

FEBRUARY 2016

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TOP TIPS

*to avoid
business-trip
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on the rise

12

*innovative
airline services*

HOW TO

keep middle managers compliant

SHIFTING MINDSETS

Thami Motlhabane gets strategic about events



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Editor's note

It's a new year and a fresh start, particularly for *Travel Buyer*, which sees a new editor take the helm.

Sue van Winsen has rejoined the company as consulting editor on both *Travel Buyer* and its online sister platform, *Travel & Meetings Buyer* (www.tam.co.za). Sue successfully headed up Now Media's inbound tourism trade publication, *Southern African Tourism Update* for several years, leaving in 2014 to join Wilderness Safaris. We are excited to welcome Sue back to the team and know she will take *Travel Buyer* from strength to strength!

The announcement, which was made at the end of 2015, comes after a number of changes to management at Now Media. For more on this story, see page 2.

Cyber crime in travel is always a topical issue – in fact, according to **Christo Snyman**, national director of Forensic Services for Mazars, no less than 77% of African companies have been affected by some form of fraud. Read more about how you can avoid becoming the next victim of cyber criminals, as well as how you can take your

procurement practices to the next level in our ABTA conference report back.

Young, eager and keen to travel (and happy to spend company money when doing so), Generation Y are starting to enter middle management, and with that comes a new set of challenges in terms of trying to keep them to stick to policy. We've spoken to experts to get their top tips for keeping millennials in check.

On the events side, **Thami Motlhabane** from The Unusuals shares her views on some of the exciting changes she's seen in terms of how the industry is approaching events. Today it's all about taking a holistic stance, and making sure events fit in with all other aspects of a company's brand. We're also shining the spotlight on luxury conferencing, delving into what clients expect from high-end meetings, and what suppliers are doing to meet clients' needs.

Keep reading!

Natasha Schmidt
(natashas@nowmedia.co.za)

COVER

Thami Motlhabane speaks to *Travel Buyer* about the importance of placing emphasis on the strategic side of events. Cover photograph by **Megan Fischer**.

| | |
|---|----|
| News | 2 |
| • 2016 – rethink how you do business | |
| • US adds restrictions to Visa Waiver Programme | |
| ABTA Conference 2015 | 7 |
| • Spotlight on corporate travel in Africa | |
| Profile | 8 |
| • How strategic are your events? | |
| Meetings | 10 |
| • How does today's delegate view luxury? | |
| • Bush escapes are in demand | |
| On the radar - Dar es Salaam | 14 |
| • Beyond the boardroom | |
| On the radar - Mauritius | 15 |
| • Best for business | |
| On the radar - Airlines | 17 |
| • Top airline innovations that change the way we travel | |
| China | 20 |
| • On the rise | |
| Big Issue | 22 |
| • How to keep middle managers compliant | |
| Deal Detective | 24 |
| • Travelinfo's latest top travel deals | |

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New editor for Travel Buyer

SUE van Winsen will become the new consulting editor on *Travel Buyer* and its online sister platform, Travel & Meetings Buyer. Van Winsen is the former editor of Now Media's *Tourism Update*, and rejoins the company with her recent appointment.

The announcement, which was made at the end of last year by Now Media md, **Anton Marsh**, comes after a number of changes to management.

Former *Travel Buyer* and *TNW* editor, **Natasha Schmidt**, has been appointed deputy publisher for outbound travel publications. She will take over many of **Kate Nathan's** current functions on the sales and marketing side of the business. Meanwhile, Nathan has been appointed to the Now Media board as group sales director.

Former deputy editor of *Travel*



Sue van Winsen and Natasha Schmidt

Buyer, **Debbie Badham**, has become the new editor of *Travel News Weekly* and the

online daily, *eTNW*.

The new appointments became effective on January 1.

City Lodge opens new hotel in central JHB

THE City Lodge Hotel Group has opened the first phase of rooms at its 148-room City Lodge Hotel Newtown. The property is expected to be fully operational by the end of the month.

Situated in Newtown on the western side of Johannesburg's CBD, the seven-storey hotel has two boardrooms (a 16-seater and a 10-seater), a mini-gym, swimming pool, coffee shop and lounge.

It offers easy access to the CBD and motorways and is a short distance away from Park Station where the Gautrain links to OR Tambo International Airport. The new hotel is adjacent to the Newtown Junction shopping centre and Museum Africa and within reach of the SAB World of Beer and the Market Theatre.

The opening of City Lodge Hotel Newtown comes shortly after the opening of the 90-room Road Lodge Pietermaritzburg in December.

2016 – rethink how you do business

TMCs will need to reconsider their business models and place greater emphasis on service excellence in 2016 if they hope to survive the tough trading environment.

Last year saw significant down-trading among many corporate clients, with economists forecasting near stagnant economic growth for the South African economy this year, says md of Carlson Wagonlit Travel, **Ben Langner**.

Although this will not necessarily play out in the reduction of demand, it does create an environment in which companies are reluctant to seek opportunities, which immediately translates to less travel, adds gm for Travel Counsellors in South Africa, **Mladen Lukic**.

Increased consolidation in the TMC environment will also create instability, comments **Claude Vankeirsbilck**, chief sales and marketing officer at Tourvest Travel Services. However, he maintains where there are challenges, there are



Mladen Lukic, gm, Travel Counsellors

always opportunities for those who are quick enough and smart enough to act.

As a result of the crippling rand exchange rate and the lack of elasticity in pricing, price will not be enough to differentiate travel companies in 2016, says Lukic. "People are no longer satisfied to base their decision on price. They are looking for value. In the value-based

system, quality providers will beat large companies with no flexibility and complete inability to personalise their offering."

He adds that 2016 will bring about some "aggressive failures" of companies that still think they can provide commoditised, catalogue-based travel.

A significant number of travel managers will expect "enhanced TMC services" to have a high impact on their programmes in 2016, comments Langner. This could be anything from visa processing and VIP travel on demand – including private jets or concierge services – to leisure bookings and relocation support.

The focus on quality of services means training will become increasingly important, notes **Adriaan Liebetrau**, ceo of SAACI. "Educated and skilled staff are becoming increasingly scarce and suppliers in the business events environment are going to focus a lot more on internal training."

Marriott Rewards partners with SAA Voyager

MARRIOTT Rewards, the loyalty programme of Marriott International, has announced a partnership with South African Airways Voyager. Marriott Rewards members can now earn SAA Voyager miles for stays at selected Marriott hotels and can also redeem points for SAA Voyager miles.

Marriott Rewards members who designate SAA Voyager as their earning preference can receive Voyager miles on USD spent on qualifying hotel charges and room rates. Members are required to confirm at which Marriott hotel brands these benefits will apply.



PHOTO: FASTJET

Fastjet launches new routes

FASTJET has officially launched flights between Johannesburg and Zanzibar, as well as between Johannesburg and Zimbabwe.

Fastjet Zimbabwe launched direct routes from OR Tambo to Harare and Victoria Falls on February 1. The airline operates daily, departing Harare at 06h15 and land in Johannesburg at 07h55. The return flight departs Johannesburg at 08h40 and arrives in Harare at 10h15. Johannesburg to Vic Falls flights will start on February 3, and will initially operate three times a

week on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

He said other plans included the expansion of services in Zambia. "As soon as we get permission to fly from Lusaka to Johannesburg, we will start flights on that route." He said the expansion of services was fastjet's attempt to drive more and more direct traffic into underserved areas, which would increase competition in the industry. "This will, in turn, encourage more people to fly around Africa," he said, adding that he expected rapid expansion within the African aviation market.

New md for BCD Travel

BCD Travel has appointed **Monique Hilton** as its new managing director for South Africa.

Hilton, who previously served as the regional travel director (Principal) for MEA at Barclays Africa Group, is not new to the BidTravel Group. She has held various roles in travel operations and account management within HRG Rennies Travel and HRG UK.

"Monique is well known in the travel industry and I have absolute confidence in her ability to lead BCD into the future. Monique has vast experience, both within the industry as well as from a corporate perspective," **Allan Lunz**, md of BidTravel said in a statement.

"I am thrilled to be given the responsibility of leading BCD South Africa, especially in a climate in which our customers are looking to us to present



Monique Hilton, managing director, BCD Travel

the right solutions that fit their travel programme," commented Hilton.

"With the support of the BCD Group, we are in a position to shape the next generation of business travel," she added.

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Madagascar introduces 30-day visa fees

THE Madagascar government has introduced fees for 30-day visas for both business and leisure travellers, with immediate effect.

Visitors entering Madagascar for 30 days or less will now pay R490,32 for a visa. Previously, the 30-day visa was free.

The visa can be obtained on arrival at the airport, provided visitors have the necessary documentation: a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months and has at least three blank pages, a return air ticket and a yellow fever card if arriving from an infected country.

Travellers applying for one-month (over 30 days) and three-month business visas must apply beforehand at the embassy.

In other news, Air Madagascar has ceased direct operations between Johannesburg and Antananarivo until further notice, due to non-profitability of the route. "We are suspending non-profitable routes within our network until further notice," said Air Madagascar in a statement. The airline says it will be in negotiations with other carriers servicing the route to ensure that passengers who had been ticketed were either still able to travel or refunded for purchased tickets.

FOR THE RECORD

In the December 2015/January 2016 issue of *Travel Buyer*, we incorrectly referred to the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) as the Global Business Travel Alliance. *Travel Buyer* regrets the error.

BA focuses on rewarding SMEs

BRITISH Airways has revealed changes on its On Business loyalty programme, which it believes offers a more compelling proposition to small and midsize companies. The programme has been made more flexible so members who want immediate savings have the option of an upfront discount on flights.

Points can be used for cabin upgrades or special offers. Rather than points awarded for distance flown, members now earn points on spend. An online account management tool enables companies with members to create customised reports and track who is earning on which routes and when.

The programme works across



BA's Cristina Graham (left) corporate sales manager, pictured with Tracey Lanjopoulos, ambassador for SA, and Edward Frost.

British Airways, American Airlines and Iberia. **Edward Frost**, BA's commercial manager for South and East Africa, says On Business

delivers real bottom-line benefits to businesses, with R680 million saved by more than 49 000 members globally.

US adds restrictions to Visa Waiver Programme

THE proposed enhancements to the US Visa Waiver Programme (VWP), which were first announced by the US Department of State in August last year, have been written into law. As a result, all South African travellers holding dual citizenship in countries permitted to enter the US without a visa, will now have to be in possession of electronic passports.

From April 1, travellers applying for admission into the US under the VWP will have to present an electronic, machine-readable passport that is fraud-resistant and contains biographic and biometric information. In addition, the use of Interpol's screening capabilities as well as a more robust implementation of information-sharing agreements between countries on the VWP will be incorporated into the VWP Programme. This has been written into the US's Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2009.

Rachael Penaluna, business



manager at Sure Maritime Travel, says the new e-passport requirement will bring about greater inconvenience and cost for South African travellers. "Currently, passengers travelling to the US with international EU passports do their own Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) online which means they can travel to the US without a visa. Now passengers will be required to apply for these e-passports which will bring about further complications

and more costs."

What's more, as part of the US's VWP reform and attempts to prevent terrorist travel, travellers will now not be permitted to enter the US if they have visited Iraq, Iran, Syria or Sudan at any time on or after March 1, 2011.

The preclearance facilities – which are currently available at 15 airports worldwide – will also be expanded to include more airports capable of screening passengers before they enter the US.

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Qatar tightens links with SA

IN December Qatar Airways expanded its reach in South Africa with the official launch of a four times a week Durban-Doha service. The airline already flies daily from Cape Town and double daily from Johannesburg.

Akbar Al Baker, Qatar Airways ceo, said he expected high load factors on the route to Durban, both in terms of leisure tourism and corporate travel. He said the development of the Dube Trade Port in Durban offered "tremendous opportunities" for further growth in Durban and South Africa. "Qatar is one of South Africa's largest trading partners in the Middle East and adding Durban to our existing South African routes will further strengthen the bond between the two countries, especially in the tourism sector."

Al Baker said it was high time that Qatar Airways and the other Gulf carriers expanded in Africa to bring more competition to the aviation sector on the continent. He said African carriers were currently undercapitalised and neglected by their governments. "African governments should subsidise their national carriers in order to let them stand on their own feet. Once that happens, and people have confidence that



Pictured here at the launch (from left) are Mike Mabuyakhulu (KZN MEC Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs), Akbar Al Baker, Edward Senzo Mchunu and councillor James Nxumalo (mayor of Durban).

the airline is safe, there is huge potential.

"Africa is an underserved continent with the largest potential for growth. The continent has been starved of proper air services for a long time. On the few air services available, I think the airlines have really taken the African people to the cleaners. It is obvious that airlines like us and our Gulf colleagues need to operate to Africa in order to give the African people connectivity, good value for money, a high standard product and respect as passengers," he added.

Qatar Airways flies to Durban on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, using a Boeing 787. The flight, which makes a stop in Johannesburg, leaves Doha at 07h45 to arrive in Durban at 17h35. The return flight departs Durban at 18h45 to arrive in Doha at 06h20 the next day.

Premier of KZN, **Edward Senzo Mchunu**, commented that direct long-haul air services from Durban were the lifeblood of the province's economy. "We want to believe that connectivity between KZN and Qatar is going to grow leisure tourism and trade in leaps and bounds."

Ethiopian launches direct CPT – Addis Ababa flights

ETHIOPIAN Airlines is launching two direct flights between Cape Town and Addis Ababa, effective February 3.

The flights will operate on Wednesdays and Fridays, departing Cape Town at 14h55 and arriving in Addis Ababa at 22h10. The return flight will also operate on Wednesdays and Fridays, departing Addis Ababa at 08h30 and arriving in Cape Town at 13h55. It will be operated using a Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

"This expansion on the Cape Town service complements seven existing flights operating between Cape Town and Addis Ababa, increasing the amount of flights between the cities from seven to nine. Four of these flights depart Cape Town with a stop in Gaborone, the remaining three depart Cape Town with a stop in Johannesburg," said **Abel Alemu**, regional manager of Ethiopian Airlines, Southern Africa.

Last year the airline said it was also considering introducing daily or double-daily services to Durban, with plans to operate the route using a Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

Fly Blue Crane extends CPT - Kimberley flights

DUE TO the success of its seasonal Cape Town-Kimberley service, Fly Blue Crane plans to make the route permanent. The service, which was launched on December 1, was originally intended to stop on January 17.

"While our initial plan was to offer this service until mid-January, there has been such an overwhelming response from our customers that we are now extending it beyond the festive season, with a plan to make the flights permanent," Fly Blue Crane chief

commercial officer, **Theunis Potgieter**, said in a statement.

Tickets were already on sale beyond January 17, he added.

Meanwhile, the airline confirmed it would discontinue flights from Nelspruit to OR Tambo International Airport due to capacity constraints.

"We will reconsider the route in future as our fleet grows and when we are able to offer at least three flights a day to Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport," Potgieter said. "Passengers booked for flights after January 8 will be refunded." ■



Spotlight on corporate travel in Africa

The 2015 ABTA Conference saw corporate travel professionals from around Africa congregate at The Westin Cape Town between November 21 and 23 to tackle pressing issues such as fraud, big data and payment solutions. **Debbie Badham** reports.

PAYMENT solutions for travel into Africa are an ongoing challenge. Not all merchants accept credit cards and where payment solutions exist, they don't always work, the result being that cash is still king.

During a robust breakaway discussion at the 2015 ABTA conference, delegates discussed the merits of looking beyond cash as a payment solution for Africa because, as was brought up, cash creates significant hassles when it hits the back office. Some members of the floor pointed out that most hotels across Africa had, in fact, started accepting credit cards, making a card-in-pocket solution an increasingly viable option.

However, buyers were equally quick to point out that this usually resulted in too many statements, which create a reconciliation nightmare. Another delegate suggested the use of an online reconciliation tool that would enable travellers to do their own reconciliation and alleviate back office administration. "Prepay as much as you can so that the travellers have as little to reconcile as possible," she said.

Additional frustrations came under the spotlight, such as not being able to do anything with foreign currency exchanged while travelling on returning to South Africa, and the fact that bank suppliers in Africa were not always as efficient as one might expect. "Sometimes the supplier you need to pay won't receive your payment for up to three months, but instead of letting you know they haven't made the transfer, the banks simply keep quiet," said one delegate.

How to prevent fraud

It's not surprising that the issue of fraud was once again brought up for discussion, during what proved to be an extremely popular session at the conference.

Christo Snyman, national director of Forensic Services for Mazars, spoke specifically about



PHOTO: DEBBIE BADHAM

*On the second evening of the conference, travel buyers were treated to a fun evening of cocktail making. Teams competed with one another to see who could mix the most stylish drinks. Celebrating with one of their winning cocktails are (from left): **Nicolas Moses** (Hollard), **Merrill Isherwood** (SARS), **Monique Swart** (ABTA), **Glynis Marthinussen** (Diners Club) and **Phillip Gade** (Starwood).*

cyber crime threats in travel. He noted that in Africa, research revealed that 77% of companies were affected by fraud. At least 47% of those report theft of physical assets or stock. He said while counterfeit fraud had decreased, card-not-present fraud had actually increased.

Using a convincing demonstration, Snyman showed delegates how easy it is to construct fake emails. He said fraudsters were able to learn a lot about a company through the use of spyware. "They gain access to your computer, track your correspondence and then, when the time comes to make payment, they send you a fake email, pretending to be the supplier requesting payment."

Snyman suggested several tips to prevent this type of fraud:

- Pick up the phone and verify with the supplier that they are the ones you are corresponding with
- Conduct monthly virus scans on your computers
- Regularly change your passwords
- Start a new email and break the email thread

Taking procurement practice to the next level

The evolution of spend management was presented by **Chris Pouney**, partner at Nina & Pinta. While Pouney pointed out that most companies had evolved to a point where they were analysing their spend, he said there was still room for significant progress when it came to excellence in procurement practice.

He suggested three key areas of focus in the pursuit of excellence.

Recognise the value of partnerships. "Demand performance and transparency and also accept that a profit will be made," he advised.

Apply strategic sourcing principles to all your key categories. While most buyers dedicate their full attention to air, hotel and ground transportation spend, these only account for 65% of total travel spend, meaning most companies are ignoring the other 35%.

Lastly, travel buyers need to ensure that the value of business travel is demonstrated both internally and externally. "Remember that you are either at

the table or you are on the menu," Pouney cautioned, emphasising that buyers need to remind their internal stakeholders of the value of travel.

Make the most of your data

Within six years we will no longer be able to process the volume of data available. This was an important issue raised during another of the conference's smaller breakaway sessions, highlighting the importance of companies understanding how to make sense of their travel data.

While most companies will use their data to formulate quick answers to predefined questions, it was pointed out that the real purpose of data was to provide companies with information without already having to know the questions. This is done through a data lake containing unlimited amounts of scaleable data in any format.

At the end of the day, the question is not how much data you have but rather how that data is used to achieve relevance. ■

HOW STRATEGIC?

are your events

The event industry is in the midst of change, with greater emphasis increasingly placed on the more strategic side of events.

Debbie Badham speaks to **Thami Motlhabane**, senior account director for The Unusuals, about shifting mindsets.

AT THE forefront of the drive to better understand the business aspect of events, **Thami Motlhabane** is a wealth of information when it comes to holistic event strategies.

Motlhabane recently joined The Unusuals, an event company that operates under the umbrella of ad agency, the Creative Counsel. As part of an ad agency, the company has a strong focus on turnkey solutions, emphasising that eventing is a critical part of sales, branding and communications.

Though she is just 30, Motlhabane has been in the business of events for eight years. A scholar of note, she currently holds a degree in communication science, honours in integrated organisational communications and a post-graduate qualification in marketing and management. She is also currently working towards her masters in communication science.

Motlhabane began her career as a client relations manager for a large organisation based in Sandton, where she was often tasked with the organisation of events such as golf days. However, it wasn't long before she was head hunted by a company operating in the economic development space, giving her the opportunity to enhance her skills in marketing and business development.

Her next career step saw her become far more involved in eventing as she took on the role of events manager at a well-known TMC. "While communications was my first love, events stole my heart," she quips.

The move to The Unusuals was a strategic one, as Motlhabane believes in the importance of chasing exposure to develop oneself into a professional who will add value wherever they go. "I needed to chase my goals and dreams," she says.

Finding the unusual in each event

A significant part of the reason for Motlhabane's recent move was her drive to become more involved in the strategic side

of events. "Positioned within an ad agency, The Unusuals has a good understanding of the branding, concept, logistics and post-event elements that form part of events," she comments.

When it comes to its clients, the company operates across all sectors and caters for everything from small groups to conferences, concerts, exhibitions and product launches. She says a significant part of the Unusuals' value proposition, as its name suggests, is to find the "unusual" within each event. "Each event is a journey of its own," she maintains.

Explaining what she means by this, Motlhabane says that more recently there has been a move towards more holistic sensory experiences within the events arena. "For example, if meeting planners can recreate feelings of nostalgia, then each time delegates remember that particular conference they will associate it with those feelings of nostalgia."

Are events truly understood?

One of the greatest challenges in event organisation, she says, is a lack of understanding of what events are actually about. "This can often result in unreasonable budgets and timelines," she comments. "Clients also don't always spell out what they actually want."

While clients don't always brief properly, meeting planners are also often expected to be magicians, which is a dangerous position to be in. "I thrive on pressure but there is a point when expectations become unrealistic and, in these cases, it's best to go back to basics and advise the clients on what realistically can be done. It's always best to under promise and over deliver," Motlhabane maintains.

On the other hand, she notes that because the industry is so saturated with suppliers, dealing with those that make certain promises and then simply don't deliver at all is another problem meeting planners often face.

"There is very little standardisation in eventing," she says. "This means that

the industry has become something of a free for all where it is difficult to establish credibility."

Continuation is key

When it comes to event strategy, Motlhabane explains that it is extremely important to remember that the intended approach should be carried out across all elements of the brand. "It is not about a strategy for each event in isolation but rather about continuation."

She notes that the industry is starting to see more and more corporates realising that events are largely about corporate identity. "This is good, because if they don't adopt this principle, their events models will become unsustainable."

She emphasises this point by noting that meetings are the space in which companies' stakeholder information is shared with potential investors, highlighting the need for strategy behind these meetings to be on point.


Innovation is critical to success. "If you only know pretty then you'll only ever be able to produce pretty," Motlhabane says.

Another important area to focus on is supplier relationships as she notes that strong relationships are key to keeping clients happy.

Event planners are research gurus

Uplifting potential young event planners is a cause that is close to Motlhabane's heart and she enjoys speaking on platforms that allow her to encourage young people and draw their attention to what eventing can do for them. "If I look at my own journey in eventing I see how I have learnt a very broad range of skills, including everything from business and entrepreneurial skills to legal, marketing and the like."

She says event management increases exposure to a wide range of industries. "Event planners are required to become research gurus of sorts. Were it not for my



involvement in the meeting industry, I don't think I would have become the research guru that I am now."

Focus on integrity

"Integrity is what gets you far in this industry," believes Motlhabane. She maintains that reputation is merely what people perceive of you and that integrity is what event planners should rather focus on.

"It's equally important to be able to dream big," she adds. "I always tell the individuals whom I mentor that it's important to dream, no matter how small the industry might seem." She says success will always involve discomfort. "You can't afford to be comfortable – if you are comfortable then you aren't growing."

Mentorship is something she undertakes consistently, maintaining that at the end of the day, it's people who make an industry what it is.

Her final piece of advice for event planners is to remain constantly aware that time is precious. "This is so important, not only as it applies to the quality of work delivered but also as it applies to time spent with loved ones. It's quality of time and not quantity of time that truly matters and it's important to focus on what you have achieved on a more personal level," she comments.

Expect big changes!

Motlhabane predicts that we can expect some exciting changes within the meetings and events industry. "These changes will fall largely in line with the merger between communication, marketing and eventing, which will affect the general direction of the industry. Anticipate great developments." ■

How does today's delegate view luxury?

These days, luxury is all about the experience. **Liesl Venter** finds out how this applies to the conferencing and event sector.

NOWADAYS luxury is far more about the experience than amassing luxury items and it has brought a complexity to the sector because, while status symbols are easily bought, buying an experience is more difficult.

A study conducted by Global Hospitality Services (HVS) found that travellers today do not always see money as a way to show-off. They would rather participate than flaunt. In other words, instead of having an expensive coffee machine in a bedroom they would rather have an experience in a hotel foyer, drinking coffee surrounded by people.

Affluent travellers all have their own definition of a luxury experience, says **Barak Hirschowitz**, president of the Luxury Hotel Association. "Although they all desire exclusive and authentic experiences, their personal preferences can vary quite extensively. Some might prefer high-tech, others would rather have high-touch, there are those who like private experiences while others want more communal ones. There



Adriaan Liebetrau, *ceo, Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (Saaci)*

is modern versus traditional, calm versus buzz and even healthy over decadent."

It is no different when it comes to conferencing, says **Adriaan Liebetrau**, *ceo of the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (Saaci)*. "With this in mind, luxury in the

conferencing sector is all about personal touch."

It is undoubtedly a segment that is growing. Globalisation, economic growth and affluence, as well as a younger generation of travellers who are shaking up the scene, according to HVS.

"We can expect more segmentation as hotel brands define their niche to grow market share," says Hirschowitz.

A positive shift

For Hirschowitz the shift from traditional luxury to luxury experiences is one that is extremely positive and will serve the industry well. It will also impact positively on the conferencing and event sector. "The buying preferences of the global affluent continues to shift from traditional luxury goods to luxury experiences with the biggest increase in travel and wellness," he says. "Globalisation has been driving growth in business travel while at the same time vacation stays are often combined with business. As such, business

travellers seek out hotel brands that offer both a first class business and leisure experience."

He says more investment in technology in conferencing and event venues can be expected from big hotel chains.

Determining the value of the experience

Despite the economic downturn, luxury is here to stay. "And although budget obviously plays a very big role, I don't think it all comes down to the rands and cents. Type of conference, attendees, theme and output all play a large role," he says. "Ultimately, it comes down to whether the conference will bring in more business," adds Hirschowitz.

At the same time, with luxury seen more and more as an experience, it's often not quantifiable in money terms. "In the conferencing sector we are seeing the luxury factor in a new way. It's about making the delegate feel special, giving that personal touch. It's all about being treated well."

Luxury brands meet changing demands

HOTEL brands are constantly evolving to meet ever-changing customer demands – this is even more evident in the luxury segment.

"The new luxury of today is time and so as a luxury hotel group we are constantly working on developing new measures and experiential initiatives to share with our guests to save them time and deliver a more inspiring travel experience when staying with us," says **Rob Cheng**, vice president of marketing for the The Peninsula Hotels.

"The new luxury also entails space – both physical and psychological, to cut through the clutter, hustle and bustle of a busy business or leisure trip with seamless service and amenities to

give guests a sense of calm and retreat," he adds.

Hotels have to differentiate themselves more and more, not in terms of price but from a lifestyle perspective, says **Hassan Ahdab**, vice president, regional director Africa & Indian Ocean Operations for Starwood Hotels & Resorts.

"It is about leveraging off the fact that while each person is different in terms of their personality, they are also different on each trip – what we call a trip persona," says Ahdab. "While today he may choose to stay at a Sheraton because he is on an official business trip, tomorrow he may choose a St Regis to celebrate his 25th wedding anniversary." a

When it comes to luxury,

the loyalty programme is an extremely important development. "Data shows that in the luxury segment, a loyalty programme is not just a nice add-on but a crucial instrument for recurring revenue," says Ahdab.

Brands will split focus

Starwood has aggressively grown its luxury brands in anticipation of the seismic growth of global demand.

"With rising global wealth and a new notion of luxury, we have seen two streams emerge: brands pursuing the masses with 'everyday' luxury and lifestyle products and, secondly, brands focusing on ultra-luxury products," says Ahdab.

For the future

"We foresee the current trend for luxury continuing, yet with a renewed focus on the 'new'," says Cheng. "Guests are looking for new destinations, hotels, restaurants, shopping, new food directions and so on. The bespoke element remains crucial. Travellers are looking for the most personalised options to suit them, their schedules, desires and dreams."

According to Ahdab, increased global flow and connectivity are changing business needs and creating new travel patterns, including a rise in corporate travel both to and from emerging economies like Africa.

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Bush escapes are in demand

Safari incentives and bush conferencing are on the increase. **Liesl Venter** investigates.

EVENT professionals agree that bush escapes remain a highly popular choice when it comes to MICE.

Bespoke experiences or money-can't-buy experiences are still very much sought after by the corporate sector, confirms **Maud Botten**, sales director for Uwin Iwin South Africa. And the African bush is able to deliver just that.

"The bush offers a very real experience," agrees **Peter-John**

Mitrovich, ceo of Grosvenor Tours. "It's not something that has to be artificially created with décor and audiovisual equipment. It does not have to be dressed up at all. It's all right there – the stars in the sky, the animals in the veld, the sun setting or rising over the African horizon. The beauty of the bush is undeniable and it is a major attraction. "Bush venues are busy and we are increasingly struggling to find availability. This speaks directly to how popular safaris have become," he adds.

However, as Botten points out, the bush appeals to a very specific client demographic. "We firmly believe in understanding the objectives

of the corporate event to ensure that the activities and environment complement and enhance the experience for the client. If, for instance, the client is celebrating and wants to have a party with loud music, then a bush venue would not be suitable as often there are noise level restrictions at such venues. However, should the objectives align with focused and uninterrupted strategy sessions, the bush is the perfect

environment, allowing delegates to de-stress and focus on the event."

"As city venues still expose delegates to technology and outside influences, more of our corporate clients are asking for venues that take delegates

to an 'unplugged' environment," says Botten. "There are no outside influences and no opportunity to leave the event early."

Spoilt for choice

The wide range of options available to organisers add to the bush's allure, notes Mitrovich. From the north to the south of the country there are a host of options, ranging from the very luxurious to the very

primitive, allowing one to satisfy just about any need a customer can have. The bush can offer the most refined hospitality and elegant sophistication, while still allowing visitors to completely step away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

Mitrovich says while more and more bush and safari venues are increasing available technology there is still a focus on peace and tranquillity.

"There is less of a rush and one is forced to slow down and adjust to a slower pace. That is a valuable experience for most people in today's modern world."

Top trends

The 'unplugged' experience continues to gain ground, says Botten. "Trends are usually aligned to the demographic of the corporate in question and the objectives of the event," she explains. "But we are picking up that there is a definite move towards shorter events at unplugged venues."

There has also been a move towards smaller more intimate venues, where companies can take over an entire resort or venue to ensure complete freedom and focus on the outcome of the event, notes Botten.

She adds that there is also a trend towards increased leisure activities if the delegates are from an environment that is fast

paced and involves higher stress levels, or if the delegates are c-suite executives. "Bush venues have fewer outside influences to disrupt the interactions during the event. There is also a greater luxury feel to some bush venues," she says. "We find that the all-inclusive bush venues are more viable for corporate events. It allows us to maximise our client's budget and objectives. Venues that do not have all the facilities on site are seldom selected as the cost of bringing in additional elements outweighs the feasibility and budget."

3 TOP TIPS

1. Be sure to book as far in advance as possible as bush venues are popular and tend to fill up quickly.
2. The winter months tend to be the busiest season for many lodges, which means there may be special offers and discounts available in summer and spring.
3. Make sure your event is suited to a bush venue. The unplugged and remote nature of many lodges is ideally suited to strategy sessions rather than raucous parties.

PHOTO: NGOMA SAFARI LODGE

Avoiding business-trip exhaustion

Arriving for a business trip jetlagged and tired can have an extremely negative impact on productivity. **Nicholas Barenblatt**, Protea Hotels & African Pride Hotels group marketing manager provides his top tips to fend off jetlag.



WHILE many of us enjoy the opportunity to see new places and experience different foods, travelling regularly for work has its challenges in terms of keeping energy levels high and a regular routine in check, says group marketing manager at Protea Hotels & African Pride Hotels, **Nicholas Barenblatt**, who adds that he has learned a few strategies that help him cope.

The biggest factor is the time zone. "Being based in South Africa means being dead centre in the world in terms of time zones. If I have to go to the US where our parent company Marriott International is based, I must cross quite a few time zones. And the same applies for

Australia," says Barenblatt.

A change of mind-set

He says it takes some time for our bodies to adjust to the change in time. As exciting as it might be to explore a new city or destination, travellers must be cognisant of adjusting to the local time, and must listen to their body and get their mind-set into the local time rather than thinking of what time would it be at the origin of departure. "A simple thing like making sure that there is natural light around during the daytime helps. I always open curtains in meeting rooms, for instance, and I try to get outside the building to stretch my legs and get some

fresh air and vitamin D during the day."

He adds that it is not a good thing, however, to have bright lights on when it's dark outside. He says light can act as a stimulant. "The same applies to substances like nicotine, alcohol and caffeine. Because the chemicals in these items stay in one's body for a long time, travellers can wake up at night even if they used these much earlier in the day. It's best to limit them as much as possible."

Get active

Further, he points out that exercising helps when travellers are tired after a long flight. "I concentrate much better in

meetings the day after I've arrived in my destination when I try to keep to an exercise routine similar to what I would do at home." Barenblatt says the easiest way to do this is to pack a pair of running shoes as they don't take up much space in luggage, and you then have the ability to run on a treadmill at the hotel gym or outside.

Another tip is that it is important to have a few solid nights of sleep of at least seven or eight hours before leaving on a trip. "To ensure that I have a good sleep the night before I leave, I make sure that everything is packed and ready well in advance of the trip so that I don't have to scurry around the night before I leave getting everything ready," he says. ■

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Beyond the boardroom

A popular business destination, Dar es Salaam also has a lot to offer when business is done for the day. **Darise Foster** explored the destination's leisure offering as a guest of SAA and Tsogo Sun.

AT LEAST 80% of SAA's passengers departing South Africa for Dar es Salaam are business travellers, however the Tanzanian city presents agents with a range of opportunities to package the destination into a trip that incorporates both a business and a leisure component, says **Austin Nyawara**, regional manager for SAA in East Africa and the Middle East.

"There has not been a lot of noise made about leisure travel in Tanzania as a whole because it is seen as an investment destination rather than a place to unwind," Austin explains. "And it is a shame because there are beautiful national parks, a lovely coastline and the tallest peak in Africa – Mount Kilimanjaro."

It can be difficult to sell mainland Tanzania as a leisure destination with neighbouring Zanzibar just off the coast, says Austin, but he points out that the two could be packaged into one deal. "Zanzibar is paradise on earth and offers a unique product but the mainland has its own strengths as well – and it would not make sense to ignore it. Zanzibar is just 15 minutes from Dar es Salaam by air, so I think it would be a good idea to package the mainland and the island into one trip."

He notes that while Zanzibar is a famous honeymoon destination, a family travelling together would appreciate the beauty and relaxation that it has to offer



Priya Naidoo, gm of communications, Tsogo Sun

combined with the bush product offered by the mainland. "So, too, can business travellers take a day or two to relax on the island after concluding their business in the mainland," he adds.

A day out in Dar

Several tiny islands surround the long coastline that outlines Dar es Salaam, which makes it easy to take a day out on a catamaran and unwind, comments **Priya Naidoo**, Tsogo Sun gm of communications. "A two-hour cruise to a private island under the East African sun allows for maximum relaxation when added on to a business trip," she says.

There are private catamaran charters available to any of the

surrounding islands in Tanzania – including Zanzibar. "You can even request that they stock it with food and drinks so that you do not do any work at all," she notes.

On arrival at a private island, travellers can snorkel, braai or take a look at old shipwrecks. "And once you're back on the mainland, you could eat out at a local restaurant in the heart of the city before going on to experience Dar's nightlife," Naidoo says.

Where to stay

The Southern Sun Dar es Salaam boasts a backbone of South African-born staff, making local travellers feel at home. "That is the main aim of the hotel – to make travellers feel at home," explains gm, **Adam Fuller**. This was evident from unique touches, such as biltong snacks and boerewors, which were served as part of the dinner buffet and met with approval by all members of the South African group visiting the hotel.

The property offers a relaxing element as well, as it neighbours the botanical gardens and features a breakfast deck that overlooks the swimming pool. The hotel is undergoing a refurbishment that will see its interior adopt a warmer colour scheme. "We want to change the atmosphere from formal to relaxing, so that even corporate travellers forget they are here on business," Fuller comments.

A popular route

EVEN with major airlines like Kenya Airways and Ethiopian Airlines competing for East Africa-bound travellers, SAA's Johannesburg-Dar es Salaam route is doing well, reveals **Austin Nyawara**.

"East Africa is one of the toughest playgrounds on the continent because two of the biggest airlines in Africa have their hubs here, so we have to be much smarter when looking for opportunities in East Africa, because it is already so well covered," he says. Currently SAA flies to Entebbe, Uganda, Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam. It also flies to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia through a codeshare with Ethiopian Airways.

What's more, the airline is hopeful that the East African tourist visa will stimulate demand for leisure travel in the region. According to Nyawara, the East African tourist visa is currently in effect for leisure tourists and works similarly to the Schengen visa – allowing for travel across Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda. ■



Mauritius is “best for business”

Trade agreements between South Africa and Mauritius have seen an increase in business between the two countries. **Carina Borralho** investigates further.

SOUTH African arrivals into Mauritius continue to show solid year-on-year growth. According to Statistics Mauritius, 64 261 South Africans visited the island between January and September 2014, and 71 248 over the same period in 2015, showing a 10,9% increase.

The Mauritian economy has consistently achieved annual growth rates of more than 3%, with estimates showing a GDP rise of 3,5% in 2014 and 4,1% last year. The country enjoys the best business environment in Africa, according to the World Bank, which ranks it first in the continent for ease of doing business.

Companies holding a Category 1 Global Business Licence pay tax of 15% compared with 28% in South Africa. Mauritius ranked 28th globally in the Doing Business 2015 report compiled by the World Bank, while South Africa ranked 43rd. An African View report in August compiled by CNN said that Mauritius, which only has a population of around 1,2 million people, is Africa's most competitive economy. It also boasts Africa's highest literacy rate, with 86% of the population being educated.



Wouter Nel, head of sales and marketing for Southern Africa, Air Mauritius

Because of this, as well as a superior health system, the general population boasts an impressive rate of productivity as well as a lack of corruption.

Interest from SA companies

The Mauritian government is fast-tracking a number of high investment projects, including smart cities, alternative energy production, and an ocean

economy (an economy that promotes the ocean and its resources), which are attracting a number of specialised South African companies. “We expect the amount of business travel from South Africa to Mauritius to continue growing in the near future,” says SAA spokesperson, **Tlali Tlali**.

Air Mauritius has also noticed an increase in business travel. “Mauritius is not only the most competitive economy in Africa, it also boasts low tax rates and political stability,” says Air Mauritius head of sales and marketing for Southern Africa, **Wouter Nel**. He adds that an increasing number of South African companies are being registered in Mauritius, which is further driving the demand for business travel.

Corporate Traveller marketing manager, **Michelle Jolley**, is also noticing the increase in business. “We have seen a healthy increase in business travel to Mauritius in the last calendar year. Corporate Traveller has recorded a growth of just under 40% in air ticket sales to the destination. Mauritius is a growing economy and a number of South African companies have business interests on the island.”

Still SA's top choice

A poll, which was published in a September issue of *Travel Buyer's* sister publication, *TNW*, found that 75% of travel agents agreed that Mauritius was more popular with both leisure and corporate travellers compared with other islands such as Zanzibar.

Another poll, which was published in the November 11 issue of *TNW*, revealed that 29% of agents said although there had been notably fewer bookings for the 2015 festive season compared with previous years, Mauritius and Thailand were still top choices for South Africans.

Newsflash

Air Mauritius offers business travellers a last-minute airport upgrade to business class from all its departure points in South Africa.

For R1 850, business travellers will experience, lie-flat seats and Mauritian gastronomy on an Airbus A340/A330 aircraft.

This service is subject to seat availability on the day of departure. All upgrades are purchasable at Air Mauritius ticket counters on the day of departure.

What makes Mauritius so attractive?

OVER 50% of the island country's land is arable, with sugarcane (its main export) occupying about 90% of its cultivated land. Yet, despite sugar being a major export for decades, Mauritius has managed to successfully diversify its economy, mainly by investing in the manufacturing sector. Initially, the focus was on the production of textiles and clothing but lately the country has set its sights on exporting jewellery and watch components.

Jewellery, watch and diamond production currently make up 10% of foreign exports, adding more than \$150 million (R2,39bn) to the country's GDP. Overall, the manufacturing sector expanded by 3% in 2013, up from 2% the year before.

Besides agriculture and manufacturing, other areas of rising economic activity include tourism and finance, especially banking and business outsourcing.

There has been a significant increase in business to Mauritius for Wings Travel Management, which speaks about specific industry sectors and Mauritius's role in these. "The reasons for the increase in business, which are specifically applicable to our clients, include developments in manufacturing, oil and gas and agriculture, as well as conference retreats," says Wings Travel Management head of operations for South Africa, **Christina Lamb**.

Where to stay and conference in Mauritius

Lamb suggests the following hotels:

1. Holiday Inn Mauritius Airport where there is a range of meeting rooms and layout with space for between 30 and 350 attendees. The hotel is also close to dining and shopping facilities, as well as the Blue Bay Marine Park.
2. Hennessy Park Hotel, a contemporary four-star property, offers four conference

and meeting rooms, including the large Ebony Ballroom which accommodates 400 guests and is suitable for various events.

3. Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel, which caters for both small group meetings and large corporate events. It has capacity for up to 225 delegates, and five different conference and meeting rooms. Also included is a health centre and wellness spa.
4. Le Suffren Hotel and Marina caters for smaller business get-togethers in a 12-person meeting room.
5. L'Adresse includes two boardrooms for eight people each, as well as a 50-person conference room.

Tlali Tlali recommends business hotels such as the Indigo Group, Holiday Inn Mauritius Airport or Voila Bagatelle, which offer quality accommodation in key cities. He says major conference facilities exist around the island, some of them in hotels that offer MICE packages. Some of the MICE events in Mauritius form part of SAA MICE calendar with reduced airfares available to participants.

Wouter Nel says Air Mauritius and Indigo Hotels are proud partners. The Indigo Hotel group offers the perfect business hotel for any business traveller's requirements, from the newly refurbished five-star Labourdonnais Hotel in Port Louis, to the modern four-star Hennessy Park Hotel in the new business hub of Ebene and Cyber City.

How to get there

For business travellers, direct flights from SA to Mauritius are the best options. Both Air Mauritius and SAA operate daily flights, while BA Comair operates a flight on Saturdays, says Lamb.

"SAA flight timings and daily frequencies to Mauritius allow business people to schedule meetings as soon as they land on the island or even before they depart, which helps to

reduce time out of the office," says Tlali.

Nel says Air Mauritius flies direct from Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Nairobi. "Our departures from South Africa allow seamless connections for business travellers from Southern Africa. Our schedule remains ideal for business travellers as we depart Johannesburg daily at 13h35 and arrive in Mauritius 19h35, missing the rush hour traffic and ensuring a good night's rest before meetings the next day. We depart Mauritius 09h15 and arrive in Johannesburg at 11h50, perfect for the business traveller who wants to conclude afternoon meetings in Johannesburg."

Travel tips

Tlali says a fast-track immigration counter exists on arrival and departure from Mauritius for passengers travelling in business class. The immigration departure counter is also equipped to read mobile boarding passes.

Lamb says no visas are required for South African passport holders and also lists a number of travel tips:

1. Taxis are regulated and reliable. All recommended hotels have transfer services.
2. Working hours are 09h00-16h00, not the South African standard of 08h30-17h00
3. Because of the mix of cultures in Mauritius, when conducting business corporates should be aware of local customs.
4. In terms of safety and security, Mauritius is considered safe but those conducting business should exercise general safety measures against petty crime.
5. Business people should avoid unofficial taxi services (those that have not been registered with the Mauritius Ministry of Tourism).
6. Most hotels offer a wireless Internet access service. All South African mobile operators offer connectivity in Mauritius, however business people should be aware of the high roaming charges. ■

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Top airline innovations that change the way we travel

In an increasingly competitive world, airlines have had to adapt and stand out to differentiate their customer experience and attract travellers. *Travel Buyer* rounds up some of the most innovative products and services in terms of hospitality, design and technology that were launched during 2015.

1. Inflight WiFi becomes a necessity

WiFi has already become a non-negotiable requirement for most hotel establishments and now airlines are following suit by increasingly offering inflight WiFi options.

Aimee Greaves, Delta spokesperson, says the airline has been rolling out WiFi on its international fleet in response to customer demand. "Staying connected makes a difference to passengers so they can stay on top of their emails, especially during a long flight such as that from Johannesburg to Atlanta. The programme will be 85% complete by the end of 2015 with all aircraft WiFi enabled in 2016."

British Airways is aiming for 90% of its long-haul aircraft to have WiFi by early 2019, while Finnair is in the process of a US\$33m (R512m) WiFi installation project across its fleet, due for completion in 2018.

Emirates has begun offering the first 10MB of data free and is rapidly extending the service to its whole fleet, and Qatar Airways announced it would provide passengers with 15 minutes of free WiFi.

As airlines continue to develop digital inflight infrastructure, the next phase is to develop innovative apps that further differentiate the passenger experience. Air New Zealand, for example, has created a 'digital crew call button' app that allows passengers to message the crew.

Similar functionality has also been rolled out by China Eastern. The airline teamed up with Microsoft to develop an intelligent personal assistant called Xiaolce. Prior to boarding, Xiaolce provides passengers with updated flight information, boarding notifications and the option to pre-order meals and drinks. After boarding a WiFi-equipped aircraft, passengers can use Xiaolce on their tablet or laptop

(mobile phones are banned on Chinese aircraft) to socialise with other passengers, contact the crew or send post-arrival pick-up reminders to those on the ground.

The new WiFi trend has also allowed airlines to improve their inflight entertainment options by allowing travellers to stream on-board entertainment to their own devices. On Virgin America and JetBlue, for instance, passengers can stream content from Netflix and Amazon Prime on board.

2. Is that a 'phablet'?

Around the world, flight attendants are increasingly using 'phablets' (a combination of smartphone and tablet) to better assist passengers.

Greaves says, "These tablet devices also give our crew everything they need at their fingertips. Benefits include the ability to take customer meal orders, receive detailed information about their flight and provide information for personalised service, such as a passenger's frequent flyer status and potential need for special services during their flight."

In the near future, we could even expect to see cabin crew with fashionable digital wearables.

3. Airlines shift focus to SME markets

Edward Frost, British Airways' Commercial Manager for South and East Africa, says airlines will need to rethink their offering to better cater for SMEs. Global research commissioned by British Airways shows that SMEs think short-term and are always looking for the best deal. They crave flexibility. "This is almost the antithesis of the typical airline offering," says Frost. "Airlines want to encourage early booking so they can fill flights. They discourage changes, particularly on discounted fares, as this makes booking patterns more predictable."



Edward Frost, Commercial Manager, British Airways

As a consequence, SMEs that shop around for the cheapest fares at the 11th hour and are then penalised if they need to change bookings, can end up paying over the odds for travel. "It's understandably frustrating, particularly if you're a dynamic company wanting to conclude deals, open up new markets or extend a visit to a trade show to sign up some new business."

The solution British Airways came up with is On Business. The programme rewards companies for their loyalty, while taking into account some of the particular needs of SMEs. More recently, based on the feedback from customers, it fine-tuned the programme to make it more user-friendly to this growing and increasingly important customer base.

Says Frost: "The new programme has been made more flexible so members who want immediate savings can choose an upfront discount on flights, if they consider this a better option than collecting points for redemption flights. It has also been simplified. Rather than points being awarded for distance flown, every time an On Business member makes a booking it earns points on the spend. An online account-management tool enables

members to maximise the potential of the programme and effectively use accumulated points. It can be configured to provide customised reports, enabling members to track who is earning where and when."

4. LCCs adapt to Africa

The key to success in Africa is to adapt your offering to the local market. This is according to **Richard Bodin**, fastjet Chief Commercial Officer. "We've learned that the cookie-cutter low-cost model that is so prevalent in the US and across Europe has to be adapted to suit local, cultural, infrastructural or commercial requirements on the ground," he told *Travel Buyer*.

Fastjet is a low-cost carrier in the true sense of the word, according to Bodin, with very low fares to stimulate opportunities for people to travel. However, the airline has made some significant changes to the traditional low-cost model by listening to its customers. Says Bodin: "The innovations we have brought to the market have all been consumer-driven."

One of those is the introduction of small-scale freighting – 80kg for US\$80 (R1 243). Traders tend to fly to Dar es Salaam to buy their goods at the market, and then drive back with their goods. Bodin says Fastjet gives customers the opportunity to return home quickly and safely with their goods.

For Mwanda travellers, Bodin says fastjet has introduced the possibility to transport back freshwater fish. "I had never even contemplated such a thing," he says, adding that the demand was overwhelming, so fastjet adapted part of the aircraft hold to accommodate this requirement.

And when it comes to payment models, fastjet modified the low-cost model to specific African requirements by introducing the possibility of paying with mobile money.

► *Article continues on p18*



► Article continues from p17

5. Payment options evolve

As African LCCs have started introducing mobile money options, international airlines have also started looking into alternative payment solutions for their clients. In October, Delta became the first US airline to allow people to pay for flights using Apple Pay through the Fly Delta App.

6. More generous baggage allowances

Although LCCs are increasingly charging customers for any luggage they want to bring along, traditional carriers have gone the other way and have become more generous with their baggage allowances.

Boeing is adding new 'Space Bins' on its B737s, which increase overhead bin space by 50%. They have already been adopted by several carriers, including Alaska Airlines, Delta and United Airlines. While some flights already have the larger bins, Alaska Airlines – the first to spring for the Space Bins – says it will be fully outfitted by the end of 2017.

Air Mauritius recently introduced a new baggage allowance of two 23kg bags for economy class and two 32kg bags for business class. This has been a welcome new feature for families travelling with young children as well as avid shopaholics, according to **Carla da Silva**, regional manager for Air Mauritius. For clients travelling beyond Mauritius, baggage allowances are more generous still. The airline offers economy-class passengers 40kg of luggage when travelling to Perth, Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai, Beijing, Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai.

7. Last-minute upgrades become popular

Business-class upgrades have become a hugely popular option for a lot of travellers.

Da Silva says Air Mauritius's

last-minute business class upgrade became very popular last year. For R1 850pp, travellers can upgrade to the lie-flat business-class product on the airline's A340 and A330 from Johannesburg. From Cape Town and Durban, the upgrade costs R1 600, although it is not a lie-flat product on the A319. "The offering is hugely popular with corporate travellers, honeymooners and travellers wanting to spoil their loved ones on the day of departure," says Da Silva.

8. Healthy choices, healthy meals

With health becoming a buzzword across the world and travellers increasingly wanting to make healthy choices, airlines have adapted their offering to meet this demand.

Delta will be focusing on inflight dining this year with the introduction of local and seasonal menu options. Says Greaves: "As part of our move to offer more chef-created menus in flight, we are furthering our partnership with Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group to feature menus developed by **Nick Anderer**, executive chef and partner of Marta and Maialino in the Delta One cabin on selected flights from New York-JFK. The dishes feature fresh, seasonal ingredients and draw inspiration from the rustic Roman cuisine that he creates at Marta. Delta's in-house chefs are also adopting this philosophy to cook with the best ingredients from the winter harvest to offer seasonally rotating fare on every flight."

9. It's all about the passenger experience

Finnair has reinvented the passenger experience on its latest A350-900 with several innovative elements. The airline has introduced mood LED lighting that can, for example, replicate the Northern lights, with clouds drifting across a blue sky throughout the cabin and cool Nordic blue shades. In total, there are 24 lighting schemes.

Says **Juha Järvinen**, Finnair's chief commercial officer:



Richard Bodin, Chief Commercial Officer, Fastjet

"Finnair's new Airbus aircraft feature a cabin interior largely based on the Space Alive concept developed by dSign, where the main idea is to change the mood of the cabin space as the flight progresses."

TAM Airlines has also picked up on this trend and recently took delivery of its first A350 XWB, which has lighting that could help alleviate jet lag. The cabins are lined with LED lights that have 16,7 million settings to try to mirror any natural lighting possibility.

Lufthansa, on the other hand, recently introduced 'Bedtime Stories', a new customer campaign featuring a new microsite with innovative activities. Parents on business trips can choose from a large selection of popular children's books and record a 'goodnight' story in a speaker box at the airport and send it to their children at home via e-mail or text message.

10. Standing out from the crowd

Personalisation has become an important element for airlines wanting to differentiate their customers' experiences. Greaves says Delta recently reacquired the data and intellectual property rights from Travelport that are central to the airline's passenger service and flight operations systems.

Says Greaves: "Delta is the only US airline to directly control these critical technology systems, making it better able



Carla da Silva, Regional Manager, Air Mauritius

to build the next generation of technology that will improve the travel experiences of its customers. It's proved such a success, that we are working with Virgin Atlantic in the UK to transition its current passenger service system to this."

11. The return of the super-long-haul flights

Falling oil prices will bring the return of the extreme long-haul flight, according to Cheapflights.com.

Emirates will pioneer this trend from February 1, with the launch of its 17,5-hour flight from Dubai to Panama City. In 2018, Singapore Airlines will follow suit with the launch of a 19-hour flight from Singapore to New York and Qantas is looking into non-stop flights between Australia and Europe from 2017.

12. Self-service airports of the future

KLM recently partnered with Aruba's Queen Beatrix International Airport to provide a 100% self-service passenger experience with the Happy Flow solution.

Throughout their airport progression, passengers have to show their passport only once at check-in, afterwards moving swiftly through the airport, simply looking at a face camera smoothly embedded in the different self-service passenger touch-points that recognise their facial features on the fly. ■



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

CHINA on the RISE

Improved access between South Africa and China will boost business between the two destinations. **Dorine Reinstein** reports.

AIR China's entry into the South African market with a service between Johannesburg and Beijing will be a big boost for leisure and business tourism between the two countries, industry players say.

Flights, which are now bookable via the GDS, began on October 29. The airline operates three flights a week in a codeshare agreement with SAA, using the latest Boeing 777 300ER with eight first-class seats, 42 lie-flat business-class seats and 261 economy-class seats.

Flights depart Johannesburg at 11h50 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, arriving the following day in Beijing at 07h30.

Return flights from Beijing depart at 23h15 on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, arriving in Johannesburg at 07h55.

"Air China has made a huge commitment to Africa through the launch of its direct service," says **Keith Gow**, md of Gateway Travel and Tours. He predicts corporate travel between China and Africa will grow to unprecedented levels, kicking off with the Second Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which was held on December 5 in Johannesburg, and welcomed numerous officials from China to discuss trade relations between the two countries.

"Trade between China and Africa is on the rise," says **Jeanine Tönnesen**, manager of China Experience Trade and Tours. She adds that China is doing business with most regions in Africa and that South Africa, as a

hub, will benefit from this traffic.

Direct flights will also boost outbound leisure travel, Gow says. He says China is an affordable destination for South African travellers, offering value for money despite the weak rand. Eight-day packages to Beijing start from R12 990pps. "China is an attractive destination for the rainbow nation," says Gow. He adds that guided tours are recommended for inexperienced travellers as English is still not widely spoken.

A big problem for tour operators has been getting availability on flights for travel to China, says **Daniela Gallagher**, operations manager at Wendy Wu. "Hopefully, the introduction of Air China's flights will alleviate the problem."

South Africa is a price-sensitive market so fares will need to be competitive, says **Chien Liou**, md of Dragon Holidays. "China is more affordable than Japan but does not compete with Thailand and Bali, for example."

Top connections for SA travellers

By **Max Marx**

ASIDE from Air China's direct option, there are several airlines in the South African market that currently offer good connections to Hong Kong and China via their hubs.

The most popular routes to mainland China from South Africa, according to operators and agents, are via Hong Kong, Singapore, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha and Mauritius.

"The main things to consider when deciding on a route," says **Chien Liou**, Dragon Holidays' md, "are price, loyalty programme and whether the client wants to visit the airline's stopover city."

Christine Sing, Flight Centre Chill Lane

team leader, says most leisure tourists fly into Beijing or Shanghai, while many business travellers make their way to Guangzhou, where a large number of trade shows, exhibitions and conventions are held. She adds that many South Africans opt to holiday in Hong Kong as South Africans don't need visas for up to 30-day stays.

Cathay Pacific offers one of the most direct routings to Beijing, the shortest flying times and generally has the cheapest fares, says **Theresa Szejwallo**, md of Trafalgar. The average travelling time from Johannesburg to Beijing is 16 hours 40 minutes, adds **Mandi Prinsloo**, travel adviser at Pentravel Gateway.

For those travelling to or via Hong Kong, Cathay and SAA are popular options, with Cathay offering very good through fares to Beijing and Shanghai, says Liou.

Singapore Airlines is another popular option, providing seamless connections into China, says **Alet Steyn**, Wendy Wu Tours' business development manager. "The transit times in Singapore are usually a maximum of two hours and the airline is one of the best in terms of service," Sing adds.

Emirates and Etihad also offer attractive airfares and short layovers, says Liou, with Emirates a popular choice because of its seven daily flights between South Africa and Dubai.

Top destination highlights

WHEN it comes to a country as vast and varied as China, with its must-see and do attractions and leisure activities, business travellers can take their pick of leisure-time excursions. The most popular destinations for the South African market in mainland China are Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Xi'an, Guilin and cruising the Yangtze River.

Beijing

"A walk along the Great Wall of China is considered by many to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience," says **Alet Steyn**. The Dongcheng district includes many of Beijing's major cultural attractions such as the Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven and Tiananmen Square. It is also home to the famous hutongs (alleyways), where one can catch glimpses of traditional Beijing, and is great to cycle through, says **Theresa Szejwallo**. At night, Beijing entertainment includes bars, restaurants, nightclubs, Chinese opera shows, acrobatics and sampling traditional Chinese cuisine. Learning Tai Chi and hiking the nearby mountains are also popular pastimes.

Shanghai

Cosmopolitan Shanghai blends the modern with the traditional. Must-visit places are The Bund, Shanghai's famous waterfront renowned for its many buildings in various architectural styles; and Nanjing Road, the main shopping street with various speciality stores, malls, theatres, bars, street musicians, and hotels. A must-see is the Shanghai Acrobatics Troupe at the Shanghai Centre Theatre. At People's Park, travellers can visit the Shanghai Museum and Museum of Contemporary Art. Beautiful, handmade silk slippers can be found at Suzhou Cobblers boutique on Fuzhou Road.



Alet Steyn, business development manager, Wendy Wu Tours

Xi'an

A visit to Xi'an allows travellers to admire the army of Terracotta Warriors and Horses and learn about the emperor who built them for protection in the afterlife, says Steyn. Xi'an is also to become the site of China's first archaeology museum, which will feature 140 000 cultural relics of Chinese history. Popular tourist activities in Xi'an are cycling the Xian City Wall, exploring the Shaanxi History Museum and visiting the Bell Tower, the Muslim Quarter, the Great Mosque and Big Wild Goose Pagoda. Trafalgar Tours, Wendy Wu Tours, and Dragon Holidays all offer itineraries that include Xi'an.

Yangtze River

The third-longest river in the world, the Yangtze winds through remote mountains, arid plains, canyon gorges and more fertile regions.

The Three Gorges on the Yangtze's middle reaches are among the most scenic, navigable areas of the Yangtze with spectacular landscapes. "Four-day cruises along the Three Gorges

Dam are immensely popular and there is a seasonal option to cruise 2 374 km along the full navigable reach of the Yangtze River between Chongqing and Shanghai – a splendid travel opportunity by any standards," says **Chien Liou**. Wendy Wu Tours and Trafalgar Tours also offer various Yangtze River cruise options.

Guilin

Guilin is set in one of the most beautiful parts of China amid mountains and coves. Travellers can visit the Reed Flute Cave with its stalagmites and take a Guilin city tour that includes a visit to the zoo where giant pandas can be seen.

"The striking karst landscape of the Li River between Guilin and Yangshuo has inspired artists and poets for centuries," says Steyn. **Mandi Prinsloo** says the Li River cruise from Guilin to Yangshuo is a great adventure. "In Yangshuo one can cycle the countryside, stopping off at tourist spots, hike up Moon Hill and cruise the Yulong River on a bamboo raft." The Impression Sanjie Liu show, staged on the Li River featuring 600 performers portraying the life and culture of the Yangshuo people, is a must-see, she adds.

Tea Horse Road in Yunnan province

Yunnan province was China's first tea-producing region and is famous for Pu'er tea and the Tea Horse Road, an ancient trading route where tea was bartered for horses and medicines.

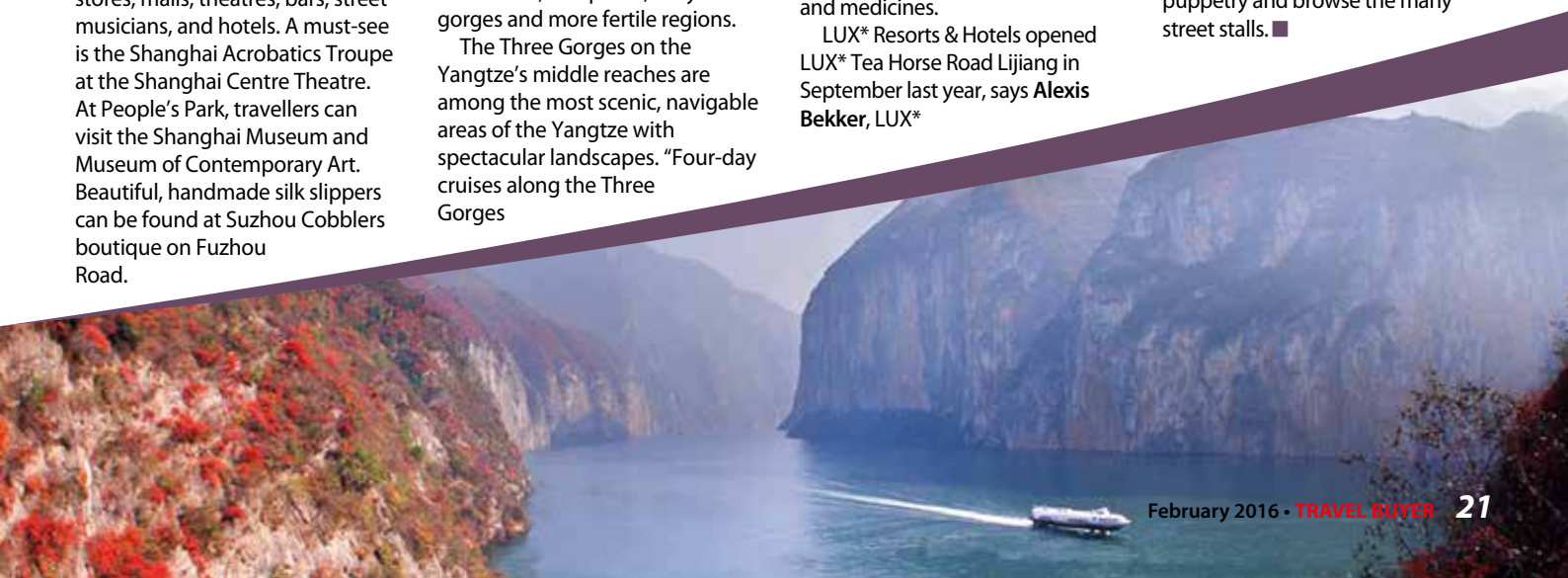
LUX* Resorts & Hotels opened LUX* Tea Horse Road Lijiang in September last year, says **Alexis Bekker**, LUX*

Resorts' head of sales and marketing: South Africa. The hotel offers a 'Discovery' package that provides a great way to explore the area. Excursions include sipping on Pu'er tea in the oldest tea house in the town; visiting the Dongba Cultural Museum for a Dongba handwriting demonstration; visiting Wenhai Lake where rare medicines and herbs flourish; trekking to the village of the Yi and Naxi people where visitors can meet a Dongba shaman; taking a horse ride to see the original Tea Horse Road caravan trails; and trekking through the Tiger Leaping Gorge.

The hotel group recently opened LUX* Tea Horse Road Benzilan further north. The mountain retreat is surrounded by Tibetan villages on the shores of the Yangtze River. Here visitors can explore the surrounding glaciers, hike deep canyons, pick mushrooms and enjoy an authentic local experience with genuine Tibetan hosts. "Private audiences with resident monks in monasteries can also be arranged," says Bekker.

Chengdu

The Giant Panda Breeding and Research Base is a must-visit destination where travellers can learn about the Giant Panda, suggest both Liou and Steyn. Travellers can also visit Chengdu's centuries-old tea houses and learn about old rituals and local culture, adds Liou. On Jinli Street, east of Wuhou Memorial Temple, old-world stores sell Shu embroidery, folk handicrafts and calligraphies, while visitors can also enjoy shadow puppetry and browse the many street stalls. ■



How to keep middle managers compliant

New to management and the 'glamour' of business travel, middle managers are one of the most difficult traveller groups to keep within budget. **Dorine Reinstein** reports.



Johan Perrson, head of Global Account Management, Radius Travel



Monique Swart, founder, African Business Travel Association



Kim Parker, head of business development, Wings Travel

GENERATION Y are slowly but surely making their way to middle management level and travel buyers are reporting that this "travel-eager" group can be difficult to manage when it comes to policy compliance. These travellers are often new to management and excited about all it entails, viewing travel as glamorous and feeling they have the right to splurge on business trips.

Indeed, millennials are travelling more than any other age group, according to a recent Egencia research study, *The Future of Travel*. The report reveals that professionals between the ages of 18 and 30 average five business trips a year, compared with just two for those aged 35 years and up.

Generation Y love to travel whether it is for leisure or business and travellers in this age group are also known to be big spenders, especially when travelling on the company dime. According to Egencia, 37% of business travellers aged 18 to 30 claim they spend more of their company's money on room service than they would of their own, compared with 21% of their peers between the ages of 46 and 65 who are more conservative when spending company's money. They are also quicker to shell out company cash on fine dining than their more seasoned colleagues.

How do middle managers think?

Gen Y travellers are typically young – in their late twenties or early thirties – and new to management. They see travel as a status item that makes them feel important and boosts their

ego, says **Johan Perrson**, head of Global Account Management at Radius Travel.

Although Perrson notes that Generation Y have a strong feeling of entitlement when it comes to travel, he adds that this behaviour is not exclusive to millennials. "Typically, people who are new to management and new to business travel see it as a way to explore the world."

Monique Swart, founder of ABTA, agrees that middle management can be a challenge within certain organisations but believes this is not an industry trend yet. She adds, however, that it could become a trend soon as more Generation Y travellers are moving into middle management positions.

These "difficult-to-manage" middle managers have typically been in the workplace for between eight and 15 years and are now moving into more senior positions within their companies. They tend to take up more 'tech' or 'creative' oriented jobs.

Kim Parker, head of Business Development: Corporate – Sub-Saharan Africa for Wings Travel, says travel-eager middle-management travellers tend to book travel at the last minute; fly on airlines that are not the cheapest but provide frequent flier benefits; stay at hotels that are personally preferred but not in policy; hire automatic cars that are out of policy instead of manual cars that are in policy and fly in business or first class when economy class is mandated.

"These travellers are more environmentally conscious than the older generations. They want what they want and want it now. They don't like red tape,

process and long-winded policy when they know they can do it all themselves now using technology. They look for all-round job satisfaction, work-life balance and experiences while travelling. They are also more likely to use Uber and Airbnb," adds Swart.

Parker points out that company culture plays a big part in allowing these travellers to have free rein. "Companies with senior management and C-level management who lead by example and comply with the travel policy will have no tolerance for travellers who travel outside of the policy."

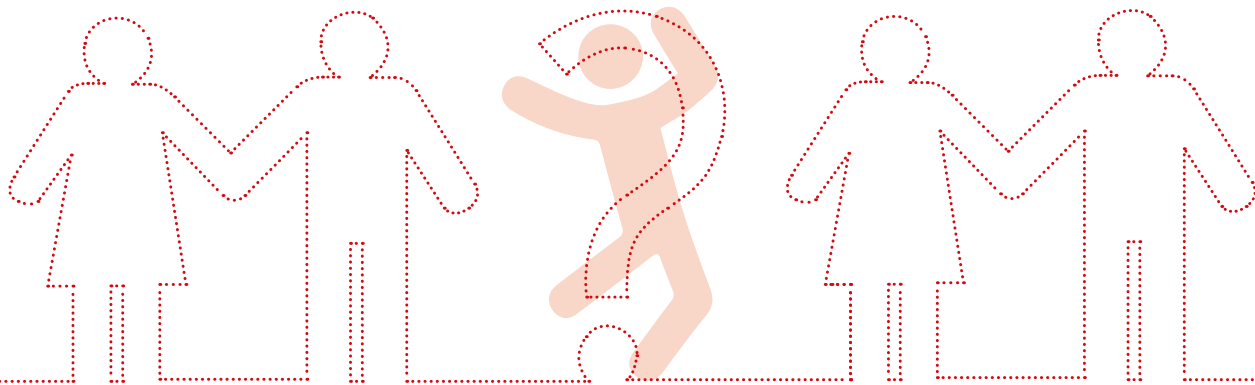
7 tips to keep Gen Y travellers in check

Explain the bigger picture

It's important to make middle managers understand that they fit into a bigger picture and that what they do is not in isolation from the rest of the company, maintains Swart. She adds that senior managers will need to take more time to explain to this up-and-coming generation why the travel policy is important, why they need to comply and why there are processes in place.

Help them keep track of budget

As Perrson points out, middle managers are typically in charge of their own budgets but they often fail to keep track of their budget. "Every manager has a travel budget – I have one – and right across the year, I typically find out where I am and how much I have left to spend. However, a lot of middle



managers will only find out that they are over budget once it's too late. Keeping track of the budget is absolutely vital."

Qualify all travel

One of the best ways to keep 'eager-to-travel' middle managers in check is by ensuring that the trips they make are for valid business reasons and that their productivity is driven to the maximum on those trips, says Perrson.

He explains that sometimes these travellers will take a trip for no apparent reason, which is why every trip should be verified. "Line managers need to understand how productive somebody is on a trip. They need to find out what the purpose of the trip is, who they are meeting and what they are hoping to get out of the meeting."

The rule of thumb, according to Perrson, is to ask corporate travellers: if it was your own business and your own money, would you do it? Only if the answer is yes, should travel be allowed. "Travellers should treat the company's money as if it's their own money," he says.

Clarify policy from the start

When new employees who will be travelling for business start at your company, it is important to ensure that the induction process covers the travel policy and the penalties for non compliance, advises Parker.

Perrson agrees that it should be made clear from the induction stage what the traveller's responsibility is as well as what the company's

responsibility is towards the traveller. "Make it clear what the expectations are with regard to travel from day one. If you have to be blunt, be blunt. We do not advocate that travellers take trips for the sake of it. That's a general rule."

Listen to your traveller

However, as important as it is to make these travellers understand the rules of the game, Swart maintains it is also important to listen to them. "They might have some great ideas on how you can revamp your policy, spend less money and use technology more to your advantage."

She warns that ignoring these travellers is not a good idea and can make issues worse. "If they don't agree with something and think there is a better way to do it which you are disregarding, you will never get them to buy into your way of doing things. If you listen to their ideas and can then apply some of them or let them know why that idea can't be applied within the travel programme, at least they will feel they have been heard and I think will then be more compliant."

Involve senior management

To more effectively handle 'new' middle managers, travel managers will probably need to enlist senior level support. Swart points out that these

travellers are on the same management level as the travel manager, so the authority of the travel manager to enforce compliance might be challenged. "To have senior management in support of the travel policy, its objectives and the way in which non-compliance is dealt with is very important."

Parker agrees and says travellers who can't be

managed in line with the travel policy will need to be managed directly by their line manager. She adds that travel buyers should have an open and transparent

conversation with the traveller's line manager to highlight the cost implication of non-compliant behaviour.

Consider 'bleisure' trips

It can be a good idea to make concessions for middle managers who are eager to travel and see the world by allowing them to take 'bleisure' trips that combine business and leisure.

However, Perrson cautions that it is important to have a clear bleisure policy outlined in the travel policy. He adds that allowing the traveller to add a few days of leisure to their corporate trip could create a win-win situation, as the airfare is often cheaper when staying over a weekend.

"As long as the justification for the trip is there and you're very clear on whose money they are spending during

the weekend, a bleisure trip shouldn't be a problem – on the contrary, it should be encouraged," says Perrson.

How can your TMC assist?

The TMC's role, according to Parker, is to provide the line manager with as much factual information as possible about traveller behaviour and non-compliance with travel policy. "These reports will highlight the cost implication of the traveller's behaviour on the company's travel budget. Reporting on lost savings because of traveller behaviour is critical."

Perrson agrees and comments that the TMC should have a solid reporting system in place, as regular reporting is key when trying to understand traveller behaviour and potential budget problems. The TMC can also assist with peer analysis. "Understanding what other companies are doing is very important and considered good practice."

Gen Y on business travel

According to Egencia's Future of Travel study, millennials are more likely to:

- Embrace loyalty programmes
- Spend company money on a flight upgrade
- Take leisure trips at 4.2 trips a year versus 2.9 for 31-45 year-olds
- Work fewer hours when they travel than they do at the office
- Mix business and leisure. ■

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.

1. Mauritius

Air Mauritius. Special promotion to Mauritius. Return fare ex-Johannesburg and Durban is R2 100, excluding taxes. Valid for return travel until March 15 (Johannesburg) and March 22 (Durban).

2. Istanbul and Venice

Costa Cruises. Seven-night Med package from R8 230pp sharing in an inside cabin. Offer includes accommodation on-board *Costa NeoRiviera*, meals, entertainment and port charges. Itinerary: Istanbul-Mykonos-Santorini-Argostoli/Kefallinia-Dubrovnik-Venice. Offer excludes flights. Valid for departure on April 11.

3. KwaZulu Natal

Fairmont Hotels and Resorts. Summer promotion from R1 300pp sharing. Offer includes one night's accommodation and breakfast. Add R250 per dinner per person per day. Special is valid for new bookings only and applicable to leisure travellers. Valid until March 31.

4. Finland

Inspirations Travel and Tours. Lapland five-night package from R9 720pp sharing. Rate includes return airport transfers, accommodation in Harriniva, husky safari, snowmobile safari and sauna. Excludes flights. Valid for travel until April 1.

5. Austria

Pure Skiing. Seven-night package from R15 070pp sharing. Offer includes return transfers, accommodation at St Johann Pension Panorama hotel with breakfast daily, six-

6. South America

Travel Vision. From Samba to Tango, nine-day package from R22 131pp sharing. Rate includes three nights in Rio de Janeiro, Ipanema and Copacabana; two nights in Iguazu Falls; and three nights in Buenos Aires; breakfast at hotels; transfers; Corcovado and Sugar Loaf tour with lunch in Rio; entrance to Iguazu (Argentine and Brazilian side) with boat ride to Devil's Throat; and city tour with dinner and tango show in Buenos Aires. Price excludes airfares and taxes. Offer is valid until August 31.



day ski pass and hire (boots, poles and skis), ski guiding, 10 days' travel insurance. Package excludes flights and taxes, ski lessons and entertainment programme. Fixed departure March 5.

7. Israel

El Al Israel Airlines. Superstar Holiday package from R11 130pp sharing. Rate includes return economy-class flights from Johannesburg, domestic add-ons permitted, three nights' accommodation at the Prima City Hotel with breakfast daily, booklet of discount vouchers for shops, restaurants, museums and one free dinner. Rate excludes

taxes. Offer applies to weekends (Thursday to Sunday or Friday to Monday) Valid for travel until February 29.

8. North West

Sparkling Waters Hotel and Spa. Special rates from R800pp sharing. Rate includes dinner, bed and breakfast. A minimum stay of two nights applies. Valid for travel until August 31.

9. Morocco

Tripistery B2B Travel. Imperial cities tour from R6 197pp sharing. Rate includes seven nights' accommodation, airport transfers, professional tour guide and entrance fees. Highlights:

Mohammed V Square, Central Market, the Habbous District and more. Offer excludes flights. Valid for travel until October 31.

10. London

United Europe. Wimbledon tennis packages from R8 450pp sharing. Rate includes one night's accommodation in a hotel with breakfast, reserved seat on no. 2 court, transfers from the station to Wimbledon, gift voucher for the Wimbledon shop and more. Valid for travel on June 28 or June 29. ■

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

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