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Editor's note

Why won't airlines cut their fuel surcharges? Oil prices are now below US\$80 (R897) a barrel and jet fuel prices are heading for their first annual decline since 2008. So why aren't airlines dropping this portion of the fare?

It's not that simple, says md of Plane Talking, **Linden Birns**. The decision by an airline to maintain, raise or decrease its fuel surcharge is determined by that airline's fuel hedging strategy and the prices at which it has agreed to in advance – anything from a few weeks to a few years in advance. Add to this that the aviation industry remains under pressure, with SA based carriers battling a weak rand and rate of exchange.

2014 in general has been a challenging year for the travel industry and the effects are likely to continue to be felt throughout 2015, industry experts say. An expected tightening of South African fiscal policy, combined with a GDP growth of between only 1% and 2%, will most likely inhibit business travel growth.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Industry authorities expect travel into Africa to continue to grow,

despite setbacks and difficulties, as infrastructure and demand grows and South African businesses look for opportunities outside of the country.

Speaking of demand, there is a growing need for corporates to look beyond large hotel chains to independent hotels, such as boutique properties, guest houses and B&Bs. In our Alternative accommodation feature we look at how accessibility of these types of properties is improving.

Turning our focus back to 2015, in our *Meet* pages we explore how event planners can get the New Year off to a good start by inspiring delegates. Our venue inspector gives Sabi River Sun a rave review and we bring you four great reasons why your next conference should be held in the bush.

It's been an interesting year and I have no doubt that next year will be too. If you're taking a break, be safe and enjoy the rest. We'll see you in the new year!

But for now, keep reading!

Natasha Schmidt
(natashas@nowmedia.co.za)

COVER

Travel Buyer speaks with **Rene Phelps**, travel and events co-ordinator at Baroque Medical, about the challenges around the Ebola crisis, global terrorism and shrinking budgets for corporate travel management. Cover photograph by **Shannon Van Zyl**.

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UK eases transit visas for SA

AS OF December 1, South African nationals who hold a valid visa for Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the USA will be able to use them to transit airside via the UK to anywhere in the world without obtaining a Direct Airside Transit Visa.

Travellers who hold visas to these countries can transit the UK (airside) given that they provide an expanded list of exemption documents in place of a Direct Airside Transit Visa. The criteria are that the traveller:

- must arrive and depart by air from the same UK airport and on the same day to another country outside the Common Travel Area 1;
- is properly documented for their onward destination;
- holds a valid exemption document in accordance with one of the following:
 - a residence permit or visa that allows entry to Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the United States of America, regardless of their route and final destination
 - an EEA or Swiss category D visa or residence permit, regardless of their route and final destination
 - an Irish biometric visa, regardless of their route and final destination.



PHOTO: KATE NATHAN

Club Travel launches solution for SMMEs

CLUB Travel recently launched a travel solution for small businesses. The new online subscription-based service will cater for small to medium enterprises that spend less than R3 million on business travel a year, providing them with reduced corporate fares, a cost centre to monitor spend across sectors within the company and reports providing an audit trail for every trip booked. Club Travel Business Solutions aims to offer businesses an affordable, one-stop, easy-to-use online

service with access to the best deals across multiple airline, accommodation and car hire suppliers. Meanwhile Club Travel recently unveiled its new logo to clients and partners at the launch of its new corporate identity. "We felt that in light of the rebrand by our BEE partner, Thebe, earlier this year, it was the perfect opportunity for us to give our logo a bit of a nip and tuck with a clean, modern makeover," said Club Travel md, Wally Gaynor.



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LATEST ON LCCs



Another LCC take-off planned for 2015

LONG-AWAITED new LCC, Skywise, plans to launch domestic flights as early as the beginning of next year. Pak Africa Aviation announced it would purchase the airline's Air Service Licence. Ceo, Tabassum Qadir said Skywise would begin operating domestic routes in the beginning of 2015, deploying one B737-300 and two A320s. She would not divulge which routes were being considered but added that regional operations were also on the cards for the end of 2015.

Flyafrica keeps growing

FLYAFRICA.COM has launched a Namibian operation – Namibia flyafrica, with fares starting from R799 (excluding airport taxes of around R386) to Johannesburg from Windhoek. The first flight is scheduled for February 2. A second route, Windhoek to Cape Town, is scheduled from March 2. Fares are from R699 one way. The airline also plans to launch flights between

Johannesburg and Lusaka, early next year.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe flyafrica plans to launch flights between Bulawayo and Johannesburg from March 2. The airline also plans to launch domestic flights between Victoria Falls and Harare, with flights commencing on December 1.

FlySafair launches second base

FLYSAFAIR, which operates from Cape Town and has launched flights to Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and George, will open a second base at OR Tambo International Airport from December 3. Flights from Johannesburg to George and Johannesburg to Port Elizabeth will start at R499 one way (excluding airport taxes of around R433).

Mango mulls East African route

MANGO Airlines added two new B737-800s to its fleet this year, with new routes being reviewed for the East African seaboard. Ceo, Nico Bezuidenhout, said: "Domestically we are reviewing options too but at present it makes competitive sense to bulk up on our existing schedule."

Investment boosts travel group

INDEPENDENT travel consultant group, Travel Counsellors in the UK has sold a stake of the global company to Equistone Partners Europe, a mid-market private equity firm, which is expected "to take the company to another level and accelerate its growth".

Travel Counsellors said in a statement that it envisaged the investment from Equistone to facilitate the management buyout of the business, which will enable the company to further boost the support it offers to its global family of agents and bolster its global buying power and potential for further overseas expansion.

The business will maintain its existing management team, including md, Steve Byrne. David Speakman will remain in his role as chairman.

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PHOTO: NATASHA SCHWIDT

From left: new BCD Travel md, **Bongani Sukazi**, outgoing md, **Kananelo Makhetha**, and BidTravel md, **Allan Lunz**.

A fond farewell

THE travel trade bid a warm and heartfelt farewell to outgoing BCD Travel md, Kananelo Makhetha, thanking him for his commitment and 18 years of service, at a function held at the Southern Sun Hyde Park in Johannesburg in October. Moving into the broader travel industry, Kananelo took up

a new position last month in the foreign exchange sector as ceo of the Travelex Africa team based in Johannesburg. The Travelex Group is headquartered in London. Thebe Holdings is its South African partner. He is replaced by Bongani Sukazi, who joined BCD Travel as financial director in March 2011.

France eases visa process

SOUTH African applicants who wish to apply for short- or long-stay visas for France, regardless of their residence address, may apply at any of the three Capargo premises, the company in charge of data collection, in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town.

Visas will then be processed

and issued by one of the two French consulates in Johannesburg or Cape Town.

In the past, applicants were restricted to applying at centres that fell within their region of residence. By giving the choice of the visa applications location, the French authorities want to better facilitate the visa process for South Africans.

SunSquare Cape Town opens after revamp

TSOGO Sun has relaunched the De Waal Cape Town hotel in Gardens as SunSquare Cape Town, following a R35m refurbishment and rebranding.

The 40-year-old property had been given a more contemporary style and modern features. All 136 rooms have been revamped and the lobby now extends into a

new bar area and terrace next to a new restaurant. The conference rooms can accommodate up to 120 people.

The relaunch is in line with the continuing rejuvenation of the Cape Town city bowl. Tsogo Sun – a R30bn company – is spending R1bn on property maintenance and R6bn on expansion in South Africa.



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Rwanda introduces visa fees for SA travellers

EFFECTIVE November 1, South African passport holders entering Rwanda are required to pay for a visitor pass not exceeding 30 days.

"Nationals of South Africa, USA, UK, Germany, and Sweden who had been waived entry and tourist visa fee shall get the mentioned visas on payment of the prescribed visa fee," the directorate general of Immigration and Emigration of the Republic of Rwanda said in a statement.

These nationals can still acquire

a visa-on-arrival but will now have to pay a US\$30 (R325) fee. This can be paid at the immigration desk on entry at Kigali International Airport or at land borders. Alternatively, visas can be applied for prior to travel at the High Commission in Pretoria.

Also available is the common East African tourist visa at a cost of US\$100 (R1 087), which covers Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya and is valid for up to 90 days for foreign tourists.

Botswana properties face Internet access regulations

BOTSWANA accommodation providers are under pressure by the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA) to offer Internet access across all properties by August next year.

BOCRA's new guidelines apply to guesthouses, lodges, campsites, motels and hotels and prescribe minimum Internet bandwidth requirements, based on a facility's grading and number of rooms.

BOCRA is consulting with the Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO) to create a standard

where non-compliance with the guidelines will affect the hospitality ranking of a property. However, implementation is at the discretion of the BTO. The guidelines prescribe the minimum bandwidth, network security and monitoring measures, maintenance and upgrading of networks, the availability of IT staff and universal Internet coverage in the facilities.

BOCRA says the hospitality industry can benefit by meeting the needs of guests, whose demand for fast and reliable Internet is growing exponentially.

KZN levy – boycotts and bad news

THE 10% hospitality levy proposed in KwaZulu Natal is already impacting on local travel to the region and its ability to attract events at a time when domestic travellers are already feeling the pinch.

KZN's MEC for economic development, tourism and environmental affairs, **Michael Mabuyakhulu**, has proposed the provincial legislature. The MEC wants to collect the levy from April 2015 to fund a "war

chest to attract major events to the province".

Otto de Vries, ceo of the Association of South African Travel Agents (Asata), says he has received a competitive and attractive proposal to hold the organisation's next annual conference in Durban. However, he says Asata can't be seen to be supporting the province if it pursues a tourism levy that is sure to put significant pressure on the tourism industry. ■



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Baroque's buyer streamlines travel

Dorine Reinstein speaks with **Rene Phelps**, travel and events co-ordinator at Baroque Medical, about the challenges around the Ebola crisis, global terrorism and shrinking budgets for corporate travel management.

RECENT global incidents such as aircraft accidents, global political unrest and the Ebola crisis, have highlighted the importance of a comprehensive duty-of-care policy to ensure the safety of corporate travellers. **Rene Phelps** says duty of care has become an important focus point and something she is increasingly conscious of in her role as travel and events co-ordinator at Baroque Medical.

Phelps says recent political unrest around the world has also heightened the company's awareness of travellers' safety. This has had an impact on a number of different areas in Baroque's travel policy, including the company's choice of airlines and accommodation. She explains Baroque Medical is limiting the use of apartments and B&Bs, particularly by its travellers, as hotel groups are generally considered the safer option. "The majority of our internal travellers are women, so we try to stick to the hotel groups out of safety concerns," she says.

Although Baroque Medical hasn't called in services from organisations such as International SOS to assist with duty of care, the company is dedicating a lot more time to the research of destinations. Phelps says Baroque has started carefully considering all travel requirements before making actual bookings. "We have started doing a great deal of groundwork to know exactly what is happening in a country before sending people there. We have also started taking more cognisance of what has been happening in the world, especially in the Middle East and Africa. If any unrest occurs, in the interest of our staff and clients' safety, we would rather postpone the trip altogether."

Thompsons Travel, the TMC

that handles Baroque Medical's international flights, has proved to be an invaluable help when it comes to duty of care, Phelps says. She says the TMC has been very efficient in briefing her on the latest destination updates and events that could affect corporate travel. She says, for example, Thompsons Travel has continually kept her updated on airport security measures that have come about as a result of the Ebola outbreak.

As Phelps mans the travel division at Baroque Medical alone, dealing with over 40 corporate travellers on a regular basis, she greatly values the support of the company's TMC. "We've had other companies offer their services but we like the one-on-one relationship we have with Thompsons Travel and see no need to change at this time."

Cutting costs

Besides duty of care, the biggest factor affecting travel at Baroque Medical is the difficult economic climate. Phelps says this has coincided with rising travel costs, which are in part due to the volatility of the exchange rate. Flight prices have also risen due to rising fuel costs. The cost of accommodation and local transfers has increased considerably too, she says.

"Our current process encourages us to book flights as far in advance as possible to make sure that we get the lowest price. However, decisions regarding international travel are sometimes made shortly prior to the individual travelling and this affects the price we pay for flights," she says.

To bring costs down, Baroque Medical has reviewed several of its corporate agreements with preferred suppliers. "It has been



PHOTO: SHANNON VAN ZYL

our experience that some hotels are pricing themselves out of the market by adding almost R600 to R1 000 to negotiated rates per night, so we have had to source more cost-effective alternatives. Where some of these providers had at first refused to lower their rates, they are now reconsidering and renegotiating their rates with us, which is encouraging because it indicates a change in mind-set," Phelps says.

One of the biggest changes Phelps has introduced at Baroque Medical since taking up her position in July 2012 is the implementation of the Amadeus e-travel Management system, an online self-booking tool that serves every aspect of corporations' travel needs through one single entry point. It has also been one of the most important cost-cutting measures by reducing TMC transaction fees. Thompsons Travel still books all international travel for the company, but domestic travel is now provisionally booked online through the in-house travel department on the Amadeus System. The TMC then confirms fares and advises whether a more cost-effective fare is available.

The fact that the TMC remains

involved in all the company's air travel bookings, although to a lesser degree, means travel costs can still be consolidated into one report. Phelps says: "Each month, the TMC provides Baroque with a comprehensive report outlining what flights have been booked and at what cost. We are therefore able to monitor all costs based on the travel budgets and to encourage pre-planning where possible to reduce costs."

Organising operations

Other changes Phelps has made to the travel programme at Baroque Medical include the introduction of a streamlined travel schedule on one spread sheet, which makes it easier to keep track of who's going where and on what date.

Phelps has also introduced comprehensive and professional 'travel packs'. These contain all the information the traveller could possibly need while travelling, from check-in details to visa information, hotel details and destination information. "It would be great to be able to introduce an app where travellers could access all the information in the travel packs at the click of a button," she comments.

About Phelps

WHEN Rene Phelps began her career as travel and events co-ordinator at Baroque Medical two years ago, her travel experience was limited, having previously worked as an executive personal assistant for corporate companies such as Dunlop Tyres and Kellogg Brown and Root.

To familiarise herself with the industry and learn

the ropes of her new role, Phelps decided to affiliate herself with organisations such as ABTA and ACTE, and attend industry events such as

Meetings Africa to collaborate with similar organisations to gain greater insight into the industry and global trends. She recently participated in the NEEMA Buyer Benchmarking Project, which was conducted by ABTA and Severnside Consulting to address the 'black hole' in the African Business Travel Industry.

Phelps is now responsible for all internal and external

travel as well as the co-ordination of a significant number of local and international congresses, together with the Baroque Medical marketing team. "Being given this opportunity in an industry that I knew very little about forced me out of my comfort zone and I have made my mark by doing things differently," she says.

Maintaining a healthy balance between work and home has proved to be one of the greatest challenges for Phelps in her new role. "It's difficult sometimes because I

constantly keep in contact with my team when they are away on a congress and I am their port of call should they need anything at any time of the day." However, she points out that these challenges are nothing compared to the benefits of her role. "Having the respect and gratitude of the travellers in the company makes it all worthwhile," she says. ■

“Being given this opportunity in an industry that I knew very little about forced me out of my comfort zone.”



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GBTA conference highlights current issues

Players in the corporate travel industry gathered at the GBTA SA's annual conference last month to network and debate issues affecting the local industry. The event was held at the Bryanston Country Club in Johannesburg on October 15 and 16.

A BIG focus for this year's GBTA Southern Africa conference was the challenges, opportunities and best practice when conducting business in Africa.

Ceo of Frontier Advisory, **Dr Martyn Davies**, delivered a fascinating report on the realities of conducting business in Africa, saying that while Africa was open for business, it was becoming increasingly difficult to conduct business across the continent.

He said opportunities could be found in Ethiopia (an emerging manufacturing hub), Mozambique (oil and gas), Kenya (a major infrastructure and technology player) and Rwanda, with its lack of corruption making it the easiest country on the continent in which to conduct business.

He added that Zimbabwe and South Africa faced challenges, with Zimbabwe on the brink of recession once again and South Africa suffering from a politically flawed economy that allowed corruption to run rampant.

While much hype has been created around the spread of Ebola, International SOS's **Dr**

Charl van Loggerenberg said that in terms of medical risks, Ebola did not rank high on the list compared with other risks such as malaria.

Medical risks aside, Massmart's **Sarel Badenhorst** said the real threat concerning corporate travel in Africa was extremists and terrorism. However, he noted that it was possible to mitigate those risks with efficient planning. He added that a good risk assessment analysis should include an analysis of the hotel's support base, its defence systems and the venue's accessibility. "Does the venue allow security sweeps and does it have facilities for armoured vehicles?" These are questions corporates need to ask, he said.

The IDC's **Phive Marumo** added to the discussion by saying that the basic comfort of employees while travelling in Africa remained a concern. She said there was an undersupply of appropriate hospitality products on the market and that well-known brands in other African countries tended to be sub-par compared with their properties in

South Africa and abroad. "What's more, even if you have booked a room, you often arrive to find there's no availability."

Managing millennials

A HOT topic at the conference was millennials and managing these travellers.

Keenan Harduth, head of the insights division at Cerebra, provided some insight into how Generation Y travellers think. More than half of the generation feel they deserve rewards and they are largely unconcerned about keeping travel expenses down. In line with this, these travellers are also inclined to use their accounts lavishly.

Harduth noted that Gen Y were particularly concerned with authenticity and sincerity. As such, he believes it's important for travel buyers to create more authentic discussions around their travel policies. He said it didn't necessarily matter from which platform the policy was communicated, just that the underlying principle of transparency was upheld.

Walk the talk

ANOTHER focus in discussions was on the critical role of communication and how buyers needed to be more clear about their expectations of suppliers and TMCs.

Suppliers said travel buyers needed to be more proactive in communicating the details of their travel policies to them, with a view to developing a relationship where the supplier was the trusted adviser and all parties involved were able to use their collective knowledge to benchmark collective policy.

Suppliers believed their relationship with a particular corporate would function more effectively if buyers were more vigilant in directing their spend as promised.

On the other hand, travel buyers said that TMCs could up their game by providing more accurate data and giving quality advice on current trends and developments. However, TMCs said buyers needed to be clearer about the type of data they required and how they would like to receive this.

Buyers added that they would like to see TMCs include proposals for what an efficient travel management programme should look like during their pitch process. ■



Sabre's **Monique Diez** (left) and **Sharon Wright** (right) share a drink with GBTA director of operations, **Jim Weighell**



From left: **Nelile Ngwenya** (Teta), **Nosimilo Nhlathathi** (Teta), **Kagiso Dumasi** (BCD Travel) and **Busisiwe Khumalo** (IDC) enjoy a few laughs at the cocktail networking function



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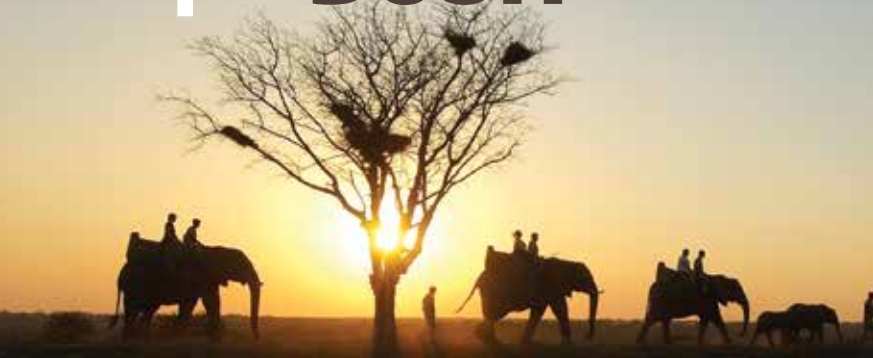
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4 REASONS to conference in the BUSH



Nothing embodies the spirit of Africa more than the bushveld. Tranquil and serene, it provides conference organisers with the opportunity to do things differently.

Liesl Venter finds out more.

A great escape

A TRIP to the bush is the perfect escape – even when you are working. The allure of the African bush is hard to ignore. Whether you are trying to spot the Big Five on a game drive, staring into the flames of a boma fire, riding on an elephant or canoeing down a river, the magic of the bush carries a certain restfulness that is not easily forgotten – therein lies the biggest advantage of holding a bush conference.

“Evenings in the bush lend themselves to experiences of a different kind.”

“The serene African bushveld is the perfect place to give free rein to your creativity while networking with colleagues in a relaxed atmosphere,” says **Gloria Huma**, conference organiser at Bushfellows, a private game lodge in Limpopo. “There is

something special about the bush that allows you to escape from your routine.”

The best of both worlds

With all the amenities of the city but none of its hassles, it makes great sense to escape to the wild for a conference.

“At Bushfellows we like to refer to it as the bushveld-meets-broadband approach to business,” says **Huma**. “While on the one hand you have all the hi-tech equipment and gadgetry you need to make your conference a success, you also have the peace and tranquillity that you will only find in the bush. It really is the best of both worlds.”

Miranda Evangelou, Forever Resorts sales manager agrees, saying most of the venues in the bush are highly organised and kitted out to meet the needs of just about any conference and any number of people.

Enhanced engagement

Conferencing in the bush can be a unique experience, even if

you don’t do anything out of the ordinary, says **Evangelou**. “Just being away from the mad rush of the city has major benefits for delegates who often find in the bush they are truly able to connect with each other.”

She explains that, because venues are away from the city, you have the undivided attention of conference goers. They are also not necessarily going to leave early and so have the opportunity to really engage with people. “The bush brings out a different energy in delegates. It is almost as if their interest is higher.”

Natural wow factor

There is not much that has to be done to a bush conference to achieve a wow factor for your event. “The very setting and the venue are already so unique that it can suffice,” says **Evangelou**.

She notes, however, that it’s important to highlight the natural elements of the bush during an event. “Make sure delegates have the opportunity to engage with nature. A game drive is a must. Allow them

the time to experience the tranquillity and peacefulness of their surroundings.”

Most bush venues have set activities built around the specific location they are in. Use this to your advantage. So whether it is trout fishing in Sudwala or hiking the magnificent Mpumalanga hills, make sure the overall experience is as far removed from the city as possible.

“Evenings in the bush also lend themselves to experiences of a different kind. Bush lapa dinners – dining under the stars while listening out for the call of wild animals – are a real treat for most people,” says **Evangelou**.

According to **Huma**, depending on how many conference goers there are, a bush event can be packaged to their liking. “It could be a luxury experience in a lodge or more of a wild experience sleeping in tents out in the bush. Give delegates the opportunity to experience something different – like having breakfast while watching animals drink at a waterhole.”



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Sunset entertainment with a *difference*

We enlisted the help of meetings expert **Vasti Topfer** to inspect the facilities of the Sabi River Sun.



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PHOTO: SHANNON VAN ZYL

What Vasti found...

THIS time round I found myself in Mpumalanga reviewing what I would describe as a pleasant surprise. The Sabi River Sun, situated just 14km from the Kruger National Park, is the complete package.

The resort is a self-contained world on its own, meaning that it can accommodate just about anyone and, of particular interest for conference-goers, has a perfectly maintained 18-hole golf course.

Yes, the venue is four-star and this is perhaps evident in the rooms and quality of the buffet food but, make no mistake, they are constantly striving to improve. In fact, a complete redo of the entire resort is on the cards in the near future. What's more, guests can order from the à la carte menu and be sure the food is delicious!

The surroundings are breathtaking, the facilities are endless and the staff are worthy of a massive mention. People can make or break a place but after meeting and spending time with the general manager, **Roger Petyt**, I understood exactly why his staff are the way they are. Nothing was too much to ask, and it's not often these days that you find people who go out of their way to chat to you and make sure your needs are met and that you are comfortable.

General facilities

Conferencing facilities are available for up to 120 people banqueting style in the main hall, and two additional rooms are available to accommodate

smaller groups. There are also multiple spots in the gardens where you can set up breakaways.

The hotel has 60 rooms that are furnished simply but provide everything you need, from tea and coffee stations to electronic safes, air-conditioning and hair dryers. There are also 104 chalets that are timeshare based. A welcoming bar and lounge set-up with flat-screen TVs near reception is a good place to relax before or after dinner.

The Eden Spa offers a menu with treatments to suit everyone.

The resort has five pool areas, which avoids overcrowding during peak periods. Three floodlit tennis courts as well as a bowling green, mountain bike hire, volley ball court and squash courts allow active guests to exercise in the open whenever they feel the urge. The front desk is happy to help with various day excursions to game drives in the nearby Kruger National Park.

The highlight

The highlight of my two-night stay had to be the sunset entertainment – the short migration of the pod of hippo that are generally residents of the Sabi River Sun. The leader heads towards the bottom end of the small waterhole on the property and waits at the exit for the rest to catch up. One by one they lift their heavy bodies up a short pathway out of the water and on to the lawn of one of the golf course's tees, where they graze for a while before walking across the grass, down the hill and into the Sabie River. What an experience it was, albeit short. I cannot wait to return with my next conference group.



After completing her BComm in Marketing Honours degree at Stellenbosch University, Vasti Topfer began her career in experiential marketing and immediately felt that events and promotions were her forte. Within a year of being in the field she decided to open her own company and has continued to watch it go from strength to strength.

How to start the **New Year** with a bang

Liesl Venter speaks to **Esse Naidoo-Posokhov**, project director for Corporate Exposure, about tips event planners can use to help inspire delegates as they prepare to tackle the New Year.

Change it up

DON'T be afraid to change things up. An event is not just an event, says **Esse Naidoo-Posokhov**. "Every event is special and should be given the attention it deserves. Coming up with unique ideas to suit the occasion, style and vision of the event is important – try to do things differently from what you did the year before." In other words, spark your imagination and try your hand at something you have never done before.

Have your cake

The giant corporate cake has captured the imagination of the corporate event space. "And we do love gorgeous giant cakes," says Naidoo-Posokhov. This is a fun way of heralding in events at the start of the New Year and is a trend that will continue through 2015. "The giant cake has given way to everything from cake pops and delicately decorated petit fours to designer cupcakes," she adds.



Be bold

Instead of solid décor colours, why not be bold and incorporate patterns, prints and designs in a multitude of colours. "Current emphasis is on capturing happiness through colours," says Naidoo-Posokhov. "It is all about being bold and giving yourself a creative outlet. Don't be afraid to try something out of the ordinary. Challenge yourself."

Don't be bound by budget

While corporates have in recent years toned down the scale of their events due to tight budgets, this is predicted to change in the New Year. "Staying budget aware is important but that does not mean one cannot deliver a stunning event. Creativity is free," maintains Naidoo-Posokhov. "Delivering uniquely tailored, budget-friendly events is very possible."

Bite-size is better

Bite-size food is the best way to keep guests coming back for more. According to Naidoo-Posokhov, this trend extends to the desserts and the rest of the menu, incorporating a wide range of savoury and exotic hors d'oeuvres that, in some cases, are replacing regular sit-down dinners.

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EMERGENCY SITUATIONS – are you prepared?

In the unpredictable world of conference and event management, ensuring you are prepared for the worst might just be one of the best decisions you can make. **Malcolm Midgley**, divisional chief of the Johannesburg Emergency Services, shares his advice with **Liesl Venter** on practical contingency measures.

Bad things happen

MEETING planners should never underestimate the importance of implementing emergency contingency plans. Anything can happen and while the likelihood is good that all will go well, it just takes one bad incident or accident to turn an event into your worst nightmare – and where death is involved there is no going back.

“It is definitely necessary to have medics at certain events,” says **Malcolm Midgley**. “On occasion, there is even need to have a fire truck and ambulances at the ready. It all starts with planning though. You have to assess the context of your conference and make decisions based on that.”

Midgley recalls an event at Ellis Park several years ago where a spectator died from a heart attack. A medical team were present on the field but, because logistics had not been carefully considered, they were unable to exit the field and so could not reach the dying person.

One Cape Town-based conference organiser says she insists on having medics at any event where there are more than 30 people in attendance, as safety is a priority.

Disregarding safety measures as an unnecessary expense can be very dangerous. Examples of what

can go wrong are endless, from the venue going up in flames to someone becoming seriously ill – having trained people on hand to deal with unforeseen crises is the only sure way of minimising risk.

Risk assessments

Having a conference emergency management team is advisable, says Midgley. “By identifying and preparing a core group of people to deal with emergency situations, one is already in a far better position to deal with a crisis. It is also important to develop an emergency management plan and create a complete list of who should be contacted for each particular kind of emergency.”

“It is definitely necessary to have medics at certain events.”

Johannesburg Emergency Services has an entire team dedicated to working in the event sector. “We overview the entire venue, the floor plans, the number of people attending and then develop a security and medical plan for the event, taking into

consideration factors such as disaster management and environmental health.”

Midgley advises PCOs to do a complete risk assessment of every event, regardless of the number of attendees.

“The final emergency plan, comprising both the medical and safety aspects, has to be aligned with the potential risk that exists,” he says.

Communicate

While a short briefing at the beginning of a conference is often considered sufficient, it is important to cover certain basics pertaining to emergency procedures. “You have to be sure, as the organiser, that you can – if necessary – move your audience quickly to a place of safety. You need to therefore know where that place is and how you are going to get them there.”

Most big conference centres and venues have established procedures in place and it’s advisable for organisers to make themselves au fait with this. “There should be clarity between the event organiser, the venue and the emergency staff about who will do what if there is an incident,” adds Midgley.

Johannesburg Emergency Services divisional chief, **Malcolm Midgley**.

No standard situations

“There are key components to every emergency plan and compiling a checklist is important.

“However, you also have to be aware that different situations require different actions and that your plan has to take different scenarios into consideration.”

A fire, for example, will have very different repercussions to a security threat or hostage situation. The one will see everyone having to leave the building as quickly as possible, while the other is about their not being able to leave at all. Naturally, the approach and solution to both is different.

“One could never plan for every eventuality,” says Midgley, “but being prepared for unexpected situations does allow for a certain degree of control during the emergency. Having staff on hand to deal with the situation that arises makes the success rate of damage control much higher than when one has to wait for help to arrive or rush to find help.” ■

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What lies around the corner?

2014 has been a difficult year for the travel industry. Although the effects of the year's most challenging developments are likely to continue to be felt throughout 2015, the industry can also expect some exciting new developments in the year ahead. **Dorine Reinstein** speaks to industry experts about the outlook for corporate travel in 2015.

THE flailing economy will continue to play a definitive role in corporate travel in 2015, impacting on all sectors of the travel industry.

Jim Weighell, the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) Southern Africa's director of operations, says although the US, Europe

and Asia Pacific are beginning to record strong economic growth, South Africa has been static or in decline since 2013. "A lack of business and consumer confidence is the primary influence."

Weighell says travel buyers can expect to see this uncertainty impact all sectors of travel in the year ahead. An expected tightening of

South African fiscal policy, combined with a GDP growth of between only 1% and 2%, will most likely inhibit business travel growth. With this, Weighell predicts a static local business environment and a more austere budget, which means that caution in spending will be pervasive into 2015.



Alan Reid, procurement manager for Africa, Puma Energy



Chris Zweigenthal, ce of AASA



Into Africa

Traffic to neighbouring states is expected to grow as infrastructure development accelerates and South African businesses seek opportunities outside of SA. This will be the biggest opportunity for 2015, Weighell says. "High economic growth rates in some African countries will present opportunities for SA businesses to increase trade outside of South Africa. We'll see a resurgence of travel into Africa where GDP is showing between 7% and 8% in countries, like Mozambique, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, Congo and Zambia."

Alan Reid, procurement manager for Africa of Puma Energy, agrees and says regional expansion of carriers across Africa has had a positive impact on corporate travel. For example, Ethiopian Airlines' stake in Air Malawi and expanding its routes; British Airways' expansion into Zimbabwe, Namibia and Zambia; and the entrance of new low-cost carriers in Southern Africa.

However, regional travel will continue to be challenging as a result of a lack of liberalisation and market access constraints for African airlines to destinations within their own continent remains a challenge, says **Chris Zweigenthal**, ce of the Airlines Association of Southern Africa. "Airlines have growth and development plans but in some cases are not able to implement these strategies due to lack of route rights."

Richard Bodin, fastjet chief commercial officer, agrees and says the challenge for 2015 will be dealing with governments that do everything to protect their flag carriers. "There has been a

lot of talk during the past few months of airlines launching, but very few have actually taken to the skies. This is partly because these carriers are not appropriately funded and partly due to the fact that governments tend to protect their own airlines."

Aviation safety in Africa will remain a top priority for 2015. Zweigenthal says: "States have a target of improving the Africa safety record by at least 50% by the end of 2015, compared to 2012 levels."

Bodin agrees: "Many African airlines have begun promoting the fact that they are being reliable, on time, and safe. In 2015, there will be a widening gap between those airlines that use international standards of safety and security and reliability, and those that don't."



Duty of care

2015 will without a doubt see an even greater focus on duty of care for corporates as a result of Malaysia Airlines incidents, political events, and the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa.

"A significant number of corporations have started spending a lot of money on tracking their travellers as a result of events that took place in 2014. Corporates will undoubtedly continue to enhance duty of care," adds **Howard Stephens**, travel procurement consultant to Nedbank.

Paul East, Wings Travel Management coo for the UK, Europe and Americas, says globally 2014 was a mix of exciting new developments along with sobering reminders of the risks associated with travel and the importance of safety. "Almost



Rodger Foster, ceo and md of Airlink



Peter Schoeman, sales and marketing director, City Lodge Group



Martin Lydall, cco of Europcar

as though by design, the new developments are serving as useful tools to assist with the latter.”

He adds that 2014 events underlined the importance of a fully managed travel programme, including a solid TMC partner with accurate traveller tracking and proactive planning around Travel Risk Management (TRM).



Aviation wars

If South Africa continues along the current path of low growth rates and investment downgrades, corporates can expect to see airlines competing for market share in an industry where there is already over-capacity of available seats in relation to actual travellers, says **Iain Meaker**, Comair’s commercial distribution executive. He explains that within the aviation sector, aviation industry growth is closely linked to overall GDP. “Both corporate and leisure sectors will seek to cut costs wherever possible and likewise try and absorb the increases felt through high inflation rates and increased taxes by taking measures such as cutting back on travel.”

Rodger Forster, ceo and md of Airlink, agrees and says 2015 will most likely see industry destabilisation brought about by overtrading and surplus competition in the regional and domestic market. He adds that South Africa might soon be bypassed as a hub, as Middle Eastern carriers are aggressively extending their networks to other points within Africa.

On the upside – for airlines – is the drop in oil price to US\$83 per barrel in mid-October 2014, which has resulted in lower jet fuel prices. But the decrease in oil price is not likely to filter through to a drop in air fares, experts say.

Meaker says the industry remains under pressure despite the reduction in oil prices. “The devaluation of the rand has had an enormous impact on input costs. 48% of our costs – fuel, maintenance and aircraft – are dollar based. With the fall from R9,59 to the US dollar in October last year to its current levels of around R11 to the dollar, the impact of this 15% rise in rand translation has been quite severe.”

Meanwhile, the biggest opportunity for airlines in 2015 is Big Data analytics, says Meaker. “As we are able to learn more about our customers, their needs and behaviours, we will be able to match them to product and service more effectively and provide greater value. Harnessing data and making effective use of it will undeniably be the big opportunity in the years ahead.”



More B&Bs and SMEs

Nedbank’s **Howard Stephens** says an increasing number of corporates are starting to turn to bed and breakfast facilities. He says whereas previously around only 5% of corporates would book B&Bs, this has now increased to 30%.

Peter Schoeman, sales and marketing director of City Lodge Hotel Group, hopes that the SME market will show signs of recovery in 2015, along with bigger corporates, as 2014 was particularly hard hit by the platinum strike, the metalworkers strike, public holidays and very weak economic activity.

Overall, however, he believes the hospitality industry can be cautiously optimistic about 2015. In the hospitality sector, the economy is likely to recover slightly from a very weak 2014, he says. “This should stimulate business travel in our core market.”

He adds though: “Managing costs will also continue to be critical for those in the hospitality industry as service providers such as Eskom continue to raise their fees above inflation.”



Survival of the fittest

2014 was the year that saw the retail travel industry in South Africa tighten its belt, focus on cost containment and fight for market share in a stagnant environment, says **Vanya Lessing**, ceo of Sure Travel. She warns that in 2015, in order to grow, travel management companies will require innovation and much more of an entrepreneurial spirit to create new opportunities. “As far as retail travel is concerned, we must prepare ourselves with a new business plan. The business model will change. Every business cycle has a sell by date. Every business owner will be looking at ways to survive. The key discipline will be to shed flab. If it doesn’t add value, eliminate it! Blinding optimism that things will stay the same is very dangerous.”



Value-for-money

Value for money will remain a key focus in the car rental industry. **Martin Lydall**, Europcar’s chief commercial officer says, as such, demand for domestic travel within the corporate market is expected to increase. He believes consumers



Lance Smith, Avis executive of sales



Debbie Duncan, sales and marketing manager, Traveluxion



Wayne Hill, Emperors Palace gm of hotels and resort operations

will start exploring more affordable domestic options and will be enticed by very competitive offers and packages. "The base of domestic travellers continues to grow each year," he says.

Stephens believes the car rental industry is in for a tough year. He foresees the industry will be faced with the same challenge as in 2014, saying that there are too many competitors in the market, making it crucial for car rental companies to have the right selection of car types where rates and availability are uniform.

Lance Smith, Avis executive of sales, doesn't expect any major game changers in 2015, but adds that the Internet and particularly mobile technology will continue to become more important for travellers.



Tech talk

Throughout 2015 travel buyers can expect to see developments on the technology front that will allow them to operate more efficiently and that assist them in cutting costs.

Debbie Duncan, sales and marketing manager of Traveluxion, says: "We know that saving money is always top of mind for corporates and 2015 will be no different. One aspect of this will be the more effective use of technology to assist in controlling costs, tracking policy compliance and tightening controls over spending habits."

The coming year will see a surge in demand for technology that can assist corporates in owning real-time data that allows them to view and approve costs before they are incurred, Duncan adds. "We are experiencing greater interest in this technology. Travel managers will be expected to pro-actively provide such solutions to the companies they service."

Paul East says the most impactful development in 2014 was the growth in social media and mobile technology. In addition to meeting traveller demands, the constant connection through social media has enabled companies to enhance duty of care and track their travellers at every point in their journey as well as push vital information to them in terms of alerts or SMS messaging – which is of great value when faced with an unexpected crisis or travel disruption, says East.

The challenge associated with this shift towards increased mobile travel technology is that it will inherently transfer some control over to travellers, which may in turn influence compliance and pose some challenges to effective programme management by corporate travel managers. "Business travellers have a multitude of options at their fingertips, and the challenge for travel buyers will be keeping travellers from straying beyond corporate negotiated arrangements with preferred airlines and hotels, which often represent significant cost savings," East says.



MICE

The South African MICE industry is poised for growth in 2015. Adriaan Liebetrau, ceo of SAACI, explains the introduction of FlySafair on some domestic routes is presenting consumers with additional flight options and competitive prices.

The main challenge for 2015, says Liebetrau, will be the tightening of government budgets when it comes to travel, meetings and conferences. He says these cuts come off the back of the rate cap that was already introduced by government last year, which stipulated that officials could not pay more than R1 300 per day for accommodation, breakfast, dinner, parking the tourism levy and other services.

Wayne Hill, Emperors Palace gm of hotels and resort operations, agrees and says that the gap created by travel budget cuts for government officials is one of the reasons why Peermont will increasingly be focusing on the domestic market.

Safety considerations will continue to be an important aspect of travel procurement management in 2015, Hill expects. He advises that travel buyers opt for one-stop-shop options, which will allow delegates to stay in one location and enjoy the benefits of different entertainment options and restaurants.

Internationally, Eastern Europe and Turkey will be attractive options for the MICE market in 2015, Hill says. He adds that Russia remains largely untapped in the super premium category.



Game changers

The new BEE requirements will also bring about significant challenges. Howard Stephens foresees the new requirements changing the way a lot of companies do business and choose their suppliers. "This will be one of the biggest game-changers. 2015 is likely to be a rough ride," he says.

The changing demographics of corporate travellers, from Gen X to Millennials, will also increasingly impact on corporate travel. Paul East says Gen Y is more likely to incorporate leisure within their corporate travel, which poses some complications. "Managing this integration of business and leisure travel from a corporate perspective comes with challenges around supplier agreement compliance, cost management and reimbursement as well as liability and risk mitigation," he says.

Meanwhile, corporate travel has felt the negative impact of the tightening of visa requirements across the continent coupled with the resulting retaliation by other countries, says Alan Reid. The expansion of terror groups in East and West Africa as well as the Ebola outbreak has also had a negative effect on corporate travel into Africa. "I believe the full impact of these challenges will be felt in 2015," he says.

How to *succeed* in 2015

Put suppliers under pressure

COMPANIES with low exposure to Africa will need to “sweat” their preferred suppliers for the best agreements for domestic travel, says GBTA’s **Jim Weighell**. “If travel managers have all the necessary information on the company’s behaviour over the past year, they can put pressure on their suppliers and request better deals or more perks, such as free lounge access or additional upgrades.”

Budget conservatively

“Monitor your company’s overall business performance and outlook, and try to anticipate cutbacks or expansions,” says Weighell. “Communicate with financial managers within your organisation and ascertain their outlooks. Manage your data and understand the trends and behaviours of travellers within your organisation.”

Investigate alternatives

Travel buyers should not shy away from opportunities that present alternatives to travel. “Travel buyers should review alternative

or ‘virtual’ travel options, such as video conferencing,” Weighell says.

Place less emphasis on price

Rodger Forster of Airlink, says travel buyers should choose their airline wisely based on sustainability of service. “The best price is not always the best choice. Reliability and on time performance is material to your customer. Multi-sector itinerary single ticketing is a good insurance policy.”

Don’t be blinded by agreements

Targeted special fares will continue to appear in the retail market, with some fares lower than client corporate fares, says **Paul East** of Wings Travel Management. “When this is the case, travel managers will need to consider the implications to the company of taking the best fare of the day to maximise their savings as they risk jeopardising their corporate fares.”

Monitor traveller alerts

With regard to safety and security, travel buyers should keep a close eye on traveller alerts around health and safety from both their TMC

and government agencies because the situation is continually changing and evolving. He says “Choose a solid TMC partner with accurate traveller tracking and remember that while we can’t predict the major disruptions caused by economic uncertainty, natural disasters, pandemics or terrorism, we must continually plan for the unexpected.”

Seek out experience

There will always be a need for interaction with and support from experienced travel professionals who can effectively problem solve, says East. “Travel buyers should carefully consider the expertise behind their TMC’s technical platform.”

Learn from the traveller

A good travel policy is necessary, but doesn’t change traveller behavior, says **Peter Long**, gm of Amadeus in South Africa. “Look at ways to engage with travellers in a way that you can inform and educate them but also learn from them regarding the challenges and reasons for their specific preferences.” ■

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Independent hotels: *demand is building*

PHOTO: ANGALA BOUTIQUE HOTEL

Corporates are increasingly booking accommodation outside of large hotel chains. **Debbie Badham** investigates.

TIMES are changing and corporates are no longer avoiding booking outside of large hotel chains due to concerns around quality assurance. The needs of both the business traveller and the company itself have become more complex, making it necessary for service providers to implement strategies to enhance the accessibility of independent hotels.

"Historically, corporate travel buyers would book with chain hotel brands because they knew they could expect an 'across the board', uniform hospitality offering regardless of the destination," says **Caroline Daniel**, account director for Africa at Preferred Hotel Group. She says buyers are becoming increasingly interested in accommodation that is unique and in tune with the local surroundings, while at the same time meeting their expectations for business-orientated services and facilities.

Daniel notes that the Preferred Hotel Group's numbers are up

considerably from last year, largely because of the enthusiasm corporate travellers are showing for the independent hotel experience.

Technology companies are also improving their systems to provide easier access to independent hotels. Earlier this year, Travelport acquired Hotelzon, a business-to-business hotel distribution technology provider, in a bid to give corporates and TMCs quicker access to a greater range of independent hotels.

Global hospitality ceo of Travelport, **Niklas Andreen**, says that outside of the US, less than 20% of accommodation is booked through large hotel chains. "It's become fundamental for us to change how we view accommodation," he says.

The emphasis is on enhanced experience. Daniel says the expectations of corporate travellers

are becoming more individualised than ever before. As such, the Preferred Group's emphasis is on championing properties that have a connection with their surroundings and the flexibility to cater for the needs of each guest. "No two properties in our portfolio of 650 member hotels are alike, yet they all maintain the same high

level of service and quality that we monitor through our Integrated Quality Assurance programme, which involves on-site inspections and daily online consumer reviews."

While independent and boutique hotels are well positioned to cater for this shift in consumer demand, chain hotels have to adapt. "The chain hotel model has been affected to the extent that they now recognise the need to get into the independent space and are rolling out their

independent-style, branded collections,"

Andreen adds that the need for experiences of a different nature has simply become a part of global culture, meaning smaller hotel chains are rapidly becoming important revenue streams for TMCs. This in turn makes them an important point of focus for technology providers within the industry.

Sabre's strategy is to continuously add the best possible selection of properties into the Sabre marketplace. The technology provider recently introduced HRS, a European provider of more than 50 000 different properties, including a wide range of independent properties, into its marketplace. **Yannis Karmis**, vice president of global corporate solutions for Sabre Travel Network says its ultimate goal is to enable travel managers to best determine how these properties can help meet the objectives they have defined for their travel programme.

“It's become fundamental for us to change how we view accommodation.”

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HOW TO ENSURE what you see is what you get

LOCALLY, the increased demand for independent hotels, boutique hotels and B&Bs relates to more than just a growing interest in unique experiences. Corporates are more concerned with governance.

Kim Koen, head of Red Stamp Club (RSC), says the shift towards independent establishments and B&Bs can be traced back to the introduction of the Best Available Rate in the South African market as well as to the 2010 Soccer World Cup, when large numbers of guest houses elevated their exposure to gain business. "This made corporates realise that there are ways of accessing cheaper accommodation that still fulfils the needs of their corporate programme."

Koen adds that around 40% of accommodation booked

by SA corporates is through B&Bs, guest houses and the like – a statistic that is also partly attributed to the fact that many corporates require their employees to travel to areas where there aren't hotel chains.

But, although there is demand, the issue with these types of establishments is that it can be difficult for travel buyers to uphold duty of care concerns.

As a result, HRG Rennie's Travel consulted its corporate clients, asking them what their primary challenges were. Complications regarding governance, health and safety and quality assurance when booking with unknown brands, were raised. Corporates were also frustrated with correct and timeous invoicing.

RSC was born from this. A significant part of its proposition is the fact that the club involves itself in the education of the

guest houses that form part of its database. RSC has a strategic approach to bringing establishments on board, ensuring that it works with enough guest houses to support its clients' business requirements in each area. Currently, Red Stamp Club has a database of over 800 guest houses that it communicates with on a regular basis.

As part of its service offering, RSC sends individuals out to ensure that member establishments have what they claim to offer. Should an issue arise, RSC will investigate the problem. What initially began as an HRG Rennie's Travel initiative is drawing support and interest from a number of different TMCs.

Not surprisingly, the Red Stamp Club service offering has seen significant uptake from corporates. Koen says the



Kim Koen, head of Red Stamp Club

service has generated great enthusiasm from corporate South Africa, saying that clients have found their administrative and governance issues are being resolved. "This collaboration is supporting the creation of world-class experiences to not only corporate travellers, but travellers from around the globe," she notes.



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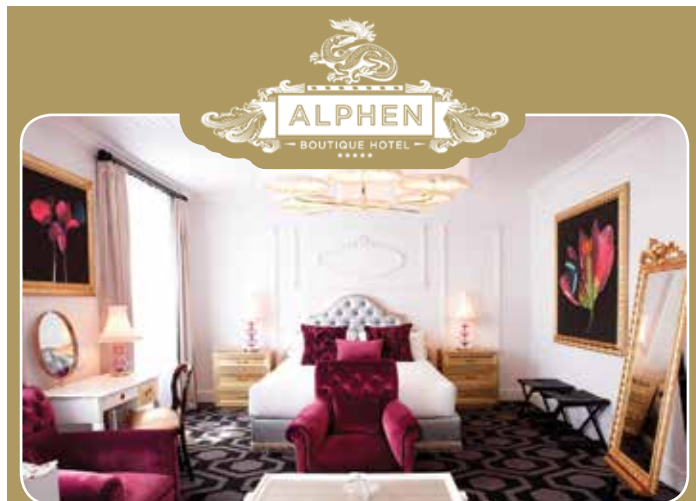
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A first for Mantis in Lagos

THE Mantis Collection has expanded its portfolio into West Africa with The George Hotel – its first hotel in Lagos – due to open soon.

The five-star hotel has 62 rooms ranging from standard, superior and luxury rooms to studio and luxury suites. There are also four penthouse suites.

The Da Vinci restaurant will offer a choice of buffet, à la carte or fine-dining.

The hotel offers a number of meeting rooms including an executive boardroom and a business centre, as well as a fitness centre, cocktail bar and pool deck, 24-hour in-room dining and complimentary WiFi.

New boutique hotel opens in Lusaka

THE Latitude Hotels Group has opened Latitude 15 in Lusaka, Zambia.

Facilities at the 18-room hotel include free WiFi

and laundry, an à la carte restaurant, bar, pool and garden. Rooms are equipped with LCD televisions, Nespresso machines and a mini bar.

Rates start at US\$220 (R2 428) per night single occupancy and US\$270 (R2 980) per night double occupancy, breakfast included.

New Shangri-La brand all about new experiences

SHANGRI-LA International Hotel Management has launched its new 'virtual-persona' hotel brand, Hotel Jen, for 10 hotels opening in major cities in Asia Pacific.

The Hotel Jen brand is inspired by the virtual persona 'Jen', a professional hotelier who loves life, travel and the adventure of discovering new places.

During the first phase of the Hotel Jen launch, Shangri-La hotels in Singapore, Hong Kong, Brisbane, Penang, Johor Bahru, Manila,

Maldives, Beijing and Shenyang will be rebranded to Hotel Jen. Future Hotel Jen development projects are under discussion for key gateway cities in south-east Asia.

Hotel Jen Orchardgateway, recently opened in Singapore and was the first hotel to undergo the brand transformation.

Hotel Jens will have free WiFi and mobile charging stations throughout. The restaurants will focus on local products and offer free 'coffee/snack-box-to-go' after

breakfast and 'grab-and-go kiosks'.

"We are excited to be launching and engaging this new brand so rapidly. We definitely want to retain our existing customer-base, who have been extremely loyal to us, but we also recognise that their needs have changed. Today's guests want more flexibility, as busy non-traditional work hours tend to blur the boundaries between business and leisure," said **Lothar Nessmann**, chief operations officer of the Hotel Jen brand. ■



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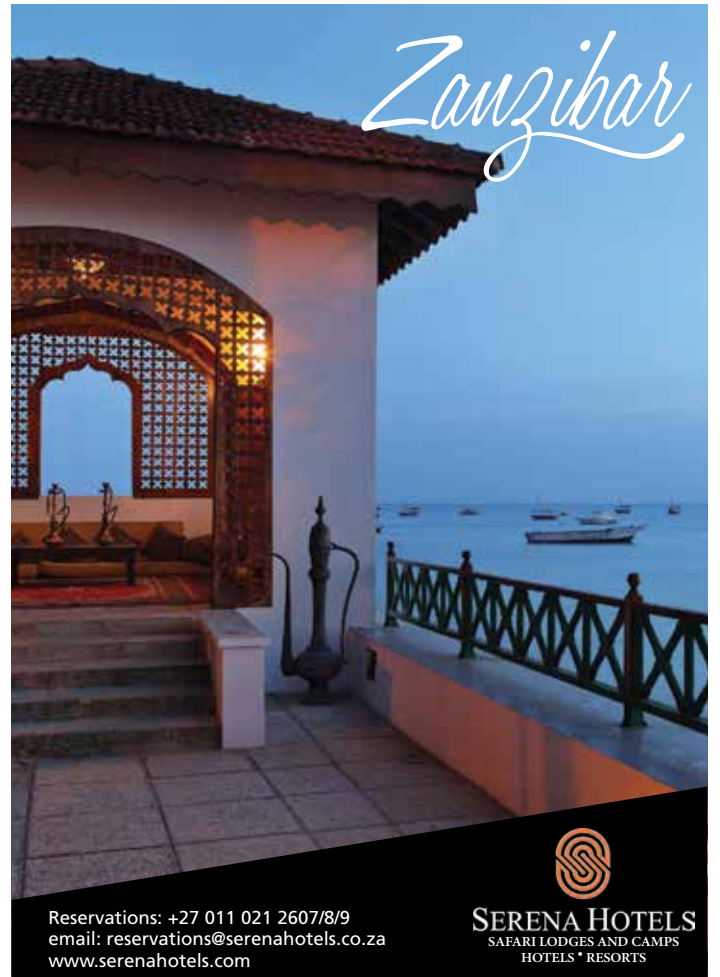
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1. MEDITERRANEAN

Discover the World. Princess Cruises Special: Mediterranean and Adriatic cruise from R21 299 per person sharing. Special includes flights ex-Johannesburg to Barcelona and return ex-Rome, seven nights on-board the Emerald Princess, all meals, entertainment, taxes and return transfers from the airport to the pier. Itinerary: Barcelona, Rome, Marseille, Genoa, Florence, Tunis and Sicily. Offer is valid for June 6 departure.

2. LONDON & PARIS

United Europe. 'Tale of Two Cities' London and Paris Special: rates are from R10 490 per person sharing. Offer includes three nights in London, three nights in Paris in three-star accommodation, breakfast daily, hop-on-hop-off bus in London and Paris and second-class Eurostar London to Paris. Offer is valid for travel from January to March.

3. BALI

Perfect Destinations. Five-star Grand Aston package: six nights from R15 111 per person sharing. Package includes flights ex-Johannesburg, return airport-hotel transfers, and six nights' accommodation in a deluxe room with breakfast daily. Valid for travel from April 1 to June 21. Bookings to be done by March 31.

4. SODWANA BAY

Travel with Options. Rates are from R3 795 per person sharing. Special includes four nights' accommodation, three meals per day with



9. MALAYSIA

F1 Grand Prix Tours. Malaysia Grand Prix from R12 500 per person sharing. Rate includes return flights ex-Johannesburg, airport taxes; return airport transfers, three nights' accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis and two-day circuit transfer. Excludes race ticket. Tour departs March 26. Four-night packages are also available.

wine at dinner, free WiFi and a 20% discount per person on any game drive. Kids under five years stay and eat free. Seven-night packages are also available. Book by December 31 to qualify for this special. Travel allowed until September 2015. 10% discount on pre-booked dive packages.

5. FRANCE

French Excursions. Land-only package from €521 (R7 186) per person sharing. Paris, St. Germaine: four nights' accommodation in Paris with breakfast. Visit Fragonard perfume museum at La Boutique des Saveurs; panoramic tour of Montparnasse; dinner and cabaret at Paradis Latin cabaret. Offer expires March 31.

6. TURKEY

Emirates Holidays. Istanbul: five-star Pera Palace Jumeirah from

R13 095 per person sharing. Offer Includes return flights ex-Johannesburg and three nights' accommodation with breakfast daily. Rate is valid until March 31.

7. SPAIN

Explore Spain. Andalusia, 10-day tour from R8 490 per person sharing. Offer Includes seven nights' accommodation with breakfast, three bus tickets, two Hop-On-Hop-Off tours, a walking tour in Granada, olive oil tour, wine tasting and river cruise. Excludes airfares and optional tours. Offer is valid until May 1.

8. CAPE TOWN

Three Cities Mandela Rhodes Place. 'Summer in the City' corporate promotion: rates are from R1 295 per person per night. Rate includes accommodation, breakfast, a dinner voucher to the value

of R100, parking, plus 200MB WiFi. Offer expires January 31. Booking code: MRPCG01.

10. NAMIBIA

Just Holidays. Thirteen-night Etosha and the Caprivi Strip package: rates are from R13 350 per person sharing. Price includes two nights at Erindi Game Reserve all inclusive; two nights at Hakusembe River Lodge bed and breakfast, four nights at Kalizo Lodge bed and breakfast with the additional option of dinner, one night at Guest Farm Ghaub, two nights at Mokuti Lodge, dinner, bed and breakfast; two nights at Okaukuejo Camp bed and breakfast. Valid from December 20 to January 4. ■

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



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