

APRIL 2015

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FOR SA CORPORATES

Govt clamp-down  
on work visas

+Meet

6

wine farms for  
show-stopping  
events

HOW TO

*manage silent travellers*

*How support & service  
strengthen compliance*

*CSIR's Lizelle Potgieter drives simple and effective solutions*



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## Editor's note

**W**e're already into the second quarter of the year. Travel has got off to a slow start with a significant drop in air spend. The weak rand has had an impact on international sales but domestic travel shows an even greater drop. There is a general negative sentiment about the economy: South Africans will be paying more tax and higher fuel levies, and companies, both small and large, are looking to save on their travel spend, industry authorities say.

Corporates are under immense cost pressures, which means TMCs need to support customers in finding ways to contain costs. Technology is empowering service providers to offer their clients the broadest range of travel content, so they can get closer to the corporate and what he or she wants.

Today's traveller expects more options: they expect fare and product parity; they expect agents to know their preferences; they want a hyper-personalised

digital experience, with new forms of payment options – all while shunning human interaction. In our bumper technology feature we explore how travel buyers can manage, and reach out and connect with these 'silent travellers'. We also look at the future of corporate travel and the complications technology is bringing with it, such as the issue of big data and ensuring data security.

Speaking of the future and forward thinking – the much-anticipated new and interactive *Travel and Meetings Buyer* website will launch this month. The new platform will combine the best of *Meet Digi-Mag's* in-depth monthly content with the up-to-the-minute news updates of the *Travel Buyer* daily newsletter in a highly interactive and cutting-edge format. Check it out at [www.tamb.co.za](http://www.tamb.co.za).

Keep reading!

**Natasha Schmidt**  
([natashas@nowmedia.co.za](mailto:natashas@nowmedia.co.za))

## COVER

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is driven by enhanced support and service delivery. **Lizelle Potgieter** reveals more about the institute's efficient and effective travel programme which helps promote compliance. Cover photograph by **Shannon Van Zyl**.

### News 2

- UK visas: what will change for SA visitors?
- UAE streamlines visa services
- Avis Budget takeover – what to expect

### Profile 6

- How support and service strengthen compliance

### Big issue 8

- Govt clamp-down on 'overused' work visas

### Meet 9

- How to navigate Cape Town on a budget
- 6 wine farms for show-stopping events
- Ways to increase your event's 'thrill factor'

### On the radar - Technology 13

- How to manage silent travellers
- Online booking – a new era begins
- Managing corporate travel beyond 2015

### Etihad launch 23

- Etihad enters 'ultra-luxury' era

### Deal Detective 24

- Travelinfo's latest top travel deals

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Brought to you by Now Media, *Travel Buyer + Meet* is a professional travel publication aimed at South African travel procurement decision-makers in travel-buying companies. This publication aims to reflect an unbiased perspective of the corporate travel industry offering insight and tools encouraging readers to manage their travel spend better. *Travel Buyer* is the media partner of ABTA, ACTE and the GBTA



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## Watch this space...

**T**HE much-anticipated launch of the new and interactive *Travel and Meetings Buyer* website will take place at the beginning of April.

The new platform will combine the best of *Meet Digi-Mag's* in-depth monthly content with the up-to-the-minute news updates of the *Travel Buyer + Meet Daily* newsletter in a highly interactive and cutting-edge format.

News will be broken throughout the day and will be

smartphone enabled.

The new format has been inspired by the success of online publications like the *Daily Maverick*, *Huffington Post* and *Newsweek*.

"We have learnt a lot about interactive publishing through the monthly Digi-Mag," says group publisher **David Marsh**. Since the launch of the Digi-Mag just over a year and a half ago, the publication has grown considerably. "We did a similar upgrade to our inbound tourism

daily in February and the number of unique users coming into the site doubled from the previous year to over 20 000. One-third are now using smartphones or tablets to get their daily update," said Marsh.

A major beneficiary will be the advertisers, as we have restricted the number so their message will be clearly seen.

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## UK visas: what will change for SA visitors?

**T**HE UK's visa system has been overhauled to reduce processing time and red tape. The changes will see the number of visa types available to foreign business visitors and tourists reduced from 15 to four.

**Isabel Potgieter**, spokesperson for the British High Commission in Pretoria, says reducing the number of visitor routes on offer will simplify the process and give visitors greater flexibility over what they can do when they are in the UK. "Entry requirements

are not being changed but aspects of the policy and the rules and guidance are being simplified so people do not unwittingly fall foul of the immigration rules. There will also be new Immigration Rules and Guidance for visitors, which are shorter, more user-friendly and easier for people to understand."

One of the main changes under the new immigration system is that corporate travellers will be able to travel for business and leisure on one single visa. "The improvements

will allow a person to visit for a business meeting and a holiday without having to apply for two separate visas," says Potgieter. The UK is also clarifying the business activities that visitors can undertake, adding in some new ones, she says.

The changes will be phased in from April. "From April, anyone entering using an existing visa will also benefit from the changes; so someone who already has a valid business visit visa can use that visa from April to come for a holiday."

## UAE streamlines visa services

**T**he Dubai Visa Processing Centre (DVPC) has introduced two new visa categories at all its application centres globally in an effort to streamline visa services to the UAE.

The new visa categories introduced are the Short Term Visit Multiple Entry Tourist Visa (valid for 30 days) and the Long Term Visit Multiple Entry Tourist Visa (valid for 90 days). Both visas are valid for multiple entries into the UAE during the validity of the visa.

They are applicable for both business and leisure travellers.

DVPC operates 33 Dubai visa application centres in 16 countries across the globe. The service is also available online.

"The introduction of both short-term and long-term multiple-entry visas gives South African travellers access to Dubai, both before and after taking flights across our network, as well as to visit Dubai at a later stage within the validity period of the visa," said **Orhan Abbas**, Emirates svp for Latin America, Central and Southern Africa.

## Africa needs more meetings

**W**HAT can be done to draw more meetings to Africa? This was a central point of focus at Meetings Africa 2015. Celebrating its tenth consecutive year, the event took place at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, from February 23-25.

Meetings Africa itself is evidence of the continuing growth of the African meetings industry, says SANCb chief convention bureau officer, **Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo**. The event has experienced year-on-year growth of 10% since its inception. Not surprising, since Africa currently boasts some of

the fastest growing economies in the world, creating considerable opportunity to drive business tourism off the back of trade deals. The average spend generated per delegate travelling for business event purposes is far greater than the average spend generated per tourist.

However, industry heads believe a great deal more can be done to capitalise on these opportunities.

Speaking at the event's media briefing, SA Tourism ceo, **Thulani Nzima**, said while South Africa had done well to invest in business tourism development, for many other African countries, allocating

budget towards this was not enough of a priority. There was a need for African countries to work together to provide business tourists with a more regional experience, rather than individual countries competing with one another for travellers' full spend, he said.

A key issue raised by International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) president, **Nina Freysen-Pretorius**, was that African countries wanting to attract large-scale association events needed to have a number of critical elements in place first, including the right infrastructure, political will and ambassadors.

## SAA adapts NY service

**S**AA has resumed a non-stop service on its daily flight from Johannesburg to New York's JFK International Airport.

While SAA's daily flight from New York to Johannesburg has operated on a non-stop basis for several years, the return flight made a one-hour stop in Dakar, Senegal, during the low-season winter months.

Due to the popularity of this route, SAA's service between New York and Johannesburg will, once again, operate non-stop in both directions on a year-round basis.

The resumption of the non-stop service reduces the overall time on the route by nearly 90 minutes.

## Corporates are still choosing Gauteng

**A**RGUABLY the country's most popular business destination, Gauteng, has a major role to play in driving business event growth. It currently hosts more corporate meetings than any other province in South Africa, says **Nonnie Kubeka**, head of the Gauteng Convention and Event Bureau (GCEB).

Kubeka believes the destination is most popular for its accessibility, infrastructure, facilities and service. What's more, she says that people are travelling less, which adds to the destination's appeal. "Although companies are travelling less they are definitely still acknowledging the importance of face-to-face meetings, in spite of their ability to conduct meetings digitally. We have seen growth in the number of networking functions being held."

Kubeka says that events such as Meetings Africa act as important platforms for generating business leads for the bidding and hosting of events. Last year, the GCEB won business for 52 different events off the back of Meetings Africa, she says.

## Travel management – the traveller's perspective



The GBTA hosted professionals across the corporate travel industry at the Protea Hotel OR Tambo Airport on February 19 to discuss recent developments affecting corporate travel, including SAA's Reinvented Voyager programme and new CAA hand baggage limits. General manager of GOtv Africa, **Willem Hattingh**, also provided an overview of travel management from both the perspective of the manager as well as the traveller. Air Liquide's **Heidi Kratochvil** (left) and mymarket.com's **Sarah Holford** (right) join in the discussion. PHOTO: DEBBIE BADHAM

## Lufthansa launches premium offering

**L**UFTHANSA passengers can now experience the airline's new first-class service on all long-haul flights from Munich, after the last A340-600 was retrofitted with the new cabin.

"This summer, the retrofit of the new first- and business-class cabins on the remainder of the long-haul fleet will be completed. By the end of 2015, all Lufthansa long-range aircraft will feature the new

premium economy cabin," the airline revealed. Altogether 11 000 seats are being installed on 105 aircraft.

First-class passengers can look forward to individual service and a wide selection of top-quality food and drinks. The eight seats recline to become 207cm lie-flat beds.

The new business-class seat converts into a 198cm lie-flat bed. Passengers can choose from the expanded

inflight entertainment programme and view it on their personal 38cm monitor. "During the course of this year, Lufthansa will offer its business-class passengers a new, more personalised, restaurant-style service," the airline added.

The new premium economy class offers 50% more space than economy class and passengers can check in two items of baggage.

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# Avis Budget takeover – what to expect

**A**S OF March 1, Avis now operates and manages both the Avis and Budget brands in southern Africa.

This follows the Bidvest Group's decision to give up the licence to operate the Budget brand at the end of last year, when its agreement with the Avis Budget Group (ABG) came to an end and rebrand as Bidvest Car Rental.

"Taking on the Budget brand gives us the opportunity to segment the market for different needs and position the Avis and Budget brands to each of those needs," says Avis Executive: sales, **Lance Smith**.

The Avis brand will be positioned as a premium brand – an "aspirational brand", says Smith. Budget on the other hand, will target a younger client, positioned as the "fun, first experience" type brand.

The Budget brand will be slightly cheaper and one wouldn't expect it to include all the offerings that Avis

does, Smith says. "For example, Avis customers will have a different service experience; they'll have access to those cars parked first and the vehicles with lower mileage."

The current Avis infrastructure (fleet, branch network, call centre, etc.) will be used to service the new Budget customers. For the moment, all kiosks – both at the airport and off site – will be dual branded, with dedicated counters for Budget customers. "Ideally, we would have liked separate kiosks at the airports but there is limited space. All car-rental groups are going to tender at the moment and we are aiming to get more space at the airport," says Smith.

Travel partners who have customers with contracted corporate accounts with Bidvest Car Rental, previously trading as Budget, will need to take special care to ensure that these customers are booked using the new Bidvest Car Rental GDS supplier code.

"We expect that people will make mistakes and arrive at the Budget kiosk, now operated by Avis Budget Group, but who have reservations with Bidvest Car Rental. We have trained our staff to deal with these issues, who will refer – even walk – clients to the correct kiosk," Smith says. "If we receive queries for invoices that are meant for Bidvest, we'll transfer these. We will do what is in the best interest of the customer."

All Avis staff, including sales people, will be dedicated to both the Avis and Budget brands. "This will be a new experience and we expect it to be a learning curve," he says. "We're fortunate that we're taking over an established brand, with existing systems that the trade and customers are familiar with."

Over time, Smith expects the new Budget brand will carve a niche in the market, which, he says, will be tough as the market is flat. "Essentially, Bidvest is the new brand in the market and I expect

they will lose some market share, particularly from inbound as these customers won't recognise the Bidvest brand, whereas the Budget brand is already there and credible.

"The next couple of years will be interesting," he says.

## What you need to know:

- Budget will continue to serve both corporate and discretionary markets and the GDS Supplier Code for Budget will remain ZD.
- New discretionary pricing options for Budget are available on both the GDS and the Club Red website.
- Budget discretionary rentals will earn Club Red members' Roses.
- The contact number for Budget reservations, customer care and roadside emergency will remain 086 101 6622.
- Avis's current GDS helpdesk has been upgraded to serve both Avis and Budget.



PHOTO: NATASHA SCHMIDT

## It's in the detail

*Tourvest Travel Services has launched its VIP Service Desk – a premium service for the TMC's "most important executive travellers". The Desk is set up with the latest technology and serviced by experienced travel consultants to offer members dedicated, personalised 24/7 assistance. To name a few benefits: online check-in for*

*flights, pre-seating, upgrades, frequent flyer redemptions, hotel early check-in and late check-out, luxury transfers, airport valet parking, tickets to theatre shows and sporting events, and personalised passport and visa services. The Desk will also assist with arranging meetings and venues, buying and delivering corporate*

*gifts, and restaurant bookings. Membership is by invitation only; for more info, clients should contact their TTS key account manager. Pictured here, at the launch is (from left): **Graham Buck** (EOH), **Cathy Motsisi** (South African Heritage Resource Agency), **Shereen Morolo** (TTS) **Cobus Stander** (EOH) and **Claude Vankeirsbilck** (TTS).*

## Global hotel group rebrands

**P**REFERRED Hotel Group has rebranded from a multi-brand portfolio into one master brand, now called Preferred Hotels & Resorts.

The goal of the rebrand is to assist travellers in more effectively identifying the hotel that will provide them with a luxury experience that most effectively meets their needs for each occasion. Guests can now browse and book stays at any of the 650 hotels, resorts and luxury properties within the Preferred Hotels & Resorts portfolio via the new brand website [www.PreferredHotels.com](http://www.PreferredHotels.com).

Each property within the new brand portfolio has been aligned with one of five collections – Legend, LVX, Lifestyle, Connect and Preferred Residences. These categories have been designed to provide a more intuitive way for guests to research, select and book travel by defining hotels based on the type of luxury experience they offer. On the new website, guests can search for a hotel by collection or by other preferences such as hotel name, experience, location and price point.

## SWISS introduces new economy fare concept

**S**WISS International Air Lines will adopt a fundamentally new fare concept for its European network during the European summer. It will apply to all European services from Zurich and Geneva, and aims to address the individual needs of travellers.

Travellers will now have a choice of three types of fare in economy class, along with the business-class fare, offering them more transparency and more travel options, as they can now select precisely the fare that meets their individual needs and pay only for the services they require.

One-way fares introduced in 2014 will also be retained. And with the

additional services offered under the SWISS Choice programme, travellers can further individualise the fare option they have chosen.

The new fare options will be known as Light, Classic, Flex and Business. The Light fare is already a well-established option for SWISS travellers from Geneva, and will now be extended across Europe. The new fare types can also be combined for outbound and return travel. All four options include the price of the flight, one item of carry-on baggage, a snack and drinks on board, an assigned seat when checking in within 23 hours of departure and Miles & More award and status miles.



PHOTO: DARISE FOSTER

### 'Thinking about data in a new way'

The African Business Travel Association hosted a breakfast for travel buyers at the The Rosebank Hotel on February 25. Entitled 'Thinking about data in a new way', the breakfast gave delegates some fresh insights and ideas for tackling data management issues, as buyers continue to question the cost to company of having

effective data management processes in place. Pictured here, **Kevin Lomax**, head of Diners Club Corporate, and **Monique Swart**, ABTA founder, enjoy a successful morning of discussion around new data management routes to take that are more cost efficient, less time consuming and less of a drain on company resources.

## Qatar Airways expands SA network

**Q**ATAR Airways will launch flights to Durban via Johannesburg four times a week from December 17. This is in addition to its daily direct flights to Cape Town, starting from October 1. All three of Qatar's South African routes will be operated by the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

This will bring the total number of flights to Johannesburg to 14 (a

double-daily service), up from 10 weekly flights, and the daily direct Cape Town service will mean the carrier will have three flights a day between Doha and South Africa.

"The new Durban service and additional flights to South Africa will offer business and leisure passengers excellent connections to popular routes in Europe and the Far East," the airline said. ■

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# How support and service strengthen compliance

Managing around 2 500 travellers a year for a leading scientific and technology research organisation that is also a parastatal, presents unique challenges. *Travel Buyer's* **Debbie Badham** spoke to CSIR travel co-ordinator, **Lizelle Potgieter**, about policy and how offering support is key to compliance.

**A**S A parastatal, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) requires a procurement policy and framework that not only provides great service delivery but also integrates seamlessly with a number of different government policies, including travel, finance and insurance.

Positioned within the institute's strategic procurement unit, Potgieter began her career at the CSIR in 2004 as a procurement administrator buyer. By 2008, she was appointed as a commodity specialist, managing all aspects of travel from one central point. Her current role encompasses a broad range of management functions, which extend through to contracts, service level agreements (SLAs), requests for quotations and proposals, adherence to the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) as well as all SARS requirements.

Throughout her career, Potgieter has completed a variety of different diplomas and courses, including the Global Business Travel Association's certification on the Fundamentals of Business Travel, which have proved very helpful in her practical day-to-day operations in procurement.

While Potgieter is the only procurement officer in travel at the CSIR, she works closely with the organisation's procurement supply manager and strategic procurement manager, to whom she reports. The organisation also works very closely with Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT), who handles CSIR's travel onsite, making their agents accessible to the organisation's travellers.

## Keeping it simple

The CSIR's travel policy is centred on efficient and effective service delivery. Travel within the organisation is completely centralised, handled entirely by the in-house travel team. Bookings are co-ordinated by the agents via an eProcure to Pay system. When it comes to domestic travel, however, travellers can log on to the electronic system to select their required route, which comes with a standardised price tag. "We've benchmarked the cost of flights to destinations such as Cape Town. This enables our travellers to request a purchase order based on that cost and they can then book their flight as per that booking order. Naturally, they must adhere to all the applicable regulations," Potgieter adds.

The institute's travel policy is not lengthy but it is comprehensive, which in many ways makes it relatively simple for travellers to use as a guideline. "For example, we always opt for the cheapest flights," she says.

CWT is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that compliance is carried out through all bookings. When consultants receive a request that falls outside of policy, they pass this on to Potgieter who then personally assists with the issue.

"If travellers didn't comply with our travel policies we would receive audit findings. As such, the only way we would ever allow a booking to be made outside of policy would be if those travel arrangements were approved at executive level."

Potgieter says since the new government spend regulations were introduced by Treasury last year, there have been no such exceptions. "It helps a great deal that we are supported in our drive towards complying with these regulations from the very top," she says.

There are always those few travellers who don't comply, notes Potgieter. However, this hasn't proved to be a significant challenge, she says, as she provides these travellers with the extra guidance they require, pointing them back on to the right track.

## Securing best rates

Negotiating best rates is not always easy but this doesn't

mean it's not possible. Potgieter says suppliers are sometimes reluctant to give rates that fall in line with government regulations. "Not all suppliers fully understand our need to comply with specific rates and, even when they do, they can't always honour these rates as a great deal depends on the hotel's availability," she says.

The organisation makes use of a large number of B&Bs and, to secure best rates for its travellers, it demonstrates to these service





providers how much revenue they stand to earn from the CSIR as a result of that regular business.

She adds that many of the hotel brands have put great deals in place to assist government entities in their effort to cut costs.

## Saving time and money

Travel managers face a number of new challenges in the form of stricter airline regulations, says Potgieter. For example, SAA has issued a new ruling regarding revalidation of unused SAA, SA Express and SA Airlink tickets. If a traveller cancels a flight or the return portion of a ticket, the ticket must be rebooked and reissued before the original flight was due to depart or within 24 hours of the client cancelling the flight, whichever comes soonest.

This creates significant challenges in the business travel environment, where

travellers often need to make changes to tickets that have already been booked. "When this happens, the travel team at the CSIR needs to issue a new purchase order, which involves a significant amount of admin," says Potgieter.

To try and avoid these situations, Potgieter is working hard to try and assist travellers with more organised planning, so that they become used to planning their trips in detail and not spending more time and money than is necessary. At this point, around 17% of the CSIR's travel is requested during the day of or a day prior to the time of travel – something the organisation is working to adjust.

Potgieter also encourages travellers to plan so they can incorporate more meetings into one trip, saving them time and saving on travel expenses.

## Pre-trip planning

Billbacks are of little concern to Potgieter, who effectively

manages the institute's travel payments with pre-trip budget planning.

The majority of travel is booked and pre-paid through the TMC. For the rest, travellers' lives are made easier by putting through requests for spending money prior to departure. "Because we have such comprehensive guidelines around spend allocations – for example, we even have exact specifications around what should be spent on entertainment – it is far easier for our travellers to budget for the trip ahead," says Potgieter. This also essentially eliminates challenges around billback processes.

While duty of care is a major area of focus for many other organisations, Potgieter says the CSIR has a significant advantage in that, often when employees travel abroad, they have been invited by organisations. There is a great deal more security for travellers who are then looked after by the hosts, she says.

## Demonstrating real value

It can be a battle for travel managers to quantify the value they add to their organisations as they are involved in so many different elements of operations. Potgieter lists her greatest achievement as being presented with the CSIR's Transactional Clients Support Award in 2008. The award is presented in recognition of a staff member's service support across the institute's various units. "It's about the company recognising the value of the support with which they are provided," she says.

Her advice for new travel managers is to live every day to its fullest potential by making an effort to learn something new every day.

Looking ahead, Potgieter sees exciting new developments in the pipeline. "I can't say too much at this point – only that we will be investigating new technologies this year." ■

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# Govt clamp-down on 'overused' work visas

The Department of Home Affairs is making it more difficult for international companies to relocate their executive staff from abroad to South Africa. **Debbie Badham** investigates.

**T**HE new immigration regulations which came into effect last May continue to create complications for global corporations operating in South Africa. Most recently, *Travel Buyer* received reports that global companies needing to acquire work visas for foreign executives whom they are trying to bring into South Africa, would need to first submit a succession plan proving that a local candidate will ultimately fulfil the role – failing which they would be denied the visa.

Immigration expert and director of Intergate Immigration, **Monya Flier**, provides clarity on the situation, saying that this latest bout of confusion relates to the Intra Company Transfer Visa. Flier reveals that the visa was introduced years ago to make it very easy for companies to inject critical skills from abroad into their South African operation. At the time, the permit was seen as an effective way of fostering economic growth. “Not all individuals would be eligible for this visa – there would need to be a very particular kind of relationship in place between the international organisation and its

South African operation.”

Perhaps as result of the visa being overused and the continuous need to bring in foreign skills, government has decided to introduce stricter requirements for the visa, says Flier. “The visa requirements communicate that government is questioning why, in the time that the Intra Company Transfer Visa has been available, companies have not been making more of a concerted effort to grow local members of staff into the role. Why have companies not been making more of an investment in their South African workforce such that it is no longer necessary to bring in skills from overseas?”

As a result, companies wanting to apply for the Intra Company Transfer Visa will now need to produce a Skills Transfer Plan that demonstrates how the foreign staff member will invest back into the local labour market through skills transfer to their existing South African staff and how they are planning to grow a South African candidate into the

position,” says Flier. “We will reach a stage where the Department of Home Affairs is going to start calling out companies that fail to meet these requirements, creating potential problems for them and their future reliance on utilising the Intra Company Transfer Visa vehicle.”

She further notes that how companies go about developing their Skills Transfer Plan has largely been left in their hands

and can be put together in accordance with their own internal regulations.

Meanwhile, for those companies that genuinely require highly

specific skill sets to take up certain positions within their portfolio, there are other work permit categories through which they can operate. These include a General Work Visa and a Critical Skills Visa.

Flier says the Critical Skills Visa is a new and exciting introduction to the immigration regulations. “This visa speaks to short-staffed professions possessing skills that we need in South Africa. It aims

to make the uptake of these professions in South Africa more attractive,” she explains.

On the list of professions that qualify for the Critical Skills Visa is a corporate general manager, which would be a category through which international corporates could introduce the foreign executives that they need into the country. “However, it’s important to note that not just anyone can apply for this permit,” cautions Flier. “They would first need to prove they have the relevant education and experience to fulfil the role.”

If a General Work Visa is sought, on applying to the Department of Labour for the relevant recommendation, corporates would need to provide proof that they have exhausted the South African labour market, making it necessary for them to draw skills from other markets.

She points out that, for corporates operating within a statutory environment, the process is even more complicated. “In these cases, there are many other standard South African legislations to comply with.” Things are somewhat easier for those companies operating in a non-statutory environment. ■

“This visa speaks to short-staffed professions possessing skills that we need in South Africa.”



# HOW TO navigate Cape Town on a budget

There is no denying the beauty of the Mother City, however it can prove to be a pricey destination. **Liesl Venter** speaks to **Brian Berkman**, founder of PR-Net, about organising events in Cape Town that won't break the bank.

**C**APE TOWN is a popular choice for meetings and events and it's not difficult to see why. There are many venues that take your breath away. The sheer beauty that meets the eye, however, is often accompanied by a hefty price tag.

"Cape Town has many magnificent destinations to offer, from seaside vistas to glamorous wine estates. This may be a case of the high price following the high demand but I do think sometimes that there are too many options at the high end and too few for people on a tighter budget," says **Brian Berkman**, who has been arranging meetings and events in the Cape Town market for PR-Net, a peer network organisation for the communications industry and clients alike, for many years.

However Cape Town can be affordable,

says Berkman, it just requires some innovative and out-of-the-box thinking at times.

## Keeping prices down

According to Berkman, it's possible to keep costs down, but this makes it necessary to become creative with the food and beverage offering. He suggests food trucks, which are a hot trend right now, or brown bag lunches with bottled water and purchases from Woolies. "Find out what really matters to the people attending the event. I, for one, couldn't be happier with great coffee along with biltong and nuts to snack on rather than greasy chicken legs and spring-rolls," he says. Meeting planners don't have

to hire an expensive venue with all its catering to boot. Simply by looking at alternative food and beverage options, already major savings can be effected.

"In my opinion you get more bang for your buck by

having one big-ticket item on offer and then cutting back elsewhere rather than going for a bland middle-of-the-road offering," says Berkman. "Hiring a top barista to pour espressos and cappuccinos or getting in an exciting supplier like Oyster King that shucks on demand for guests is a great way to entertain without spending too much money." He maintains that it then seems to matter less if the rest of the offering is below par.

## Solving location costs

People often opt for the more obvious – and expensive – venues because they are conveniently located. However meeting planners should consider venues that are not as well positioned and then investigate alternative transport solutions such as partnering with a

local taxi organisation. This would also solve issues with parking, which is often a problem in Cape Town.

"There is no doubt that sometimes the one-stop solution that a hotel or conference centre offers is just what the doctor

ordered, but it does not have to be the case if you are on a budget," comments Berkman. However, he cautions

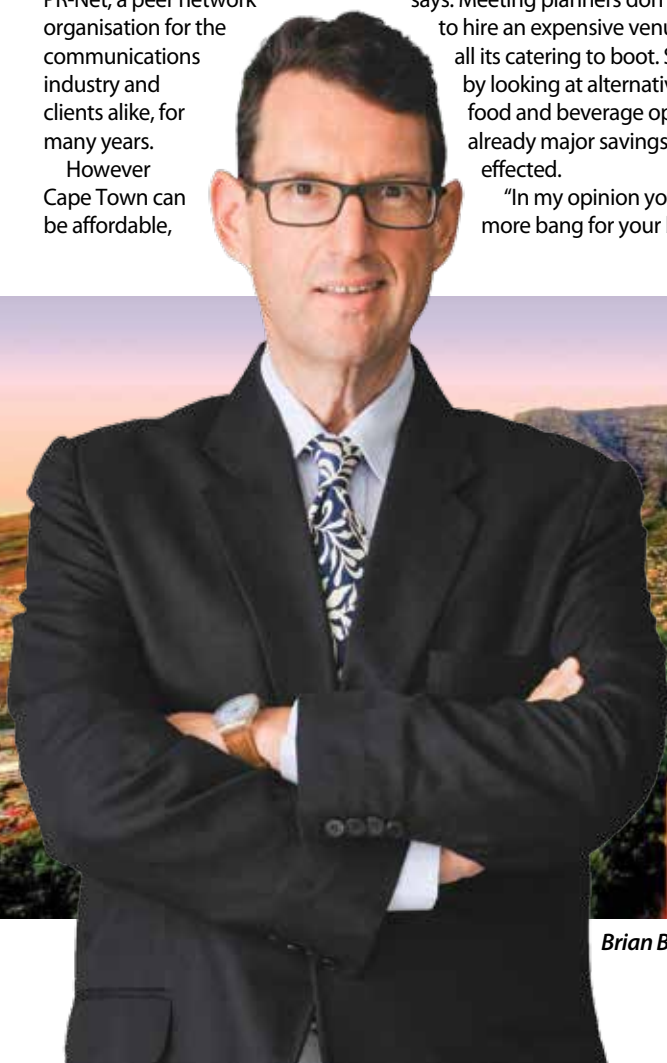
that if you are on a budget it is important to be clear about the goal of the event. "When you're communicating a message around a top-end product then you can't slum it for the event. If it is a health-related event then something on a beach or at a sports field may be appropriate. When your budget is very limited you should rule out hotels entirely and try to make the budget work creatively for you looking at alternative venues."

**"You can get more bang for your buck by having one big-ticket item on offer and then cutting back elsewhere."**

## 4 TOP TIPS

Here are four of Berkman's top tips:

- Investigate restaurants that might be willing, especially on a Monday, to hire out their space and catering as an exclusive-use venue.
- Connect with film location scouts and pump them for venue and supplier contacts.
- Investigate parastatal properties such as museums, galleries, government properties.
- Look at schools and religious institutions that offer their premises for hire at very reasonable rates.



Brian Berkman

# 6 wine farms for *show-stopping* events

Nothing highlights sophistication quite like the Cape's famous wine farms and their idyllic surrounds. Meet's **Liesl Venter** speaks to managing editor of WineLand, **Wanda Augustyn**, about top choices to consider for your next event.

## Babylonstoren

TAKE a trip down memory lane with an event at this historic Cape Dutch farm, where many of the venue's original buildings, such as the old farmyard, have been preserved. Several of the old buildings on Babylonstoren have been transformed into function rooms and the farm can easily cater for events for groups of up to 100 people. "There is a lot of integrity to the farm," says Augustyn. "Its look and feel are authentic and it has a lot to offer visitors, be it a stroll along the vineyards or a closer look at its impressive vegetable garden." The farm is situated in the Drakenstein Valley between Franschhoek and Paarl. It also boasts a small hotel and a spa.

## Vondeling Wines

Situated in Paarl, this working wine farm has its own unique allure, offering the event experience of a lifetime. Rolling lawns welcome guests to the countryside and here, it's not unusual to spot horse-drawn carriages. "It is a very elegant venue in true Cape country style," says Augustyn, adding that the farm also has some accommodation available. Events can be held inside or out depending on the time of year. The farm also has a marquee that can be set up on request.



PHOTO: SPIER

## Haute Cabrière

Built into the side of the Franschhoek mountain range, there is no denying the spectacular scenery this venue has to offer. "The farm has a variety of venue options to choose from, each offering its own unique settings and services, making it ideal for any private or corporate function," says Augustyn. Significant emphasis is placed on pairing food with the farm's wine offerings, creating what the property terms "a true marriage of food and wine". "It really is one of the Cape's more exquisite food and wine destinations," says Augustyn. For the more adventurous there is always the

opportunity to learn the art of sabrage – a technique for opening Champagne bottles with a sabre – another key attraction at the farm.

## Spier

Popular and well known, Stellenbosch's Spier wine farm remains an old trusted favourite. Events of all sizes are held at the farm, thanks to its variety of venues ranging from the old wine cellar to the amphitheatre. The wine farm has the added bonus of being able to offer accommodation as well as several restaurants to tantalise the taste-buds. It is also home to some of the country's finest wines and tastings are offered daily.

## Kleine Zalze

Kleine Zalze's wine is distinctly South African and is described as full-bodied and lively. Much the same can be said for other experiences on offer at the property. The farm is the ideal winelands venue and can easily host a range of events of varying size. Says Augustyn, "It's an extremely flexible venue where one can really create any event requirements you desire." Built in traditional Cape Dutch style, the farm has the added allure of the De Zalze golf course as well as a lodge offering accommodation.

## Landscap

Situated in the Devon Valley near Stellenbosch, Landscap is not a traditional wine farm. In fact it is not a wine farm at all but an events and conference venue situated in the heart of the winelands. The venue describes itself as forward thinking with state-of-the-art facilities. "It is the best of both worlds," says Augustyn. "A venue with everything you could possibly need just a stone's throw away from several wine estates, guesthouses and hotels." As a dedicated function venue anything is possible at Landscap, with a variety of venues available that can be transformed to suit any specific requirements. With an on-site catering team available as well as an events team, Landscap is where ideas become reality.





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# Ways to increase your event's 'thrill factor'

Why not include a ride on the wild side at your next event or conference with some white-knuckle thrills and spills at one of Africa's most entertaining theme parks? With some high adrenalin rides that require nerves of steel, Ratanga Junction offers the ultimate adventure excursion. **Liesl Venter** finds out more.

## What is it?

RATANGA Junction has been entertaining Capetonians and visitors to the Western Cape for 16 years. The theme park, situated near the popular Century City shopping centre along the N1 highway, is easy to access and offers ample parking for visitors.

According to **Jenni Vermaas**, corporate sales executive for Ratanga Junction, the park has more than 27 attractions, including 23 rides ranging from kiddie to family rides and, of course, the more adrenalin-pumping rides for the intrepid adventurers. "These rides really are only one element of what is on offer at Ratanga Junction," she says. "The theme park is designed to entertain children, families and all those who prefer to take their thrills in more manageable doses. There is something for everyone."

The theme park has been growing in popularity as a destination for large corporate groups. "Especially groups looking to fundraise for their Corporate

Responsibility Index (CRI) responsibilities," says Vermaas.

Bridgeways, Ratanga's event function and conference venues are comprised of 12 different venues of various sizes and styles that can each be adapted and themed to suit the event in question. Teamed with creative menus and kitted out with the latest state-of-the-art technology, it has everything one needs for a successful conference, event or meeting.

## What are the benefits?

Meeting planners are not simply left to their own devices when hiring this unique venue. The Bridgeways team, which has a wealth of experience in hosting

large events, is at your beck and call. "We have an experienced team on hand who assist to make the event an experience of a lifetime," says Vermaas. She says the theme park is a one-stop shop for clients who need to entertain large numbers.

"Ratanga Junction can accommodate up to 5 000 guests in the ride park each day. This makes the venue ideal for larger groups wanting exclusive use of the theme park for a day," she says. "The theme park also has a variety of food and beverage outlets, sufficient restroom facilities, advanced first aiders and first-aid facilities, and security structures. There is therefore no need to obtain special suppliers and permits when hosting events at the venue."

## How can you incorporate it in your event?

As the theme park is large, it is most suitable for larger guest counts of 2 500 to 5 000 guests.

"An exclusive corporate day is perfect for the 'day of leisure' event for larger inbound groups, local corporate offices, retail organisations and government projects," she explains. "For smaller groups, a non-exclusive group rate can also be offered. These groups would then enter the theme park on a standard operating day."

The park is available to corporates all year round, even though it is closed to the general public during certain times.

Exclusive hire can be requested during most months of the year, with the exception of August and Ratanga's peak operating periods. ■



PHOTO: RATANGA JUNCTION



# How to manage silent travellers

How should travel buyers go about managing travellers who actively avoid interacting with them? **Dorine Reinstein** speaks to industry experts about the impact of silent travellers on travel management programmes.



**Shirley Le Roux, md,**  
Traveluxion



**Pine Nel, senior manager,**  
Integrated Solutions, Carlson  
Wagonlit Travel



**Carole Graaff, category  
manager Travel, Ericsson**

**T**HE meteoric rise of the 'silent traveller' – an individual who lives and breathes online and mobile tools, using them to reach beyond previously-defined industry silos, presents travel buyers and their TMC partners with numerous challenges. Finding an effective way of managing this tech-savvy traveller, who seems to shun human interaction in favour of logging in online, is, perhaps, the greatest of these challenges. One thing is certain: travel buyers will need to brush up on their technology skills if they want to reach out and connect with these travellers on their level.

## What has the impact been?

The emergence of silent travellers presents certain risks to the companies that employ them, says **Shirley Le Roux**, md of Traveluxion. She notes that the risk for corporations lies in not possessing technology that allows for this reality. "Generally these digital transactions by silent travelers fall outside a managed travel programme, which is then not equipped to provide visibility around the usage of corporate rates, supplier agreements, traveller tracking from a duty-of-care perspective, consolidated data and the likes."

Le Roux adds, however, that with the correct technology owned and implemented by the corporation, the business travel programme can be flexible enough to accommodate both the 'silent traveller' as well as the

'managed traveller' while still providing the corporation with the comfort that budgets and sound corporate governance are being maintained.

**Maria Chevalier**, gvp, Corporate Incubation for Travelport, says this creates limitless opportunities for technology providers. "Silent travellers have helped drive prioritisation on many new initiatives and strategies as well as providing opportunities for technology providers to develop new capabilities to serve their unique and unmet needs."

This traveller – more than any other – is the driving force behind the exciting innovations in corporate travel today, agrees **Pine Nel**, senior manager of Integrated Solutions for Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT). He warns, however, that this creates challenges for the TMC. "The silent traveller's no-nonsense approach to efficiency and demand for simple working technology raises the bar throughout the travel programme. TMCs can no longer rely on the friendliness of travel counsellors to smooth over rough edges, shortcomings or service failures. This traveller simply does not afford you the opportunity – and nor should they. With a world full of solutions out there it is time to step up and deliver."

## How should buyers connect with this traveller?

Silent travellers drive low-touch environments, says

**Carole Graaff**, category manager of Travel for Ericsson. Accordingly, she advises travel managers responsible for these travellers to drive their programme towards a low-touch environment and provide travellers with the relevant tools available in terms of booking platforms and travel information sites.

Nel believes the company's travel programme should embrace this traveller – ideally with minimum change to policy fundamentals – recognising that, provided with the right tools, silent travellers could be 'utopian' travellers. "Drive your online offering and make sure that your online booking tool (OBT) selection does not become an afterthought or simply a tick box. Make sure that when functions are brought online, they are implemented properly. Deploy the right mobile solutions as an integrated component of your programme and not as a standalone solution. Do not deploy features that result in anomalies. If travellers makes use of a function it must be fully supported by, and form part of, policy," he advises.

Effective management of silent travellers shouldn't necessitate changes to travel policy, agrees **Andreas Wellauer**, ceo Galiant Consulting. They instead need to communicate policy to the traveller in a way in which they prefer to interact. "They'll be happy to follow the policy. But, you need to be in their space and engage on their level," he says.

► Article continues on p14

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**Andreas J. G. Wellauer**, *ceo, GALIANT Consulting*



**Maria Chevalier**, *gvp, Corporate Incubation, Travelpoort*

For example, Wellauer explains that travel managers can easily create a closed group on Facebook on which they could provide all kinds of information that wouldn't be available otherwise, including 'Where is our office location in that country? How much do we commonly pay for a taxi fare in that country? Who are our contacts for travel at your destination? How far is the building away from the hotel?'. "By catching them on that page and giving them the information they want to know, you access them on their level. Once you've got their attention and they are getting all the things that they want, they'll be much more likely to book the way in which you want them to book."

Travel managers should develop a procurement strategy that supports the needs of these travellers, and develop a communication strategy to inform, educate and drive behavioural change, says Chevalier. She advises

travel managers to provide differentiated processes for individual travellers within different traveller demographics. "Support supplier-specific mobile apps that support hotel check-in and other online self-service needs," she says.

According to Le Roux, travel managers should ultimately institute a process that is flexible while mitigating any obvious risk. "Best practice suggests that procurement is moving into the realms of e-procurement at a rapid pace, and my view is that travel and expense should adapt. Corporations would ease a lot of their current pain points if they sourced technology and solutions that are independent and allow for emerging trends as a result of the rapid pace at which technology is moving."

## How is compliance best managed?

According to Wellauer, the silent traveller is often non-compliant. However, he also points out that non-compliance doesn't necessarily mean greater cost. "It's often a misconception that travel managers have that non-compliance means greater expense. These travellers are actually sometimes willing to spend even less. The real questions are: What does non-compliance mean for safety and security? What does it mean in terms of tracking employees? What happens when tracking spend? That's the difficult part."

Chevalier, on the other hand, argues that the perception that silent travellers are less compliant is not always correct. "Silent travellers will want to comply with the company's travel programme if it means minimising interactions brought about by non-compliant behaviour. These travellers prefer their entire journey to be self-served from end-to-end – including planning, booking, travelling and expensing their trips."

Nel finds that compliance becomes a 'non-issue' as long as the TMC or travel buyer can supply the correct tools to interact with the silent traveller

on his level. "Adherence to policy becomes a reflection of how well the deployed technologies align with, and support, the travel programme. Utilising the official online or mobile platform should in itself ensure policy compliance. The traveller does their part simply by following the correct channel."

Compliance only becomes a problem where the traveller, unsatisfied with the sanctioned solutions, moves completely outside the travel booking system, says Nel. "If unhappy with the process, speed or intuitiveness of the solution provided, this traveller is spoiled for choice when it comes to maverick alternatives. This has the potential of very quickly turning the silent traveller into the invisible traveller."

Graaff agrees, saying that if the platforms and tools are smart and user-friendly the traveller will mostly be compliant, unless there is a will to 'duck' the travel directive. "In which case there is not much you can do unless you have a very strict mandate and strong travel claims audit process," she says.

Compliance means different things to different organisations, says Le Roux. The upside is that there is technology available to help understand these varying dynamics. "The key here is to source tools, from an independent provider who specialises in this area, which can accommodate and capture all levels of transactions throughout the T&E process, regardless of how the transaction occurred. By that I mean, multi TMC, offline, self-booked or even changes made during a trip. The traveller or organisation should not be hamstrung by technology that prohibits them from making the best choices for their business."

## What about traveller data and reporting?

There are a lot of different ways to manage data and traveller feedback, including internal

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audits, through travel management companies, form of payment, suppliers and third parties. Chevalier says it is critical to merge the different data sources and develop a reporting platform to aggregate and mine the data.

Once this has been achieved, Chevalier maintains that the next critical aspect is to develop specific traveller demographics and use these to better understand the relevant travellers. "It's important for procurement managers to understand how differences in characteristics such as gender, age, location or 'silent vs interactive' affect their travellers' needs. Once you find commonality between different sub-groups, you can create process efficiencies;

where there are differences, you can provide a customised experience for them."

Given the nature of the silent traveller and the potential for non-participation, payment reconciliation should be the first port of call in helping to identify the need for tailored engagements, says Nel. "The value of effective communication, both in terms of policy awareness and traveller feedback, should not be underestimated and may help to prevent a lot of headaches and traveller disengagement."

However, according to Wellauer, there are no service providers that can do consolidated reporting on a comprehensive level yet, from the booking through to the flight, the

hotel and other aspects. "It's not a corporate focus yet. Not even in Europe or the US. We'll need to invest significant amounts of money in order to achieve this." He adds that reporting remains restricted as companies are reluctant to share too much data with a third party such as their TMC.

Wellauer says TMCs are also reluctant to venture into fully consolidated reporting, explaining that often the TMC's margins are already razor thin, so they just don't have the means to invest in this kind of reporting. But he warns: "They are not doing the right thing by avoiding it, because reporting is their future business. Taking a reservation will not be their future business."

### Accurate feedback

All travellers should be enabled to provide feedback during their journey and this feature should be integrated into corporate booking tools, maintains Chevalier.

Twitter is a great tool to obtain

reliable feedback from the silent traveller, according to Wellauer. He says the travel manager can set up a closed Twitter group where travellers can interact directly with the travel office. If something has gone wrong at the airport, or there have been delays, it can be communicated immediately.

Wellauer adds that very often the travel manager will only hear once the traveller is back that their experience at a certain hotel was below expectation. When the message is only conveyed after the fact, the supplier never has a chance to rectify the situation, because they simply aren't aware of any problems during the time of travel. He explains that, through the Twitter channel, the travel manager can immediately take action by either passing the information on to the TMC or to the supplier, who can act to ensure immediate service recovery. "While the traveller is still at the front desk of the hotel, my corporate department can get in contact with them and ask, 'What can we do?'," he says.

**The value of effective communication, both in terms of policy awareness and traveller feedback, should not be underestimated and may help to prevent a lot of headaches and traveller disengagement.**

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# Online booking – a new era begins

**B**IDTRAVEL is in the process of developing a new online booking tool (OBT) that it believes will usher in “next level” corporate travel booking.

Travel Buyer had a sneak peak at the corporate online system launched by BidTravel Online Software Solution (BOSS) which aims to far exceed the user experience of any other OBT currently available. Executive director and cio, **Dawood Tagari**, says while OBT1.0 looked at the implementation of automation across the corporate travel process from the point at which the order is placed through to direct integrations into ERP systems, OBT2.0 will revolutionise user experience.

Managing director, **Allan Lunz**, explains that OBT2.0 will ultimately be adopted by each of the brands in the BidTravel stable, each using their own form of the new system.

One of the primary goals of BidTravel’s new software is to provide corporate travellers with

more of the ‘shopping experience’ to which they have become accustomed. This involves the ease with which the system flows as well as its flexibility and the comprehensiveness of its information.

Users will have a shopping basket from which they can add or remove suppliers while they shop around the site. They can book each aspect of their trip (whether it be the flight, accommodation, car rental, add-on, or otherwise) in any order of preference – only having to check out the items in their shopping cart at the very end of their ‘shopping trip’.

There are numerous examples of the rich content the new tool will offer, delivering an enhanced experience from beginning to end. Perhaps the greatest advantage is the tool’s highly complex algorithms, which enable users to complete searches almost immediately and allow them to conduct more than one search at a time without losing results or

having to return to the beginning of the search process.

Travellers also have access to a wide range of media and visual content. Detailed information on supplier content is well packaged for ease of use. For example, flights offer details of in-flight entertainment, fares, baggage and fare rules.

Tagari says the site is designed to provide a consultancy function, which is lacking from current OBTs. For example, while travellers are booking their travel, they are alerted to events taking place in their destination at the time of travel, providing them with the option of extending their trip to include a leisure component.

On the management side, dashboards, dynamic allocation of costs, business rules, policy management and payment mechanisms have also been included.

Conveniently, the system adjusts to the platform in use, meaning that an app is not required.



## Did you know?

*THRIFTY Car Rental recently introduced dynamic corporate pricing. The company’s primary goal is to develop mutually beneficial relationships with its corporate clients. As such it also offers additional savings through its online booking system, Thrifty Direct. “Whether through discounted pricing at specific branches, or additional inclusions such as one way fees or GPS, our aim is to work together to work on what really counts – the bottom line,” the car rental company says.*

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# Managing corporate travel beyond 2015

Technology is transforming travel at a rapid pace. What will the future of corporate travel look like? *Travel Buyer* consults professionals across the industry.



## Personalisation

AS TRAVEL is an emotive experience, personalisation will be the greatest tool with which the travel industry can arm itself, says mymarket.com head of account management and implementations, **Sarah Holford**. "To be able to choose, change and update your likes and dislikes, preferred vendors, hobbies, pastimes and shops, all forms part of a powerful revolution, namely user experience," she comments.

This will be achieved through a network of beacons and sensors whereby travellers and travel bookers can communicate their preferences via social mobility and social networking with the end goal of improving their business travel experience, Holford explains.

As the fastest communication channel, social media is also

extremely helpful in terms of travel updates, says **Mohammed Khan**, systems administrator for Corporate Traveller. "Live chat and FAQs help travellers to communicate and be in touch with the travel companies at any time of the day."

Technology has empowered customers booking travel, adds Sabre's vp for Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa, **Dean Bibb**. "They can shop around, they know more about what's out there and, as a result, they have more demands."



## Big data

At the same time, technology has empowered service providers who now, with big data, have the necessary information to tailor-make travel experiences, offering the client more in the value chain. "Technology allows agents and

suppliers to tap into different segments and market product to clients according to their needs, driving good deals to those who are price sensitive and offering a more personalised service to those that aren't."

The sale of airline ancillary products has rocketed in recent years and we can expect to see more options become available, says **Harold Eismacher**, Sabre's senior vp for EMEA. As a result of data mining and analyses, service providers have more information on clients than ever before and, what's more, they're able to capture and use this data to tailor their offering."

However, some professionals believe more needs to be done to harness the power of data. "We need to leverage travel data to build predictive and benchmark analyses," comments head of strategy, development and

marketing at First Car Rental, **Melissa Storey**.

On the travel manager's side, processes practically revolve around data. "Traditionally the focus was on answering predictable questions based on predictable (and limited) data sets – this is changing," says **Pine Nel**, senior manager of integrated solutions for Carlson Wagonlit Travel. "The focus is shifting to answering ad hoc questions using an infinite number of diverse data sets."

## Mobile



Saying that mobile is the technology of the future has almost become a cliché, however, this does not make the statement any less valid, says Nel. "If anything, we tend to over simplify

► Article continues on p22

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the concept of mobile into a 'ticked box' called apps – we focus on the marketable tip of the iceberg, often oblivious to what lies below."

He maintains that it is the how, when and where mobile enables travel buyers and TMCs to engage with the traveller which will bring about significant opportunities.

Straw agrees that mobile demonstrates massive potential across the wider travel industry. However, he believes that this potential goes beyond the development of a tactical tool to improve traveller information and content delivery. "In the future, mobile will serve as the key device for gathering information to keep us safe, process our passports, make payments, move seamlessly through airports, hotels and various modes of transport.

This relates to all modes of transport, including rail travel. **Terri Wright**, manager of World Travel, reveals that brand-new apps such as My Train Companion are already simplifying train journeys across Europe. "A traveller is able to retrieve train schedules, locate stations on a city map and view

public transport connections. Where possible, they are able to retrieve all ticket details easily with a booking reference number. They are also able to access interactive maps, allowing them to plan their rail route online, providing them with the best available rail options and most up-to-date information," she says.



### Increased connectivity

Wireless connectivity and an "always on" approach will be crucial for the travel management space, says Holford. "Whether you are travelling local or 'glocal' the ability to connect back to the office (and home) is crucial. The ability to access the experiences of others in a similar space will assist the traveller with decision making while travelling outside of their comfort zone," she maintains.

Holford explains that the real-time exchange of information will take place via connectivity 'hot spots', enabling the travel experience to evolve into a solution,

underpinned by technology.

Interconnectedness will have a significant impact on service delivery and wait times, according to Straw. "The potential for efficiencies is endless, from travellers being notified when aircraft are running late to hotels being warned 15 minutes before a guest arrives so that they can complete the check-in process without a weary or rushed traveller standing around unnecessarily," he says.



### Integrated software

The technology of automated workflow management is set to gain in popularity over the next few years, enabling greater control over booking and authorisation processes, while at the same time adjusting to each company's specific authorisation process, believes **Costa Sofianos**, CEO of Go Travel Technologies. He explains that the technology is built around "workflow engines" that control each step of the booking

process with rules tailored to each client's needs. "For maximum effectiveness, these engines can work across multiple systems such as phone apps, online booking tools and mid-office applications used by the TMC," he says.

According to Sofianos, travel managers will benefit by having full control over each step of the booking process, as well as access to detailed data on each step of the process. "For example, the data can be used to determine whether the client is provided with adequate turnaround time."

Future software will be characterised by its ability to better enable reporting, analysis and direct integration with travel suppliers to provide companies and management with better insight and greater control over business travel expenses, adds Storey.

Similarly, Khan believes greater efficiencies can be achieved through a single online travel management system with a profiling system that companies can update; enabling live data reporting on travel spend and forecast budgets through the Cloud. ■

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# Etihad enters 'ultra-luxury' era

Etihad Airways revealed its new A380-800 and B787-9 Dreamliner aircraft, featuring the airline's new 'Residence' product, at a recent event in Abu Dhabi. *Travel Buyer* attended, courtesy of Etihad Airways.



**E**THAD Airways introduced its latest aircraft to media from around the world at an event as large and lavish as the planes themselves, showcasing the aircraft's new cabin products, including the three-room 'The Residence' ultra-luxury cabin.

The A380, the first of a fleet of 10 on order, features on its upper deck 'The Residence': a unique 11,6sqm cabin with a living room; en-suite bathroom with shower; bedroom with a double bed and flat-screen TV; and a private, Savoy Academy-trained butler and inflight chef.

Tickets for this cabin from Abu Dhabi to London cost approximately US\$20 000 (R230 230), with the price allowing for single or double occupancy. With this new product, the airline plans to target passengers who may otherwise use a private jet at a cost of US\$100 000

(R1,15m) upwards.

There are also nine single-occupancy First Apartments, 74% larger than Etihad's current Diamond First Class Suites, which contain a 77cm-wide reclining lounge chair, mini-bar and an ottoman that opens up to become a separate, fully flat bed (205cm long and 66cm wide).

The A380's 70 Business Studios, arranged in a dovetail configuration, offer a 56cm-wide seat that also combines with an ottoman to make a 205cm-long fully flat bed.

The upper deck also features a central Lobby: a common area with a six-seat circular sofa and a full bar

and snack service.

On the lower deck, the A380 has 417 48cm-wide Economy Smart Seats, with a 79-84cm pitch, 15cm recline, adjustable lumbar support, and a camel leather headrest with a fixed wing to make sleeping easier.

The aircraft is already flying to London (operating as EY11/EY12), with a second A380 to be added to the route in the second quarter of this year. After that, Sydney and New York routes will be added.

Etihad has four more A380s on order that will arrive this year, with another three to come in 2016 and the remaining two to be delivered in 2017.

## Dreaming big

The B787-9 Dreamliner on show at the launch is the first of a fleet of 41 on order, with 30 B787-10 aircraft also on order – a massive boost to Etihad's

capacity.

Etihad currently has two B787-9s in the fleet, with three to arrive this year, three in 2016, nine in 2017 and the rest thereafter. The first B787-10 variants are scheduled for arrival in 2018.

The new B787-9 cabin configuration comprises eight First Suites, 28 Business Studios and 199 Economy Smart Seats.

The First Suite seats convert into 205cm fully flat beds and passengers are served by an inflight chef and have their own mini-bar.

The Business Studios also feature the dovetail configuration, 56cm-wide seat and 205cm-long fully flatbed used in the A380. Economy Smart Seats are slightly narrower at 44cm.

The first Dreamliner flight is to Düsseldorf on February 1, with routes to Washington DC, Mumbai, Moscow and Brisbane to be added later this year.

"With the launch of these aircraft, we usher in a new era of unparalleled luxury, comfort and service. We aim to be the best, not the biggest, and are consistently using new innovations to improve our offering," said **James Hogan**, Etihad Airways' president and ceo.

## Catching a connection

All passengers from South Africa arrive at Abu Dhabi Airport's Terminal 1. Connecting flights depart from the same terminal or from Terminal 3, which is approximately a 20-minute walk in the airport building, with no need to pass through immigration. Passengers can follow the signs to the Transit Desk should they need assistance.

The futuristic Midfield Terminal, which will increase the airport's capacity from 12 million to 25 million, is under construction and is expected to be operational by 2017. ■



PHOTO: S ETIHAD

# Top 10 specials

**Linda van der Pol**, *Travelinfo's* editor, is our Deal Detective, bringing you great specials from *Travelinfo*, the online travel information system in daily use by travel agents all over SA. Just book through your TMC and tell the consultant it's a *Travelinfo* special. To get connected, e-mail [lindav@nowmedia.co.za](mailto:lindav@nowmedia.co.za).

## 1. Zanzibar

Africa Stay. Seven-night packages are from R12 995 per person sharing. Offer includes return flights to Zanzibar, airport taxes, return airport/hotel transfers, four-star accommodation, all meals, select drinks and free excursions including Stone Town, Spice Tour and Prison Island Tour. Valid for travel from September 1 to November 30.

## 2. Cape Town

African Hotels & Adventures. Winter special: Inn on the Square. Rates are from R547 per person sharing per night. Special includes breakfast and a R200 food voucher, redeemable at the hotel's restaurant. Minimum three nights' stay required. Kids under 12 stay free. Kids over 12 pay R350 per night. Special is available from April 7 to September 30.

## 3. Germany

Air Namibia. Johannesburg-Frankfurt economy-class return special from R8 832, including taxes. All travel to be completed by June 30.

## 4. Zimbabwe

Air Holidays. Victoria Falls: 'bonus package'. Four nights at Elephant Hills from R6 630 plus approximate taxes of R3 720 per person. Package includes return flights ex-Johannesburg, airport transfers, accommodation with breakfast, one dinner, guided tour of the Falls (entry fee paid direct), lunch at Rainforest Café, historical bridge



tour, sunset cruise (\$10 (R124) park fee paid direct), and dinner cruise including three course meal and open bar. Offer expires June 30.

## 5. Mediterranean

Development Promotions. Costa Cruises: eleven-night Mediterranean cruise from R12 185 per person on board Costa Magica. Cruise departs Savona, Italy. Rate includes on-board accommodation, all meals, entertainment, port charges and ship insurance. Itinerary: Savona-Marseilles-Malaga-Funchal-Santa Cruz de Tenerife-Arrecife-Palamos-Savona. Rate is valid for departures on May 21, June 23 and September 12. Offer excludes flights and gratuities.

## 6. Tanzania

Rove Africa. Seven-night wildebeest migration packages are from R23 610 per person sharing. Rate includes return flights ex-Johannesburg, airport taxes, private 4x4 safari vehicle, accommodation, all meals, full-day or two half-day game drives per day, all park/conservancy fees. Pricing based on four passengers travelling together.

## 7. Monaco

Pure Sport. Formula 1 packages: Monaco Grand Prix (May 22-25) rates are from R16 350 per person sharing. Rates include three nights' accommodation, race ticket, all transfers and insurance. Excludes flights, airport taxes and meals. Singapore Grand Prix (September 18-21) rates are from R10 990 per person sharing.

## 8. Madagascar

Origin Tours. Seven-night packages are from R15 809 per person sharing. Offer includes return flights ex-Johannesburg, return airport-hotel transfers, one night's accommodation sharing in Antananarivo with breakfast, six nights' accommodation sharing at Nosy Iranja in a bungalow with breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Offer excludes taxes and is available for Saturday departures until June 30.

## 9. iSimangaliso Wetlands Park

Wilderness Safaris. Three nights/four days dive package at Rocktail Beach Camp from R6 077 per diver (single supplement is R1 596). Offer includes three nights' accommodation with breakfast and dinner plus four dives. Minimum age is 12 years. Offer is valid until December 9, excluding long weekends, school and public holidays.

## 10. South Africa

City Lodge Hotels. City Saver rates are R850 at the City Lodge Hotel Port Elizabeth, R1 150 at Courtyard Hotel Arcadia, R750 at Town Lodge Airport Johannesburg and R505 at Road Lodge East London. Rates are per room per night single or double occupancy and valid until April 30. Available for online booking only at [www.clhg.com](http://www.clhg.com) ■

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