

Gateway 21 in Japan folds with massive debts

The study abroad agency Gateway 21 in Japan collapsed in September, leaving many hundreds of clients stranded as it filed for bankruptcy and revealed debts of US\$12 million. Of that considerable sum, US\$9 million was estimated to be debts owed to individual customers. Lawyers acting for the company said that some 1,300 people who had paid tuition and accommodation fees up front were unlikely to get their money back, despite bankruptcy proceedings going ahead. The company belonged to the Japan Association of Travel Agents, but only a small portion of fees could be returned under the Jata system.

One news source suggested that the company ran into problems when its partner schools were not paid, and therefore refused to accept any more of the company's clients. A Japanese agent told *Language Travel Magazine* that Gateway 21 had placed a lot of advertisements before running into this crisis, amid a general slowdown in the Japanese outbound study market.

The company closed suddenly, and a stream of clients were reported to be queuing up at the head office to try and retrieve

funds already paid. These included a student who told a newspaper she had paid US\$7,500 to study at a language school in Canada. Students who were already abroad in September may also have been affected. Many clients in Canada managed to continue their studies when 13 members of school association, Languages Canada, offered free courses to affected students, but others in Australia, New Zealand and the USA may have had to leave.

In Japan, there was surprise at the scale of the debt and questions were being asked about why the agency had continued to accept bookings if its finances were awry. Various agencies said they had been contacted by affected clients. One said, "Some [Gateway clients] are saying they will pursue their plans through us. At the same time, there must be quite a few who will need to cancel their plans for financial reasons." The source echoed other comments that Gateway 21 was unique in the marketplace for its "aggressive" tactics without a commitment to quality service.

Gateway 21 opened in 1997 and reportedly dealt with up to 8,000 clients per year, with an annual turnover of US\$28 million. ●

MEI-Relsa holds agent fam trip after StudyWorld

IRELAND'S ENGLISH language school association, MEI-Relsa, held an agent fam trip and workshop immediately after StudyWorld this year in order to introduce Ireland to interested agents and enable them to visit some Irish language schools.

Overall, 48 agents attended the trip and they got the chance to meet with representatives from 23 schools from Ireland.

Fernanda Alberti from Cultural Adventure in Brazil said that it was very important to meet with and talk to the schools personally. "We learned so much and came back with

more energy and knowledge," she commented.

During the fam trip, which took place between 10 and 14 September, agents visited Cork, County Kerry, Dublin and Athlone and took part in a workshop in Athlone. Aoife Mulvihill from Atlantic Language Galway said that for her, a boat cruise along the River Shannon was a highlight of the trip.

"I think it's very important to organise agent visits to schools," she said. "As there are many schools all over the country and despite Ireland being so small it does take time to travel from A to B." ●

In memoriam: Frederic Gonzalez

FREDERIC Gonzalez, Centre Director for EC Boston in the USA, passed away suddenly and tragically earlier this year.



Well known for his rare ability to get the best out of people and for his great leadership skills, Fred was a key player in the EC team and will be sadly missed. He will be warmly remembered for his *joie de vivre* and positive mindset.

French-born Fred joined EC as General Manager of EC Cambridge in 2003 before moving to Boston last year. He leaves a wife and two young sons. ●

Agency of the month



In a series appearing each month in *Language Travel Magazine*, we ask a different language teaching institution to nominate one of their preferred agencies or agent partners, and to explain why this person/company is worthy of their nomination.

This month **Professionals UK** in the UK nominates **Answer English** in the UK. Karen Bowring, Managing Director of the company explains her decision.



"I would like to nominate Answer English (AE). James Herbertson at AE and his team are a fast-moving and flexible agency and they turn their resources to where the demand is very quickly. They provide excellent accommodation services outside of the host family sector and are a

great partner to link up with to prepare packages such as English and work experience with accommodation in a student house/residence – which is very popular in the European market.

They feel like a student one-stop shop, pointing students in the right direction for work experience, getting a foothold on London life, sorting their accommodation and of course getting them the best English courses around. They also do these great conversation exchange evenings, where they mix students from [other agencies] eg Spanish Express learning Spanish, with Spanish students learning English. I love small vibrant agencies like this one! But I don't think it will be small for long!"

Industry issues - agents speak out

January February March April May June July August September October November December

Q. Do you have an online booking system on your website? How has this helped develop your business?



**Peter Rupp,
Biku Languages,
Switzerland**

"We introduced an online booking system in 2006 when we completely overhauled our website. It seemed appropriate to launch this tool that enables people to book easily and rapidly from home or their workplace online. For us as a counselling agent, it is an invaluable asset in as far as clients can, for example, fill in the online booking form while on the phone with us, send it, wait for us to read it and then discuss and clarify any uncertainty related with the booking. It saves time and eliminates misunderstandings. It happens rarely that we receive an unexpected booking "out of the blue" via the online booking system. As we are not active in the mass market, we do not feature big chain schools in our programme, but rather stick to the personalised top end of market, most of our bookings are a result of

intensive counselling work. The online booking system is more of a service to our clients but to ourselves too, as it facilitates our work in terms of administration and also saves time."



**Meredith Butler,
Language Link, USA**

"Language Link implemented our online booking system seven years ago. It has helped us maintain a constant presence with our clients with 24-hour booking and information in regard to programme availability, pricing and dates. Clients feel they are able to access up-to-date information no matter in which country or time zone they live, and they are able to access the latest information and register at their convenience. The online booking system has expanded our international client base greatly. Since its implementation, we have seen a surge in European clients. We are currently working on allowing our clients access to

RSS feeds [that alert readers to updated content] to experience podcast language lessons and virtual tours of the programmes. We feel that technology is a useful and vital tool which allows our clients to travel to any of our destinations at their convenience."



**Hani Sayyaf,
Managing Director,
Dar Alfikr Institution,
Syria**

"We are applying an Internet booking system in the coming months. It is in progress. I think paying via the Internet would be useful for students who wish to study abroad or who are coming from outside of Syria and wish to study at our institute, but for others, local students, who want to take classes at our institute, most prefer to pay in cash."



**Henry Caro, Learning,
Colombia**

"We don't have an online booking system on our website yet, but we are

working on this project as a part of a new website we will launch from next January. In our agency it will be a big help, taking into consideration we are a leading agency not only in our city (Barranquilla) but also in other important cities in the north of Colombia. As we have clients in places that are quite far away (five hours by car), it will help us to offer a better service. As a part of this project, our first task has been the design of a unique enrolment form that we will use to send the specific student information directly to the schools we are working with. We will include this option in our new web site, taking into account one survey we recently undertook, which pointed out that 84 per cent of our potential clients approved the use of this new tool. The principal people who are interested in an online booking system are from small cities that we often visit and mainly young people under the age of 25 years."



**BELL BEDGEBURY
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

Bell Bedgebury
International School is
owned and operated by the



bell educational
trust



**Five term
GCSE Programme
starts January
2009!**

Preparing students for a boarding school education in the UK

- Co-educational boarding school for boys & girls aged 12-17
- Bell's unrivalled expertise in English language teaching coupled with a broad range of academic subjects
- One year GCSE and two year GCSE programmes
- Outstanding facilities set in 220 acres of parkland in South East England
- Highest standards of pastoral care and 24 hour supervision.

For a copy of the school prospectus visit:

www.bedgeburyschool.co.uk/prospectus

e: bedgebury@bell-centres.com

t: + 44 (0) 1580 879100

quote ref: LTM12/08



Q&A



Italian in Italy is working more closely with fellow association, Asils. GIUSEPPINA FOTI, Chairperson of the association, answers our questions.

Fact box

Full name: Italian in Italy – Associazione Nazionale di Scuole di Lingua e Cultura Italiana
Year established: 1997
Number of members: 25
Type of members: Private Italian language schools and also schools of design, fashion, art, music, communication, cooking.
Association's main role: to promote Italian private language schools internationally and Italy as a leading destination, to defend Italian language prestige and lobby for the interests of industry, to encourage and assist Italian language course providers.
Government recognition: yes
Code of practice: yes
Complaints procedure: yes
Agent workshops/fam trips: yes
Contact details:
 Italian in Italy
 Via Tibullo 10
 00193 Rome, Italy
 Tel: +390668307796
 Fax: +39066869758
 Email: info@italianinitaly.it
 www.italianinitaly.it

What has your association been up to in the last 12 months?

We participated in many workshops and events. Last year Italian in Italy, in joint cooperation with Asils, has started a fruitful debate with the Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to represent the best interests of Italian language schools. We organised a conference with Asils about "Breaking down the barriers for the diffusion of the Italian Education System". We are still working in cooperation with the Ministry of Education towards creating a register for all privately accredited Italian language schools.

Are you aware of any visa difficulties faced by students wanting to study Italian in Italy?

In Italy the visa regime has not changed much in the last years. Italian embassies abroad still ask the students requiring a visa to have at least a certified A2/B1 Italian language competence (level) in order to receive the visa. At present visas for study are only issued for the following reasons: enrolment at Italian universities, novitiater/religious studies, post compulsory school, technical, vocational and training courses and scholarship programmes.

What main challenges are your members currently facing when it comes to recruiting new students?

In terms of business, the last four years have been very difficult. The Italian market has been affected by the current economic climate. A high visa denial rate in many countries is still a concern for Italian schools. Our challenge is to recruit many new students from China as well as India.

What marketing activities is Italian in Italy planning for the near future?

We will promote the Italian in Italy association through a wider range of media. We will be offering some fam trips for agents and travel writers in Rome, Torino and Ascoli Piceno. We will also be attending language fairs and restructuring our website. We are going to have our next workshop in May 2009 from the 8th to the 10th.

On the move

Chamber College Language School in Malta has appointed James Drury as its Business Development Manager. Mr Drury has over nine years' experience in the tourism sector as well as the English language industry, having spent a year in the UK. Chamber College also has a new Leisure Manager – Alex Camilleri (below). With extensive operational management background in the hotel industry, Mr Camilleri has worked in Malta, UK and New Zealand. He has spent the last seven years in the ELT industry heading up the leisure department at IELS (ex LAL).



Justin Mastoyo is the new Principal at Geos Christchurch in New Zealand. Mr Mastoyo originally started working at Geos in the accounts department in 2001 before becoming Registrar. He has lived in Hong Kong where he gained his Celyl qualification. "In my new role, I hope to provide an enjoyable and beneficial learning experience" he said. "We have staff from many different backgrounds and many of us were English students ourselves at one point in our lives."



Nicole Williams is the new Marketing Manager for Hawthorn-Melbourne in Australia. She has a background in media sales and marketing and started her working life at a national newspaper in India, before moving to Dubai and then to Australia. She plans to strengthen Hawthorn-Melbourne's ties with key agents globally and growing certain key students markets within the Indian subcontinent.



Study Group has recently appointed Kim Eklund as Regional Director for Europe. Previously, Mr Eklund has been working for Study Group in Shanghai, China, as Deputy Director and in this new role he will relocate to Istanbul. Mr Eklund looks forward to this exciting new position and will make every effort to build on Study Group's current success, in partnership with agents.



Eric Squires joins Bell Bedgebury International School (BBIS) in the UK as Head. He previously worked at International College, Sherborne School where he was Director of Studies and, before this, was Principal of Bellerbys College, Cambridge. He has extensive experience in the education sector and has worked in the UK and overseas in a number of senior positions.



Services summary

Liberty Living acquires Unite accommodation

Student accommodation provider, Liberty Living, based in the UK, has acquired nine student accommodation blocks from Unite at a cost of UK£152 million (US\$270 million).

Liberty Living is the asset manager for Brandaux Student Accommodation Funds, the oldest students accommodation fund in the UK. Charles Marshall, Chief Executive of Liberty Living said that the company had plans to expand in the future. "[Brandaux Student Accommodation Funds] has been investing in student accommodation since 1999 and now has a portfolio of 15,000 beds in 18 cities in the UK. We anticipate that the Funds will continue to invest in student accommodation in line with investment demand from investors which for Brandaux has been strong in recent years."

Marshall added that the company owned and operated the accommodation and that high quality service was important. "We spend a large effort on refining the operating model and training and motivating our staff," he said. "This we hope gives the Liberty Living brand valuable identity."

Foreigners take Korean language test

More foreigners are sitting the state-run Korean proficiency test as the trend to study and work in the country continues. According to statistics from the Korean Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 150,000 people from 31 countries applied to sit the test this year, compared with just 72,292 in the previous year.

Students can take the test in Korea or in any of the 31 countries that currently administer it and Turkey, Laos and Indonesia all held the test for the first time this year. Korean language learning is the most popular among Chinese citizens with 64,309 of them registering to take the Korean proficiency test this year, while 6,282 Japanese citizens also applied to take the test and 1,205 Taiwanese and 897 Vietnamese.

Shin Kang-tak, an official at the Minister of Education, Science and Technology, said, "A growing number of foreigners are showing greater interest in Korean language tests. I think the Korean culture wave also played some role. This indicates that we can invite more foreign students."

lasis covers for airline failure

After the recent spate of airline failures, the International Association of Student Insurance Services (lasis) has teamed up with insurance provider International Passenger Protection (IPP) to launch a new product that covers for airline failure.

Normal travel insurance policies do not cover clients for airline failures but the new product, called the scheduled airline failure policy, covers customers for failure and during their flight. The insurance package protects clients against the financial failure of an airline and covers the rebooking of a ticket in the event of a collapse before the trip or while they are away.

Michael Ward at lasis said that the new policy was a "hot topic" at WYSTC in New York this year due to "25 airlines collapsing in the first six months of 2008 compared with five during the whole of 2007." He added that 200,000 people were affected by the recent collapse of tour operator XL. Although some clients were covered by paying on credit card and the Customer Credit Act, he said up to 85 per cent of UK clients were now interested in such a clause.



Malta

Learn English with native speakers under the Mediterranean sun. Enjoy a wide range of sport and cultural activities. All that and much more on the Maltese islands.

MALTA
MALTA GOZO COMINO

The Mediterranean's best kept secret
www.visitmalta.com

COMITATO LINGUISTICO in Perugia

ITALIAN LANGUAGE COURSES for foreigners



- Member of ASILS
- Location in the historical city centre
- Short and long term courses all year round
- Modern, air-conditioned facilities
- Free Internet access for our students
- Six levels - small groups highly qualified teachers
- Flexible organization
- Cultural activities

COMITATO LINGUISTICO
06121 Perugia,
Largo Cacciatori delle Alpi, 5 (3rd floor)
Tel. +39.0755721471 Fax +39.0755734258
info@comitatolinguistico.com
www.comitatolinguistico.com



Associazione Lingue e Culture Europee
www.studyitalian.it
P +39 (0)51 345.888 - F +39 (0)51 58.72.133
Official CILS Examination Centre

Learn Italian in Bologna

Quality intensive courses all year round

Authorized by University of Siena	Quality accommodation experience
Small classes (average 3/6 students)	(Homestay - residence - apartments)
New: ACTIVE ITALIAN (Cultural workshops and conversation - extra learning for free)	Weekly social & cultural programme
General Italian - Business Italian	Bologna: City of Art and birthplace of the oldest university in Europe; the main railroad junction in Italy, very easy to reach and close to the main cities
Exam preparation - Italian for Law	
Wine tasting and cooking classes	

Courses Recognized by CSN Sweden and for Bildungsurlaub
Member of Alto and Wyse - Associated to: Eduitalia




www.hothousemedia.com

Grapevine



The second ICEF Higher Education Workshop was held in Antwerp, Belgium, this year and below are some photos of the delegates enjoying socialising as well as working hard. Below left, Steffan Tabel from the International University of Applied Sciences in Germany talks business with Ingrid Evert from Estonia.



Mini hamburgers were the US-themed canapés at the WYSTC opening party in Brooklyn, New York, USA. The venue was a hit with delegates this year, with exciting Manhattan literally on their doorstep. Above right, cocktails in Manhattan are enjoyed by, from left to right: Meritxell Morera, Sabatica, Spain; Jayne Hatak, Fern English Academy, New Zealand; Janine Wegman, Activity International, Netherlands and Tamsin Plaxton, Tamwood International College, Canada.



Lisa Barrett of the Centre for Macquarie English won the EA/John Gallagher Award this year at the English Australia Conference (far left), recognising her contribution to the industry. Record numbers of members attended the conference in Canberra and EA booked tables at the National Press Club (centre left) so that delegates could

hear Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education speak.



Travel Update Travel Update Travel Update Travel Update Travel Update

- **SmintAir**, a smoker friendly airline, is planning to operate flights between Düsseldorf in Germany and Tokyo in Japan, and looking to introduce cutting-edge technology, spacious seating, no economy class and the right to smoke while onboard. The carrier, which has lobbied against the smoking ban, aims to appeal to business travellers who can't survive a 12-hour flight without having a cigar or cigarette. A similar attempt by another charter airline in the USA to launch an airline was unsuccessful.

- **American Airlines** plans to add a new route to its list of services this winter. The carrier, which intends to grow its presence in the South America region, will add a thrice-weekly service from Miami to Belo Horizonte in the south of Brazil. The airline is also set to increase the number of flights to other popular destinations, including four weekly nonstop flights from New York to Rio de Janeiro and a fourth daily nonstop flight between Miami and Sao Paulo. Peter J Dolara, American Airlines' Senior Vice President, said, "Brazil is a popular desti-

nation, particularly during the winter travel season, so we're pleased to add more flights to our schedule".

- The **Port Authority of New York and New Jersey** has unveiled a new 193,500 metre squared terminal at John F Kennedy International Airport in New York. The 26-gate terminus, which cost an estimated \$800 million to implement, is equipped to handle up to 20 million passengers per year. Port Authority Executive Director, Chris Ward, said, "Kennedy Airport's remarkable 60-year history as the gateway to the world adds an important new chapter with the debut of terminal five. We're proud to have invested in a facility that will play such a critical role in accommodating future growth in air travel," he said.

- **Jet Airways**, India's second largest international airline after Air India, has announced an expansion of its codeshare agreement with Brussels Airlines. The cooperative agreement will now include Paris and Manchester and according to officials, passengers will now benefit from "seamless con-

nectivity" between India and Western Europe. Jet Airways' Chief Executive Officer, Wolfgang Prock-Schauer, said, "Jet Airways now offers its passengers enhanced connectivity on the India-Europe sector, via its world-class, passenger-friendly hub in Brussels." Jet Airways currently flies to Brussels on a daily basis from three separate gateways in India including Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai. With this new codeshare the airline will be granted permission to fly on to destinations such as Madrid, Barcelona, Lyon, Berlin Tempelhof, Paris and Manchester, via its main European hub.

- A new travel website, which looks to assist passengers who have missed their flight, was launched recently by **Teleticket Travel** – the flight consolidator. According to the website, one in eight passengers misses their flight every year and the most common reasons included misreading documents, flight schedule changes and denied permission due to an incorrect or expired passport. By logging on to missedaflight.com, panic stricken passengers can complete

and submit an online form – which includes details of the flight that was missed and relevant contact information. In turn, the missedaflight.com team will endeavour to prepare a list of alternatives before calling the aggrieved passenger to talk through the options and book another flight.

- **PromPeru – Peru's national tourist board** – and the Oneworld airline alliance have joined forces to promote tourism to the Latin American country. The alliance aims to appeal to the 150 or so countries it serves by encouraging holidaymakers to holiday there. PromPeru's Director of Tourism, Mara Seminario, said, "PromPeru is thrilled to work with the Oneworld alliance, which connects international travellers to the world's greatest tourism destinations." He continued, "Last year, Peru received a record number of visitors, after promoting the country's amazing culture, heritage, biodiversity, and cuisine throughout the world. The [marketing partnership with the] Oneworld alliance will lead to sustained tourism growth in Peru for the years to come."

‘The pathway to a successful UK Masters’

**We prepare students for business
or tourism related Masters at top
UK universities.**

- Developed with guidance from the University of Leeds
- Guaranteed entrance to a UK Masters Degree upon successful completion
- Next start date January 2009
- Agents get commission from our partner universities



Katherine Bradley
Marketing Manager

**Contact me now for
more information**
k.bradley@malvernhouse.com
+44 (0) 20 74 40 17 80



**And
More...**

The Malvern House Academy

46/47 Bloomsbury Square,
London, WC1A 2RA, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 20 78 41 11 90
Fax: +44 (0) 20 78 41 11 99



www.malvernhouse.com