safe; while the fun and artistic dim sum set includes four pairs of chopsticks, chopsticks stands, bowls, placemats and a bamboo steamer.

Maxwell & Williams started from humble beginnings in Melbourne but today is a global brand with a presence in over 30 countries around the world.

For more information, go to www.maxwellandwilliams.com

To enter, visit the online quiz entry form on the CX World site.

The deadline is noon on Friday, 1 June.
Business Analyst Louis Lee had a rare glimpse into the lives of North Koreans

While North Korea held the world’s attention in December as the nation mourned the death of its leader, President Kim Jong-il, the country is still regarded as the one of the most secretive on earth.

So I grabbed the chance to tour around the mysterious state. The tour group I signed up with in Hong Kong included visits to Pyongyang and the civil war monuments in Kaesong.

The programme was arranged with the aid of the North Korean Tourism Bureau and my group enjoyed a comfortable coach, clean hotel rooms, tasty meals and were entertained by a humorous tour guide.

The Air Koryo flight we took from Shenyang in Northern China to Pyongyang had a peculiar nostalgic feeling inside the cabin. A lot of the tour was taken up visiting war memorials including the China-Korea Friendship Tower, which was built in memory of the Voluntary Army from China who arrived in the urban districts of Pyongyang. The city streets appeared very neat and filled with happy people, fun-loving schoolchildren and bashful women who were happy to be photographed with us.

Interestingly, this scene of a utopian society is dramatically different from what I have seen in the media and this journey gave me a lot of food for thought.

Group touring remains the only way for normal tourists to visit North Korea. Our mobile phones and travel documents were kept by the local tour guide throughout the journey, but there were few restrictions placed on taking photos.

A lot of the tour was taken up visiting war memorials including the China-Korea Friendship Tower, which was built in memory of the Voluntary Army from China who died in the Korean War in the 1950s, and the “Arc de Triomphe” which is slightly larger than the one in Paris and was built to glorify President Kim Il-sung’s role in the military resistance against Japanese rule. We also visited the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom which separates North and South Korea.

With a new leader in place, I hope the standard of living improves in North Korea and the citizens enjoy a better lifestyle. Who knows – one day we may even fly there!