

MAY 2014

# TRAVEL BUYER

FOR SA CORPORATES

## +Meet

# At Liberty

**New travel manager, Kele Mohale,  
takes things to the next level**

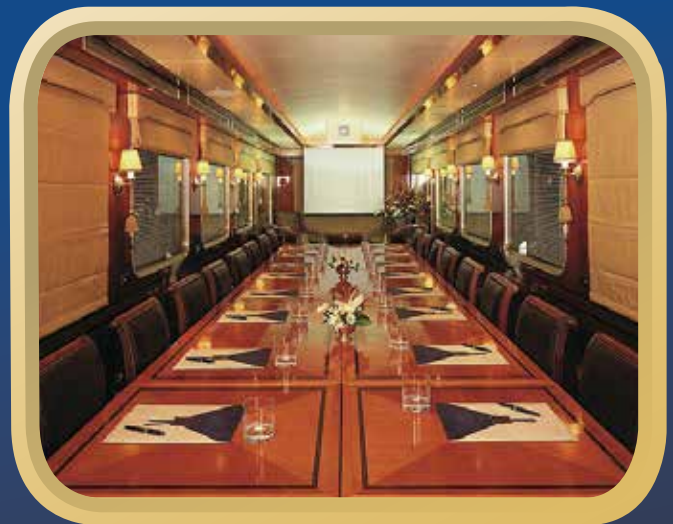
- *Are tenders a waste of time?*
- *How to incentivise with cruising*
- *Luxury hotels – five-star brands push rates up*
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## COMMENT:

# A letter of reference

**T**ENDERS are a topic we visit frequently, since they can play such an important role in the life of a corporate travel buyer. For this reason I always find it interesting to hear new insights around the topic, particularly in terms of how the process and its cumbersome burden of documentation can be streamlined and improved (see pages 4, 5 and 7).

So the question of whether tenders are a waste of time resulted in an interesting industry discussion at a recent industry forum, as well as in a thought-provoking power panel in this issue.

According to **Chris Pouney**, director: Business Travel at Severnside Consulting in the UK, it is possible to have a highly efficient, innovative and leading-edge travel programme without ever going to market by a tender. "In reality though, most organisations use a tender as a tool to benchmark prices, drive innovation and keep suppliers 'on their toes'."

Yet a growing area of concern, he informs *Travel Buyer*, is references, particularly where TMCs give travel buyers' names as references without permission. "I certainly see this as an issue in global tenders including Africa. The point here is that as buyers we ask for references far too early in the tender process,

for example when we start a bid with ten suppliers in the running. For a TMC to give a buyer's name as reference, the good TMCs will usually have to ask permission, resulting in a huge amount of energy expended by suppliers with virtually a zero chance of us ever calling on them."

He says it is better to bring in references much later in the process and ask for references for areas that interest you, for example a client with a recently launched online booking tool, or a client who has just consolidated data globally.

Importantly, he continues, is that buyers need to push back in their own organisations and be comfortable acting as references themselves. "It is completely unethical to use references in your own tender processes yet refuse to act as a referee yourself. Companies either see the value of them or they don't, and need to recognise it as give-and-take."

Perhaps that simple give-and-take could take a tender that would have been a waste of time and give it to the travel buyer as a meaningful tool to drive travel management strategy forward.

All the best!

**KIM COCHRANE**  
(kimcochrane@telkomsa.net)

## COVER

Former independent business travel specialist, **Kele Mohale**, joined Liberty as travel manager earlier this year. She spoke with *Travel Buyer* about some of her plans to take the travel programme to the next level. Cover photograph by **Shannon Van Zyl**.

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# Fast *and* furious...

Low-cost carrier, fastjet, is aggressively gaining ground in Africa, with its eye firmly set on the South African market.

**Natasha Tippel** reports.

**S**INCE the launch of operations in November 2012, fastjet has consistently been in the headlines, with ambitious plans to grow its network and establish the airline as "Africa's first pan-continental airline".

The carrier, which launched operations from Tanzania to South Africa in October last year, has set its sights on growing the new route. Johannesburg is a key commercial route and critical to fastjet growing its footprint in Africa, says **Richard Bodin**, fastjet's chief commercial officer.

A key strategy is to engage more with business travellers and the corporate agents that service this sector. The airline went live on the GDS at the end of January and recently announced the launch of a dedicated travel agent booking portal, [www.fastjet.com/za](http://www.fastjet.com/za), through which it will offer 'travel-agent-only' exclusive fares.

"We have seen a steady increase in the amount of business traffic coming from South Africa to Tanzania, as big companies see the value in using fastjet to transport



PIC: FASTJET

workers heading to Tanzania's mining sites," Bodin says. "Many of our corporate passengers catch fastjet flights to Mwanza and Mbeya, which are two of the country's busiest mining hubs."

Corporates who are travelling on incentive usually head from Dar es Salaam to Tanzania's safari lodges on the Cessna or Caravan planes, or catch connecting flights to Kilimanjaro or Zanzibar. "We're also seeing

an increasing number of people spending a few days in Dar es Salaam as part of an overall Tanzanian holiday," Bodin says.

He adds that Tanzanians living and working in South Africa going home to visit their families have always been the larger percentage of its passengers on the Johannesburg route. "They are already familiar with the fastjet brand, and the reliability and affordability that it offers, as we have been operating our domestic routes in the country since November 2012."

The airline is also committed to "democratising air travel by making it possible for more

people to fly more often with affordable fares between two of Africa's capital cities," he says. "Before fastjet started flying between Johannesburg and Dar es Salaam, passengers were held hostage by a monopoly carrier that could charge what it wanted to, without any pressure from competing airlines." He says the airline is committed to offering seats on every flight between Johannesburg and Dar es Salaam from as little as R1 600, including all airport and government taxes. "Passengers who book early online are going to get the best deals – regardless of what time of year it is."

## Facts and frequencies

■ FASTJET'S flights between Johannesburg and Dar es Salaam operate three times a week, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. As of March 1, flights now depart Dar es Salaam's Julius Nyerere International Airport at 10h30, and land at OR Tambo International Airport at 13h20. Flights depart Johannesburg at 14h15, and land in Dar es Salaam at 18h50. Flight time is about three and a half hours.

Bodin adds: "We have noticed an increase in passengers flying to Dar es Salaam wanting to catch onward flights to our domestic destinations. Due to immigration processes, we can't offer connecting flights, but we are looking at adapting our timings on the Johannesburg to Dar es Salaam flights to make it easier for our passengers to catch onward flights to Kilimanjaro, Mwanza and Mbeya."

## Growing, growing

FASTJET launched flights to Lusaka – its second international route – from Dar es Salaam in February. The airline is in discussions with the Zambian government to establish a base in the country. If successful, potential new

routes include domestic flights from Lusaka to Ndola and Livingstone.

The carrier is also looking to expand its international network from Dar es Salaam to destinations such as Nairobi, Lilongwe and Entebbe. ■

## Conference specials at your fingertips

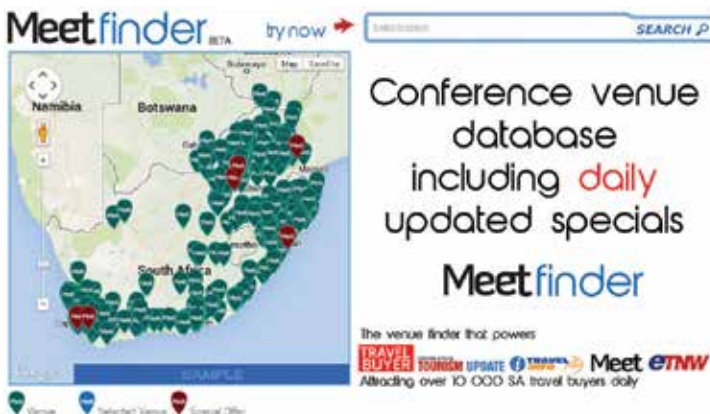
**F**INDING conference and meetings venues in South Africa – including special offers – has never been this easy.

Meet Digi-Mag, a digital publication for meetings organisers, has launched the Meet Finder – a database of all meetings and conference venues in the country, including details of those with special deals.

Info and special offers on some thousand venues are

updated throughout the day. The quick-reference tool pins all venues for a location to a map and flags those with special deals in red. Venues with a special offer are listed first and details of the deal can be viewed by hovering your cursor over the word 'Special'.

The Meet Finder appears in each issue of the monthly Meet Digi-Mag and you can see the full issue by clicking on 'Contents' at the top of the results page after doing a search.



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## ABTA launches African Business Travel Conference

**T**HE African Business Travel Association (ABTA) will be hosting an annual African Business Travel Conference, the first of which will take place from November 2-4, 2014 at the Sheraton Pretoria

Hotel, advises ABTA founder **Monique Swart**.

This conference will see business travel industry professionals from across the African continent converge in a hive of educational activity,

focusing on giving practical guidance on a host of business travel trends, challenges and opportunities.

The conference entitled 'ABTC 2014 – Education, Strategy, Power' expects to attract 250

to 300 delegates from across all industry sectors.

"We are so thrilled to be able to host an education-rich two-and-a-half-day conference, supported by top travel buyers, TMCs and suppliers across Africa," she says.

PIC: DEBBIE BADHAM



### Beating bill-backs

GBTA hosted a Southern Africa Buyers' Workshop recently at Accenture's offices in Woodmead. The focus of the workshop was centred around the challenges presented by bill-backs and how to overcome

these. Travel buyers came together to discuss various accommodation payment solutions. From left: **Mercia van Vuuren** (Massbuild), **Phumla Mazibu** (Clientèle Life) and **Fierozza Ally** (Barclays).



### Jacky Maulgue joins BON Hotels

**Guy Stehlik**, ceo of BON Hotels, a South African based company

that owns, manages and markets hotels, welcomes **Jacky Maulgue** as sales director, BON Hotels, Gauteng. Maulgue began her travel

career in 1993 and has some 18 years of experience in the industry, more recently with the GBTA Southern Africa. Her experiences have taught her the value of fostering preferred partnerships with corporates, travel buyers, procurement managers, industry suppliers and sponsors. ■



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# Are tenders *a waste of time?*

It is not as simple as saying 'I'm going out to tender'. It can be a complicated business, but there is a knack to running a successful tender, as was debated at a recent industry event hosted by ABTA. Words by **Kim Cochrane**.



**Chris Pouney**,  
Sevenside  
Consulting, director:  
Business Travel



**Ramon Geldenhuys**,  
ceo at 360 Degrees  
Travel



**Shaun Lovett**, Wings  
Travel Management,  
Oil & Gas Division  
Sub-Saharan Africa



**Carole Graaff**,  
Ericsson business  
services manager,  
Global Category  
Team Travel

**A**TENDER is simply a tool to drive your procurement strategy effectively and is not the procurement strategy itself, believes **Chris Pouney**, director: Business Travel at Sevenside Consulting in the UK.

Pouney moderated at an industry forum recently where the discussion focused on practical guidelines for putting together travel tenders and requests for proposals/RFPs (see page 7 for more on the topic).

"It is possible to have a highly efficient, innovative and leading-edge travel programme without ever going to market by a tender. In reality though, most organisations use a tender as a tool to benchmark prices, drive innovation and keep suppliers 'on their toes'."

Call them what you like – tenders, RFPs or sourcing initiatives – they are a means to gain a better understanding of what is being offered in the market, agrees **Shaun Lovett**, Wings Travel Management, account manager: Oil & Gas Division Sub-Saharan Africa. "As a travel buyer, a tender ensures that you are keeping abreast of market trends and service offerings. And if you are going out to tender, ensure you have alignment from all key stakeholders as well as clear goals and objectives of what you want to achieve with your sourcing initiative."

By understanding the mandate from management including what buyers really want to achieve from a tender is the only way the tender process and accompanying documentation can be simplified to be more effective, continues **Ramon Geldenhuys**, ceo at 360 Degrees Travel, who also addressed delegates at the event.

Tenders are therefore not a waste of time if they are well planned and well defined, adds **Carole Graaff**, Ericsson business services manager, Global Category Team Travel.

"Your partners should know that your business is not to be taken for granted at all times, not only at tender time, so do not go

out to tender if all you need is a consultation process to re-evaluate your status."

## How do tenders still play a meaningful role?

In Pouney's opinion, a tender can deliver benefits internally and externally. "Internally a tender can allow a travel buyer to demonstrate to internal stakeholders that the best supplier is installed and performing the function. Suppliers rarely see the pressure and influences a travel manager has to negotiate and a tender is a great tool for 'clearing the decks' and killing any internal noise over supplier selection."

Externally, he adds, a tender allows the travel manager to demonstrate best pricing, drive innovation and to understand what the market can offer. "Of course it doesn't always result in a change of supplier. If the incumbent is doing a great job and the tender proves this, there should be no need to change suppliers!"

Geldenhuys agrees that buyers should not go to tender for the whole account if the rest of the business is happy. "Ring-fence the area of concern and then tender on that area only; i.e. this account is out to tender but directors travel is not."

Graaff continues that tenders are still necessary in some instances as they ensure a traceable evaluation. "Procurement must record selection process and ensure transparency. Tenders are also contractual and may avoid the need for extended contract terms after selection."

But there is a need for trimming and de-cluttering on some of these basic standard tender questionnaires, she says. "Only ask what you really need and be precise. Before you ask the question, ask yourself if you are going to read the answer."

## Where to make it count?

Pouney recommends that there should be less energy in

the 'process' and more in analysing the results. "We need to be results and outcomes orientated rather than process oriented. So 'give me a report that states passenger name, flight taken and cost' becomes 'how can I drive savings by better understanding the behaviours of my top travellers'."

For a tender to carry weight, Geldenhuys refers to staffing as a key element. One way to streamline things is to avoid large committees working on the process. "Sales people can be dangerous on a tender as they promise the world and then step back. The ops team then steps in and can't believe what the sales team promised. Ideally you need procurement and financial teams involved."

Geldenhuys suggests that to understand a pricing gap better, for example, buyers should do a request for information (RFI) instead of a RFP. "Compare apples with apples. If a TMC is part of a consortium, it has the same deals as others, so the tender becomes about the cost of the transaction. Don't complicate it by asking about other issues. All companies are generally the same; it's about the people who look after you. Understand who is involved and who is doing the implementation."

He adds: "In tenders I run I always try to get past the sales guys as quickly as I can, and get to know the actual teams who will be delivering the service. Account managers are a critical part of the equation, as we need not only the data, but the ability to interpret it and create intelligence to find solutions."

## How do buyers go wrong?

Buyers do not always do their homework and seek simplicity, believes Graaff. "This may be due to lack of in-depth knowledge of the services requested. They ask the same questions over and over out of habit. They also think that it must be that big document full of questions and attachments. I have also



Talking tenders at the ABTA executive forum were **Chris Pouney** (Sevenside Consulting); **Ramon Geldenhuys** (360 Degrees Travel); and **Shaun Lovett** (Wings Travel Management).

often seen a non-consultative approach where the paperwork provided seems to carry more weight than the time spent talking with suppliers."

For Lovett, buyers take a wrong turn by not getting buy-in from key stakeholders on what they are trying to achieve. "The biggest misperception is that buyers think a tender process should be an extremely elaborate and lengthy process but they themselves have the power to streamline what the tender document entails."

To assist, Pouney recommends buyers use an industry standard template for capturing data and be clear about what they are looking for. He believes there is also a place for box ticking in a tender. "I've known tenders with 20+ suppliers involved and you have to create what I would call some 'killer questions' for which failure to comply removes a supplier from the process. There is also clearly a place for open questions, where suppliers can be creative and express the corporate culture of

their organisation so the buyer can assess the cultural fit."

A concern Pouney highlights is unreasonable time frames. "For example, the corporate wants to launch the RFP and then go live in two months with the new TMC. You can have the best TMC in the world but if you don't give enough time the process will fail and you are better off sticking with your current supplier."

This does depend on the complexity of what you are looking for, he adds "If you want a travel agent to process five visas a month and book five hotel rooms, then two months is perfectly reasonable. If you are looking to review your TMC, implement a new online tool, consolidate your data regionally, create a good cultural fit and install a trusted partner who will guide you in the complex world of business travel for the next

five years, I'd suggest you need a little longer!"

## Where can suppliers improve?

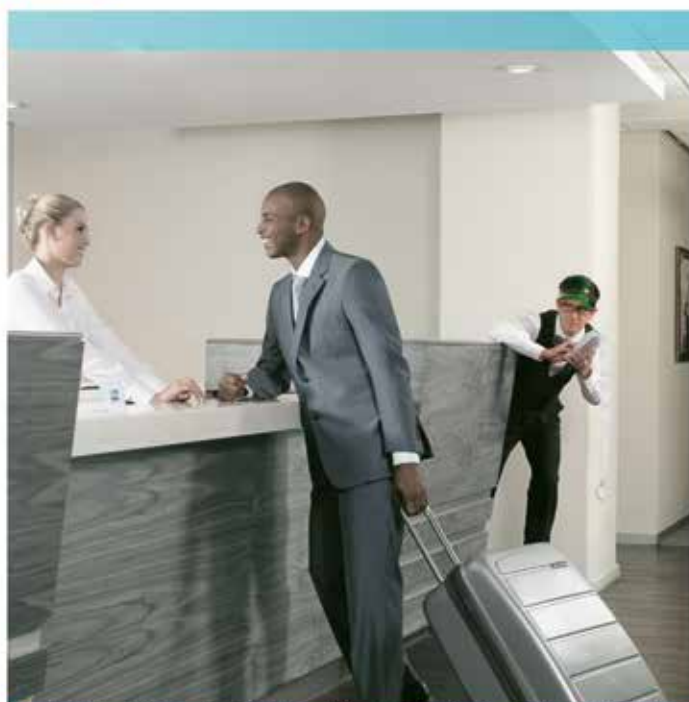
Suppliers need to learn to 'sell the sizzle not the sausage!', suggests Pouney. "By that I mean they should focus not on what tools and processes they have, but what it is going to mean to me and my travel programme. Benefits not features!"

It is also essential to brief potential companies and providers properly, advises Geldenhuys. "TMCs should decline to tender if they are not given the opportunity to understand the corporate's business. Sometimes the deal is already done and the TMC is invited for due process. TMCs should walk away if they think they are wasting their time."

► Continued on p7



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# At Liberty

Former independent business travel specialist, **Kele Mohale**, joined Liberty in the capacity of full-time travel manager in January this year. She spoke with *Travel Buyer* about some of her plans. By **Kim Cochrane**.

## Q: How are you adjusting to your new role?

**A:** I'm loving it! My main goal at the moment is to reclaim and reposition Liberty's Travel Hub (internal travel office) as a very unique, central point of travel in the business.

We would like the entire group to benefit from Travel Hub so using our office as a central platform and one-stop shop will assist in this consolidation.

## Q: Would consolidation include MICE?

**A:** MICE is still outside the travel programme from an operational perspective. As Travel Hub, we don't have capacity to run events but we engage with our group events team and assist from a commercial perspective.

## Q: Are you keeping existing policies or starting from scratch?

**A:** The travel processes are in place but the policy is under review because it needs an update. Until it gets approved into the business, we are referring to it as a guideline.

## Q: Are you building new partnerships?

**A:** My focus so far has been to bridge the gaps with suppliers, particularly since Liberty's previous travel manager left the company in 2013 and I have only now stepped into that role. Liberty did, however,

have an online booking tool keeping the framework of travel management in place supported by the technology supplier's inhouse travel team, as well as input from Liberty's internal travel stakeholders. But there was no one looking after travel full time so one of my first priorities has been to strengthen Liberty's relationships with preferred suppliers.

As a subsidiary of Standard Bank, we negotiated corporate agreements as a group. The rates are available for us but I want to improve our own relationships because it helps Travel Hub offer a better service to the business.

## Q: So you mean to put your own stamp on existing agreements?

**A:** Exactly, especially since the nature of some of those agreements have needed us to add in our own requirements because you must remember that even though we are part of Standard Bank, we don't have the same travel trends and behaviour. So while Liberty has access to the great rates, not all hotels that we need across the group, for example, are included in the agreement.

We also pay our suppliers directly, not via the TMC, which will remain an integral part of my closing the gaps strategy.

## Q: Will you be working more closely with Standard Bank?

**A:** It is one of the bigger things we want to do.



Liberty's **Kele Mohale** with **John Cave**, head of Group Procurement Operations and Travel (seated) and **Clifford de Witt**, financial officer: Travel

## Q: Why did Liberty go out to tender recently?

**A:** Our footprint in Africa currently incorporates Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya, Mozambique and Mauritius. Since our Travel Hub needs to re-position itself in a more prominent role, we need the support of a strong TMC partner who can fulfil our requirements and offer the footprint and high-touch expertise we need from a regional travel perspective.

## Q: And your biggest challenges for the rest of this year?

**A:** Buy-in. I believe that after selecting the right supplier, and having bedded down processes, the biggest thing will be to relaunch Travel Hub across the various divisions. This takes time, especially because travel is so emotional, but having the right suppliers onboard will help us in this process. Customer service experience is the biggest thing we have to offer the business.

One way I'm trying to build awareness of Travel Hub is by



### Did you know?

**Kele Mohatlé** has over 16 years of travel industry experience, coupled with supply chain management environments, with companies such as HRG Rennies Travel, Galileo SA, SAA, Umsobomvu Youth Fund, Iata and BCD Travel SA. More recently she worked as service level manager: Outsourcing at Business Connexion before founding NaKo Consulting to offer a platform for mentorship of travel managers and coordinators.

compiling and distributing an eye-catching monthly internal newsletter about travel, including updates and special promotions. It's a way to ensure the business doesn't forget about us even though travellers and bookers book online. It's easy for them to lose track of us and what we offer.

The most challenging thing as a travel manager is that if you are managing people who mostly know what they are doing (i.e. booking online) you need to take it to the next level. The challenges within the business are not unique but from a travel management perspective, how you manage those expectations is unique. The users know what they want. That is why you need to give the right answers the first time!

But that said, we do continue with educational initiatives because you can't take it for granted that people always know, especially when new employees join the company. For this reason I want to build a multi-level programme – one that assists beginners and also more experienced personnel.

My aim is to streamline things; to bring people back to the right process – and ensure that the process works when I bring them back. ■



Pictured at the recent ABTA event where the challenges around travel tenders were debated: Volvo's **Crystal John**, purchasing manager: Indirect Products & Services; **Nadia Chandler**, travel administrator; and **Alida Liebenberg**, gm: Legal & Security.



T-Systems South Africa's **Monique Naidoo** (head of Procurement) and **Richard Whitfield** (finance & travel specialist) spoke at the forum about how an effective RFP process had contributed towards the successful implementation of an online booking solution.

PICS: KIM COCHRANE

## Out to tender

Wings Travel Management's **Shaun Lovett** puts forward some practical guidelines for buyers preparing to put together a travel tender or request for proposal (RFP). By **Kim Cochrane**.

1. Do what works for you. As a travel buyer, director or manager you need to understand your business from a travel management perspective as well as your key company goals and objectives.
2. The process can be streamlined. "I've seen many tenders; I've seen it all. It is not as time-consuming as you think if you have your ducks in a row."
3. Clearly identify and align your company's key goals when putting together a tender. The first question you ask yourself after that is: What do I want to get out of my sourcing initiative?
4. Where does the responsibility lie? There is a fine line between procurement, finance and travel. Committees do work but you need to get key stakeholders to sit down together and buy into the travel-sourcing goals and objectives. If you don't have a travel manager, ask your travel bookers or TMC to provide you with the relevant information to identify gaps and opportunities to streamline your travel-sourcing initiative.
5. A common issue corporates face is not having a true centralised understanding of their travel programme. The buzzword for many years has been consolidation but it's important to understand global versus local versus regional directives for travel.
6. Ask yourself: What do I as a buyer need to look out for that separates the good from the great? USPs need to be tailored, not a copy and paste job. You need solution-based answers in the proposal. If a TMC can't give you this then they don't understand what you need or simply cannot provide you with a solution. A true understanding of your company's objectives will differentiate your front runner. Look for a 'whatever it takes' attitude.
3. Ask the TMC to provide payment solutions.
4. Accurate, leading and innovative management information (MI) reporting can make or break a TMC. Ask the TMC to showcase their reporting capabilities through samples and even online presentations.
5. Quality assurance and service delivery: ask how the TMC both reports on and manages quality assurance.
6. Good versus great account management; this is what holds a buyer-TMC relationship together. Ask to meet prospective account managers – challenge them. What fits your culture? Align yourself with a partner suited to the business; find the right fit of someone who understands your industry and type of travel.
7. Having the experience and expert knowledge of the region will separate the front-running TMCs from others. Buyers need to ask for references and engage with other travel managers to get a true reflection of the TMC's expertise.
8. What new technology is the TMC developing and investing in (e.g. apps)? ■

### Where do I start?

#### What buyers need to ask TMCs:

1. Ask the TMC to provide you with solution-based responses based on your objectives.
2. Provide fee-costing templates incorporating what you want to evaluate and ask TMCs to complete these accordingly; this ensures a level playing field for evaluation from the buyer's side.



## What millennials want from meetings

SAACI national chair and owner of Imfunzelelo Tourism & Event Specialists, **Zelda Coetzee**, gives tips on how to satisfy the expectations of millennials attending conferences and events.

**M**ILLENIALS want meetings that are engaging and allow for collaboration and networking. PCOs can facilitate this by setting up an event blog that encourages networking opportunities and allows delegates to participate in shaping the speaker line-up as well as the topics covered.

PCOs should structure their events in ways that encourage dialogue and also provide opportunities for delegates and speakers to interact. Look for casual and intimate meeting spaces and consider more talk-show styled talks as opposed to podium-style talks.

Millennials want to hear honest stories with real-life examples. They get bored quickly and have short attention spans, so it is best to grasp

their interest with short and focused sessions. Following a conference, millennials expect content from the session, such as summarised notes and videos, to be promptly published online or shared with them directly.

### The essentials

Free WiFi, the use of the latest technology and social media integration, which includes setting up an event hashtag on Twitter, are all essential elements when millennials are in attendance. Using outdated technology or asking millennials to switch off their mobile phones is sure to garner criticism from this audience. Don't even think about using a venue that requires delegates to purchase expensive WiFi vouchers.

### Keep it interactive

Millennials are experiential learners and want to try out new, interesting ways of engaging. Millennials are confident and like to ask questions. They get frustrated with one-way dialogues.

A programme that is structured with endless plenary sessions and no opportunity to ask questions is not going to impress millennials.

Millennials like to benefit personally as a result of participation, whereas older generations might attend a conference and event without thinking about personal benefit. PCOs should therefore ensure that speakers include visual experiences in their presentations and that these include take-aways, such as toolkits and how-to guides. Pay

attention to visual elements and edutainment when designing your conferences and events. Every touch point needs to be designed with purpose.

### Balancing millennial needs

Catering for the requirements of millennials need not come at the expense of other delegates and there are ways to appeal to both millennials and older generations. For example, delegates from both generations will appreciate charging stations for their devices.

PCOs should also avoid conflicts with family and free time because millennials like to balance work and personal life, while the generation is also starting to steer away from events and conferences that cut into family and personal time.

## The 5 things... most likely to annoy meeting delegates

By **Tessa Reed**

### 1. Poor catering

Poor catering is the most likely element to raise the ire of the delegates at a conference, according to event planners. Common complaints include insufficient options for vegetarians or delegates with special dietary needs. "Adequate, quality catering for special needs such as kosher, halaal and especially vegetarian has been a continuous complaint, as delegates often feel that they do not get the same quality of food as other delegates," one organiser told *Meet*. Clients who served minimalistic snacks to skimp on price were inviting criticism, she added.

### 2. Death by PowerPoint

The most frequent gripes were about speakers who were boring or spoke for too long. PowerPoint presentations also came into the firing line: "Presentations can be very bland, no variety or colour, and even the wording is not stimulating," said one organiser. A few planners also said speakers sometimes did not deliver what was expected. "When a delegate is paying to hear a speaker on a topic, the speaker should be relevant and stick to the issues," one organiser told *Meet*, adding that speakers needed to research their audience. "Organisers very often engage speakers who don't charge and they feel that they cannot influence

the presentation," she argued, pointing out that this was damaging to the conference.

### 3. Some like it hot

Balancing the conflicting temperature requests of delegates is tricky. "Some delegates want it colder and others want it warmer – there's just no pleasing them all," said one PCO. Another warned that unstable air-conditioning tended to leave delegates feeling tired and stuffy.

### 4. Service

Poor service was another common complaint. A number of PCOs insisted that it was crucial to make sure there were enough

staff to cater for an event to avoid long queues at lunchtime. Delegates were also likely to complain if the registration process was tedious, while one organiser suggested this could be taken care of ahead of time.

### 5. WiFi

Most PCOs agree that WiFi is no longer a nice-to-have at conferences. They warn that delegates are certain to complain if a conference offers insufficient or slow WiFi, while charging delegates for WiFi is considered taboo. "Around the world, WiFi is offered free of charge, yet in SA, clients often have to pay," said one PCO.

► *Meet continues on p10*





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# Inside The Michelangelo Hotel

We enlisted the help of a meetings expert to inspect the facilities of The Michelangelo Hotel. What can conference and event planners expect from this grand venue?



Vasti Topfer of Pink Plum Event Management has been running her own events and promotions company since the age of 25 and working as a team with her sister for the past two years. Some of her clients include Dimension Data, Nespresso and JWT.



PICS: SHANNON VAN ZYL

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## What Vasti Topfer found

**O**N my daily drive to work past Sandton, I always glance up at the building that towers above them all. Yes, it's the Michelangelo Hotel and this time my drive took me directly to the hotel.

Upon arrival, you are immediately hit with a feeling of grandeur. You undoubtedly know you are in a five-star venue and will be guaranteed this service throughout your visit. It is part of the Legacy Hotels & Resorts group and has the Leading Hotels of the World stamp of approval.

I was taken on a tour of the entire hotel and one would never guess how big it actually is.

The hotel has a total of 242 rooms comprising presidential suites, premier, executive and superior/deluxe rooms. There is an opulent feel to each room and there is no wonder the likes of **Richard Branson**, **Oprah Winfrey** and the late **Nelson Mandela** have stayed there.

The hotel has an indoor pool that is temperature controlled and I was told it was the only one in Sandton. There is a standard gym, unisex steam room and sauna as well as a spa, but be warned – weekend bookings are advised.

If your reason for going to The Michelangelo is conferencing you will be pleased to know that you are given 200MB of free WiFi per day. Should you be staying at the hotel and need to arrive earlier than check-in, it offers a full bathroom service whereby you can freshen up then sit in the nearby lounge and work.

The conference facility has an in-house technical company, which automatically makes any conference easier for those accidental 'oops-I-forgot' situations. The temperature in each room is controlled by a water system cooler. Cleverly, the hotel offers what is called the 'energy break' supplying guests with water, iced teas and energy bars as opposed to high-sugar options.

L'incontro, its biggest venue, can seat up to 160 guests at round tables of ten and if a smaller, more intimate meeting is all you require, the property accommodates guests within the business centre, which has five individual meeting rooms.

My excitement levels hit an all-time high when I found out that on weekends the hotel offers a Lindt high-tea buffet. The hotel also offers a chef's table that seats six to ten guests comfortably within the hotel's kitchen. The chef presents a set menu paired with suggested wines – bliss!

Another bonus for an in-house guest is the 24-hour bar service. Should you not be an in-house guest but looking for a friendly face to serve you an ice-cold drink, you can also order drinks until 02h00.

Two extra little sneaky tips about this hotel – it is renowned for its crème brûlée and has its very own famous head concierge called Archie. Do yourself a favour and Google this man – people honestly do love him!

► *Meet continues on p12*



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## CASE STUDY:

# A government conference in the countryside



**Debi Williams**, owner of D&S Conference Solutions, recently planned a successful countryside conference in Magaliesburg. **Max Marx** spoke to her to find out about the key elements that went into organising the conference, challenges encountered and solutions implemented.

### The brief

As it was a government client, three quotes were required. The client was seeking a four-star venue away from city distractions within one-and-a-half hours' drive of Pretoria. Single accommodation was required for all delegates – originally 27 people, some of whom were international delegates.

A schoolroom-style set-up was required, with international delegates placed on one side of

the conference venue and local delegates on the other, facing one another.

Being a government department, the client was budget conscious. They needed a venue for four days and nights, with some delegates arriving the evening before the conference commenced. They wanted a venue that offered personal service and would focus exclusively on them.

D&S submitted three quotes and then took the client on site

inspections, discussing the pros and cons of each venue. The client selected Magalies Manor in Magaliesburg as they felt it would meet all their requirements.

### The planning process

As a PCO, D&S Conference Solutions' function in planning the event is to work closely with its client, sourcing the most suitable venue and assisting with the details that need to be arranged prior to the conference. These functions included creation of a clear conference agenda; detailing the timing of refreshments and meals; creating room lists; dealing with dietary requirements; room set-up; and AV requirements.

### Challenges and successes

A few days before the conference, the client received notification that the number of delegates who would attend had increased but there were no specific numbers available. In the end,

delegate numbers increased to 47, which necessitated finding additional accommodation as Magalies Manor has only 32 rooms.

D&S needed to find another venue nearby. It was unable to give the overflow venue exact numbers as the client was not privy to this detail. D&S also required them to hold rooms for the client that possibly would not be filled. D&S was fortunate to find Usiba Country Lodge, which was extremely accommodating and willing to hold rooms for the client until the day of the conference.

Debi Williams was at the venue during the conference to assist with co-ordination and planning. This was crucial as, with the increase in delegate numbers, check-in, room allocation and registration had become challenging. Being on site to manage these details played a big role in giving the client peace of mind that the logistics were being handled, enabling D&S's client contact to focus on her role within the conference.

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Magalies Manor: A school-room set-up was required during the event



## PCO picks: Top country venues

**Margaret Combrinck**, owner of Kikuyu Africa, shares her top-five Gauteng countryside conference and events venues:

1. De Hoek Country Hotel
2. The Blades
3. Avianto
4. Pecan Manor
5. Mount Grace



Avianto



Mount Grace

PIC: MOUNT GRACE

International delegates had to be accommodated at Magalies Manor. Because final numbers were not available, room allocation could not be done when local delegates arrived to check in, and they could not immediately be told where they would be staying. D&S and Magalies Manor handled the situation by being professional, apologising for the inconvenience and offering a clear explanation.

The seating plan in the

conference room had to be adjusted to accommodate the new numbers. Magalies Manor was flexible in this regard and made extra staff available to facilitate this.

Meal requirements had also increased. The chef was gracious, serving amazing cuisine and personally asking delegates about the food.

Magalies Manor has only one area where WiFi is accessible. As the international delegation

had increased, the request for WiFi also increased. Magalies Manor managed to arrange extra routers, which were placed in the conference venue.

The client had organised a translation booth but this turned out to be too small and with insufficient headsets because of the additional delegates. D&S therefore needed to access urgent quotes for another translation booth and secure a technician. The conference set-up needed to

be re-arranged to accommodate the bigger booth.

### The results

The conference was a huge success. By having exclusive use of the venue and with Magalies Manor and Usiba Country Lodge being so accommodating and flexible, all challenges were successfully overcome. D&S received no complaints and the client was happy. ■

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# Five-star rates rise

The recent oversupply of local hotel accommodation saw luxury brands dropping prices. Corporates found their budgets stretching to facilitate more than just top management in luxury accommodation. **Michelle Colman** investigates and finds this trend is at an end.

**P**REDICTIONS are that the rate gap between four- and five-star hotels, which narrowed significantly in the wake of the 2010 World Cup and its hotel boom, is at an end.

**Xander Nijdens**, md for extrabold, the hotel management company managing two of Johannesburg's four-star properties, the Crowne Plaza Johannesburg – The Rosebank and the Holiday Inn Sandton, explains: "The last two years have shown steady demand growth from the corporate segment and as a result there is a move toward aligning pricing more directly with product and service offering, as well as the star grading. During the coming three to five years we will see five-star properties pushing their rate in the corporate segment and as a result creating a more natural rate gap between the four- and five-star segments again."

Director of marketing at the five-star Westin in Cape Town, **Keaton Quarmby**, says some five-star hotels in Cape Town have certainly positioned their rates in line with four-star properties but the trend will soon change based on current demand.

Simultaneously, hotels are aware of tighter corporate budgets in 2014. **Abri Meyer**, corporate sales manager of

Legend Lodges, a group which spans the four- to five-star levels, reports huge pressure for discounted rates in negotiations. Most noticeable, he says, are briefs for five-star luxury with a four-star budget.

Quarmby says while some corporates are still using The Westin despite a 2014 rate increase, and financial institutions and the like continue to prefer five-star establishments based on brand, service levels and perception, a tendency to cut down is evident. "Certain local corporations with much stricter budgets do not allow for five-star hotels in their programmes and stick to the lower-category hotels. We are noticing certain organisations are focusing on implementing stricter travel policies."

An interesting observation is made by **Mbali Mngomezulu**, sales and marketing director of The Birchwood Hotel close to OR Tambo International, a strongly corporate three-star property with a 'business class' section operated to four-star standards. She has noted the three-star category growing in occupancy, whereas four- and five-star are experiencing a general drop or stagnant occupancy levels. RevPar in the higher-graded brackets, she notes, however, is improving, an indication that the upper categories are holding well



*WITH its signature blend of luxury, not to mention its sought-after location in Sandton's suburb of Rosebank, 54 on Bath has been recognised as one of the top hotels in South Africa and on the continent.*

on rate regardless of occupancy, and that discounting has slowed.

## Little difference perceived

It's not only on price that the lines between four- and five-star properties have become blurred. Services are often so close and marketing so formulaic that guests perceive little difference between them, despite considerable differences in grading requirements as stipulated by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA).

Nijdens states this is not a situation unique to South Africa. "The quality of the hotel's product and service is often dictated more by its

brand standards, the age of the property, the service culture and the quality of the operator, rather than strict grading requirements. TGCSA does have different standards for the two grading classes, yet these often relate to services offered and some relatively subjective standards creating a sense of luxury."

Nijdens continues: "We would generally prefer to position our luxury hotels as excellent four-stars which exceed expectations, rather than entry level five-stars, which may end up disappointing travellers. If one does develop a five-star hotel, then it needs to be accompanied by an appropriate international five-star brand to ensure that its product standards and service levels are in line with global luxury expectations."



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## The new luxury

**M**ANY hotels today describe themselves as five-star plus, even six-star in their marketing and advertising campaigns, as they attempt to differentiate their levels of über-luxury from five-star properties that simply meet grading requirements.

What is luxury today? According to The Westin's **Keaton Quarmby**, it's about the hotel creating an identity that stands out from the crowd, irrespective of star category, with luxury permeating every aspect of operation – interior design, staff attitudes and brand standards conformities.

**Jose Ventura**, vice president: Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa, Business Development for the Preferred Hotel Group, believes a memorable experience is the essence, as well as taking care of time-consuming details on the

client's behalf. The Preferred Hotel Group promotes corporate travel to Africa from the UK, USA and Germany, business which tends to be incentive and rewards oriented.

"It is no longer enough for a hotel to provide elegant suites, state-of-the-art facilities or even spa and fine dining outlets. Luxury now extends to time, space and excellent service."

The African concept of luxury, for so long closely associated with 'Out of Africa' colonial overtones, has also moved on. States Ventura: "More properties are offering a modern African experience, coupling luxury accommodation and services with the opportunity to engage with local communities and to experience a variety of outdoor pursuits."

With the range of standards within the five-star category

widening, perhaps the time has come to review grading.

**Abri Meyer** of Legend Lodges gives the example of the concept of luxury in different countries to demonstrate: "Just think of Egypt where a four-star boat is very basic and Dubai where a four-star hotel is top notch! With the extreme luxury built into new hotels, the five-star meaning has definitely changed and a new level of luxury can be enjoyed. It is very hard though, to break perceptions of guests and expectations of a certain level of star grading. As technology betters and new levels of luxury are introduced, it would be good to re-assess higher-end star grading for the future."

But then again, in the age of social media, perhaps the significance of grading will be trounced.

Says **Xander Nijnsens**, md for



PIC: TSOGO SUN

*TSOGO Sun's InterContinental O.R. Tambo Airport remains the Best Airport Hotel in Africa, say travellers who participated in the Skytrax 2014 World Airport Hotel Awards.*

extrabold: "Ultimately guest reviews and ratings will become – and perhaps already are – much more meaningful and credible in deciding where to stay rather than a star grading, which differs wildly globally and does not take guest satisfaction into account."

► feature continues on p16



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# Marriott: 65 African hotels in the pipeline

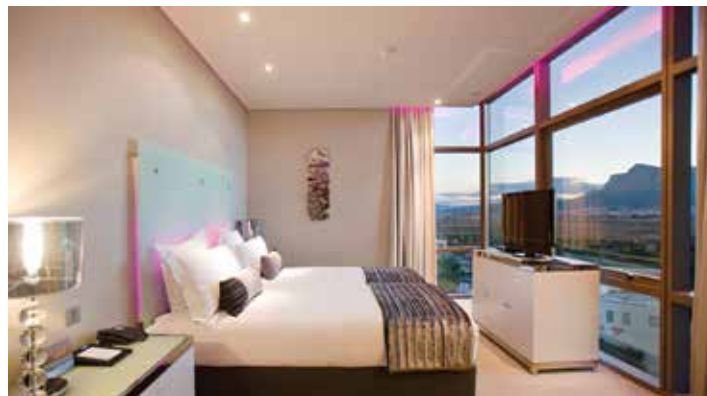
**M**ARRIOTT International has completed its acquisition of the 116-hotel Protea Hospitality Group (PHG), increasing its presence in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region to more than 160 hotels and 23 000 rooms. According to the latest published information by Marriott International, this will make it the largest hotel company in Africa.

At the same time, Marriott has said its pipeline of new hotels in the Middle East and Africa, including Protea's pipeline, was now more than 65 hotels and 14 300 rooms, including more than 20 hotels and 3 000 rooms in Sub-Saharan Africa. The

company has a strong pipeline of upcoming properties in Africa, which now also includes the Protea Hotels brands, in several markets including Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Benin and Algeria. Marriott International also expects to recruit more than 5 500 staff over the next four years to meet the needs of its growing portfolio of hotels.

Marriott expects that the Protea portfolio will be available for booking on Marriott.com or via Marriott International's global reservations centres toward the end of May, and the hotels will join the Marriott Rewards guest loyalty programme later.

**Alex Kyriakidis**, president and md of Marriott International's



*AFRICAN Pride Crystal Towers Hotel & Spa has become one of Cape Town's most favoured executive stay and conferencing destinations.*

MEA region, said there were no current plans to change the brands' identities.

Protea ceo, **Arthur Gillis**, will join the Marriott International family as non-executive chairman for Africa Development of Marriott International, focusing on

exploring opportunities for new African hotel growth for all of Marriott International's brands. **Mark Satterfield**, currently chief operations officer for Marriott International's MEA region, will relocate to Cape Town to act as business leader overseeing integration of the companies.



PIC: ONE&ONLY

## A beacon of luxury - One&Only

*ONE&ONLY Cape Town, undisputedly a beacon of luxury at the tip of Africa, celebrated its fifth anniversary this past April. Comments md Clive Bennett: "It has been a truly rewarding and humbling experience to see One&Only Cape Town develop from the 'new kid on the block'*

*into one of the leading hotels in Southern Africa and in such a short period of time. The continuous accolades for service excellence in conjunction with the achieved rates and occupancies are a testament to the management and staff's commitment to blowing away the customer."*

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PIC:TSOGO SUN

## Accolades in Nigeria

SOUTHERN Sun Ikoyi Hotel in Lagos recently emerged winner of the award of the 'Best Hotel Nigeria 2013/2014 African Region'. Reputed as the only organisation providing five-star accolades at an international level, the International Hotel Awards, is a sought-after recognition. The hotel is located within easy access in the government area of the city. Its complimentary high-speed WiFi access and business lounges make meetings and networking easier for all hotel guests.

## Boom forecast for Cape Town hotel industry

OCCUPANCIES in South Africa, and Cape Town in particular, are set to continue increasing as the sector comes out of an oversupply that, according to STR Global, saw occupancies drop to 54% in 2011.

So says **Wayne Troughton**, ceo of hospitality and property consulting firm, HTI Consulting. He points out that last year SA saw an increase in average room

rates and occupancies in all classes of hotels and across all provinces. Occupancies were at 62% for 2013, according to STR Global, and Troughton predicts these should reach 65% this year.

"Areas like Cape Town are absolutely booming," Troughton says, adding that the city had a very good season, helped by the weakened rand. According to him, occupancies in Cape Town should reach 68% by the end of

the year, driven by visitors both from overseas and also Africa.

He points out that Cape Town has received a number of recent accolades recognising the city as a prime destination and that its status as World Design Capital 2014 should boost travel to the city. He cautions, however, that development should be sustained to avoid the oversupply that caused a dip in occupancies a few years ago.



PIC:SOUTHERN SUN

## Southern Sun Maputo closes for revival

ONE of Maputo's most celebrated business, conference and leisure hotels, Southern Sun Maputo, located on the Avenida da Marginal, has closed for renovations and aims to reopen on August 1. At an investment of US\$30m, with 423 contractors on site, this mammoth top-to-

bottom revitalisation project will include the addition of 111 guestrooms and the complete refurbishment of the current 158 guestrooms and all the public areas. An addition will be a 120-seat conference centre, two new meeting rooms and a brand new business centre.

► feature continues on p18

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► feature continues from p17

## Westin Cape Town focuses on well-being

**T**HE Westin Cape Town will be making a number of changes to the hotel. This was announced at the recent launch of its Well-Being Movement.

The new initiative comprises various measures that aim to help guests "eat well, sleep well, move well, play well and feel well". The hotel's gm, **Rob Kucera**, says the programme aims to have guests feel better when they leave than when they arrived.

"We began making the difference with the unique 'Gear Lending' programme," he says, which enables guests to borrow the sports equipment (such as running shoes) they need for in-hotel gym sessions, from the hotel. "This was supported by the Westin's



PIC: THE WESTIN CAPE TOWN

SuperFoodsRX menu and Home Collection: Heavenly Beds and Heavenly Showers."

The global campaign will see the launch of an online portal to allow for the exchange of new ideas and interpretations of well-being that could be brought to life, Kucera adds.

Regarding upgrades at The Westin Cape Town, these will include a refurbishment of the Executive Club restaurant, scheduled to reopen on May

19 with a new menu developed by a top chef. The hotel will also build an outdoor pool and convert the air crew lounge into a mock-up room of what the refurbished bedrooms will look like.

The hotel's Arabella Spa will be upgraded and rebranded to a Heavenly Spa by Westin. Kucera adds that on the mezzanine level, the conference section will be refurbished and the cigar lounge will get a facelift.

### Did you know?



PIC: HOTEL LE CRISTAL

■ **LEGACY** Hotels recently opened its first Western Coastal hotel in Gabon. Hotel Le Cristal is located on Pl. de L'Indépendance, Estuaire, in the heart of Libreville, about 15 minutes from the airport. The hotel has 46 newly refurbished rooms in total, and other amenities including 24-hour room service, medical services and a business centre.

■ **PREFERRED** Hotel Group, a global collection of independent hotels, has introduced its iPrefer points-based guest loyalty programme. Complimentary to join, points can be exchanged for reward certificates redeemable like cash during stays at participating hotels and resorts. ■



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# Meet in Mauritius

Mauritius is trying to showcase itself as an ideal place to do business. **Dorine Reinstein** investigates what the island has to offer delegates.

PIC: OUTRIGGER



PIC: INDIGO HOTELS

*The Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel in Port Louis is known for hosting high-profile conferences. This elegant five-star hotel is adjacent to the financial and business centre of the city and is within easy reach of convention centres, embassies and major tourist attractions.*

**S**OUTH African companies continue to explore Mauritius as a MICE destination, says **Kathy Basson**, sales manager at Mauritius Incentive Connection. She has seen a notable increase in demand from South African companies for Mauritius over the past few years.

"Mauritius is not only a fantastic leisure and MICE destination but it is also full of investment opportunities, thus traffic from South Africa has increased." She adds the tax incentives have definitely not gone unnoticed by South African corporates and programmes including a quick or casual conference element for the tax benefits have increased in popularity.

The island is offering 15% corporation tax; exemption from customs and excise duties on

imports of equipment and raw materials; exemption from tax on dividends and capital gains; as well as free repatriation of profits, dividends and capital.

According to Basson, its proximity to South Africa is an important reason why Mauritius has flourished as a MICE destination. "Trends over the last few years have shown a high demand for shorter stays, making Mauritius an ideal option, as it is only four hours away."

The availability of all-inclusive packages has further added to the destination's appeal in difficult economic times, she continues, adding that its popularity is showcased in the fact that South African corporate clients have become savvy when it comes to Mauritius. They know exactly what they want for their conferences and incentives.

**Rolph Schmid**, md Indigo

Hotels, continues that South Africa has always been an important component of the corporate market for Mauritius in sectors such as finance, IT, banking and various spheres of more specialised businesses.

"In the past few years, we have seen growth and development in shopping centres and malls, prompting the development of South African retail companies and franchises mainly in the food and beverage sector and textiles."

**"The SA market is not using Mauritius to its full potential when it comes to conferences."**  
- **Rolph Schmid**

Although South Africans are turning to Mauritius for their meetings and incentives needs, they are, however, not taking full advantage of the conference and exhibition opportunities on the island, says Schmid. "There are many opportunities to hold conferences in Mauritius, as facilities have continuously improved over the years whether it be conference space, hotels or road infrastructure. The South African market is not using Mauritius to its fullest potential when it comes to conferences despite being well promoted by the national airline and the government."

The Mauritian exhibition sector has also gone unnoticed by South Africans, adds Schmid. "We have seen development in this sector from the Southeast Asian countries particularly in tertiary education. Recently, we have seen various trade fairs taking place as well."

According to Schmid, these sectors should be highlighted to South African corporates,



## Corporate travel management in Mauritius

MAURITIAN companies have a very different approach to corporate travel management than South African travel buyers, according to **Kathy Basson**, sales manager at Mauritius Incentive Connection (pictured). She explains most larger companies have an affiliation with a travel agency and use it for their corporate business.

The corporate travel management policies as known in South Africa or in Europe do not really exist in Mauritius, she suggests. "Most managers make their own arrangements through their personal assistants. The reason for this is that there is simply not enough turnover to warrant corporate travel managers."

especially since the island is strategically located between Africa and Southeast Asia with easy connection to the Far East and Europe.

**Carla da Silva**, Air Mauritius regional manager Southern Africa and Latin America, agrees that Mauritius has the ideal geographical location, with easy access to India, Australia and the East. This has led most of the Mauritian hotels to establish a powerful MICE value proposition, appealing to businesses all over the world. She explains the airline is capitalising on Mauritius' strategic location by offering free stopovers for

► feature continues on p20

► feature continues from p19 **Meet in Mauritius**

businesses wanting to combine business trips in Mauritius and other destinations.

## Obstacles

There are obstacles preventing Mauritius reaching its full potential with regard to the South African MICE market. Its biggest drawback is cost, with high airfares and hotel prices making it expensive compared to other destinations.

**Mike Gray**, ceo Uniglobe Travel Sub-Saharan Africa, explains that although business and conference travel from South Africa to Mauritius has been on the increase for the last five years already, budget restraints remain an obstacle. "The rand having devalued against the rupee by over 50% over this period makes Mauritius expensive."

Da Silva agrees that corporates cutting back on travel and incentives is one of the main obstacles for MICE travel to Mauritius. She adds, however, that Mauritius offers different value propositions for different budgets, and the Mauritian travel industry is focusing on overcoming budget constraints by finding innovative ways of offering more value for money.

One of the ways to overcome budget constraints is by



PIC: OUTRIGGER

carefully planning the dates for a conference or meeting, as the Mauritian government is actively trying to boost low-season tourism. Basson explains the island offers budget-friendly, low-season deals from May to September. "Four-night packages during this time are extremely competitive and affordable. If the corporate client were to incorporate a weekend into this, it would also limit time out the office to two nights."

The Minister of Tourism and Leisure, **Michael Sik Yuen**, has designed a strategic plan to boost low-season tourist

arrivals in Mauritius. The Minister recently mentioned that special packages would be offered to large travel groups from South Africa, comprising 100 or more people, as part of the Rs 25m Special Fund to boost arrivals from regional destinations during the low season outlined in the 2014 Mauritius budget.

This Fund will provide financial incentives for shorthaul regional flights. Hoteliers and service providers will be invited to join in this promotion exercise complemented by a discount shopping package.

## Did you know?

■ **FOR 2013**, the South African market experienced an increase of 5,8%, with 94 208 tourists visiting Mauritius compared to the 89 058 in 2012. The Mauritius Tourism Promotion Agency is expecting a 7% increase on these figures for tourist arrivals from South Africa for the current year.

■ **THE Outrigger Mauritius Resort and Spa**, located on the southern tip of Mauritius in Bel Ombre, opened on January 30, 2014. The deluxe 181-room, all sea-view resort is the first for Outrigger in the Indian Ocean and the company's 45th property now open or under development in eight countries.



■ **INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group (IHG)** announced the opening of the 140-room Holiday Inn Mauritius Airport (pictured above) in December 2013. Just 700m from the new SSR International Airport, five minutes from the nearest beach and 45km from the capital, Port Louis, the hotel is ideally located for travellers looking to make the most of their time in Mauritius. Holiday Inn Mauritius Airport caters for Mauritius' growing business travel community with 450sqm of meeting space, including a boardroom and four meeting rooms with garden break-out access.

## Mauritius new airport – a boost for corporate travel

**T**HE new airport terminal at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport in Mauritius, built at a cost of \$260m (R2,7bn), has created a boost for corporate travel, according to industry players.

The new terminal has created the capacity to double tourist arrivals to the island with the ability to host 4,5m passengers a year. The new terminal has 52 check-in desks,

five boarding gates of which one is A380 compatible, 26 immigration counters, five telescopic passenger boarding bridges, five baggage claim carousels, a new aircraft parking area and a landside car park for more than 1 000 cars for passengers, taxis and tour operators.

**Rolph Schmid**, md Indigo Hotels, explains: "The airport is a new feature on the island, which has not only facilitated

the travel of holidaymakers but is certainly more efficient and more conducive for business travellers."

Mauritian Prime Minister **Navin Ramgoolam** has said he wants the new terminal to become "an icon and the window of modern Mauritius... It translates the government's vision to modernise the island with its new airport terminal, new road network and light rail project."





## More than business hotels, your lifestyle.

With more than 17 years' experience, Indigo has firmly established itself as the leaders in Business Hotels in Mauritius. With five excellent hotels, Indigo offers the modern day traveller visiting Mauritius a distinctive lifestyle experience in each hotel; crisp efficiency coupled with outstanding service and attention to detail.



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Five venues, five distinct personalities; in the heart of the Caudan Waterfront in Port Louis there's the Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel, the 5-star business hotel with a traditional sense of luxury, Le Suffren Hotel & Marina, a contemporary 4-star City Resort Hotel for the modern business traveller, and Le Suffren Apart'hotel, Mauritius' first serviced duplex apartments offering all the freedom and comfort of a home together with the extensive services of a 4-star Hotel.

In the heart of Ebene Cybercity there's Hennessy Park Hotel, a 4-star venue with a unique artistic flair. And new to the Group is the fully refurbished The 4-star Address Boutique Hotel in the residential village of Port Chamblay, 5 minutes north of Port Louis, offering a personal and vibrant experience for each and every guest.

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All the modern technology expected by the business travellers are readily available in all five hotels. A highly

professional and dedicated banqueting team is ready to make your ideas become impactful events. Excellent banqueting and conference facilities are ready to cater for the most intimate functions to the eminent events with the same attention to detail.

### Wine and dine around the world

Indigo's range of delightful restaurants serve up cuisines to tempt every palate from the best of Mauritian fare to the pick of international dishes including Japanese and mediterranean specialities.

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Each of Indigo's venues has just the right balance of work and play, with a superb range of facilities including swimming pools, catamaran cruises, peaceful spas, fully equipped fitness clubs, hydro pool, squash court, convivial bar lounges and much more besides.

## Indigo at a glance

- 5-star Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel
- 4-star Le Suffren Hotel & Marina
- 4-star Hennessy Park Hotel
- Le Suffren Apart'hotel
- 4-star The Address Boutique Hotel

### Offering a total of:

- 344 spacious rooms
- 19 elegant suites
- 10 hotel apartments
- 9 delightful restaurants
- 4 trendy bars
- 3 modern spas
- 4 state-of-the-art fitness club
- 10 fully equipped conference rooms (total area of 920m<sup>2</sup>)



Labourdonnais  
Waterfront Hotel  
[www.labourdonnais.com](http://www.labourdonnais.com)

Le Suffren  
Hotel & Marina  
[www.lesuffrenhotel.com](http://www.lesuffrenhotel.com)

Hennessy  
Park Hotel  
[www.hennessyhotel.com](http://www.hennessyhotel.com)

Le Suffren  
Apart'hotel  
[www.lesuffrenaparthotel.com](http://www.lesuffrenaparthotel.com)

The Address  
Boutique Hotel  
[www.addressboutiquehotel.com](http://www.addressboutiquehotel.com)

► feature continues from p20

## MK launches wellness programme

PIC: AIR MAURITIUS



**A**IR Mauritius recently launched its Wellness and Wellbeing Programme, aimed at corporate executives, groups, incentives and MICE travel.

The four- to five-night programme will begin with a series of in-flight broadcast inserts, comprising helpful health tips, such as beneficial stretches

and what to eat and drink in transit. From there clients will be provided with accommodation in a serene and tranquil location.

The package includes a special fare, excess baggage benefits, business lounge access and value-adds such as spa treatments, yoga and health assessments.

## Did you know?



PIC: THE WESTIN TURTLE BAY RESORT & SPA

■ STARWOOD Hotels & Resorts has announced that it will soon introduce its Westin Hotels & Resorts brand to the island of Mauritius. Owned by Blue Ocean Park Ltd, The Westin Turtle Bay Resort & Spa, Mauritius is scheduled to open in spring 2014. The Westin Turtle Bay Resort & Spa, Mauritius will feature nearly 340 sqm of event space, including a ballroom, two meeting rooms and a fully equipped business centre.

■ AIR Mauritius has launched a new mobile website with capability for customers to purchase tickets, check-in, access 'Manage my Booking' and consult the airline timetable for updated flight information. Users are automatically redirected to the mobile website when using a handheld device. ■



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TB1783SD



# EUROPE:

## A turnaround for Schengen visas

Will simplified visa procedures result in a boost in corporate travel to Europe? By **Dorine Reinstein**.

**T**HE recently announced European Union resolution to simplify and shorten visa procedures for South African travellers from as early as 2015 will definitely simplify – but not necessarily boost – corporate travel to Europe, according to industry players.

**Claude Vankeirsbilck**, chief sales and marketing officer for Tourvest Travel Services, explains a visa relaxation could boost leisure travel, but not business travel. “Whether a visa is required or not, the company and traveller still have a need to be in that country for a specific reason and therefore the visa is just an added step to the process.”

**Lynn Howarth**, operations director for HRG Rennies Travel, echoes this sentiment. “Ultimately business economics drive the need for travel and to where; not the visa complications. Saying that, by simplifying the visa requirements for business travel to Europe it is more likely that travellers may stop over in Europe en-route and it could possibly also make this a more attractive incentive and conferencing destination.”

Up until now, the complexity of visa requirements has played a significant role in the choice of stopovers for corporate travellers. Howarth explains most Schengen countries allow a visa-free transit,

providing travellers do not leave the transit area and have a visa for their final destination. “However, when a transit includes a change from a local to an international terminal, a visa is usually required and this does impact the traveller’s choice of route.”

Vankeirsbilck adds that stringent UK visa requirements have prompted corporates to steer away from the UK and from British carriers in an attempt to bypass the country as a stopover. A point that is confirmed by **Angela Newton**, senior manager, Carlson Wagonlit Travel: “You only need a transit visa if you have two or more connections within Europe. If you transit via London to Europe, you would require two visas – transit visa for the UK and Schengen visa for your destination. This works against using London as a connecting point.”

With the proposed simplification of Schengen visa procedures, corporates are likely to continue to avoid passing through the UK, as Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, Cyprus, Romania and the UK currently do not take part in the improved visa policy. UK tourism companies have expressed concern that the improvements to Schengen visas could drive even more business to competitor countries in Europe.



**David Scowsill**, president and ceo of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC), also called on the UK government to continue to significantly change its approach and policies; including freezing APD and aligning its procedures with the Schengen visa area to simplify access to the UK for travellers.

### Welcome development

Although a relaxation of visas might not result in a boost of corporate travel to Europe, it is a welcome development for most travel buyers and TMCs in South Africa. The current complexity of embassy requirements for Schengen visas is a headache at best, a critical business issue at worst for any corporate with a significant number of travellers to Europe.

**Lindley Aylward**, senior financial manager De Beers Group, explains that although the company is not directly involved in obtaining visas for corporate travellers due to the personal requirements of obtaining a visa, feedback

indicates that travellers currently find it a tedious and time-consuming process. “The most common challenge I find with corporate travellers is the processing time of the visa application. The fact that they must be present to submit their application does tend to inconvenience the traveller as it takes time from their day and business appointments too.”

Vankeirsbilck agrees as current requirements for Schengen visas can significantly delay travel due to visa-processing time. “Often, last-minute travel is not possible as embassies are not willing or able to assist with emergency or last-minute visas. Another time-intensive obstacle is the fact that clients often have to obtain business letters and invite letters from overseas clients, which delays the process and can result in clients submitting their visas late. We have so many cancellations from clients due to the fact that they did not receive their visas prior to their trips.”

The nature of most business trips is that they are generally last

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► feature continues from p23

minute, agrees Howarth. She adds visa requirements are fairly rigid, require a lot of supporting documentation which takes time to arrange and the visa process itself can take up to 14 days to complete. In addition, there are often limited appointment times with both the lodging agents and the consulates/High Commissions. "This, in addition to requirements such as appearing in person often mean that the process is delayed, which negatively impacts on business travel arrangements."

## Financial impact

The financial impact related to the cost of obtaining a visa is also a concern for many companies.

Says Vankeirsbilck: "Companies are quoted for visas in foreign currency which, when converted, can be extremely expensive. Having to produce issued tickets and confirmed

paid-for accommodation means that the company incurs a cost for the ticket but if the visa is delayed or declined, the cancellation penalties or change penalties of that ticket will also apply. In most cases, the company policy is cheapest fare, which carries the highest restrictions and is often non-refundable."

The EU has addressed all these concerns in its proposal to simplify visas.

**Cecilia Malmström**, commissioner for EU Home Affairs, states: "Europe needs a smarter visa policy. We need to attract more tourists, business people, researchers, students, artists and culture professionals to our shores. Now, we want to boost our economy and create new jobs by underlining the economic dimension in our visa policy, while keeping a high level of security at our borders. Today's proposals will greatly



Exciting news for regular business travellers: mandatory issuing of multiple-entry visas valid for three years.

facilitate the procedures for short-stay visitors. Thanks to these proposals we expect a serious increase of travellers in the years to come."

As part of the simplification process, the EU aims to reduce the deadline from 15 to ten days for processing visas and make it possible to lodge visa applications in other EU countries consulates if the Member State is not present. On the cards as well is the introduction of a new type of visa, the touring visa. This visa will allow legitimate travellers to circulate in the Schengen area for

up to one year (without staying in one Member State for more than 90 days in any 180-day period).

The application forms will also be simplified and allow for online applications. In some countries, there will be a possibility of visa-on-arrival for up to 15 days.

The most exciting announcement for business travellers, however, is probably the facilitation for regular travellers, which includes mandatory issuing of multiple-entry visas valid for three years.

## Take the stress out of visa applications

### 1. Use a professional

Use a professional who understands visas and the nature of the process, advises **Claude Vankeirsbilck** of Tourvest Travel Services.

HRG Rennies Travel's **Lynn Howarth** agrees: "Travellers are busy and find it frustrating when they are required to appear in person for a visa appointment. In addition it is often difficult to procure an appointment at short notice. They want a TMC to take care of the process from A-Z."

According to Howarth, HRG

Rennies Travel has tried to make the experience easier by developing key relationships. "As an example, we have an agreement in place with Capago that allows for the processing of our travellers' French and Italian visa applications without the traveller being personally present, provided their biometric fingerprints have been done previously."

### 2. Allow enough time

Apply for your visa with ample time prior to departure, Vankeirsbilck suggests.

## Eurail launches new select pass

EURAIL has announced it has launched a new, revamped select pass for four European countries, including France.

Travellers will be able to tailor-make their itineraries and benefit from a wider choice of countries (26) from which to choose. This will allow easier access into Spain and



Portugal. This pass has the same features and benefits as the traditional Eurail Select 4 Countries Pass. The difference is that the portfolio now includes France. The Eurail Select 3 and 5 country passes will be discontinued.

"Plan ahead where possible and ensure that your visa is processed early in the travel-planning stage," agrees

Howarth. She adds that where an embassy allows it, travellers should try to obtain a multiple-entry long-stay visa. ■

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\*The American Express GlobalTravel Card 3% Cross Currency Conversion Fee will be reduced for a limited time to 0% from 28 October 2013 – 31 January 2015. The American Express GlobalTravel Card is not for use in South Africa, the other Common Monetary Area (CMA) countries (Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland) and in countries where South African or United States sanctions apply. The American Express GlobalTravel Card is issued by American Express Travel Related Services Company, Inc. Incorporated with limited liability in New York, USA. ®Registered Trademark of American Express Company. The use of this Card is subject to the Terms and Conditions and Exchange Control Regulations







Johan Venter

## Incentivise with a cruise ... on a tight budget

In the current economic climate, budget-conscious companies who seek to offer their top achievers an incentive of a lifetime should consider a cruise incentive, writes **Max Marx**.

**A** CRUISE incentive is the perfect solution when working with a limited budget, believes **Johan Venter**, Uwin Iwin's executive head: Incentive Travel.

"A cruise provides exceptional value for money and allows for little to no opportunity to over-extend on the budget." He says Uwin Iwin was recently asked by

one of its clients on a tight budget to arrange a cruise incentive for top performers. "Our choice was Azamara Club Cruises, as they offer an all-inclusive package allowing for a drinks supplement. The only costs to add on are port charges and gratuities. Thus all expenses are covered."

The choice to use Azamara Club Cruises was obvious to

Uwin Iwin because of the cruise line's AzAmazingEvenings programme, which offers cruise guests a complimentary evening's entertainment and an opportunity to experience the best of the destination's local culture in a unique way. This could be a live performance by three tenors in an Italian monastery, getting red carpet treatment at a ballet at the Mikhailovsky Theatre in St Petersburg, or an evening of opera in a French chateau.

Uwin Iwin's clients visited the ancient Roman city of Ephesus in Turkey, where they were treated to a private performance by a 12-piece orchestra playing the music of Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart and others.

To keep within budget, the ten-day Greek Isles and Turkey

cruise itinerary, which visited Kusadasi and Marmaris in Turkey, as well as Athens, Mykonos, Rhodes and Kos in Greece, primarily featured days and evenings at leisure in each destination, enabling travellers to explore the destinations on their own with a wide variety of land excursions, nightlife and entertainment options from which to choose through Azamara's Land Discoveries programme.

Uwin Iwin's client gave its incentive travellers US\$150 each to spend on excursions, shopping and entertainment.



Azamara Cruises

PIC: AZAMARA CRUISES

PIC: WINDSTAR CRUISES



George Agyropoulos

## ... and go over-the-top *Mixing business with Paradise!*

**T**HE intimate scale of Windstar's luxury yachts make them ideal for a full ship charter, believes **George Agyropoulos**, md of Cruises International, which represents ten cruise brands.

"Every day is yours by design as the Windstar yacht becomes an exclusive extension of your company. You can create unique

experiences for your group with customised itineraries and shore excursions, all included to provide uncompromising value. With engines off and sails up, sailing amidst sandy beaches with coconut trees just inches from warm waters, there's nothing quite like Windstar's Tahiti experience." The yacht sails from Papeete (roundtrip),

to Moorea (mooring overnight), Tahaa, Raiatea (overnight), Bora Bora (overnight) and Huahine.

But what else makes this experience French Polynesian island adventure '180 degrees from ordinary'? Nothing compares to the clear lagoons and lush rainforests of these Polynesian islands, he says. "Experience Papeete's famous

le truck – one of the world's most unusual forms of transportation; hike the majestic Three Coconut Trail on Moorea island; swim with dolphins in Tahaa; explore the coral reefs of Raiatea; and explore Huahine, known as Polynesia's 'Garden of Eden'. In Bora Bora, enjoy a beach dinner on a private motu (tiny islet) with

► *feature continues on p26*

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► feature continues from p25

acrobatic dancers and flame throwers for entertainment; and sail, swim and kayak from the yacht's water sports platform."

Windstar's corporate and incentive facilities cater for groups of 20 to 150 while exclusive full-ship charters cater for 148 to 310 guests, with a ratio of two crew members per guest. Fares start from US\$3 599 pp sharing, with full-charter rates available on request.

"This is one of our most exotic cruises," says Agyropoulos. "It is most people's dream to visit Pacific Islands such as Tahiti and Bora Bora and it is the ultimate achievement to qualify for an incentive trip like this."

Cruises International offers cruise incentives to suit every budget, lifestyle and company objective from floating resorts to intimate luxury ships.



Cruising in Santorini

PIC: WINDSTAR CRUISES



Kathy Nel

## ...or include a meeting component Great for return on investment

**T**HE combination of a cruise experience and conference is a powerful tool to inspire and motivate a company's employees, believes **Kathy Nel**, national manager of LimeX, Rennies Travel's incentive division.

"Days at seas can be used for conferencing while delegates can enjoy spectacular incentive experiences while docked at port. There are also fantastic team-building activities available onboard and onshore. With the cruise fare including all food and drink (when a drinks package is opted for), there are no surprise costs, and delegates have access to loads of onboard entertainment. Some cruises include onboard conferencing in the cruise fare, while others do not. Team building is generally not included."

The conference can also

include some of the ship's entertainers to add sparkle to the conference proceedings.

Onshore team-building activities are also very popular, says Nel, offering unique experiences. "For example, with a small cruise ship such as *Le Soléal*, which operates cruise itineraries in the Mediterranean, the cruise itself is a huge attraction."

Here are a few examples of excursions offered by *Le Soléal* on its Turkey to Greece cruise:

- In Santorini, you can hike to the crater of an active volcano with its lava fragments and volcanic rock formations and then swim in 37°C green sulphur waters on your way to the thermal springs of PaleaKameni.
- Go jet skiing or take a quad-bike tour complete with donkey ride, wine tasting and a visit to a Venetian castle and to Santorini's 'black' beaches.

- In Mykonos, enjoy a 4x4 off-the-beaten track safari offering spectacular views, swimming at deserted beaches, a visit to a Venetian monastery and sampling the local cuisine.
- Enjoy a four-hour speed boat adventure that takes your travellers to several of Mykonos' famous beaches, or an exhilarating helicopter ride that flies over Naxos, Paros and Koufonisia.

The ship can cater for conferences of up to 110 delegates.

The estimated cost of such a seven-night cruise is R56 900 excluding flights and any additional activities or enhancements. But, says Nel, there are a wide range of cruise liners available and their costs vary significantly depending what they offer.



PIC: ROYAL CARIBBEAN CRUISES

Depending on the ship selected, onboard team-building options could include an amazing race or treasure hunt that explores the ship's facilities; golf; climbing wall; dance, aerobic or cooking challenges; gambling activities and motivational speakers.



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## Did you know?

WITH group bookings of 20 travellers or more, Uwin Iwin offers a free corporate pack, which includes a branded backpack, travel wallet and comfort pack. For groups larger than 35 travellers, Uwin Iwin provides a complimentary tour leader.



Emma Momberg

## More cruise ideas

**C**RUISEMASTERS is offering two Costa Cruises specials in Europe and has added a new product to its cruise portfolio, according to **Emma Momberg**, marketing and product manager, CruiseMasters.

On offer is a seven-night Italy, Spain and France cruise aboard the *Costa Serena* from US\$899

pps, excluding port charges. Departure dates are 15, 22 and 29 June 2014 from Savona. Another option is a seven-night Italy, Greece and Croatia cruise aboard the *Costa Fascinosa*. The cruise, which departs from Venice, starts at US\$949 pps excluding port charges. Departure dates are 16, 23 and 30 June 2014.

## Book it!

CRUISES International is offering a seven-night Pacific cruise roundtrip from Papeete in Tahiti. The cruise costs US\$3 599 pp sharing.

The price includes all meals, accommodation, activities and entertainment onboard; customisable itineraries and shore excursions; group airport transfers; complimentary

cocktail party, and meeting spaces with complimentary refreshment breaks and AV equipment, and world-class Windstar cuisine enjoyed at leisure.

Excluded are taxes, gratuities, beverages and expenditure of a personal nature, with beverage packages available for an all-inclusive experience.

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Would your travel partner have remembered the bucket and spade? The small things are often overlooked!



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# Top 10 specials

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



PIC: THE BLUE TRAIN

## 1. MAURITIUS

South African Airways. Economy class promotional fare from Johannesburg to Mauritius. Return fare is R2 100. Valid for travel until June 26. Fare excludes taxes.

## 2. MEDITERRANEAN

Thompsons Holidays. Seven nights western Med cruise onboard *Liberty of the Seas*. Cruise departs October 12. Price is R17 877 pp sharing including all taxes. Package includes return flight ex-Johannesburg to Barcelona, cruise, all meals and entertainment onboard, port charges gratuities and taxes. (Itinerary: Barcelona, Marseilles, Nice, Florence, Civitavecchia, Naples, Barcelona.)

## 3. EUROPE

Ethiopian Airlines. May promotion. Fares ex-Johannesburg to Europe are from R2 470 (Paris), R2 820 (Stockholm), R2 870 (London), R2 940 (Rome), R2 980 (Frankfurt) and R3 010 (Brussels). Fares are saleable until May 31. All taxes excluded. Travel is permitted until June 30.

## 4. TURKEY, MAURITIUS, BRAZIL OR MALDIVES

Club Med. Early booking bonus for couples – book before May 14 and save up to R5 400 per couple at select resorts. Turkey from R10 470, Mauritius from R12 445, Brazil from R17 355 and Maldives from R23 825. Packages include return airfares ex-Johannesburg, transfers, meals and drinks. Travel dates vary for each destination.

## 5. EUROPE

Egyptair. "Affordable Europe" fares – economy class fares ex-Johannesburg are from R2 890 to Istanbul and R3 190 to Rome, Milan, Athens and Larnaca. Valid for travel until June 19. Fares exclude airport taxes and fuel surcharge.

## 6. PHUKET

Perfect Destinations. "Phuket special – save R3 600 per person". Packages are from R11 430 pp sharing. Offer includes return flights ex-Johannesburg, all taxes, return airport-hotel transfers, and seven nights' accommodation with daily

breakfast. Rate is valid until June 18 and again from August 1-20. Packages ex-Durban and Cape Town are also available.

## 7. CAPE TOWN

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group. Park Inn by Radisson Cape Town, Foreshore. A 24-hour conference package from R1 450 per person. Rate includes accommodation with breakfast, standard conference equipment inclusive of data projector, complimentary internet access, three tea/coffee breaks, with lunch and dinner served in RBG Bar and Grill. Minimum 30 delegates required. Offer expires October 31.

## 8. MAURITIUS

Beachcomber Tours. Early bird specials – valid for travel from May 1 to June 26. Four-star rates are from R10 745 pp sharing. Offer includes return airfares ex-Johannesburg, return transfers, daily breakfast and dinner as well as free land and motorised water sports. Rate includes 25% discount – 30-day advance purchase required. Excludes taxes (R3 420 per person).

## 9. CAPE TOWN or PRETORIA

The Blue Train. "Three nights for the price of one" in June. Two extra nights in either Pretoria (The Sheraton Hotel or Castello Di Monte) or Cape Town (The Taj Hotel or The Westin) including breakfast and one-way transfer to the train station. Valid for Pretoria to Cape Town departures on June 2, 9 and 16 or from Cape Town to Pretoria on June 4, 11 and 18. One-way Blue Train rates are from R13 015 pp sharing. Rate includes one night's accommodation on the train with all meals plus two nights at the hotel of choice.

## 10. ZANZIBAR

Africa Stay. Seven-night packages are from R9 585 pp sharing. Package includes return flights ex-Johannesburg, airport taxes, airport-hotel transfers, four-star accommodation at Blue Bay Resort, daily breakfast and dinner. Offer is valid until June 30. ■

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



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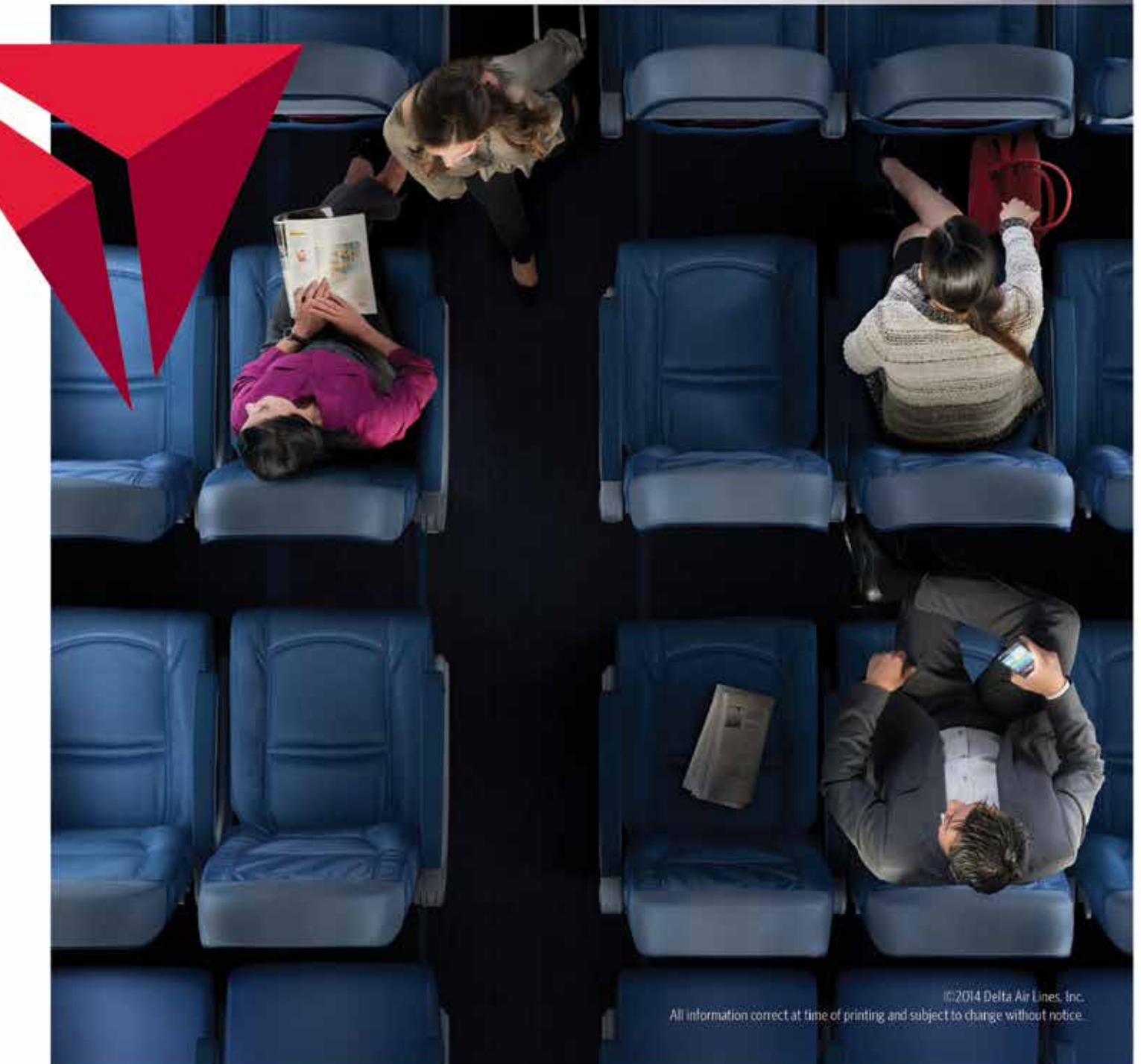




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