

APRIL 2016

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to up its game?

Are suppliers  
*keeping your data safe*?

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## LEADING GOVT INTO A NEW ERA

*Vinesh Naidoo embraces technology to boost efficiencies*

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## Editor's note

**T**he rate at which technology is advancing fills me with equal measures of excitement and terror. On the one hand, it's undeniable that mobile devices and advancements in artificial intelligence, virtual reality and the Internet of Things are improving our lives in ways we could never have imagined.

But of course, there is also a dark side to technology that cannot be ignored. Barely a day goes by where I don't receive at least one suspicious email prompting me to open attachments, click on links or provide personal information – and judging by some of the recent headlines, I'm not alone. This month saw several consumers taking the big banks to court after they fell prey to phishing scams, while the Hyatt data leak saw cyber criminals steal credit card data from thousands of its clients.

In this issue we take a closer look at whether suppliers are keeping your data safe. As travel managers have all kinds of personal information at the tip of their fingers, it's an important consideration to take into account. We bring you some of the pertinent questions you should be asking merchants and suppliers to ensure they are taking active steps to protect your data.

In our technology feature, we've

taken a look at some of the latest advancements that are changing the way we travel. Airports and airlines are investing huge amounts of money into Internet of Things projects that in the future may see us being able to get up-to-date information on check-in queues, or walk time between gates through sensors and beacon technology. We're also delving into the topic of data consolidation – as technology is only useful if it allows you to effectively collect and interpret data.

Also, on the topic of technology, we met with **Vinesh Naidoo**, director of security, vetting and travel service at the brand new Department of Environmental Affairs headquarters Pretoria. I wouldn't be surprised if this was one of the "greenest" construction projects ever undertaken in the country – with innovative waste water management systems, energy-efficient electronics and dramatic vertical gardens to aid with the natural cooling of the building. We spoke to him about some of the ways his department has evolved and embraced technology over the last 15 years.

Keep reading!

**Sue van Winsen**  
(suev@nowmedia.co.za)

## COVER

**Vinesh Naidoo** tells *Travel Buyer* about the big changes that are under way at the Department of Environmental Affairs with the introduction of new technology and processes. Cover photograph by **Megan Fischer**.

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## Govt travel cuts – TMCs need to adapt

**G**OVERNMENT – the travel sector's biggest corporate client – will continue to reduce its travel spend in 2016. This is a reflection of the industry at large, TMCs say.

President Jacob Zuma, in his State of the Nation Address, said that although excessive and wasteful expenditure had been reduced since 2013, there was still more to be done. "Overseas trips will be curtailed and those requesting permission will have to motivate strongly and prove the benefit to the country. The size of delegations will be greatly reduced

and standardised. Further restrictions on conferences, catering, entertainment and social functions will be instituted," he said.

**Shariefa Allie-Nieftagodien**, operations director of XL Nexus Travel, says the travel industry has seen demand from government for lowered room cost, fewer bed nights and smaller delegations. "Cost containment is very high on the travel agenda and although this process, in practice, was initially challenging, it has become the norm and TMCs have adapted to the changed requirements."



## Travellers to pay more for Angolan visas

**W**ITH immediate effect, all applications for Angolan visas must be submitted online at an additional cost of \$40. This fee is separate to the existing visa fee.

Once applicants have submitted their documentation

online, the consulate will then determine whether the applicant is eligible for a visa and, if so, the applicant will then be required to submit fingerprints and supporting documentation at either a visa office or the consulate.

## New airline entrants struggle to combat market distrust

**T**HE high rate of failure for new airlines entering the SA aviation space has made it difficult for emerging entrants to gain credibility and the trust of local consumers.

Speaking at a recent GBTA workshop in Pretoria, Fly Blue Crane cco, **Theunis Potgieter**, said that despite their ambition, many failed new entrants made the mistake of underestimating just how difficult it was to enter the market and this had tainted people's perceptions. "The barriers to entry are high as you have to pay upfront for fuel, Acsa fees and aircraft." He added that airlines should factor in an investment period of about three years before they should expect to start to turn a profit.

Potgieter said many new airlines made the mistake of trying to compete on the 10th busiest route in the world, Johannesburg-Cape Town. Fly Blue Crane, he said, had instead opted to focus on routes with higher margins, while dealing with the right distribution partners. Proving



*Richard Bodin, cco, Fastjet*

their proposition would be a key part of their strategy going forward, said Potgieter. "People are starting to ask questions about who is behind new brands in the aviation sector – and in our case we have a lot of people who have been in the industry for a long time."

**Richard Bodin**, cco of fastjet, agreed and said that while SA was one of the most attractive destinations in Africa, its aviation sector "has a catalogue of

spectacular failures". He said the country's limit of no more than 25% foreign ownership of airlines was also a barrier to entry.

"As a relatively new airline and a low-cost carrier, fastjet is very focused on stimulating demand. While we are growing, we are keeping fares low at this point to generate interest in demand in recognition that there have been some market failures," said Bodin.

He added that revenue management principles were constantly evolving and that price elasticity was essential. "Certain African countries rely on cash in hand at the moment, which makes yield management a real challenge. For example, easyJet would expect 40% to 50% of seats to be sold 11 months ahead of travel, while fastjet's average is just nine days."

"Reputation is key, and our hope is that, as we grow our routes, frequencies and footprint, so we will get more and more converts. If people fly with us and feel they got value, then hopefully word-of-mouth will spread," he added.

## Protea adds two properties in Uganda

**P**ROTEA Hotels, a member of Marriott International, is to develop two new properties in Kampala, Uganda.

The signing of the development contract brings Protea Hotels' presence in the country to four properties, with one existing hotel in Kampala and another in Entebbe.

The Protea Hotel Naguru Skyz and the Protea Hotel Pinnacle will both be situated in the Kampala suburb of Naguru, an area that has both upmarket residential and commercial property.

Work on the 141-room Protea Hotel Naguru Skyz is already under way, and is scheduled to open in July this year. An early 2018 opening is targeted for the 105-room Protea Hotel Pinnacle.

The hotels will offer a mix of facilities for business and leisure travellers, with meeting rooms geared to cater for the high demand for conference and business meeting facilities in Kampala.

## Air Mauritius to launch regional airline

**P**LANS are in the pipeline for Air Mauritius to launch a regional African airline, with the intention of reinforcing connectivity between Africa and Asia.

"The new regional airline will be established as a subsidiary of Air Mauritius and will increase

the Air Mauritius network, adding an additional eight points in the African region," says **Carla da Silva**, Air Mauritius' regional manager for Southern Africa and Latin America. In the meantime, operations to Maputo and Dar es Salaam have been scheduled for May this year.



## Kenya Airways boosts Joburg flights

**K**ENYA Airways will add four flights a week between Johannesburg and Nairobi, increasing the service to four daily flights on Mondays, Tuesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, effective April 2. The airline currently operates three daily

flights on the route. KQ 767 will depart Johannesburg at 05h00 to arrive in Nairobi at 10h05. Return flight KQ 766 will depart Nairobi at 00h55 to arrive in Johannesburg at 04h10 on the same days. The new flight will be operated using a 98-seat Embraer ERJ-190.

## Saaci Congress registration opens

**R**EGISTRATION for the 2016 Saaci Congress is now open, set to take place in Mangaung/Bloemfontein at the Kopano Nokeng Country House and Conference Centre and the President Hotel and Conference Centre from June 5 – 7. Social events will take place at the Oliewenhuis Art Museum and the Rambles Club.

The programme will consist of a mix of keynote speakers, relevant topics, solutions sessions, 'out of the ordinary' workshops, two masterclasses, open mic sessions, as well as sustainability case studies. Tech@saaci returns as well with the addition of a 'busyhub' where

members can mingle with one another.

The opening address will be delivered by the Minister of Tourism, **Derek Hanekom**. Vice chancellor and rector of the University of the Free State, Professor **Jonathan Jansen**, will deliver the keynote address. Amongst many other speakers, business expert and media personality, **Victor Kgomoewana**, will speak about the current state of business in Africa, and where it can be expected to go in the future, while **Kevin Horsley**, holder of the Guinness World Record for memory, will talk on mindfulness.

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# Starwood ramps up South African presence

**S**TARWOOD Hotels and Resorts has restructured its global office for sub-Saharan Africa with the refreshing of the sales team, which is now headed up by account manager, global sales for Starwood, **Phillip Gade**.

The decision to restructure was based on the potential the group sees from the local outbound market. **Hassan Ahdab**, vp and regional director for Africa and Indian Ocean for Starwood Hotels and Resorts, says the restructuring is in line with the group's intention to keep the trade up to date in terms of Starwood's new hotels, brands, innovations and ideas through personal face-to-face contact.

Gade says South Africa remains the strongest market in the sub-Saharan region when it comes to structured business travel within the continent and internationally to Europe, Asia and the Americas. "Strong presences of corporate decision-makers as well as strategic TMC partners, have been a driver for Starwood's decision to have the restructured global sales office based in Johannesburg," he adds.

Starwood aims to grow market share within the SME segment by incentivising companies with room night potentials of between 100 and 2 000 through its dedicated



**Phillip Gade**, account manager, global sales and **Hassan Ahdab**, vp and regional director for Africa and Indian Ocean.

SPG Business programme, which includes a number of benefits such as a dedicated reporting tool.

"We see a shift from purely procurement-driven travel programmes towards those that focus much more on other elements such as duty of care, business efficiency etc. Our job is to help these companies to achieve their travel programme goals in a collaborative way with tailor-made service solutions," says Gade.

The office, which works in unison with the sales teams from Starwood's South African properties – the Sheraton Pretoria

and Westin Cape Town – also has a development division to focus on identifying expansion opportunities within Africa. Starwood recently announced several openings in North and East Africa, including an Element property in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and a Four Points in Nairobi, Kenya. "We are now looking for conversion opportunities," says Ahdab, adding that the group hopes to increase its network while at the same time allowing hotels to benefit from the Starwood engine and systems.

## Nam clamps down on business visas

**T**HE Namibian government is clamping down on visitors who require a business visa, actively interviewing travellers entering the country.

"Corporate travellers have always had to apply for a business visa, however it was treated as a 'grey' area," says **Cristina Cicognani**, Namibia Tourism's area manager for Cape Town. "Before, corporate travellers often indicated that they would come to Namibia for leisure to avoid the hassle of applying for a business visa. This is now no longer possible."

South African business travellers to Namibia are required to apply for a visa at the Namibian High Commission in Pretoria. To apply for a business visa, travellers need a visa application form, an original passport, a motivation letter explaining the purpose of their visit, an invitation letter from the host institution and an itinerary. Travellers will also need to bring two passport-size photos and a copy of the air ticket. The cost of the visa is R80 for the handling fees and R390 for the visa itself.

## Rovos snaps up Shongololo

**R**OVOS Rail has purchased the Shongololo Express train of 19 coaches and has agreed to employ all the personnel. The train has been repainted green and cream, while an additional dining car and an observation deck has been added. The three itineraries are: Southern Cross: Pretoria to Victoria Falls (12 days); Dune Express: Pretoria to Swakopmund (12 days); and Good-Hope Golf: Pretoria to Cape Town (15 days).

## SAA amends Joburg closing time for domestic flights

**S**OUTH African Airways has amended its departure closing time for check-in to 40 minutes before boarding on flights from OR Tambo International to Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London, effective April 1.

"The reason for closing flights earlier is to allow the airline to conclude all departure procedures timeously, especially those relating to baggage, so that our customers may not be inconvenienced by possibly travelling with their baggage left behind," says **Tlali Tlali**, spokesperson for SAA. ■



A woman with long blonde hair is sleeping peacefully in a fully flat bed on an airplane. She is wearing a dark blue t-shirt and is covered with a light-colored quilted blanket. A blue pillow is under her head. In the background, another passenger, a man in a blue shirt, is also sleeping in a similar bed. The cabin interior is modern with large arched windows and overhead lighting.

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\*Image depicts Club World cabin, available on long-haul flights to London and beyond.

# IDENTITY THEFT

## – are suppliers keeping your data safe?

At a recent GBTA workshop, a panel of banking experts addressed the topical subject of financial crime and identity theft. **Sue van Winsen** reports.

In January it came to light that Hyatt Hotels had fallen victim to a massive data breach, which saw personal customer credit card data from 250 hotels in 50 nations stolen by cyber criminals who had managed to infiltrate the group's payment systems between August and December 2015.

A statement issued by Hyatt said that in most cases, card data had been stolen at the group's restaurants, while a small percentage of transactions at its spas, golf shops, parking, front desks and sales offices had also been compromised. "The malware was designed to collect payment card data – cardholder name, card number, expiry date and internal verification code – from cards used onsite as the data was being routed through affected payment processing systems."

Moderating a panel on financial crime and identity theft during a recent GBTA workshop, **Nomonde Thethe**, senior manager financial risk card payments for the Standard Bank Group, pointed out that if a company the size of Hyatt with the kind of capital required to invest in sophisticated security systems could fall victim to financial crime, what about smaller suppliers?

### A growing threat

**Setumo Seroka**, assistant vp of Citi Bank, explained that identity theft was when someone impersonates an individual to use their personal details for their own financial gain. It has become one of the most pervasive forms of cybercrime in the world, with someone falling victim every 79 seconds and, in South Africa, it is estimated that company losses due to identity theft amount to some R1bn per year.

Thethe said that while government was taking steps to mitigate the risk by introducing legislation such as the PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) and the POPI Bill (Protection of Personal Information), it was still vital that businesses took steps to keep their companies' data, and employees' personal information, safe – especially when it was handed over to third parties such as merchants and suppliers.

Seroka echoed her sentiments and said that, while banks were constantly trying to mitigate risk factors, it ultimately came down to the individual and how they treated their personal

information. "Information has become a commodity and as an individual and corporate, you have to treat it as such. Otherwise, at some point you will be held liable and accountable for not treating information as private."

### Phishing and malware

Identities are generally stolen in two ways – through phishing and malware. Phishing takes place when someone opens an email that appears to be from a trusted source, such as their bank, and gets directed to a replica site that prompts them to enter personal information.

**Grace van Deventer**, senior manager: value chain management and optimisation for Diners Club International, said the trouble with phishing scams was that they were so easy to fall for as they often offered a prize or reward.

"The solution is to never open an email if it is not from a source you recognised and, if you do, never provide information you wouldn't give to a friend." Another form of phishing was "smishing", said Thethe, where someone receives an SMS claiming they have won a cash prize and are then told to provide banking details to get their reward.

Malware is software that is installed remotely on to someone's laptop, PC or smartphone, which acts as a vacuum for all the information typed into these devices. Seroka added that malware was also being downloaded on to Point of Sale (POS) devices, which enabled cyber criminals to collect masses of data. "This is why it's so important to ensure that all your service

providers and suppliers are certified – if not, you could be opening the door to fraudsters."

Many people are lulled into a false state of confidence by relying on PIN numbers alone to keep their cards safe. The reality is that one of the fastest growing types of fraud is 'card not present' cybercrime. With just the card number, expiry date and CVV number, criminals are able to transact and steal vast sums of money. This means that corporates should be aware and ask questions of all suppliers that they provide with credit card details. "For

For example, when making bookings online, you need to make sure the website is secured, even if it means asking the company or website to verify their security features."

example, when making bookings online, you need to make sure the website is secured, even if it means asking the company or website to verify their security features," said Thethe.

In addition, some of the questions you may ask suppliers to ascertain whether they are protecting

your personal information include:

- What kind of security regulations do they comply with?
- How do they store clients' data – and how do they keep it safe?
- What do they use the stored data for?
- What kind of security threats do they encounter?

Another point to interrogate suppliers on is how they dispose of private information. "Fraudsters have worked out how to piece papers together from shredders – so organisations need to ensure they have PCI-compliant shredders in place," she added.

"The reality is that, all too often, small businesses think it will never happen to them, but unfortunately some of the bigger breaches we've encountered have been in smaller enterprises," added Thethe. ■



**N**ow in its 11th year, Meetings Africa 2016 is the African continent's largest trade show for the business events industry.

Hosted annually by the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCNB), a division of South African Tourism, this year's event provided a networking opportunity for the best and brightest minds in the global business events industry.

This year's Meetings Africa boasted an assemblage of industry experts and distinguished international

speakers ready to share valuable insights into global best practices and trends.

With an even larger contingent of qualified buyers and visitors at this year's event than last year's, the tourism sector and those who were in attendance certainly benefited immeasurably.

It attracted more than 170 quality vetted hosted buyers from across the globe, all intent on pursuing business ventures with the best Africa has to offer.



## Business events key to overall tourism growth, says Hanekom

**T**he meetings and events segment has huge potential to contribute to overall tourism growth, with in turn provides means for social economic development through more jobs and opportunity for entrepreneurs to innovate and become part of the tourism value chain. This was the message from Minister of Tourism, **Derek Hanekom**, who was speaking at the opening ceremony at the 11th edition of Meetings Africa, which is currently underway at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg.

He said the show has ushered in a new era as it enters into its second decade of existence, as it

increasingly focuses on its theme of "Advancing Africa Together" with some 15 countries and seven tourism boards exhibiting their offering to 250 buyers from around the world. "The business events industry is ambitious, market-focused and strategically organised in order to meet the demands of the international market," he added.

Also speaking at the opening ceremony, Gauteng MEC for Economic Development, **Lebogang Maile**, also emphasised the importance of working together with stakeholders from throughout the continent in order grow the business events industry in Gauteng.

"Over the past year we have seen a

tremendous increase in the number of quality meetings, conferences, conventions and exhibitions hosted on our shores. With the planned construction of the Tshwane International Convention Centre, possible expansion of the Sandton Convention Centre, the building of another five-star conference centre in Melrose Arch and the Gautrain phase two expansion, Gauteng is poised to continue being a dominant player in this industry," he said.

Maile added that Gauteng had recently approved and its new bidding and hosting strategy, which he expects will stimulate the province's competitive edge as a preferred business events destination.



*Derek Hanekom, Minister of Tourism*

For more information on what's happening in Gauteng, what to do and where to go, visit [www.gauteng.net](http://www.gauteng.net) download our Gauteng Travel Guide APP on Google Play and App Store, follow us on Facebook [ilovegauteng](#), on Twitter [@visitgauteng](#) with [#GPLifestyle](#) [#GeePeeShotLeft](#)



# Leading government into a new era

The Department of Environmental Affairs is embracing new technology in order to maximise savings, especially in light of reduced budgets from Treasury. **Sue van Winsen** spoke to **Vinesh Naidoo**, director of security, vetting and travel services to find out more.

**W**ith no less than 15 years' experience managing travel for the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), **Vinesh Naidoo**, director: security, vetting and travel services, has seen a great deal of change during his tenure. From the splitting of the department (Tourism fell under the same portfolio as Environmental Affairs until 2009) to the gradual moving away from manual processes and the adoption of online technology to improve efficiencies, the DEA continues to evolve with the changing travel landscape.

Naidoo explains that the DEA comprises eight different branches: Oceans and Coasts; Environmental Programmes; Chemicals and Waste Management; Climate Change and Air Quality; Biodiversity and Conservation; Environmental Advisory Services; Financial Management Services; as well as the Chief Operating Officer's branch. Travel for each of these branches is managed by either the Pretoria or Cape Town office.

His department is responsible for security, vetting and fleet management, as well as travel. This includes managing the security of all the DEA's buildings, the screening of new appointments, and overseeing the DEA's green electric vehicles, which are used for government business within the central Pretoria area. "Balancing these different portfolios means we need to be as efficient as possible," says Naidoo, adding that most of his day is spent on the travel portfolio due to the large volume of business travel undertaken by the department.

## Conferences abroad and at home

While a great deal of the department's travel is domestic, Naidoo says international travel

also accounts for a significant portion of the DEA's travel spend. "It's mainly our international advisory unit that travels overseas as they deal with treaties, negotiations and bilateral agreements with other countries and travel to conferences on various issues like climate change and rhino poaching.

"We are also busy organising an important conference taking place in September and October – CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP17), which we will be hosting in South Africa," he adds. An estimated 3 000 delegates are expected to attend, of whom 2 500 will be from overseas. "We are also anticipating many VIPs, with a significant number of international ministers expected to attend." The DEA has signed an agreement with the City of Johannesburg and the Sandton Convention Centre, which will be the host venue for the conference. "We are now currently busy with accommodation procurement and securing good rates that we can publish on our website so that international bookers can make arrangements prior to travel," he says.

## New challenges and innovations

Over the years, Naidoo has seen significant changes, particularly in terms of the department's processes and systems. He explains that the travel department used to do travel procurement via a manual system. "We had a manual order book and would have to write up the order, take it to the travel agent who would issue the ticket, and then physically take that ticket to the traveller," he recalls. "Over the years, we moved to e-ticketing

and travellers would receive notifications via their cellphone."

Now, the DEA is currently rolling out Travellinck as its online booking platform. Training is already under way, and Naidoo is looking forward to realising significant cost and time savings as a result. "Currently, if an employee is planning to travel, he has to fill in a form and get it signed by his supervisor. However, if the supervisor isn't in the office, the traveller will have to wait for them to come back. This delay often results in us having to pay a much higher fare or rate than if we had paid immediately," he says. "With the online tool, the person

who is authorising your travel can make approvals from anywhere via their cellphone or email, and the traveller gets their itinerary and vouchers almost immediately. It is going to completely change the way we work and result in a great deal less worry and stress for travel bookers."

Naidoo adds that, with the cost containment measures introduced by the Treasury, the new online tool is a lifeline because of the anticipated savings. "We want to reduce our transaction and travel management fees and with the online tool, the price you see is the price you pay with no hidden costs."

## Benefiting from technology

Another benefit of adopting an online booking tool is real-time reporting, says Naidoo. "We get a lot of parliamentary and audit questions coming in from different officials and, historically, it's taken us time to get these reports via our travel agent. Parliamentary questions are time-bound, but

with this system, we can pull up reports almost immediately ourselves without having to wait the usual three to four days."

He is also looking forward to utilising the new system's ability to pick up duplicate invoices. "We have a manual system to check for duplicate invoices and, while it works, it involves a tedious process of checking spreadsheets," says Naidoo. Feedback from the team has been very positive, with travel bookers looking forward to using the new system.

## Cutting back

The department is strict about enforcing its travel policy and is adamant that employees only travel if there is a specific need. Naidoo says that even prior to the Budget vote, the DEA had decided to cut down on the number of people travelling to destinations for meetings. "Why take 10 when you can take one or two?" he says. "This has helped a lot in terms of reducing the volume of travel we are processing."

The department also has people in place who monitor travel requests and ensure they are compliant with the travel policy. "Deviations are not booked until they have been approved by the director-general or chief operating officer. This deters people from taking chances and helps us to curb travel expenditure," says Naidoo. The policy is refined annually in line with the needs of the department, but when there are cost-containment measures and instructions from Treasury, the policy is reviewed immediately.

## Lessons learned

One of the most important lessons Naidoo has learnt along the way has been the importance of carefully evaluating the ability of suppliers to meet the needs of the department during the tender process. "You have to have an ear to the ground and

discuss potential shortfalls with other departments, finding out whether suppliers have managed to close gaps or if they have let things fall by the wayside,” says Naidoo. He adds that it is essential to determine whether they can really handle the job in terms of the massive volumes and high spend that comes along with a government client. “Small companies are unlikely to cope – and even if they appoint and train people along the way, too much time is wasted in the process of bringing them up to speed.”

### About CITES CoP17

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species Conference of Parties (CITES CoP17), which is being coordinated by the Department of Environmental Affairs, will take place at the Sandton Convention Centre from 24 September to 2 October 2016. It will be the fourth CITES CoP meeting to take place in Africa since 1975.

About 3 000 delegates from 180 countries are expected to attend and engage on debate on issues relating to the conservation and protection of plant and animal species.

The Minister of Environmental Affairs, **Edna Molewa**, said that the discussions were expected to see countries debating not only the plight of the rhino, but also threats being faced by the African elephant and pangolin. ■



# When to blow the budget on a *boutique* venue

Intimate, stylish and anything but ordinary, boutique venues, by their very nature, are designed to create unique experiences. **Liesl Venter** spoke to experts to find out when one should splash out for a bespoke venue rather than the standard, run-of-the-mill hotel.

**B**outique and budget are two words that definitely do not belong in the same sentence, regardless of what one is talking about – fashion or hotels. **Patrick de Bree**, owner of Hospitality Affairs, an exclusive events company that specialises in creating memorable signature events for a niche market of corporate clients, says boutique hotels offer that “wow factor”.

“That is the allure of bespoke,” he says, “and bespoke is what a boutique hotel offers its visitors. They are, more often than not, smaller in size and independent, allowing the delivery of unique experiences.”

Using a boutique hotel for an event, be it a conference or a meeting, is not a decision that should be taken lightly, he says. “Bespoke is not cheap. In the boutique and bespoke market there is no such thing as copying and pasting. Each and every event is a once off where the client’s needs are met 100%,” says De Bree. “Fulfilling a guest’s needs by giving attention to every last detail and walking the extra mile to meet their expectations all the time is always going to be a more expensive option than using larger hotel brands.”

The very size of boutique hotels in South Africa also has a cost implication, he explains. “Boutique hotels are for the most part not very large as their facilities are geared towards smaller more intimate events. These venues cannot compete with the bigger chain brands and so the cost immediately will be higher. In the current economic climate these are factors that will play a big role when choosing a venue.”

## When to splurge

Professional conference organiser, **Zelda Coetzee** of Imfunzelelo Conference and Event Management, says: “These venues serve very specific purposes. If matched to the right client, they are the ideal setting and make for very successful events.” Boutique venues are ideally suited to small, intimate gatherings where attention to detail is required.

“Small sophisticated gatherings – be it for a cocktail function or a dinner – are ideal for the boutique hotel market,” says Coetzee. “In the meeting space, boutique hotels also have a powerful role to play. The value-add that comes from holding a board meeting at a boutique hotel rather than in the corporate boardroom is sometimes reason enough to



*Saxon conference dining area*

blow the budget and go bespoke.”

Not only does it allow for a change of scenery but, with the added attention that comes with these types of venues, stakeholders can get on with their business and be served, allowing for more powerful deliberations.

“They can go to the spa, they can have a personal chef make the specific things they want to eat, they can sleep over and so can meet late into the evening. There are several benefits to using these spaces,” says Coetzee.

Boutique hotels the world over cater for the principle that guests want what they want and they deliver to those wants no matter what they are. “It is this very concept that makes it beneficial for top business people to meet in boutique hotels rather than at the office. Not only do they get what they want but they are also afforded privacy unlike anywhere else. They get exclusivity and sometimes this is exactly what is required.”

Coetzee cites examples such as meetings where top executives do not necessarily want staff to be aware that deliberations are under way, or when headhunting high-quality people is being done.

“Any event where you want exclusivity, privacy and intimacy is what drives one not to consider budget and use a boutique hotel. It is not the venue for a conference of 100 people. They are not set up to handle that from any perspective, but also these establishments do not want to compete in that market.”

De Bree agrees, saying meetings with top clients who contribute significantly to one’s business are a reason to head to a boutique

hotel. “It is ideal for those clients that you want to impress, as these venues are usually beautiful and secluded. They are authentic by nature, delivering an experience that is not found elsewhere.”

Security is another reason, says Coetzee. “If someone is high profile or there are real security threats involved, then these types of venues are ideal as they are able to assist by providing the facility exclusively for your use.”

## 5 reasons to choose a boutique venue

**W**hile the hefty price tag may deter some event organisers and meeting planners – there are times when it is worth considering a boutique venue over more mainstream alternatives.

1. As they tend to be smaller in size, boutique venues offer a high level of personal service and attention to detail.
2. They offer an off-site alternative for meetings that require a degree of privacy or secrecy.
3. Most boutique venues also offer high-end accommodation for multiple-day meetings.
4. Many also have facilities such as restaurants and spas.
5. They offer a more secure option for high-profile delegates.

12

## OF THE BEST BOUTIQUE VENUES

South Africa boasts some of the world's most extraordinary boutique venues. We round up some of the best options on offer.

● ONE

**La Residence (Franschhoek)**

Surrounded by vineyards and plum orchards with a spectacular mountain backdrop, this venue offers complete tranquillity. The uniquely designed property has 16 suites and a spa, and offers gourmet food to its guests in a baronial dining room filled with crystal chandeliers and art works.

● FOUR

**Abbey Manor (Cape Town)**

Nestled on the slopes of Table Mountain, Abbey Manor's views of the Mother City are sensational. It was built more than a hundred years ago and its old-world charm and grand décor are as impressive as the dramatic views. Offering several elegant suites and rooms, the focus of this establishment is on luxury.

SEVEN

**The Turbine Boutique Hotel and Spa, Knysna**

Situated on the picturesque Thesen Island within the Knysna estuary, this hotel is the product of the transformation of an old power station. Guests have a choice of 17 standard rooms, six luxury rooms as well as a suite. It boasts two conferencing rooms that can each seat up to 20 delegates.

TEN

**The Peech Eco Chic Boutique Hotel (Johannesburg)**

South Africa's first 'eco-chic' boutique venue offers 16 suites, a bistro restaurant and a boardroom in Melrose, close to the hustle and bustle of the city's business centre. The hotel also features two fully equipped meeting rooms. Its focus on the environment is significant, creating spaces that need no added lighting or heating.

● TWO

**Le Quartier Français (Franschhoek)**

This luxurious 21-room establishment is known for its impeccable service and attention to detail. Tucked away in a secluded garden in the heart of Franschhoek, it is the perfect base from which to explore this picturesque village. It is also the home of world-renowned restaurant, The Tasting Room, from where executive chef, **Margot Janse**, takes guests on a gastronomic journey.

FIVE

**POD Boutique Hotel (Camps Bay)**

Cocooned in privacy, this 17-room hotel is as distinctive as they come. Each room offers an unsurpassed view of some of Cape Town's finest sights, including Table Mountain, the Twelve Apostles and Camps Bay beach. POD believes in striking a perfect balance between relaxation and refinement and offers its business travellers the best of both worlds.

EIGHT

**No. 5 Boutique Art Hotel (Port Elizabeth)**

No stone was left unturned in the development of this Summerstrand hotel. Offering 10 suites, a spa and an executive boardroom fitted with the latest technology, it is a glamorous stay for any guest. The hotel features a privately owned art collection.

ELEVEN

**Botsebotse Luxury Retreat (Waterberg)**

African design and art are the themes of this luxury venue. Rare African artifacts and tasteful décor combine to provide a calming and comfortable sanctuary from which to explore the Zebula Nature Reserve. Four luxurious and spacious suites make up this boutique hotel.

THREE

**AtholPlace Hotel (Johannesburg)**

This venue is contemporary and classic with an understated elegance. Situated a stone's throw from the heartbeat of business in Sandton, AtholPlace Hotel has nine stylish and spacious suites. Three new villa-style suites have recently been added.

SIX

**Babylonstoren (Paarl)**

At the foot of the Hottentots-Holland mountains lies this unique working fruit and vegetable farm where guests will find anything from beehives to roaming tortoises. The venue is a multi-award winner and dates back to 1692 with one of the best preserved farm yards in the Cape. The small hotel and spa offers its visitors an authentic farm-stay experience.

NINE

**Saxon Boutique Hotel Villas and Spa, Sandhurst Johannesburg**

This unique space is frequently visited by international celebrities, thanks to its privacy and high security features. With two conference rooms, a boardroom as well as the space to host banquets, it offers five-star facilities to the business traveller. The hotel has five suites and one villa as well as a well-established spa on the premises.

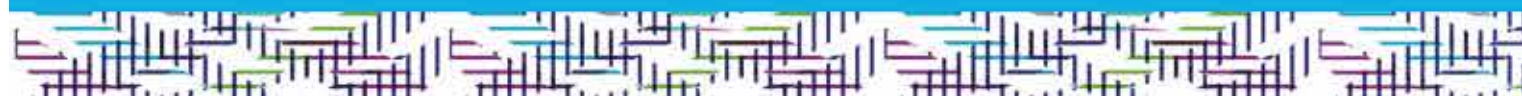
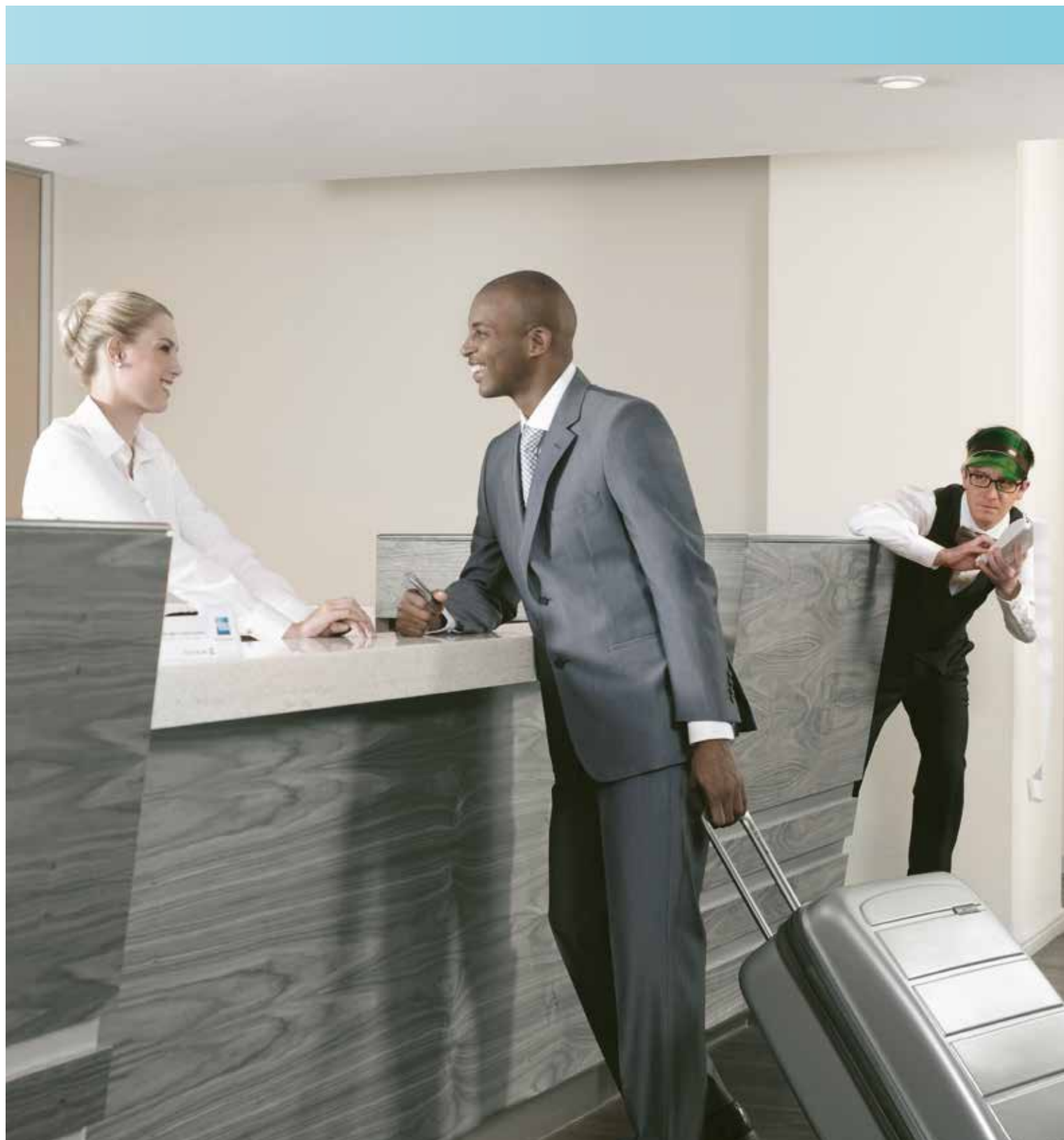
TWELVE

**Quarters Hotel (Durban)**

A former Victorian home in Morningside that has been restored to its glory days, offers guests a charming stay in a venue filled with character. It is ideally situated close to the Durban ICC and features 24 rooms. With a combination of modern sophistication and old-fashioned warmth, guests are guaranteed personalised experiences.



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# Mobile event apps are here to stay

Whether it's for a single event or providing a platform for managing multiple events throughout the year, mobile event apps are here to stay. **Liesl Venter** spoke to **Abdul Rehman Gani** of Guidemobi about the relevance of this ever-growing technology.

**A**n event without an app is fast becoming a non-event as the mobile app industry continues to explode around the world. The growth of event apps is remarkable when you consider that the first smartphone was launched less than 10 years ago.

To put this into perspective, the Internet took about 16 years to take off on a global scale, while mobile devices took just four years to do the same.

The figures speak for themselves – since 2008, app revenues have grown at a 129% compound annual growth. The dollars involved amount to billions. “A well-designed event app, exploited to its maximum potential is one of the most powerful weapons in the professional event organiser’s armoury,” says **Abdul Rehman Gani** of Guidemobi. “There is no indication of mobile apps slowing down in the event industry. In fact, expectations are that this industry will continue to grow in the future.”

Apps in the event industry only started taking hold in 2013, so the technology

is still relatively new. Yet the meetings community have embraced the technology and in markets such as the US, apps are very much a given.

## Connectivity limits growth

In South Africa, says Gani, it has developed at a slower pace, with organisers and corporates

alike still at times debating whether an app is necessary or not.

“A lot of this has to do with connectivity. In the US, WiFi is ubiquitous and an app is expected to be part of the meeting and event experience

by organisers, corporates and delegates alike,” he says. “In South Africa, because WiFi is often problematic, delegates not only have to download the app but also use it with their own data package, which is not really optimal and causes less engagement

with the technology. But this is also changing very quickly.” With data costs decreasing and availability increasing, mobile event app developers like Guidemobi predict a growth in the use of the technology locally.

## The cost factor

Another factor that has impacted on the increased use of apps locally has been the cost factor. A general mobile event app can start anywhere in the region of R10 000, but the sky is the limit depending on what is incorporated and what budget is available. Gani says Guidemobi has developed very basic apps for as little as R2 500.

“I think the focus must move away from pricing. Having an app is a given nowadays and it's better to have a platform than not have one at all,” he says. “A solid investment in an app is a sound business decision and they can be developed cost effectively, where the platform is created for a corporate and they just customise it slightly for every event they hold. The app

does not have to be redeveloped every time. Features and attributes can then also be added over time.”

## Making it relevant

Gani advises corporates wanting to invest in apps for their events to ensure that the technology is user-friendly.

“They have to be easy to use. It is about making the experience pleasant for the delegate,” he says. “They must also not be overloaded with content as one does not want attendees to be more focused on their phones than on the actual event. It's a delicate balance to keep.”

He says making apps more relevant requires more than just the basic information about the event. “At the very least one should be replacing the printed brochure – the general programme so to speak, the agenda, speakers and facilities,” he says.

“Apps that allow for surveys, interaction with the speakers and better networking opportunities is where the real relevance lies.” It is also beneficial to organisers as they have access to feedback immediately.

He says a growing trend is communication via the app. “Be it organisers communicating with attendees by sending them alerts and notifications, or delegates asking questions or giving comment, this is an important aspect now for apps.”

Another feature that is increasing in popularity is the ability to create personalised notes and schedules, he says.

Gani says research and development into improving and creating bigger and better event apps continue. “Technologies like voice activation and virtual reality are all coming on board and there are a lot of exciting developments in the pipeline for this industry.”

**“A well-designed event app, exploited to its maximum potential is one of the most powerful weapons in the professional event organiser’s armoury.”**



# KWAZULU NATAL

## 4 off-the-beaten-track venues

KwaZulu Natal is famous for a variety of reasons, from the spectacular Drakensberg to its rich cultural heritage. **Liesl Venter** set out to find some of the more unusual and off-the-beaten track venues.

### 1. Shakaland

Shakaland is a 'living museum' or recreation of Shaka, King of the Zulus' Great Kraal. This village hotel, nestled at the top of the Entombeni Hills and overlooking the Phobane Lake, is a monument to Zulu culture, offering visitors an intimate view into traditional Zulu life. It is not just another hotel but an enriching cultural experience that gives visitors a better understanding of the Zulu nation, its people and their intriguing customs.

From foot-stomping tribal dancing by assegai-wielding warriors dressed in animal skins to consultations with sangomas (spiritual leaders believed to be able to communicate with the ancestors) or an inyanga (traditional herbalist), it's an experience unlike any other.

The hotel resembles a traditional Zulu village and accommodation is in beehive huts. The hotel has 17 standard rooms, 14 twin rooms, 13 double rooms, nine family rooms and two rooms designed for people with disabilities. The well-equipped conference venue can handle between 50 and 90 delegates.

### 2. Giant's Castle Rock Lodge and Conference Centre

Probably one of the most unusual conference facilities in the country, the Rock Lodge and Conference Centre is built into a hillside overlooking the Bushman's River with Giant's Castle as a backdrop.

"The venue is designed primarily to accommodate smaller groups. It is ideal for groups of up to 30 people," says resort manager, **Nozipho Sibeko**. "We can, however, easily accommodate up to 60 delegates in the venue if they are seated cinema style."

The Rock Lodge offers accommodation for six people but, as the venue is within the greater Giant's Castle Game Reserve, there are several other facilities available for guests to stay over. According to Sibeko, the resort itself can accommodate up to 120 people at any time. "It really is a unique facility, having incorporated the surrounding landscape into the décor. The conference lounge hall is the natural rock façade."

### 3. Mont Aux Sources Hotel

Bordering the renowned Royal Natal National Park, the Mont Aux Sources Hotel offers visitors a view of the world-famous Drakensberg Amphitheatre. The Drakensberg, a Unesco World Heritage Site, is the second most photographed destination in Southern Africa. The Mont-Aux-Sources peak was named for being the source of several major rivers, including the Tugela, which plunges into the world's second tallest waterfall, the Tugela Falls.

The hotel has a range of accommodation, from standard and deluxe rooms to private chalets, as well as two restaurants, a bar and a country pub. The conference facilities

are completely flexible, with the hotel promising that no wish is too big or too small. Equipped with up-to-date technology the venue can accommodate anything from 35 to 200 people in various seating styles.

### 4. Didima Camp

Nestled at the foothills of the Cathedral Peak, the Didima Resort offers peace and tranquillity. The area, often referred to as a hiker's paradise, this is a true Drakensberg experience, as visitors find themselves surrounded by scenic mountains.

According to **Sibongile Mzobe**, conference assistant at Didima Resort, there are two facilities to choose from that can accommodate up to 120 delegates in a classroom style. "The camp has a unique character with a lot of San art and culture being incorporated in the architecture and design," she says. "In the Didima Valley there are many examples of San rock art, while the resort itself has a Rock Art Centre."

A variety of accommodation is available, says Mzobe. "We have 28 two-bed non-catering units, 32 two-bed self-catering units, two four-bed bungalows that are self catering and one six-bed self-catering bungalow. The accommodation can be made up as twin beds or double beds depending on guests' requests," she says.

Mzobe says anyone wanting to conference in the mountains will find Didima suitable. "We suggest that visitors bring a good pair of hiking boots to enjoy the beauty of the Berg.

## BREAKING THE ICE

**F**ew people realise that there are some good ice and snow climbs available in Southern Africa, says **Gavin Raubenheimer**, owner of Peak High Mountaineering. Thanks to the snowfall in the southern parts of the Drakensberg mountains, ice and snow climbing have become popular pastimes offering visitors to the area a definite one-of-a-kind experience.

Raubenheimer introduced guided ice and snow climbing to the range of packages offered by Peak High Mountaineering several years ago. Available between June and August, the activity is offered at three different locations in the Drakensberg.

From a corporate perspective, says Raubenheimer, ice and snow climbing offers some real benefits as it is a good way of building effective communication within a team. Trust, self-esteem and self-sufficiency are also valuable lessons learned, while it also goes a long way in teaching how to overcome challenges and to take on tasks that sometimes seem too big.

"Anyone wanting to ice climb needs to be reasonably fit and cannot be scared of heights. It is a relatively serious activity, even though it is practised in the safest of possible environments," he says.

Peak High offers three-day ice or snow courses under the auspices of the Mountain Development Trust and certificates of attendance are issued. According to Raubenheimer, this is the best way to learn the basic skills of winter climbing. ■



More hotel options in the three- and four-star bracket will serve the cost-conscious South African corporate traveller well, writes **Michelle Colman**.

## Filling the mid-market void

**T**he boom in mid-market accommodation stock in the Gulf – in Dubai particularly – has been welcomed by rand-fatigued corporate travellers from South Africa.

In the last two years, Dubai developers have shown a significant swing away from the über-luxurious hotel to mid-range new builds, where a noticeable gap was acknowledged.

The change in focus was a deliberate one by the city, which temporarily exempted three- and four-star property developers from a 10% municipality fee levied on each night of occupancy. This move was intended to stimulate delivery of new hotels in the sector and advance Dubai's objective of 20 million annual visitors by 2020.

Further, the construction approval process was streamlined and reduced, and government-owned land allocated to new developments.

The emirate, as of the end of January, now boasts some 21 000 four-star rooms, over 20 000 one- to three-star rooms and 15 500 standard-rated hotel apartment keys. Another 16 three- and four-star properties, as well as standard-grade hotel apartment establishments, are due to open this year. (By comparison, Dubai has 31 300 five-star rooms and 9 600 deluxe/superior hotel apartments).

### Welcomed by SA corporates

Additional choice in the mid-market sector is a win for South African corporate travellers.

**Shaun Lovett**, head of business development: oil & gas – Africa & Middle East, at Wings Travel Management, says the South African business traveller no longer demands accommodation in upscale locations. "Rising costs and the volatile exchange rate have significantly impacted on the policies of South African and global businesses, resulting in a sharp decrease in the demand for luxury properties and flight classes, especially for business travel." The majority of bookings, he states, are now made in the three- and four-star properties.

In agreement is **Maria Martins**, director: programme management for Carlson Wagonlit Travel in Johannesburg. "Corporate travel always involves cost containment and whilst security and location remain very important, most corporate hotel programmes are based on three- to four-star markets. Only senior executives on limited programmes make use of five-star properties."

### Four-star Dubai

According to **Wendie White**, director of the Southern African Representative Office of Dubai Tourism, the following four-star properties are working well with the South African travel trade:

- Vida Hotel in downtown Dubai, a 15-minute walk from the Dubai Mall and the Dubai Fountains;
- Manzil Hotel, also in downtown Dubai, a contemporary Arabic-themed hotel;
- Marriott Harbour Suites Hotel at the Dubai Marina, where one-

to three-bedroom suites provide accommodation for groups of people working together on Dubai projects.

### Abu Dhabi on a tighter budget

In neighbouring Abu Dhabi, new hotels span the three- to five-star range. The emirate currently has a complement of 35 000 rooms, operating at 75,4% average occupancy. A further 8 000 rooms will be built by 2017 but, with the ultimate goal – according to the Abu Dhabi Vision 2030 – being 80 000 rooms, building cranes will be a fixture for some time.

Amongst the familiar Hyatts, Hiltons and Radissons, is the four-star Southern Sun Abu Dhabi operated by Tsogo Sun. It offers 353 rooms, six food and beverage facilities and a city centre location that is convenient for the airport, business districts and tourist attractions.

**Jean Martins**, country manager for the Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA) Abu Dhabi, lists the following properties as appealing to South Africans:

- Traders Hotel Qaryat Al Beri Abu Dhabi, ideally positioned on the creek, with a good beach and access to a mall;
- The three-star Premier Inn at Abu Dhabi International Airport for a quick overnight stopover;
- Yas Island properties, such as the Centro Yas Island and Park Inn by Radisson Abu Dhabi Yas Island.

This emirate is claiming a 50% growth in tourist arrivals from South Africa since the opening of a TCA Abu Dhabi office in Johannesburg in March last year.

## Air access to the Gulf

**W**ith the recent dissolution of the SAA/Etihad Airways partnership, air access to the Gulf underwent some changes, notably the reduction of flights from Johannesburg to Abu Dhabi, from two flights a day to one daily.

TCA Abu Dhabi is obviously disappointed at the development, but **Jean Martins**, country manager in South Africa, points out that Etihad Airways will be introducing a bigger capacity A330 on the route in April and a B787 in November.

Emirates continues to serve Cape Town twice daily, Durban daily and Johannesburg four times daily. Note that Dubai International Airport has implemented a new passenger facilities charge (PFC) of AED 35 (R149) on all departing flights.

Qatar Airways serves Johannesburg twice daily, Cape Town daily and Durban via Johannesburg four times a week.

## New in Dubai

The following mid-market establishments have all opened in Dubai in the last four months:

- Al Buraq Hotel (three-star)
- Hilton Garden Inn Dubai Al Mina Hotel (four-star)
- Naif View Hotel L.L.C (two-star)
- Al Manar Grand Hotel Apartment (standard rated)
- Hilton Garden Inn Mall of the Emirates (four-star)
- Auris Inn Al Muhanna Hotel (four-star)
- AlFarej Hotel (three-star)
- Ibis One Central Hotel L.L.C (three-star)
- Travellers Hotel Apartment L.L.C (standard rated)
- Ibis Styles Dragon Mart Hotel (three-star)
- Wyndham Marina Hotel L.L.C (four-star)

# Oman Air to launch South African flights?

**T**here is market speculation that Oman Air may launch flights to South Africa in the near future, or play a more prominent role in some shape or form in southern African skies. This has been fuelled by an advertisement in *The Star* in late January, publicising the airline's search for a "representative partner" in the local market.

Travel Buyer recently sought confirmation of this from the Muscat-based airline. senior officer – corporate communications and media, **Raajeshwari Ashok**, responded: "Currently we do not have any updates on this."

South African-based TMCs have not observed a significant demand for travel to the Sultanate of Oman but the airline does offer a wide network of onward connections to Middle Eastern, Asian and European points.

Says **Shaun Lovett** of Wings Travel Management: "At this point the routes offered into the Gulf region, serviced by the major



**Shaun Lovett**, head of business development, oil & gas - Africa & Middle East at Wings Travel Management

regional airlines, are extremely comprehensive. A direct flight to Oman may be preferable, as is any direct flight, however this route will need to be highly competitive in terms of cost to sufficiently compete against the

other regional airlines." It may also be that companies will waive the higher cost of a direct flight, as the convenience outweighs a layover. It all depends on the business needs of the client, he adds.

Oman's major industry is oil and gas, with tourism a growing sector. It has a good spread of three- and four-star hotels carrying international brand names such as Golden Tulip, Radisson, Ramada, Crowne Plaza and ibis.

As a port city in the Gulf of Oman, Muscat's Muttrah Corniche, with promenade and souqs, is a highlight. The city is characterised by low-lying white buildings topped by golden minarets.

South African passport holders can apply for visas on arrival. A visa costs approximately US\$52 (R800) and is valid for 30 days. Applicants will need passports with a six-month validity, proof of accommodation, letter of invitation if on business, and confirmation of flight reservations.

## On the radar - Saudi Arabia

**A** Gulf destination increasing in popularity for local business travellers at present is Saudi Arabia.

**Shaun Lovett** of Wings Travel Management, a TMC prominent in the oil & gas sector, names the country as its top Gulf location. Carlson Wagonlit Travel's **Maria Martins** has noted demand for the Saudi cities of Jeddah and Riyadh.

Lovett puts the top Gulf destinations for his TMC in this order – Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Bahrain, Iran and the UAE. Martins places Dubai as most popular by far. "With very much reduced demand – less than 10% of the Dubai trips – the following locations are booked on behalf of our corporate clients: Abu Dhabi, Jeddah, Riyadh and Doha." ■

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Is your TMC's data proposition compelling enough to attract clients? **Dorine Reinstein** speaks to industry players about how companies need to enhance their offering.

## Data – effective interpretation is essential

**W**hile data collection is not new to TMCs, it is becoming increasingly evident that TMCs may need to up their game in terms of how they interpret their clients' data.

A major challenge currently facing travel managers when entering supplier negotiations is the successful consolidation of data. Travel managers turn to their TMC to provide them with the right tools and the right data for these negotiations but unfortunately the TMC is often found lacking in this respect.

Travel managers want TMCs to focus on data analysis and reporting in the next five years, according to a recent GBTA study, *TMCs Today and Tomorrow, A Survey of Business Travellers and Corporate*

*Travel Managers*. In the US, more than half of the travel managers surveyed mentioned data analysis, performance measurement and reporting as the top three priority areas where they want their primary TMC to improve. Moreover, when it comes to TMC services, US-based managers are currently least often satisfied with their reporting, big data, data aggregation and insights, and global data consolidation, according to the study.

### A challenge in Africa

"Many TMCs struggle to consolidate data historically, because they are obliged to use non-GDS carriers to transport clients to remote locations. This is a manual process and not as transparent as TMCs would like. This situation

sometimes frustrates TMCs when gathering data to evolve and improve their travel programmes, says **Kim Parker**, head of business development corporate, Sub-Saharan Africa for Wings Travel Management.

What's more, many TMCs fall flat when it comes to service delivery in Africa, according to Parker, because they operate from franchised outlets and are not wholly owned entities within a single database. She says it is important to have a unified platform so that any client from anywhere in the world can phone any office and get information from the centralised database.

"If two clients are in Angola and one flew in from London and the other from Rio de Janeiro, the service they receive should be

identical," she says, adding that this is essential from a security and safety point of view.

"Companies need to know where their employees are at all times, and employees need to be able to call for any emergency service at any given time, no matter the constraints in terms of road infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure or availability of fuel."

### Consolidating data in stages

TMCs should take the lead in consolidating the client's travel data in stages, says **Scott Gillespie**, co-founder of TClara. In the first stage, the TMC needs to produce good data from the back office and ensure it is free from errors, missing values and poor logic such

This year's Budget, Honourable Speaker, is focused on fiscal consolidation. We cannot spend money we do not have. We cannot borrow beyond our ability to repay. Until we can ignite growth and generate more revenue, we have to be tough on ourselves."

– Finance Minister, Pravin Gordhan.

According to the Budget Speech given on the 24 February 2016, fiscal consolidation is the main objective for this year. The TraveluXion Application is certainly a tool that can provide solutions to the topic at hand, consider perhaps just

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as trip breaks. In the second stage, the TMC needs to add context to the data, which could include peer group benchmarks. Lastly, the TMC will need to educate the client on how to use the data. "Don't assume that the TMC's job is done upon delivery of the report."

**Ben Langner**, md of Carlson Wagonlit Travel, agrees, and adds that travel managers want access to near real-time data, along with benchmarking, insights and recommendations, so that they can manage their entire travel programme end-to-end. "It's up to companies like CWT to provide that support to travellers on the road, while taking our clients from a world of facts, figures and reports, to a world of connections, insights and possibilities," he says.

It is important not to look at data reporting in isolation, adds **Mladen Lukic**, gm of Travel Counsellors in South Africa. He says the demand for effective reporting stems from a requirement for complete transparency. "Customers want to be totally aware of their supplier's business and pricing models. They want to be an active participant in the pricing model.

"To be able to do that, you need to have a truly personalised offer, adjusting the offering as they consult with the client."

## Relevance is key

Although lots of information is helpful, the key will be the relevance for the consumer, says Amadeus Travel Intelligence coo, **Nicholas Borel**. For example, he explains, as a corporate procurement manager or TMC, you might need to reduce the number of flight changes made by your travellers to bookings done through your corporate booking tool. By collecting travel intelligence and interpreting it, you would be able to determine who are the 'prima donnas' (those who change their flights regularly) or the 'sheep' (those who stick with their plans).

"Your business could choose to take necessary actions to reduce flight changes by knowing the extent of the problem and changing the behaviour of those causing it," continues Borel. "Take it a step further, overlay salesforce as a data source so you can see if the serial offender is someone from whom flight changes are entirely acceptable. You're hardly going to stop your

top sales person from making loads of flight changes if their behaviour actually contributes to your company's success."

## Increasingly complex algorithms

As technology improves, TMCs will use increasingly complex algorithms to address clients' needs, leading to increased automation of services," comments Parker. "Traditionally, the model for servicing the energy industry is a high-touch model. This involves the traditional offline model of the client e-mailing the consultants and using their skills sets and knowledge about a particular industry in terms of offshore fares, geographical knowledge and the best ways to get in and out of a country. With the evolving technology, much of that knowledge can be transferred into online booking tools to empower the booker to reach the destination in the optimum manner."

Parker warns that TMCs that have not already migrated from a manual to an electronic platform will find it hard to remain competitive. The online procurement space, with integrated end-to-end, total cost-of-ownership solutions is the way of the future for TMCs. "These systems, such as corporate reporting, take a lot of time to overhaul in favour of new technology, and corporate clients do not have the time to wait for their TMC to catch up with technology. They want to save money now."

However, Gillespie argues that supercomputers are not needed for the collection and analysis of relevant travel data. "All you need is good old fashioned data collection and integration efforts, with a strong dose of analytical smarts thrown in."

"The good news is that we're all in the same place when it comes to the journey of mastering travel intelligence and that happens to be right at the start," says Gillespie.

He says the TMC's first step must be to start collecting data so that when they are ready to interpret, they will have some history against which to compare current travel intelligence. "As overwhelming as the sound of a data lake (a hub of unlimited amounts of data of any format and type) may be, you have to start somewhere and there's no time like the present."

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meet your exact business requirements. We know that we can deliver savings on your total cost of travel," says Morne du Preez, Tourvest Travel Services CEO.

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solution makes life easier. High volume domestic and point-to-point international travel bookings become simple; travel documents are received five minutes after booking approval; bookings can be changed online without consultants; everything is on one page; GPS co-ordinates accompany hotel and guesthouse vouchers.

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## COST SAVINGS *reliant on technology*

**T**he main focus for travel managers continues to be cost savings.

"Accurate travel data is the key ingredient to providing the main areas in which cost reduction can take place, as well as traveller behaviour improvements. It is up to the TMC to ensure that the client understands the data and how to act on the provided data," says **Kim Parker**. To realise cost-saving objectives, harnessing big data is important for the TMC and the client, she adds. "We use the data to learn more about the behaviour of our travellers and to measure supplier effectiveness, which lets us



put plans in place to address future needs with increasing efficiency. TMCs that do not use deeper dives into big data to unlock cost-saving opportunities for their clients will become irrelevant. The value that a TMC can unlock for its clients will determine whether it keeps them or not." "Having access and being able to interpret and apply relevant intelligence about your customer and staff's travel habits (with their consent) could make a massive difference to your business," says **Jannine Adams**, senior manager marketing at Amadeus Southern Africa.

## EasyJet & Gatwick

partner on IoT app



**L**ondon's Gatwick Airport and low-cost carrier EasyJet have partnered to develop an app that combines live data from the airport's systems with Google indoor maps, passenger booking details, location and flight time to provide personalised instructions and updates for passengers.

According to the SITA Air Transport Industry Insights Report, the updates include check-in reminders, directions to bag drop, departures and gate location, plus real-time gate and baggage belt push notification direct to the traveller's mobile phone.

The airline is also investigating whether artificial intelligence has a role to play in improving efficiency, revenue and customer satisfaction in terms of flight schedules, fleet reliability, in-flight food and drink and easyJet's loyalty programme. For example, artificial intelligence will be able to harness the airline's data to anticipate demand for certain items of food and drink on each flight so that supplies match customer demand without running out or carrying an excess amount.

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# Enhancing travellers' experience through the Internet of Things

**T**he Internet of Things (IoT) refers to smart, interconnected devices that are able to 'talk' to one another to make things happen remotely or automatically – and we are only just beginning to tap into the capabilities of this technology to improve the travel experience.

According to the latest research from Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT), key elements are coming together to enable massive growth in IoT. This includes the rapid spread of sensors; smaller and easier-to-implement radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags used to transmit information between objects; and the universal growth in mobile networks, devices, storage and processing power. This, coupled with rapid adoption of new technology, means that the IoT is expected to take off in the coming years.

CWT surveyed more than 1 000

travel managers throughout the world and discovered that half of all travellers in the US and France, and four in 10 in the UK and Germany are likely to purchase a wearable device in the next few years. More than half of US travellers would let airports track their mobile devices if it meant getting real-time updates on security lines, wait times at customs and ticket counters, walking times between gates or other benefits.

Added to this, by 2018 44% of airlines intend to use beacon technology, which sends location-based signals to improve services and connections with customers; while 86% of airlines said IoT would

present clear benefits in the next three years.

According to the CWT report, this will result in many benefits for corporate travellers. "A number of airports and airlines have launched IoT trails to see how sensors and beacon technology can improve

travel. The answer appears to be 'everywhere and at every stage of the process', with location-based information helping people manage their journeys better or receive timely assistance

depending on where they are.

"Automatic check-in, gate reminders, information on wait times at security, automatic rebooking of missed connecting flights, luggage tracking and even

pre-ordered food being prepared as you approach are among the personalised services that are now possible," states the report.

SITA's *Air Transport Industry Insights Report* also emphasises the growing role IoT has to play, particularly in terms of travellers' airport experience. According to SITA's research, over the next three years, more than half of all airlines expect to have IoT initiatives up and running. "Thinking about the passenger's journey, over half of airlines predict that check-in is one of the three stages in the journey that would benefit most from IoT," says the report. "Bag-drop and baggage reclaim are also in the top three."

There are further opportunities for other suppliers in the chain, from alerts to rental car suppliers to facilitate pick up, to automatic hotel check-in and keyless access to rooms.

**"A number of airports and airlines have launched IoT trails to see how sensors and beacon technology can improve travel."**

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# 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. To get connected, e-mail [lindav@nowmedia.co.za](mailto:lindav@nowmedia.co.za).

## 1. Mauritius

Beachcomber Tours. Early-bird rates from R13 300pp sharing. Offer includes return flights on Air Mauritius from Johannesburg, return transfers, five nights' accommodation at Le Victoria with breakfast and dinner daily, and free land and motorised water sports. 30-day advance purchase applies. Excludes taxes of approximately R4 350pp sharing. Valid for travel between July 23 and September 30.

## 2. Mozambique

Thompsons Holidays. Five-night Massinga Beach package from R13 782pp sharing. Offer includes return flights from Johannesburg to Inhambane on Mozambique Airlines, including approximate taxes, return airport-lodge transfers, accommodation in an ocean-front deluxe room with breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Valid for SADC residents only. Offer valid for travel until June 30.

## 3. Durban

Kulula.com. Two-night winter promotion from R2 341pp sharing. Rate includes return flights from OR Tambo or Lanseria to Durban, including approximate taxes and levies, two days' car rental with a standard waiver and 200km free per day and two nights' accommodation at the Protea Hotel Umhlanga. Offer valid for travel until September 30.

## 4. Bali

Emirates Holidays. Seven-night special from R16 552pp sharing. Rates include return flights from Johannesburg and approximate taxes and fuel surcharges, return transfers, seven nights'

## 5. Greece

Azure Travel. Island hopper package from R14 995pp sharing. Offer includes return flights from Johannesburg on Emirates, relevant airport transfers and speed ferries between islands, two nights in Athens, two nights in Paros, two nights in Mykonos, two nights in Santorini and breakfast daily. Rate excludes approximate taxes of R7 600pp. Valid for travel until May 31.



accommodation at the Mercure Bali Legian with breakfast daily. Valid for travel until June 20.

## 6. Italy

Pure Sport. Livigno mountain biking from R16 220pp sharing. Offer includes seven nights' accommodation with breakfast and dinner daily, airport transfers, guided excursions and more. Excludes flights. Valid for travel between July 1 and September 30.

## 7. Western Cape

HS&V Hospitality. Winter Corporate Special from R1 320 per double room per night. Rate includes one night's accommodation in a classic room with full breakfast and a R100

dinner voucher. Single room options available from R1 010 per night. Bookable at Devon Valley Hotel and Erinvale Estates Hotel and Spa. Valid for travel until May 31.

## 8. Egypt

Tripistery B2B Travel. Explore the pyramids and Sphinx from R8 397pp sharing. Rate includes three nights in Cairo, three nights in Hurgada with dinner, tour to the pyramids, Sphinx and bazaar and transfers. Package excludes flights. Offer valid for travel until April 30.

## 9. France

F1 Grand Prix Tours. Le Mans 24-Hours packages from R27 700pp sharing. Rate includes

return flights from Johannesburg and approximate taxes, return transfers to Le Mans, four nights' accommodation with breakfast daily, three-day circuit transfers and an on-site tour director. Land-only packages available from R15 970pp sharing. Package excludes race tickets. Set travel dates, June 15-20.

## 10. Sandton

Leaves Signature House. Weekend special from R499pp per night. Offer is valid Fridays to Sundays and includes breakfast. Offer valid for travel until April 30. ■

**DISCLAIMER:** All specials are subject to availability, currency fluctuations and seasonal surcharges.

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