

OCTOBER 2014

TRAVEL BUYER

FOR SA CO

The true cost of going 'cheap'

+Meet

3

REASONS

SMEs NEED TMCs

HOW TO

'inspect' venues you can't visit

NEW BEE CODES

– are you prepared?



FNB INVESTS IN CHANGE

Elsa Silva reveals more about recent innovations to FNB's travel programme.

BUSINESS TRAVEL INSURANCE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q: What does a travel insurance policy cover?

The most important benefit on your travel insurance policy is your emergency medical cover. This covers your medical costs in the event of injury or illness while travelling outside the borders of South Africa.

A comprehensive policy will also include cover for:

- Losses incurred due to unforeseen cancellation or cutting your trip short
- Death and disability cover
- Personal liability cover
- Luggage cover
- Various other inconvenience benefits



Q: Why is travel insurance important?

Due to the increasing exchange rate of the Rand against many foreign currencies, travelling without travel insurance has the potential to leave you financially crippled.

For example: A routine visit to a GP in the United Kingdom will cost you £150 to £200. Hospital costs for a serious injury have the potential to run into millions of Rands!

Travel insurance products offer the affordability of purchasing your policy in Rands, with the peace of mind that your medical costs will be covered in the foreign currency you require.

Q: What are the most important travel insurance benefits?

The majority of travel insurance claims are related to medical costs, cancellation expenses and luggage losses. When you compare policies and benefits, it is important that you ensure that you have cover for all three risks.

Q: What business travel options are available to business travellers?

- **Individual Travellers:** You have the option to purchase cover each and every time you travel, OR you can purchase an annual Multiple Entry Policy, which will be activated each time you travel internationally.
- **Frequent Travel Businesses:** You may want to consider one of the Annual Declaration Corporate Travel Policies that can provide business travel cover for all of your staff members.
- **Expats in Africa:** If you are a South African contracted to work in Africa for an extended period, you may want to consider a medical and evacuation-only type of policy.

Q: Will I be covered for malaria if I have not taken anti-malaria medication?

Yes. Emergency malaria treatment is covered, but it is recommended that you be aware of the risks associated with contracting malaria and take precautionary measures before departure.

Q: What is typically excluded from medical cover?

It is important that you check the full details of your policy for cover, terms and exclusions as cover for pre-existing illnesses is not included on all policies. Other common exclusions include:

- Accidents while participating in hazardous pursuits, speed or endurance activities
- Injury / illness resulting from your negligence
- Self-harm
- Injuries / illnesses incurred during illegal activities

Injuries resulting from your participation in leisure sporting activities are usually covered, but professional sportsmen must apply for specific cover.

Q: Are injuries covered if manual labour is performed on a trip?

Costs incurred for manual labour-related injuries are excluded on standard cover. However, most comprehensive business travel products have various options for adequate cover in this regard.

Q: How are overseas medical costs paid?

The services of a 24-hour international emergency assistance company will be linked to any good travel insurance policy. This company will provide a payment guarantee to the hospital or clinic and settle the medical account directly with the service provider.

Q: How are other claims paid out?

All claims for other benefits (or medical bills you might settle yourself) are payable to you, the insured, once the claim is submitted.

Q: What does Cancellation Cover insure?

Cancellation Cover will reimburse any non-refundable travel or accommodation costs in the event that travellers are unable to travel due to an unexpected illness or accident.

Your cover might include cover for other incidents as well – these will be detailed in the policy document. Always ensure that you understand this document fully.

Q: I have free cover on my credit card – is this sufficient?

Most banks provide some complimentary travel cover if you have purchased your ticket using your credit card. This is usually limited to some medical cover, accidental death and disability cover. Make sure that you check exactly what is covered before travelling.

Should you find that this cover is not sufficient for your travel purposes, you can purchase one of the Top Up options available at TIC. This will ensure that you have adequate cover for any event.

Estimated costs:

- Heart attack in USA:** USD12,000 - USD15,000 per day
- Broken leg in Europe:** USD20,000
- Flu in the UK:** USD600
- Food poisoning in Asia:** USD300 – USD1000

Interesting fact:

The highest recorded medical claim paid globally is US\$ 1,5 million.



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Editor's note

It's been several months since news of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa began dominating headlines and, as the situation continues to worsen, so do fears and the implications for travel. I spoke to a friend recently who works in the pharmaceuticals industry. She said her company was forced to cut back on travel to Nigeria, although there are no travel advisories suggesting restrictions to the country, as most of their corporate travellers were not comfortable visiting the destination and refused to travel. "Who can blame them," she said, "the virus is now airborne." Ignorance around the situation is a bigger threat than the disease itself – which, in fact, is NOT airborne. In an effort to prevent misinformation and keep our readers and travellers updated on info critical for people travelling to and from Africa, *Travel Buyer's* daily – www.travelbuyer.co.za – has produced an interactive map, which is updated daily. To view the map, visit the website. Meanwhile, in this month's *Travel Buyer*, we tackle issues a little closer to home, such as the new B-BBEE codes of good practice, which will be

implemented from April 30, and have far-reaching consequences for corporates and their supplier agreements. There are going to be a lot of changes as to how people are going to come up with strategies to comply with the new scorecard. Speaking of change, we profile FNB's Elsa Silva, who tells us a bit about how the company is introducing innovations to transform its travel programme. The diverse nature of FNB's business has meant many preferences with regard to suppliers, but the company has had to rationalise its supplier database to meet its procurement objectives. Don't miss our bumper TMC feature, which puts TMC transaction models under the spotlight, revealing some truths about how going "cheap" can cost corporates in the long run. The feature also looks at how SMEs can benefit from working with a travel management company to save them time and money.

Keep reading!

Natasha Schmidt
(natashas@nowmedia.co.za)

COVER

The diverse nature of FNB's business requires a travel policy that is clear enough to maintain good governance and compliance, yet eclectic enough to accommodate the requirements of all its business units. *Travel Buyer* finds out more from FNB's Elsa Silva. Cover photograph by Shannon Van Zyl.

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GBTA introduces travel tech 'Maturity Index'

THE Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) has launched Maturity Index, a travel research benchmarking tool, to enable organisations to evaluate their use of travel-related technology against a set of best-practice standards. The index provides feedback on opportunities to improve travel management programmes by making better use of

technology in the context of a given organisation's needs and goals. The Maturity Index requires organisations to take a self-assessment test. Based on the outcome, they will receive a report on where they stand against best-practices, both overall and per category. Outcomes can be benchmarked against other GBTA members to identify areas for improvement.

Indian High Commission evaluates visa formats for South Africans

THE Acting High Commissioner for India in South Africa, **T Armstrong Changsan**, said India was ready to introduce biometric visas for South African visitors but was adopting a wait-and-see approach as it weighed up the possibility of harming inbound tourism. For the moment, it will hold back unless it receives strict instructions from Delhi. He said the visa process in South Africa would be simpler than the South African experience in India as South Africa was far smaller and already had three Indian consular services, in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town. Changsan said the possibility of visas on arrival for South Africans also remained a possibility and was "a work in progress". His "educated reading" was that it would not be a visa on arrival in the conventional sense but would take the form of an advance travel authorisation, where applications for entry would be made online, and copies carried by travellers for display at immigration counters on arrival.



PHOTO: KATE NATHAN

Freedom for frequent flyers

DINERS Club SA has launched an innovative, new loyalty programme, ClubMiles. Diners Club SA cardholders get flexibility and freedom of choice – their loyalty miles can buy them a ticket on any airline, with no blackout periods. As long as the seat is available, the client may use their ClubMiles to book and pay on the ClubMiles website. The miles may be used to pay for both tickets and airport taxes, and members

can use their Diners Club card to pay for additional ClubMiles if needed. A big plus for this programme is that while the client earns ClubMiles they will still earn their Voyager Miles or other airline loyalty points. Companies with corporate cards can select from several options regarding the redemption of points. Lee-Ann Shepherd, Diners Club SA's marketing head looks forward to a future of freedom.

Gautrain extends hours for airport service

THE Gautrain service between Sandton and OR Tambo International Airport now operates from earlier in the morning until later in the evening. The first trains now leave Sandton at 04h50 and 05h10 and the last trains from OR Tambo leave at 20h46 and 21h04. Gautrain ceo, **Jack van der Merwe**, said these early and late trains did not stop at

stations between the airport and Sandton. "This means that, if passengers want to make use of the early or late service, they have to use Sandton station as their departure point and not any other station on the Gautrain route." The Sandton and airport stations will open and close 15 minutes before the first and last trains leave each day.

AIRLINK LAUNCHES flights to Sishen

AIRLINK has launched flights between OR Tambo International Airport (ORTIA), Johannesburg, and Sishen airport in the Northern Cape. Sishen airport is located close to Anglo American's iron ore mine in Kumba and services the broader mining community of Kathu. Travellers from as far as Postmasberg, Kuruman, Olifantshoek and the new Kolomela mine will also be able to make use of the new Airlink service. Flights operate twice daily, with morning flights departing ORTIA at 07h20 and arriving in Sishen at 08h40. The return flight departs Sishen at 09h05 and arrives in ORTIA at 10h15. The afternoon flight departs ORTIA at 16h30 and arrives in Sishen 17h50. The return flight departs Sishen at 18h15 and arrives at ORTIA at 19h25. Flights operate Monday to Friday using a 37-seat Embraer 135 Regional Jet Aircraft.

Qatar launches Cape Town flights

QATAR Airways will begin non-stop flights, five times a week, between Doha and Cape Town, from November 3. This will replace the airline's current three-times-

a-week flights to Cape Town via Johannesburg. The route will be operated by a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, with 22 seats in business class and 232 in economy. Flying on Mondays,

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, the flights depart Cape Town at 12h45, arriving in Doha at 23h30. The return flight departs Doha at 01h25, arriving in Cape Town at 10h15.



Regulations for child travellers postponed

THE Department of Home Affairs has delayed implementation of the requirement for children under the age of 18 to present an unabridged birth certificate until June 1, 2015. Furthermore, in the instances where children are travelling with one parent, the written permission required under the new regulations would also be postponed until June 1. This was announced by minister of Home Affairs, **Malusi Gigaba**, at a media briefing on September 16. Gigaba's announcement follows a meeting last week with industry associations, including IATA, Asata and the TBCSA.



PHOTO: DEBBIE BAHAM

IDC Travel takes off

IDC Travel officially opened its doors on April 1. The new travel office will take care of the travel needs of the IDC and its three subsidiaries, including Foskor. The

company celebrated its launch at a special ceremony on August 29 during which Foskor handed its IATA licence to the IDC, officially enabling it to operate as a travel

agent. Celebrating the launch (from left) are **Busisiwe Khumalo** (head of department: support services) and **Maureen Masuku** (corporate travel manager).

BA introduces three-day hold-fee

BRITISH Airways has introduced a new, cheap, hold-fee that allows South Africans to hold long-haul reservations for up to three days. Customers reserving flights via BA's website, ba.com, can now pay £10 (R180) to hold long-haul reservations for up to 72 hours. If, within 72 hours, customers want to pay for their flights, the hold deposit is refunded and the ticket

can be purchased. The name of one person is needed to hold the flights. Additional names of those travelling can be added within 72 hours of the booking being held. Seats can be held up to 21 days before departure. The hold-fee is also available for short-haul flights in the UK or Europe for £5 (R89) but does not include domestic and regional flights in South Africa operated by Comair.

SAA increases capacity to Mumbai

SAA has introduced a bigger aircraft on the Johannesburg-Mumbai route. A 253-seat A340-300 replaces the existing A330-200, adding 31 seats. SAA flies daily, except Tuesdays, to Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport. SA284 departs JNB at 11h25 and arrives in Mumbai at 00h05. The return flight, SA285, departs Mumbai at 01h35 and arrives in JNB at 06h55.

REMINDER to register

The inaugural African Business Travel Association (ABTA) conference will take place from November 2-4 at the Sheraton Pretoria Hotel in Pretoria. Over 200 delegates from across the world are expected to attend, providing delegates with key insights into trends, challenges, opportunities and best practice when sending travellers into Africa. For more information and to register for the conference, contact Monique at monique@abta.co.za.

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New B-BBEE codes – be prepared

The recently revised Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) codes of good practice are likely to have far-reaching consequences for companies in the year ahead and for the suppliers they choose. According to analysts, the codes will make it more difficult for most companies to reach compliant status. By **Dorine Reinstein**.

THE revised codes have reduced the scorecard elements from seven to five by combining Management Control and Employment Equity into one element and combining Preferential Procurement and Enterprise Development into one element. In short, this means there are going to be a lot of changes as to how people are going to come up with strategies to comply with the new scorecard.

The new procurement targets in particular are likely to create havoc in the travel industry. The Procurement element comprises the previous Preferential Procurement as well as the Enterprise Development, and has increased in importance from 35 points to 44 points. It will therefore become more difficult for companies to reach targets on procurement. One of the indicators on the new element is for a company to spend 40% of its procurement from empowering suppliers that are at least 51% black-owned.



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

TRAVEL Buyer chats with Keith Levenstein, ceo of EconoBEE, about what travel managers need to know about the new scorecard.

Q: The new sector code for the tourism industry has not yet been published. When will the new tourism charter come into effect?

A: The Department of Trade and Industry has stated that they have a commitment from all sector councils to have their sector code ready by year-end. They most likely will not achieve this deadline and even if they do, there is a long process to go before officially gazetting the sector code. There has been a statement that if the sector code is not ready, entities must follow the general amended codes from May 1, 2015 until such time as the sector code is applicable.

Q: How will a company's travel choices impact on its B-BBEE status?

A: All companies will start looking for suppliers who are BEE compliant and ideally have more than 51% black ownership. In the travel industry, consumers are sometimes limited, e.g. in choice of airline or hotel.

Q: The issue of third-party procurement is likely to create some issues. What are some of the pitfalls associated with third-party procurement when it comes to travel?

A: Most of the spend by a company with their travel management company (TMC) is third-party procurement. For

example, if a company asks the TMC to book a flight to Cape Town, the flight itself is procurement from an airline by the company and their only spend with the TMC is the service fee charged for the booking.

Many companies prefer to use the TMC's BEE scorecard because they tend to have a high level of compliance, but the TMC will be loathe to be seen to be the supplier of, for example an airline ticket, because it would detrimentally affect their score. This is the third-party procurement problem.

Q: Is there a solution to this problem in the travel industry?

A: Unfortunately third-party procurement is not verified properly and most companies use the TMC's BEE status for all their spend, while TMC does not regard the spend with the airline as their own procurement. We hope that the sector code and new verification manual will further explain this.

Effectively many companies are using the wrong procurement BEE status for their spend, a misrepresentation of their true BEE status. This is happening to both TMCs and their customers.

Q: What can the TMC do to ensure that the company uses the right B-BBEE certificate for the right supplier?

A: The ideal situation is for the TMC (third-party procurer) to issue a detailed statement showing spend with and invoices from third-party suppliers together with their BEE

certificates. By getting it wrong it could be seen as fronting!

We do recommend that as an added service the TMC collect valid certificates of each of the third-party suppliers.

Q: What should travel buyers do to ensure they have the right certificate from the right supplier?

A: Travel buyers need to check procurement very carefully. We recommend a competent consultant be appointed to ensure that a company's procurement score is accurate.

Sometimes a company pays for their travel expense with a credit card and wrongly uses the bank's BEE status because their procurement schedule shows 'credit card' as the expense. Once again, many verification agencies and auditors miss this and award the wrong procurement score.

Q: What are some of the consequences of involuntary fronting – for example if the travel buyer accidentally uses the wrong procurement?

A: The B-BBEE Amended Act makes it clear that fronting is a deliberate misrepresentation of an entity's BEE status or where the md or ceo 'ought to have known' that it was a misrepresentation.

The Act lays down penalties of up to ten years in jail or 10% of a company's annual revenue. Even if a company is not charged its clients will see this as a stigma, and the company is likely to lose business.

Industry views

It is a little premature to comment on the new scorecard, as the new Tourism Charter for the new BEE codes has not yet been issued and that is what we are rated against.

"We understand from the general codes that have been issued, which will filter through to the new Tourism Code, that the most significant change will be around preferential

procurement, which will be more onerous. Our procurement is, however, relatively small taking into account that supplier spend is not deemed as procurement for us as a TMC.

"As a service provider, the only credit a company can take from us as a TMC is based on the fees they pay us for the services we provide. We do collate the BEE certificates of suppliers they use so that our

customers can determine their procurement spend.

"We have not encountered any problems with this other than managers understanding who they can claim BEE points from and who not, so the supplier versus the service provider does take some explanation but once this is understood then we encounter no issues."

– **Claude Vankeirsbilck, Tourvest Travel Services**

As De Beers is part of the Anglo Group, we participate in all their travel contracts. Their procurement office does contract negotiations and draws up preferred partner programmes. They will consider BEE status during the negotiation phase.

"We are obliged to use these partners."

– **Lindley Aylward, De Beers**

In the Revised Codes of Good Practice, the target for procurement spend becomes 40% of Total Measured Procurement Spend on 51% or more black-owned suppliers who are Empowered Suppliers.

"If hotel groups hit this target they will be awarded nine points on the scorecard, which is almost 25% of the available

scoring for the Enterprise and Supplier Development pillar.

"This requirement is challenging for the industry, as there is currently a real lack of black-owned suppliers in the tourism industry but Protea Hotels is focused on the support of black-owned suppliers as far as possible."

– **Benjamin Memani, Protea Hotels**

The car-rental industry will be severely affected by the new scorecard,

as 90% of procurement is vehicle procurement from the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs). I foresee a tough year ahead with significant challenges for the car-rental industry as most of the vehicle OEMs are global, international companies, making it almost impossible for car-rental companies to fulfill the procurement element of the new BEE charter.

"Avis is level 2 BEE compliant but the company stands at risk of dropping to a level 6, 7 or 8 because of procurement targets. We support transformation 100%. But, there is still a lot of work to be done for the code to be practical."

– **Keith Rankin, Avis**

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FNB invests in change

The diverse nature of FNB's business requires a travel policy that is clear enough to maintain good governance and compliance, yet eclectic enough to accommodate the requirements of all its business units. **Elsa Silva**, senior sourcing specialist for travel at FNB Procurement, speaks to **Debbie Badham** about introducing innovations that have transformed FNB's travel programme.

WHEN Elsa Silva began her career in procurement at FNB two years ago, she was faced with a number of 'intertwined' travel-related challenges.

"The most prevalent challenge has been the rationalisation of our supplier database due to the fact that there are so many business preferences from area to area within the business – this makes it difficult to keep all stakeholders happy with the selection of suppliers," she says. "This was most noticeable in the domestic accommodation sphere."

The diverse nature of FNB's business makes it necessary for the organisation to accommodate all of its travellers' needs within the selection of travel suppliers. However, a number of procurement objectives must be taken into consideration including meeting strategic objectives, aligning with preferred suppliers, maximising value and offering travellers and travel bookers great customer service.

New data model

Another significant challenge relates to the acquisition of relevant and real-time travel data to assist with strategic decisions and the management of exceptions as early as possible. FNB recently completed a project on data acquisition through a web service with its TMC. Silva says: "We are completing the

build of our travel data model that will be the management tool for travel-related reporting," she says.

Rationalising suppliers

In an effort to address challenges surrounding FNB's supplier data base, Silva's team has recently concluded an extensive hotel rationalisation project for domestic accommodation by means of a tender process that led to a significant reduction in the number of hotels on its preferred supplier list (PSL).

"At commencement of the project our booking history showed that we had utilised in the region of 300 hotels over a period of 12 months," she explains. "It soon became clear that a major reduction was necessary to rationalise the number of suppliers, not only to consolidate volumes for future rate negotiations but also to offer travellers an easier and trusted selection process."

Once the tender was concluded, the number of hotels identified for the preferred supplier list was 20% of the original number. This included hotels across nine South African provinces that conform to various criteria, including fit for purpose, location, value-adds and value for money. During this process a second-tier supplier list was also compiled.

Silva says the financial benefits of the project are not necessarily visible as numbers will be reviewed over time in comparison to previous booking



ELSA Silva began her career in procurement at FNB determined to make the FNB Travel process more efficient.

history. "Immediate benefits have included the ease of reference for our travellers in facilitating the selection process as well as the value-adds that have come about in some instances, such as free WiFi, shuttles, free parking and the like."

B&Bs and guest houses

The bed and breakfast and guest house industry was previously a completely unmanaged sector for FNB. Due to the nature of the FNB Branch network, the company's footprint extends far and wide, including smaller towns in South Africa where hotels are not prevalent. "We therefore rely greatly on guest houses, lodges and B&B accommodation in some of these

areas," Silva notes.

She points out that the need for FNB to conform to duty of care for its travellers necessitated a mechanism for the company to ensure that the establishments used are vetted for certain "non-negotiable" criteria, such as: security; health and safety; standard of facilities; and compliant invoicing capabilities.

"It was virtually impossible for FNB to embark on this project in isolation, so we partnered with the HRG Rennie's Travel's Red Stamp Club (RSC). With its 800 members across the country, the RSC has assisted us in determining whether an establishment is up to standard or not," Silva says.

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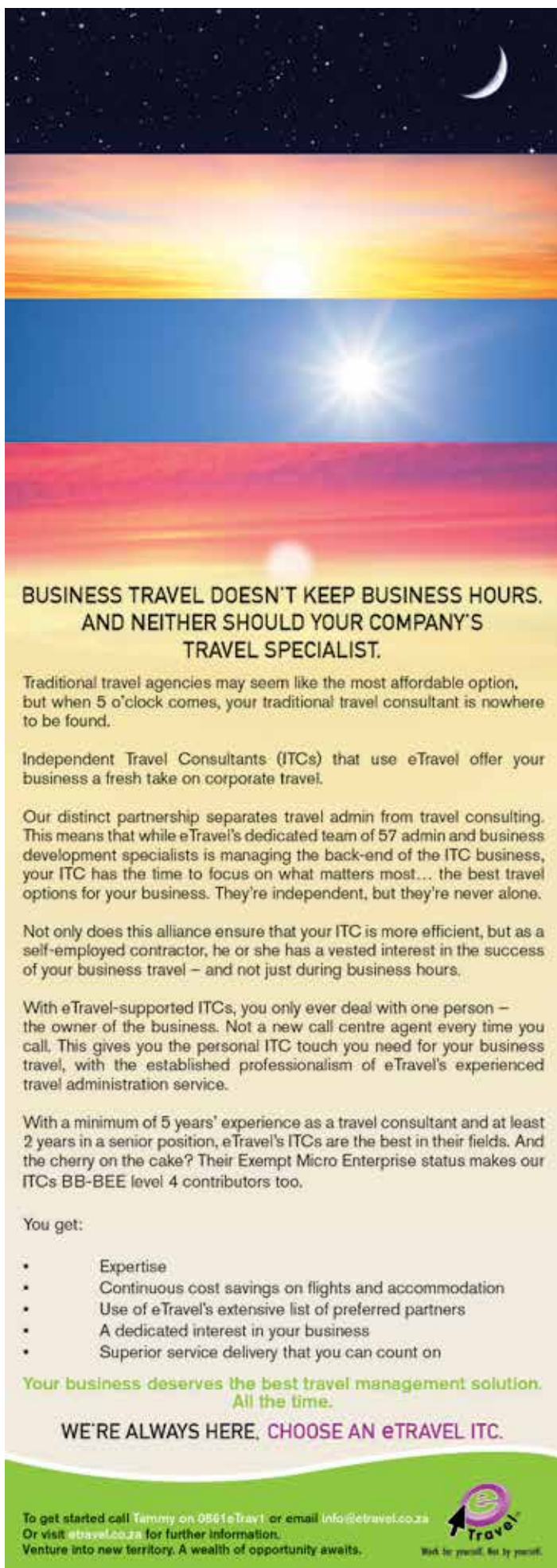
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► Article continues from p6

Consulting on and off site

FNB's adoption of the RSC has benefited the company in a number of different ways, including its commitment to duty of care for travellers, security, health and safety, and compliant invoicing capabilities.

In line with this, FNB's flexible relationship with its TMC has been paramount to its success in moulding and fine-tuning the service offering as and when required, Silva says. "Over the last few years I have seen the FNB travel requirements and trends change due to the ever-changing business landscape and the rapid expansion of our footprint in Africa. Due to these changes, the Rennie's Travel service offering to FNB transformed from a shared consultant pool a few years ago to an exclusive dedicated team."

An exciting new venture for travel at FNB is a proof of concept project currently under way to implement an in-house travel desk at FNB. Silva says her team is taking the service offering to a new level for its stakeholders with onsite travel consultants to assist with international travel requirements and proactive support for online bookings. While the booking platform for domestic travel through the online booking tool will remain unchanged, the medium to long-term objective of the initiative will be to reduce the number of online users and centralise the travel booking process within the Centralised Travel Desk.

Automatic approval

FNB currently has an automated online approval process that has proved highly beneficial to its travel programme. Silva says the process has enabled the company to facilitate approval in line with the bank's delegation of authority, such that the cost centre owners can see their own travel bookings and spend and are then able to manage these accordingly.

"With the increase in volumes of travel bookings, the number of travellers and approvers within business, managing this process

manually, would be a mammoth task," Silva notes. "We are always looking at new ways to enhance our processes and therefore embrace new technology."

Procurement-led policy

The travel booking process at FNB is currently decentralised; Silva says the operating model is led by procurement. "Travel bookers are currently based within the relevant business units and book domestic travel online, utilising the online booking tool. International travel is referred to the TMC for facilitation."

She adds that the procurement-led travel policy is reviewed whenever necessary to accommodate changes. "Reporting on travel patterns, spend and behaviour form an imperative part of procurement's involvement in travel and we therefore drive this assertively to provide our stakeholders with the information they require. Our business is dynamic and innovative and, as such, we need to ensure that travel is the enabler to support our goals and objectives."

Challenging convention

The way travel is managed is changing at FNB – a more strategic approach has replaced the conventional way things were done at the company in the past. "We are into 'big picture' thinking as there is a danger in making incremental changes or decisions that are not suitable for the long-term. What's more, opportunities lie in challenging traditional thinking," maintains Silva. "It is only those who venture into uncharted waters who will truly change the traditional way of procuring travel."

She believes that to continue to make a difference, procurement practices need to evolve and focus more on the "value" and "innovation" components of the travel programme. "Central to these future endeavours are strategic partnerships as well as having access to real-time data, converted to information, and knowledge to support strategic decision making. This is where we are headed." ■

How to 'inspect' venues you can't visit

How can you ensure a prospective venue meets your requirements when you can't get on site to conduct an inspection? **Liesl Venter** speaks with **Megan Buchanan** of Event Affairs to find out more.

Establish reputation

You've found a prospective venue for an upcoming conference in another city. There's just one problem: the venue is far and a site inspection is impossible. Not being able to physically walk through the premises to dot the i's and cross the t's, you're left to rely on your instincts.

"Technology can help," says **Megan Buchanan**. "While there might not be any online review sites to guide decision making, most venues offer websites that give a fair idea of what they have to offer." But, she warns, websites should never be the determining factor in the decision-making process. "What you see is not necessarily what you get. It's a good idea to consult social media and see what kind of presence they have and what their interaction on the forum is like."

Another way of determining if a venue suits your needs is by taking its star rating into consideration, says Buchanan. "For example, if you are looking for a high-end venue then you will immediately know that a three-star is not going to meet your needs. It is all about getting a good feel for the venue, whether it's through the website, its social media presence or other avenues such as unbiased write-ups or HelloPeter reports."

She also advises speaking to others who have used the venue before. "This could be tricky if a venue is far out and no one in your immediate network has



used it before, but put your feelers out, using your own social media, chat to colleagues – you never know who might live in the area in question."

Communicate clearly

Most reputable, professionally run venues have a banqueting or events manager who should have all the necessary information and answers to questions. "A phone discussion with an events manager will give you a good idea of whether they are professional, knowledgeable, helpful and confident in their offerings. If you

have any doubts, then walk away or try and find someone to have a look at the venue for you," she advises. "If you get a good feeling for what they have on offer, put everything in an email to the relevant person so it's in writing. Ensure you get feedback from the responsible person and keep communication gates open at all times."

Keep a checklist

"Don't take anything for granted," says Buchanan. "Make sure you have a checklist and that every item on it is ticked

prior to your event."

This would include basics such as whether the venue provides/has enough knives, forks, cutlery, crockery, chairs and tables as well as its ability to cater for specific dietary requirements, and if there are technical facilities and adequate parking available.

"In the case of an event taking place at an unknown, far-out venue, the event organiser would need to have the entire event scripted out in a checklist," says Buchanan. "If at any stage there are more than a few items not being sorted out or with which they are unable to assist, then it's best to look elsewhere. Also, if the venue has not undertaken a similar event before, it may be too risky to use it, particularly if you are unable to see the venue before the major planning takes place."

“It's all about getting a good feel for the venue whether it's through its website, social media presence or write-ups.”

Buchanan maintains that online review sites would be highly beneficial in helping organisers make informed decisions. "The most important factor would be reviewers with some clout in the industry," she says. "Just as helpful would be a virtual tour of the facilities allowing an organiser to see exactly what is on offer."

Conferencing in the heart of Jozi

We enlisted the help of meetings expert, **Clare Coomer**, to inspect the newly refurbished Garden Court Milpark in Johannesburg.



PHOTOS: SHANNON VAN ZYL



CLARE Coomer, director of Network Conferences, has been in the conference industry for the last 35 years. Her career in hotels started in Zimbabwe with Meikles Southern Sun Hotels, after which she moved to South Africa in 1981 where she joined the Southern Sun Hotels sales team. Coomer founded Network Conferences in 1994 and now operates as a professional conference organiser. She is also an executive committee member of the PCO Alliance Network.

What Clare found...

Situated within the academic precinct of Johannesburg, the Garden Court Milpark provides easy access to the highway and is only 30 minutes' drive from OR Tambo International Airport. It is also conveniently close to the Johannesburg CBD and other local hot spots. The hotel opened originally in 1974 and is now owned by Tsogo Sun. The most recent renovations were completed in December 2013, with all bedrooms, the lobby, lounge and corridors being refurbished and the addition of three new conference rooms and a fitness centre.

The hotel has 251 spacious and comfortable bedrooms with options from standard to executive.

Conference facilities

The venue's five new state-of-the-art conferencing facilities can accommodate from 25 to 140 people cinema style. The rooms are modern and contemporary, offering standard conference equipment and WiFi connectivity.

General facilities

- The restaurant offers a full English breakfast buffet, while the onsite Family MacRib serves

both lunch and dinner, along with an 18-hour room service.

- Secure covered parking is available opposite the main entrance to the hotel.
- For those who enjoy the outdoors, a lovely pool area with manicured gardens is available to guests.

The Verdict

It was very refreshing to meet the general manager of the Garden Court Milpark, **Noel Macquet**. Macquet has great passion for his newly refurbished three-star hotel, which is a definite four-star in the making. His eye for detail and knowledge of his hotel from top to bottom brings whole new meaning to the word enthusiastic. The gm was so knowledgeable about his hotel during my site inspection, that I left feeling I knew the hotel inside and out in just a short space of time. Under the care of such a hands-on gm, the Garden Court Milpark is well equipped to provide an enjoyable and successful stay. I would certainly not hesitate to recommend this hotel to my clients.

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5 cocktail snacks to keep guests happy

Top events caterers don't waste time reinventing the wheel. Gone are the days of elaborate and over-the-top dishes. Fresh and simple is back. **Liesl Venter** speaks to chef, restaurateur and Master Chef consultant, **Stuart McClarty**, about five cocktail snacks to keep your cocktail evening up to date with the current trends.

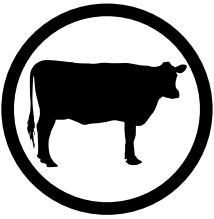
LANGOUSTINES



Simple yet elegant is the order of the day, like McClarty's char grilled langoustines served with hay smoked avocado and a tomato jus. "This is a simple dish served on a skewer and it is all about the flavour of the ingredients," he says. "The lightly smoked avocado enhances the natural

flavour of the langoustine which is the star of the dish. The aim is to allow the flavour of the central ingredient to shine." The trend, says McClarty, is around fresh, seasonal food that is prepared in a way that will highlight the natural flavours of the ingredients.

OXTAIL AGNOLOTTI



Wholesome comfort food is back – this includes cocktail snacks. McClarty maintains that even when preparing appetisers or starters the emphasis is on drawing people in and combining different flavour experiences with dishes that they know well and with which they are comfortable. "Oxtail agnolotti – a semi-circular pocket of pasta filled with slow cooked oxtail, removed from the bone and placed in the pasta circle

– is a winner even though it is a very rich dish," he says. Be it fish and chips, pies or even small little bunny chows, appetisers that people are familiar with are fast making a comeback. "The trick is to be innovative in the presentation," says McClarty. "Just because it is comfort food does not mean it cannot look beautiful. People eat just as much with their eyes as with their mouths. The way it looks is very important."

GAZPACHO

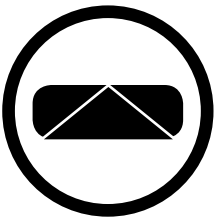


Soups, both hot and cold, also make the list, says McClarty. "A chilled gazpacho with olive ciabatta croutons can make a real statement, especially if served in a shot glass."

It really is a blast of flavour. According to McClarty

this kind of dish also speaks to the trend of neat and clean presentation of food. "The saying of less is more really does come to mind. At the same time we are seeing far more focused menus with fewer options being presented."

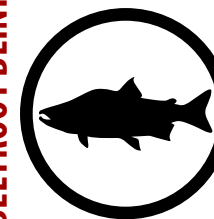
BEEF SWEET ROLLS



McClarty says grass-fed beef sliders, pan-seared minced short rib and chuck seasoned with a bit of salt in a slightly sweet roll garnished with a few rocket leaves will leave guests wishing this was their main meal. "It is about presenting food as naturally as possible, allowing for the flavour to shine through. No longer are dishes contrived or intricate and stuffy with a lot of seasoning. They're

simple yet elegant." There is also a definite move towards eating the whole animal he says. "Non-traditional cuts of meat are becoming prevalent, from liver pâtés and mousses to tripe. Braised short rib is far more popular at the moment than a filet mignon for example." Cheaper cuts are also fast becoming a trend and being used more often in the kitchen.

GRAVLAX ON A BEETROOT BLINI



Gravlax on a beetroot blini with horseradish cream is a definite crowd pleaser. "The salmon is cured with oranges, lemons, sugar and salt. Thinly sliced and placed on a beetroot blini topped off with a tiny spot of horseradish cream, it's a bite-size winner," says McClarty. "Bite-size food served in interesting and

innovative ways is very popular at the moment. We are not seeing heavy meals and large portions but rather a move towards fresher and healthier options in smaller portions. The food is definitely not overwhelming but rather minimalistic, allowing the purity of the ingredients to shine through." ■

The true cost of going 'cheap'

TMC transaction models used in the corporate travel space are under scrutiny. TMCs accuse counterparts of hiding fees from clients in order to show the 'cheapest' service. **Chana Boucher** asks industry players about their views on the ethics of this practice and how it could impact corporate travel as a whole.



Jim Weighell, director of operations for Southern Africa, GBTA



Claude Vankeirsbilck, chief sales and marketing officer, Tourvest Travel Services

TRANSPARENCY is a word often raised when discussing the pricing models TMCs use. While most clients demand it and travel agents claim to provide it, the reality is that some TMCs are not transparent about their pricing model. These agents discount their service fee, hiding charges elsewhere, in order to win the business. They recover the cost by loading airfares, usually without the client's knowledge.

Jim Weighell, GBTA's director of operations for Southern Africa, says "hidden costs" can be eradicated by detailing all possible charges at the outset of a relationship. But Weighell warns that a travel buyer with limited industry awareness may not be able to make an accurate determination of valid costs and pricing.

What's ethical?

Weighell says service fees and airfare loading can both be ethical and acceptable cost recovery vehicles as long as

the method of cost recovery is mutually agreed on by the TMC and client. "Airfare and/or any other commodity loading becomes unethical when it is deliberately hidden in a premeditated manner from the client. It is this practice that breaks down trust, a most vital element in any long-term business relationship."

Claude Vankeirsbilck, chief sales and marketing officer for Tourvest Travel Services, says TMCs who hide margins by loading airfares to recover fees when their service fees have been highly discounted – or even offered free – are unethical in their business practices. "Service fees, and management fees for that matter, are perfectly legitimate and acceptable pricing models."

How can clients gauge the true cost of a TMC?

"A TMC is entitled to a fair profit margin and to reasonably cover their operating costs. As long

as the client believes, and can determine, they are getting fair value they will have no issue paying a commensurate fee," says Vankeirsbilck. He adds that service is easily measured and that it is critical for corporates to benchmark pricing. "If a TMC stands out as too cheap, then alarm bells should ring and interrogation should be done to understand how costs and fair margin are recovered."

Weighell agrees that a TMC offering comparatively 'cheap' services is most likely engaging in fare loading or similar undisclosed extra cost recovery methods. Alternatively, he says, they could be offering a very basic service with extra services being charged at 'above package rates'. "In either case, the most likely victim will be a buyer untrained in the basics of managed business travel. Travel buyers must have a sound technical understanding of the travel booking lifecycle, dependable management information and access to peers

▶ Article continues on p14



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▶ Article continues from p13



Jacqui Abrahams, manager: travel services, Accenture SA



Wally Gaynor, md, Club Travel

with whom they may compare and benchmark agency performance and spend," he says.

Wally Gaynor, md of Club Travel, agrees, saying that clients need to be informed. He provides three tips for travel buyers: firstly, Gaynor says airlines act as the merchant so a credit card statement should have the airline's name on it. "If the agent is the merchant then ask why. Why would the agent take the 2.5% or 3% fee when they don't have to?" Secondly, he advises the client to query why their agent would offer a 30-day account on air tickets. "If all the transactions are cash, it's easy to hide overcharging." Lastly, Gaynor explains that when an agent issues an e-ticket they can choose to show the fare breakdown or not. "You can ask that all tickets issued show the actual fare charged by the airline," he says.

Jacqui Abrahams, manager of travel services at Accenture SA, says corporates are willing to pay more for a high-touch

service when that is needed, and prefer to pay less for a low-touch transaction if that is sufficient for the purpose. "In this tight economy, corporates are watching their costs very carefully and expect value for money from their TMC.

"Generally, savvy buyers of a service know what constitutes a competitive or an expensive price and will make their purchasing decisions accordingly," she says.

What's the impact on the industry?

Gaynor says the majority of TMCs are honest and ethical but "there are some big-name travel companies that have actually built their business on ripping clients off. The problem is that the entire industry gets tarred with the same brush."

Weighell says unethical hidden cost recovery methods damage the trust clients place in TMCs. "Many large companies prefer to operate their own travel divisions, while smaller

companies 'go online' to supplier websites."

According to Vankeirsbilck, unethical behaviour leads to reckless trading and that could destroy the industry. "We will do all it takes to uphold the professionalism in our industry and continue to work through Asata to ensure this is achieved."

Weighell adds that pricing regulation is not a solution. "Pricing regulation has never been known to produce superior service in any industry. It would be particularly bad for the managed business travel industry, because of its complexity and the wide range of customer expectations.

What's more, Weighell believes pricing regulation could actually have the opposite effect and increase the 'hidden cost' aspect while removing the travel buyer's ability to negotiate an agreement based on their well-defined objectives and expectations.

He says the TMC field in SA is intensely competitive, but that it has not yet explored all the latest tools and methods designed to maximise value and diminish cost.



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Uniglobe Travel Celebrates 15 years in Africa!

UNIGLOBE Travel opened its first office in Africa in September 1999 in Sandton, South Africa with Mike Gray as CEO and master license owner for Sub Saharan Africa.



From Left to right: Mike Gray, George Ferreira VP & COO of Samsung Electronics Africa and Andre Visagie, MD of b-there Travel at the launch of b-there Travel app at Samsung S5 launch.

Since then the UNIGLOBE African footprint has grown to include Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, joining over 600 travel entrepreneurs in over 60 countries worldwide in an exciting young and fast paced global group which started in Vancouver in 1979.

Says Mike: "UNIGLOBE Travel Sub Saharan Africa, has invested heavily in mobile applications and online solutions over the last 5 years and is now poised to grow rapidly with B2A (Agency), B2B (Business), B2C (Consumers), B2D (Distribution), B2E (Enterprise), online and mobile solutions."

Says Martin Charlewood, CEO UNIGLOBE International: "Congratulations to UNIGLOBE Travel (Sub Saharan Africa) on 15 great years in the UNIGLOBE system! Your contributions and unwavering support to the success of the UNIGLOBE network as a whole has been incredibly valuable and we are proud to count you as a very important part of our global family."

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With global oversight, the UNIGLOBE organization presently comprises over 600 locations in more than 60 countries across the Americas, Europe, Asia/Pacific, Africa and the Middle East operating under a well-recognized

brand, common system and services standards. UNIGLOBE has its world headquarters in Vancouver, B.C., Canada with an annual system-wide sales volume of \$5.0+ billion.

Alan Dixson of Uniglobe Letsgo Travel, Kenya says: "By being part of the world-wide friendly UNIGLOBE travel family, we have better systems, technology and staff, supported with best training and processes to provide that more important Travel assurance to our customers."

Lyndee Armstrong Co-owner of UNIGLOBE3 in Cape Town: "Uniglobe has always been there to meet our needs as a growing TMC. We are like family"

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According to Moustafa Khataw, owner of UNIGLOBE Skylink Travel, Tanzania: "Over the last 10 years, Uniglobe has helped me grow my business strategically and technologically. I also feel part of this wonderful global

family. Recently I have been part of winning a global bid – without UNIGLOBE this would not have been possible"

We are entrepreneurs

We have all the energy, creativity and flexibility that "entrepreneurial business ownership" demands.

Murtaza Kanani, owner of UNIGLOBE Fleet Travel, Kenya: "UNIGLOBE has helped me developed my passion in the travel business. Since I joined UNIGLOBE 8 years ago I have been stimulated through interaction with travel entrepreneurs globally to develop the Blue Ocean strategies in my business. Over the last 5 years my specialisations in GSA's and spiritual tours has taken off, while my corporate travel business has been streamlined through travel technology and UNIGLOBE processes.



Tumi Modise and Cynthia Senyatsi, owners of UNIGLOBE Barbirwa Travel, Pholokwane, South Africa.



U. Gary Charlewood (Chairman) and Martin Charlewood (CEO) Uniglobe Travel International LP

Caroline Malinda, Uniglobe Silverbird in Nairobi says: "Attending international meetings stimulates my ideas and helps develop my business."

Says Bronwyn Ferroz of Aspen Travel "As an in house, I still feel part of the Uniglobe family"

We are local.

We live and work in the communities we serve and are highly accessible and responsive to our clients.

Njeri and Joel Mugo, Owners of UNIGLOBE Northline Travel, Kenya: "Since joining UNIGLOBE 10 years ago we have learnt how to better serve our local community. We have found UNIGLOBE to truly be family"

We are technologically savvy.

By taking a "shared buying power" approach, we are able to acquire and implement new technologies as operational needs evolve and consumer demands change.

John and Ronel Harris, owners of UNIGLOBE Gateway Travel, Johannesburg: "UNIGLOBE has broadened our minds about the possibilities of value added travel and business service. We have grown our school tours business year on year and have turned our technology costs into an investment that is generating real returns on investment.

We are global.

As members of a global organization, we have the mechanisms and the ability to network with other agencies and suppliers both locally and around the world. We share best practices and benchmarks, collaborate on better solutions, and work together to build strong, agile, growth-oriented and profit-driven companies.

Mairead McAliden Owner Uniglobe W Travel, Cape Town: "after 10yrs with the Uniglobe family, its TMC focus & entrepreneurial Network have been a key & unique element. I feel part of their Global growth plans and have enjoyed being part of this 'unique family' and look forward to many, many more years...."

Olivier Meganck, Co-owner with Monique Beckers of UNIGLOBE Intek: "Travel is not always a party and it can be tough on your own. I have enjoyed the support of my UNIGLOBE colleagues throughout the world"

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Whether your company spends R50,000 a year or R50,000,000 a year on business travel you will receive the same high standards for which UNIGLOBE Travel is renowned.

Tumi Modise and Cynthia Senyatsi owners of UNIGLOBE Barbirwa Travel, Pholokwane, South Africa: "Attending the owners retreat in Mauritius inspired us to develop our business using Blue Ocean strategies. Since then we have grown beyond our dreams and are excited about the future.

Mike Gray says: "Our Sabre partnership has been tremendous – from web services for development of mobile apps, to online B2B and B2C portals and passenger security tools. We have also used productivity and quality control tools and cloud based accounting systems. Sabre can be trusted to provide solid solutions to meet every need of the 21st century TMC."

Gary Broomberg, Sabre Managing Director in Southern Africa, said: "We are proud to have Uniglobe utilise Sabre's travel marketplace and technology. Our platform delivers many benefits, among which is access to our GetThere online solution along with Traveler Security, for reporting and location control. Uniglobe's customer value adds are increased as a result and this aligns with our goal to help our customers achieve their growth objectives."

Mike and Nikki Gray: "CHEERS and here's to another 15 years of growth for UNIGLOBE in Africa."



Murtaza Kanani Owner of Uniglobe Fleet Travel with Alan Dixson Uniglobe Letsgo Travel Kenya



Gary Broomberg, Sabre Managing Director in Southern Africa



Nikki and Mike Gray, director and CEO of Uniglobe Travel (Sub Saharan Africa)

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3 reasons SMEs need TMCs

SMEs without defined travel processes or policies often make the mistake of going it alone as they think it's cheaper to book direct online. But working with a professional TMC can save them time and money. **Dorine Reinstein** looks at how TMCs can help.

Complex ticketing

Most corporates welcome the liberty and freedom of open bookings for straightforward point-to-point trips. However, when it comes to complex ticketing, open bookings can be restrictive and costly. This is where using a TMC becomes worthwhile and can help travel buyers save time and money.



Shaun Lovett, key account manager of Oil and Gas, Wings Travel Management.

The TMC consultant handling complex fares needs to have extensive knowledge of geography, international fares, offshore or marine fares, airline partnerships and their respective codeshares, alternative airports and complex visa requirements.

Shaun Lovett, Wings Travel Management's key account manager for the Oil and Gas Division, says unlocking the complexity around intricate international itineraries with specific scheduling constraints is something consultants do every day. "Complex ticketing requires acute attention to detail and an excellent understanding of both international fares and airline partnerships, which come into play as you look for the best combination to get there and back."

Robyn van Staden, gm of Corporate Traveller, says an experienced travel management company has the knowledge and expertise to look at the corporate's travel requirements holistically. "They are able to access a host of airlines, fares, options and any other requirements regarding a

particular routing or destination at the touch of a few buttons and then relate it back to the client's particular business needs."

"A well-trained, experienced travel consultant is worth their weight in gold and can save a client a lot of time and money on a complex itinerary," says **Wally Gaynor**, md of Club Travel.

Gaynor says corporates are able to obtain a fairly good deal on point-to-point travel by themselves but the Internet or a corporate booking tool will start showing its limitations on more complex itineraries. "For example, when booking a ticket to the West Coast, USA the system will give you a return fare but won't tell you that rather than return the same way it may be cheaper to continue and take advantage of a Round the World Fare. Or if a client needs to go to Venice and Auckland the computer will not tell them to stick to one carrier and route via the Middle East to save a small fortune."

Monica Horn, product manager of the Harvey World Travel Franchise Support Team, adds that the travel



Robyn van Staden, gm of Corporate Traveller.

buyer isn't always aware of the consequences of booking the 'lowest fare'. She says, for example, booking full-service carriers can work out more cost effective than low-cost airlines, as LCCs have strict cancellation and change penalties.

Besides personal expertise, TMCs also offer technological solutions that are not available via the Internet, which can provide important savings for

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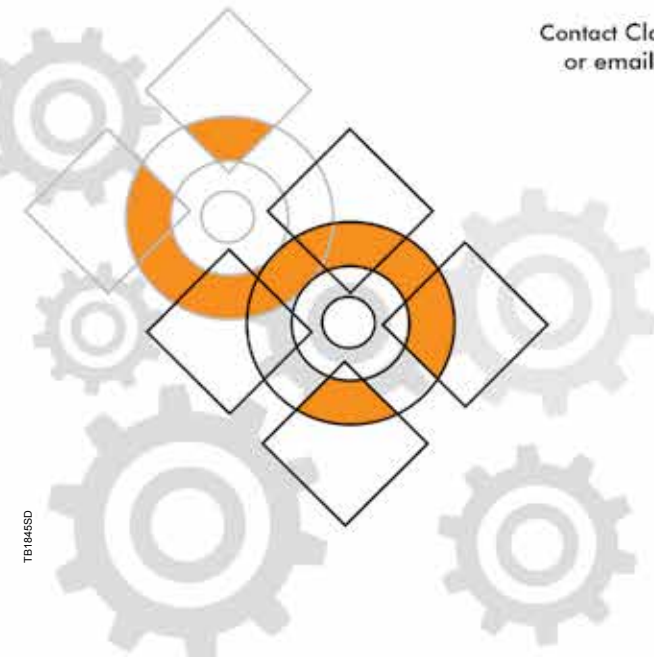


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► Article continues from p18

the corporate. "Global TMCs that truly have one standardised platform from which travel consultants can jump into offices around the globe and access fares that are not available in the country of request and provide substantial discounts, can make a world of difference," says Lovett. "Because of our single, standardised platform, our team has access to global content to support complex global tickets and that's a real differentiator."

Michelle Viljoen, Club Travel's fares manager, adds that TMCs have negotiated deals with airlines and suppliers, which will ensure that corporates get better deals. "These deals may not be published and, as a result, a computer would not be able to 'pull' these."

The savings TMCs can obtain tend to be substantial on complex itineraries. An example: Wings was able to reduce one client's cost by US\$3 000 (R33 150) on a trip from the US to Germany, onwards to Seoul and Singapore and back

to Frankfurt, before returning to the US – all within the space of five days. Lovett says: "By using partner carriers we were able to reduce [the client's] overall costs using a round-trip fare with side trips on the ticket."

Harvey World's in-house fares expert recently saved a client R58 000 on a complicated round-the-world fare. "This is what differentiates using a TMC from attempting to plan tricky trips by yourself," says Horn.

The TMC's knowledge, contacts and expertise will not only allow companies to find the best deals for their travel requirements, it will also come in handy if something goes wrong and the client needs to cancel or change their itinerary. "A client booked their own tickets originating in Africa, as it was cheaper from the source. He then required multiple changes. He had to hand over the ticket to us to manage when he was unable to contact the airlines directly to make necessary changes. This was resolved with ease through our various contacts."



Michelle Viljoen, fares manager, Club Travel.

Visas

Visa applications are a frustrating and time-consuming exercise for corporate travellers, especially when navigating complex and multi-destination itineraries. Although the TMC can't appear at the embassy in person on behalf of the traveller, consultants can take a lot of the stress out of the process.

Ramon Geldenhuys, md of 360

Degrees Travel, says researching travel visa requirements is an essential part of planning an international trip, but that it can be confusing for clients who don't deal with visa requirements on a daily basis. "Consultants will assist with giving the traveller the correct information required for the application, checking that all the travel documents are valid, as well as providing the supporting documentation. They are there for expert advice, review of applications and expedited processing. Thanks to technology, consultants have all the information at their fingertips as well as visa updates," he says.

Ben Langner, md of Carlson Wagonlit Travel, says, for example, TMCs can assist with sensibly sequencing the applications for multi-destination itineraries. TMCs are able to advise clients on important details such as the fact that the traveller first needs to get the visa for the last country on the itinerary. Langner explains that, for instance, if a South African

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► Article continues from p20

passport holder has to travel to Schengen countries and then the UK, he needs to obtain the UK visa first.

Langner adds that TMCs can also tailor the itinerary to make the process less onerous for the traveler. He illustrates this with an example. If a South African passport holder has to travel at short notice to Turkey, the UAE and Kenya for a stay of a few days in each country, the TMC would probably advise the



Rod Rutter, coo of XL Travel

itinerary sequence as follows: fly to Kenya first (because no visa is needed), then to Turkey (because the online visa is usually granted very quickly), then to the UAE (because the online visa takes a couple of days). He says: "Without the knowledge of visa processing options and issue time, the traveller would be at a disadvantage in planning their itinerary."

The TMC will also have the competency to project-manage the visa application process to enable the traveller to achieve their itinerary objectives. "In summary, the TMC can help the traveller cut down on the time, hassle and, sometimes, costs of applying for visas."

Gaynor points out that corporates who book online tend to forget onerous visa requirements in their search for the best deal. "Corporates booking directly may not be advised of visa or transit visa requirements. For example, a client may book a cheap fare to Paris via London and not be aware that a UK visa as well as a Schengen visa will be required

for those travelling on a South African passport. The same would apply for those booking flights to Mexico via the USA. A USA visa will be required."

Rod Rutter, coo of XL Travel, says visas are becoming more complex. "It is important to note that a visa does not always allow access into a country and that in many instances entry is reliant on border agencies and health requirements."

"Risk issues, such as the Ebola crisis, as well as vaccination requirements can restrict entry." According to Rutter, clients rely heavily on the TMC to provide the correct visa and health information and in many instances this is crosschecked at the airline check-in counter or boarding gate.

Van Staden says visa and health requirements tend to change on a regular basis. "As a TMC we are informed up front about any significant conditions influencing travel," she says.

When things go wrong, TMCs often have the contacts and expertise to make things happen, even at the last moment. **Mike**

Gray, ceo of Uniglobe Travel, describes how the TMC helped a group that was travelling from Mexico to Canada. One week before the trip, the group had still not managed to obtain the necessary visas. Gray explains: "Uniglobe then wrote and made a follow-up call to the Canadian Consulate on behalf of the Mexican group, explaining why the group was travelling and who they were, also questioning them as to why there was a delay. Within 72 hours, the Mexican group had visas."

Meetings and conferencing

Outsourcing your MICE requirements to a TMC with a specialised meetings and events division can prove beneficial and cost effective.

Jim Mckintosh, gm of business development and marketing at Seekers Travel MICE business, says a dedicated TMC can offer a one-vendor solution, thereby streamlining the procurement process. "Product knowledge

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and supplier relationships enable TMCs to offer negotiated rates and ensure service delivery from their suppliers. Value-adds include services such as online registration and the ability to offer creative design elements specific to an event or conference."

Mckintosh advises travel procurement managers to select a TMC that has a dedicated, reputable MICE division. "Staff within the MICE division have the skills and know-how. Project event and financial management are vital."

Mckintosh adds that Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI) membership and accreditation are good guidelines for choosing a suitable TMC for a company's MICE requirements. "The SAACI accreditation process includes submission of details of five conferences or events that the company has managed, along with references, detailed CVs and qualifications of all operational staff, a case study of one of its events, and a site inspection of the offices and infrastructure."

When travel procurement

managers bypass their TMC and organise their own events, this can lead to pitfalls. Mckintosh quotes a particular case where a blue chip multinational client had oversubscribed an event and the venue was unable to accommodate all the delegates. "Due to our product knowledge and our ability to leverage our supplier relationships, we were able to source an alternative

venue at a moment's notice and negotiate with the original venue to waive their cancellation penalties."

Mckintosh describes another

incident in which a hotel misallocated the hotel rooms for a client with a group of approximately 300 people. "The hotel oversubscribed its number of twin rooms, resulting in too few twin rooms to accommodate the group. This could have been a major issue but was well handled by our operations team on-site, who negotiated with the hotel to offer single rooms at a twin rate."

Mckintosh adds that TMCs often add value by putting out fires of which the client is totally unaware.

“ Due to our product knowledge and our ability to leverage our supplier relationships, we were able to source an alternative venue at a moment's notice. ”

Club Travel drives new front-end solutions

CLUB Travel has completed the implementation of new software that will benefit its corporate clients.

The new software, which is produced by travel-based solution specialist, Cornerstone Information Services, includes iQCX and iBank.

iQCX is a quality control programme that is used to confirm the content of the passenger name record (PNR) against a pre-programmed matrix of tables. The quality control ensures that the customer's data is correct at the time of creating the PNR, which in turn ensures the

integrity of the customer's MIS reports.

An MIS tool, iBank gathers information from multiple sources, including the GDS and back-office accounting system. Using multiple information streams the software enables pre-trip reporting and assists in locating travellers, which makes it ideal for duty of care purposes.

The software is innovative in that it allows clients to access their report online from any device, anywhere in the world. The data contained in iBank is almost real-time, available for reporting within 24 hours of the transaction taking place.

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NEW APP for business travellers

CORPORATE Traveller has launched a new mobile app designed specifically for corporate travellers. Corporate Traveller Mobile can be used by travellers globally on most mobile devices, including iOS, Android and BlackBerry. The app provides travellers with access to itinerary details, flight status notifications, instant flight check-in and other useful information, such as airport guides, a currency converter and

weather forecasts. Key features include online check-in, traffic delay warnings en route to airport, flight delay and disruption notifications, boarding notifications, weather forecasts for up to five days ahead, a currency converter, destination guides and advice, including restaurant reviews and an upcoming trip preview. The app also enables travellers to add events to their itinerary.

Amex unveils Africa portal

AMERICAN Express Travel Services in South Africa has introduced its bespoke Customer Self Service Portal designed specifically for travel in Africa. The portal is a gateway to a range of different technologies that streamline and standardise the entire process of requesting, selecting, approving, acquiring and ultimately viewing reports related to corporate travel in Africa.

It caters for African nuances such as identifying destination countries that require a visa for entrance, tracking travellers' passport details and expiry dates as well as visas, and providing information related to health requirements and certification for African destinations. The portal also includes a basic travel requisition process and

approval structure. The portal is developed to operate in African markets where high-volume bandwidth and Internet coverage are not always reliable. It relies on communication methods beyond email, as cases when email servers go down or fail in African countries are reasonably commonplace.

American Express has also developed a reporting strategy specifically for Africa. It has put together various collection and validation methods to load an Africa-specific database from which content-rich reports are produced to assist customers in decision making. Transactions are instantly translated into a common currency (USD) to allow customers to combine any combination of countries or regions for comparative purposes.

► Did you know?

FCm Travel Solutions, owned by Flight Centre, recently achieved its Level 1 BEE accreditation. ■

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The power of sport to build bonds

Not many South Africans can afford the cost of travel to an international sporting event, but a company incentive trip makes the dream a possibility.

By **Michelle Colman**.

THE COST of attending an international sports event has spiralled. In the case of South Africans, the weak rate of exchange has increased the effect of inflation and packages are no longer within reach of most individual travellers – a hard blow for a nation of sports fanatics.

As a result, an increasing number of corporates are basing their travel incentive campaigns



Greg Taylor, gm of Pure Tours

on sports events, to the great appreciation of staff members who react well to the chance to claim something they ordinarily couldn't afford.

Greg Taylor, gm of Pure Tours, says: "Incentives need to be a reward outside the majority's means to obtain. It's too easy to simply book a beach holiday. Rather combine your favourite destination with a world-class sporting event. Sport has the amazing ability to bring people of mixed backgrounds together in a fun, exciting environment."

Maud Botten, sales and marketing director at Uwin Iwin Incentives, agrees: "The camaraderie and memories made on these trips last forever, and those who were part of the group never forget their experience. The ability to bond with a key client, supplier or top performer during the key moments of an unforgettable trip is immeasurable."

What are the benefits for staff? Besides the acknowledgement of their effort and success, the social aspect and team building, Botten points out there is access to experiences they wouldn't normally have. It's getting

behind the scenes into locker rooms, enjoying the best seats, and being received like a VIP. It's also about being able to absorb an extraordinary atmosphere. "It's one thing to go to Monaco, but going during the F1 GP is another kettle of fish," says Taylor.

Sports travel works well for many reasons, says **Johan van Veelen**, md of F1 Grand Prix Tours. "Formula 1 travel incentives offer a short but intense and action-filled tour alternative to corporate incentive decision makers. Travel time is three to four days and over weekends, particularly important for tightly scheduled top-management incentives, resulting in only one or two productive working days lost at the workplace. F1 tours offer high value for money, two days of adrenaline-filled racing action, as well as additional options such as club and gourmet restaurant experiences and even official F1 after-parties. F1 tour incentives can be structured to the needs and the level required by the incentive objectives, from low-budget tours right up to top management VIP experiences."



Maud Botten, sales and marketing director at Uwin Iwin Incentives

For corporates, the advantages lie in the loyalty and goodwill created among their staff, the increased performance and productivity. "In the past we have seen unbelievable success achieved by some of our corporate clients in this regard – which resulted in the same client scheduling at least one, and sometimes up to three incentive tours, to different F1 events every year," says Van Veelen.

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Official accreditation counts

WITH each major international sport event come stories of fans victimised by less than honest service providers. "With so many fly-by-night operators I think it's important to look out for experienced operators that know the events inside out and have strong relations with official suppliers," says Pure Tours' Greg Taylor.

Johan van Veelen of F1 Grand Prix Tours says: "Corporate incentive buyers can burn their fingers by not utilising specialised, knowledgeable and reputable suppliers, ending up with inferior tour arrangements or ticket choices, over-paying for a tour, or not being informed of all the value-adding options available for a specific event. There is nothing worse than spending money on an incentive tour to motivate staff

or clients and ending up with an unhappy group. Sport tours are a specialised field requiring specialised knowledge."

He advises corporate decision makers to demand at least three presentations for a planned tour, and ensure they are aware of all the possibilities and pitfalls related to the sporting event they select to attend.

Maud Botten of Uwin Iwin says reputable agents are specialists. "They can get access to places that others can't, they know how to fix the kind of issues that can occur and have a remarkable support network in far-flung locations. They can also ensure that the best price and service are guaranteed," she says.

She urges travel buyers to put their faith in experience, client testimonials and industry referrals. "Many people say that they have what it takes to run a



sports travel trip but those who can testify to a well organised trip are the best sources. Most sports suppliers go through a vendor process, for example for the Rugby World Cup 2015, and will thus have official supplier status. It is best to check online on the official event websites to find suppliers that are officially appointed."



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Upcoming events

Cricket World Cup, February 14-March 29, 2015

Australia and New Zealand will host the 2015 ICC Cricket World Cup jointly. This is the second such event to be played in Oceania.

A total of 49 matches will be played in 14 venues. Australia will stage 26 games at grounds in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney while New Zealand will host 23 games in seven cities – Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, Napier, Nelson and Wellington. The final match of the tournament will take place at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

ICC Travel has partnered with the following official travel agents: EduSport and Makro Travel.

Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens 2015, March 27-29, 2015

Hong Kong is the ultimate destination for all Sevens fans,

providing partying, shopping and three days of rugby action at Hong Kong Stadium.

The official travel agents for the Hong Kong Sevens 2015 are EduSport and Makro Travel.

Rugby World Cup, September 18-October 31, 2015

The eighth Rugby World Cup will be held in England with the finals taking place at Twickenham. Tournament organisers, England 2015, and the International Rugby Board have confirmed that 2.3m tickets will be available across the tournament's 48 matches.

Packages can be acquired from official sales agent SA Rugby Travel or official sub-agents Edusport and Makro Sport Travel. Marketing manager of Edusport, **Tertia Summerford** says that fully inclusive packages are available for those who wish to travel in groups as well as tailor-made packages for more discerning travellers.

New F1 hospitality options for corporates

F1 GRAND Prix Tours has put together Formula One (F1) hospitality options for 2015 that are designed specifically with corporates in mind.

The Formula One Paddock Club offers advantages such as greater access, enhanced service, superior cuisine and better views. Among some of the Club benefits are: access to the circuit and the Formula One Paddock Club, pit lane walkabouts at specially allotted times, entertainment and prime viewing facilities from the start/finish straight.

F1 Grand Prix Tours can also arrange for corporate groups to be hosted by the Formula One team of their choice during the weekend of the Italian Grand Prix at the Monza circuit. Hosted groups will have privileged access to the paddock, pit and garage in the company of their host team. Benefits include: access to the team suites of the group's preferred F1 team, privileged team garage access to closely follow the activities of the team engineers, and a daily team souvenir gift for every guest as well as entertainment. ■



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1. ZANZIBAR

World Leisure Holidays. Fully inclusive rates at Azanzi Beach Hotel are from R10 140 per adult sharing. Package includes return flights from Johannesburg, airport taxes, return coach transfers, four nights' accommodation in a superior room, all meals, selected house wines, local wines, local beers and soft drinks between 10h00 and 22h00 and non-motorised water sports. Travel must be completed by December 15.

2. ITALY

Pure Skiing. Early-season offer (December 13-20) at Livigno – rates are from R24 420 per adult sharing. Packages include return flights ex-Johannesburg, taxes, return resort transfers ex-Milan MXP Airport, seven nights' accommodation with breakfast, travel insurance, six-day ski pass and ski hire. Excludes six days' ski school (R1 530) and four entertainment dinners (R2 340). Christmas rates also available.

3. SEYCHELLES

Africa Stay. Pay five, stay seven nights special – rates are from R11 920 per person sharing. Offer includes return flights ex-Johannesburg, South African departure taxes, domestic transfers plus accommodation with daily breakfast. Special expires October 31. Supplement of R600 per person applies for travel from October 3-10.

4. TURKEY

Avocatur Wholesale Tour Operator. Seven-night 'Grand Tour of Turkey' from R20 797 per person sharing. Price includes airfare ex-Johannesburg, taxes, return airport transfers, accommodation, seven breakfasts and five dinners plus daily guided tours. Visit: Istanbul, Bosphorus, Ankara, Goreme, Cappadocia, Konya, Pamakkale, Aphrodisas and Ephesus. Departure December 12, returning December 21.



5. UMHLANGA

RH Hotels and Management. Holiday Inn Express Durban. uShaka Marine World package – rates are from R1 500 per room per night. Rate includes accommodation for two adults and two kids under 18, free Express Start Breakfast plus four combo tickets to uShaka Marine World Wet and Wild valued at R740. Offer expires December 11.

6. CROATIA

Sirius Travel. Adriatic cruise special – rates are from €790 (R11 297) per person from Dubrovnik on-board *M/S Splendid* and from €890 (R12 726) from Split on-board *M/S Kleopatra*. Packages include a seven-night cruise with breakfast, lunch, welcome dinner and free WiFi on board. City tours of Dubrovnik, Korcula, Hvar and Split included on *M/S Kleopatra* cruise only. Cruise departs every Saturday from May to September. Early-bird discount of €100 (R1 430) for reservations and payments before December 31, 2014.

7. VICTORIA FALLS

Air Holidays. Three-night packages are from R2 865 plus taxes of R3 440 per person sharing. Offer includes return airfares ex-Johannesburg to Victoria Falls, taxes, transfers, accommodation with breakfast and a sunset cruise (excludes US\$10 (R111) park fee paid direct). Rates expire December 20. Premium packages also available.

8. MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique Tourism. Fly-in packages are from R15 640 (five nights) and R17 640 (seven nights) per person sharing. Rate includes

flights ex-Johannesburg to Vilanculos, airport departure taxes, accommodation at the four-star Bazaruto Lodge with all meals, selected non-motorised water sports and free Internet access. Offer valid until December 19.

9. PHUKET

Checkout Tours. Seven-night packages are from R11 720 per person sharing. Offer includes return flights ex-Johannesburg, all taxes, return airport transfers, three-star accommodation with daily breakfast. Package is available from November 1 to December 10. Four-star accommodation options also available.

10. CENTURION

Legacy Hotels. Weekend special at Centurion Lake Hotel. Rates are from R395 per person sharing per night. Special includes accommodation with breakfast, an evening movie under the stars, free WiFi and complimentary use of the new gym. Upgrade to the Spa package for R675 per person sharing per night. Offer available until December 1. ■

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