

**6 March 2017**

## **INTREPID GROUP APPOINTS MILLENNIAL CEO TO GROW FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL**

- CO-FOUNDER DARRELL WADE TO BECOME EXECUTIVE CHAIR
- MOVE FOLLOWS RECORD SALES 20 MONTHS AFTER END OF TUI JOINT VENTURE

Intrepid Co-founder Darrell Wade has appointed a young successor to take over the role of Chief Executive Officer as part the company's long-term vision to grow sustainable tourism.

Thirty-five year-old Managing Director James Thornton will become the first non-founding CEO of the Intrepid Group, which employs 1600 staff in 27 offices and is now the world's largest provider of adventure travel experiences.

Darrell Wade will become Executive Chair of the company, which began as Intrepid Travel in 1989 and has grown to become a global multi-brand business that now takes 300,000 travellers to more than 100 countries each year. The Group now includes leading travel brands Intrepid Travel, Geckos Adventures, Peregrine Adventures, Adventure Tours Australia, Urban Adventures, 19 destination management companies, and not-for-profit The Intrepid Foundation.

The appointment comes 20 months after Wade and Co-Founder Geoff Manchester split from a partnership with TUI and bought back Intrepid Travel, along with the rest of the Group. Intrepid has been celebrating record sales since the split, up 15% across the group. Newly independent Intrepid has also moved to new offices in Melbourne and London, paid company-wide bonuses, and raised more than \$1 million AUD for charities.

"The growth that James has helped the business to achieve over the past 20 months reassured us that we have a sustainable future ahead – that purpose beyond profit can be profitable," says Darrell Wade, Co-founder and Executive Chair of the Intrepid Group.

Wade is handing over the day-to-day running of the company to pursue new opportunities, including developing the Chinese market and further expanding the company's new small-ship adventure cruise product.

"We've learnt that it's crucial to find people who share your vision and values, which is why the time is now right to hand over the reins for the next generation. I have every confidence that James will build on what we've created," adds Wade

Thornton, a British ex-pat, began his career in investment management before making a career change to join Intrepid Travel twelve years ago as UK Sales & Marketing Coordinator. He has grown up with the company, rapidly progressing through roles to become Managing Director of Intrepid Travel in 2012, then Managing Director of the newly-formed Intrepid Group the following year.

"Darrell and Manch started Intrepid 28 years ago with the simple idea that travel could change the way people see the world. Their original vision has never been more important," says James Thornton, Chief Executive Officer of the Intrepid Group.

"It's a privilege to be able to lead Intrepid in to the future. We have a responsibility to support the communities in the destinations where we operate. I believe business can be a force for good and now that we have a sustainable business model, we'll be even more actively pursuing our growth with purpose".

Intrepid Co-founder and owner Geoff Manchester remains as Chair of the group's not-for-profit, The Intrepid Foundation.

ENDS

**Notes to editors:**

Images are available to download here:

<https://intrepidgroup.filecamp.com/public/collection/7qc9-uhq2b0o6>

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**About the Intrepid Group**

Independently-owned by the original founders of Intrepid Travel, the Intrepid Group is now a collection of six tour operator brands and 19 destination management companies united by the vision of changing the way people see the world. For the past 28 years, Intrepid has been taking small groups to travel the local way, on real life experiences that give back to the places and people we visit. As this style of travel has caught on, the Intrepid Group family has grown to now offer around 2000 trips to more than 100 countries and on all seven continents. We cater for all ages, budgets, and appetites for adventure through Adventure Tours Australia, The Family Adventure Company, Geckos Adventures, Intrepid Travel, Peregrine Adventures and Urban Adventures. Globally-renowned as a leader in responsible travel, Intrepid has been a carbon-neutral business since 2010. Our not-for-profit, the Intrepid Foundation has raised \$5m AUD for over 75 local and international charities by matching traveller donations dollar-for-dollar. For more information, visit: [www.intrepidgroup.travel](http://www.intrepidgroup.travel)

**About Darrell Wade**

Darrell Wade is the co-founder of Intrepid Travel and Executive Chair of the Intrepid Group, the world's largest provider of adventure travel experiences. In 1989 Darrell and his best mate Geoff Manchester created a style of travel that would benefit travellers and the places and people they visit. During the course of his career, Darrell has been recognised as a leader in entrepreneurship and as a passionate advocate for sustainable tourism. He spearheaded Intrepid's climate management programme, with the company realising its goal of becoming carbon neutral in 2010. Darrell was selected as one of the first group of Australians to complete Climate Project training with the Hon Mr Al Gore. In 2016 Darrell he was one of 17 Australian business leaders to sign a statement of support for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. His achievements include being winning the NAB SmartCompany Award, and being named the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year in 2002. Darrell is a board member of Melbourne-based social enterprise Good Cycles, a mentor for the University of Melbourne's entrepreneurship programme, and more recently has been asked to join the Executive Committee of the World Travel and Tourism Council.

**About James Thornton**

James Thornton is the Chief Executive Officer of the Intrepid Group, the world's largest provider of adventure travel experiences. 35 year-old Thornton began his career in the U.K. in the lucrative field of investment management before making a career change to joining Intrepid Travel's UK office as Sales & Marketing Coordinator in 2005. Over the past twelve years he has quickly risen through the

business tackling a number of roles and regions, including dual roles as UK & Europe Regional Director and General Manager Global Sales. At 28 years-old James worked to establish day tour company Urban Adventures, at 29 years-old he was appointed to Intrepid's Global Leadership Team, at 31 years-old he became the first non-founding Managing Director of Intrepid Travel, and the following year he was appointed as Managing Director of newly formed The Intrepid Group. In 2015 James led the Intrepid Group through a shareholder split from TUI Travel plc, the world's largest leisure travel company that saw the group return to the private ownership of Intrepid Travel's original founders with the dual objectives of growing the market for sustainable experience rich travel and operating a company that has a purpose beyond profit. James is a member of the Young President's Organisation, the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and sits on the industry council for the Pacific Asia Travel Association.