

SEPTEMBER 2015

TRAVEL BUYER

FOR S

+Meet

*What
premium
travellers
want*

HOW TO
.....
choose the
RIGHT
.....
teambuild

5
*top Midlands
meeting spots*

SAA's
new frontier

AFRICA-SPECIFIC

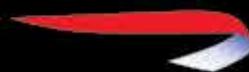
*Nicole Fonzari on updating global
policy with local nuances*



An experience
so good,
you'll sleep
right through it.

Our exceptional British service includes fully flat beds,* premium lounges and à la carte dining, ensuring you arrive ready for business.

To Fly. To Serve.



BRITISH AIRWAYS

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

Editor's note

The past month has seen a number of interesting new developments across the airline industry, meaning greater choice for travellers.

While on the international scene Iberia is considering re-introducing direct flights to Johannesburg either in 2016 or 2017, regionally the official launch of flyafrica Namibia will increase competition and introduce lower fares on the Johannesburg - Windhoek route. Zimbabwe's latest offering, Rainbow Airlines, has set its sights on the route between Johannesburg and Harare and, at the time of publishing, had plans to launch flights on August 26.

On the home front, Mango's introduction of flights from Lanseria to Durban opens up more possibilities for Jo'burg-based travellers, continuing the trend towards increased competition in the domestic budget travel space. Lower fares are a significant benefit for corporate travellers, but is price enough to make LCCs the business travel mode of choice? In this month's budget travel feature we take a closer look at the low cost landscape and its impact on the corporate space, both locally and into Africa.

Cost continues to play an equally significant factor in the premium travel space and, to

this end, our premium class feature investigates how airlines are adapting their offerings to cater for travellers' demands for increased comfort at a lower price.

Also featured this month is rail travel, which is an increasingly popular mode of transport for corporates travelling through Europe. Bustling stations, each with their own set of rules and processes can be intimidating though, especially for South African travellers who are unfamiliar with rail travel. We've put together a mini guide to help you direct your travellers around the do's and don'ts.

E-tolls continue to make the headlines, most recently because of Sanral's intention to implement the controversial N1/N2 Winelands Toll Project, which would see Cape motorists paying three times that of the tolls in Gauteng. While much is said about the impact of tolling on the public, little has been mentioned about how companies are handling the e-toll system. How is the lack of control and standardisation affecting travel administration and what are corporates doing to effectively manage this cost?

Until next month!

Debbie Badham
(debbieb@nowmedia.co.za)

COVER

Cummins Africa is tightening up and improving on a number of its travel services. *Travel Buyer* speaks to travel manager **Nicole Fonzari**. Cover photograph by **Shannon Van Zyl**.

News 2

- 'I'm back to turn Birchwood around' - ceo
- New carrier to fly Harare-Jo'burg
- Flyafrica Namibia finally gets the nod

Ghana report 4

- SAA's new frontier

Profile 6

- Cummins focuses on Africa

Meetings 8

- New conference centre on the Zambezi
- Is your year-end on target?
- How to choose the right teambuild for your objective
- 5 top Midlands meeting spots

On the radar - Premium class 13

- What premium travellers want

On the radar - Budget travel 20

- Competition is driving lower fares

On the radar - Rail travel 22

- A guide to Europe by rail

E-tolls report 26

- Are e-tolls an admin headache?

Deal Detective 28

- Travelinfo's latest top travel deals

PUBLISHER Kate Nathan **GROUP PUBLISHER** David Marsh **GROUP EDITOR** Natasha Schmidt **DEPUTY EDITOR** Debbie Badham **EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS** Linda van der Pol, Dorine Reinstein, Michelle Colman, Liesl Venter **DESIGN & LAYOUT** Tanya Bosch **PHOTOGRAPHER** Shannon Van Zyl **SALES** katen@nowmedia.co.za **ADVERTISING CO-ORDINATOR** Courtney Canham **CIRCULATIONS** subs@nowmedia.co.za **PRINTED BY** Juka Printing (Pty) Ltd **PUBLISHED BY** Travel & Trade Publishing (Pty) Ltd, Now Media Centre, 32 Fricker Rd, Illovo Boulevard, Illovo, Johannesburg, PO Box 55251, Northlands, 2116, South Africa. Tel: +27 11 327 4062, Fax: +27 11 327 4094, e-mail: travelbuyer@nowmedia.co.za, web: www.travelbuyer.co.za

NOW
Media

abc

Brought to you by Now Media, *Travel Buyer + Meet* is a professional travel publication aimed at South African travel procurement decision-makers in travel-buying companies. This publication aims to reflect an unbiased perspective of the corporate travel industry offering insight and tools encouraging readers to manage their travel spend better. *Travel Buyer* is the media partner of ABTA, ACTE and the GBTA

ABTA
AFRICAN BUSINESS TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

ACTE
GLOBAL

GBTA
GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAVEL ASSOCIATION
AFRICA

**ARE YOU THE
GBTA
TRAVEL BUYER
OF
2015?**



Go to www.tam.co.za and nominate a travel buyer who stands out from the crowd. All nominations will go into a draw for a R500 Woolies voucher.

GBTA
GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAVEL ASSOCIATION
SOUTHERN AFRICA

**DAILY TRAVEL
& MEETINGS
BUYER**

'I'm back to turn Birchwood around' – ceo

KEVIN Clarence has returned to the Birchwood Hotel and OR Tambo Conference Centre in an operational capacity to implement a turnaround strategy that will promote efficiencies within the business and restore the establishment's "customer-focused" reputation.

He spoke exclusively to *Travel Buyer* to outline his plans for the hotel. "Previously, I was sitting at board level, practicing top-down communication with management." Clarence says he watched as the business he started with his late father back in 1998 began to hire more staff than necessary, losing site of its clients and the day-to-day management of the business.

The hotel's reputation began to take a knock, as service levels dropped. Tough economic

conditions and complex lease agreements added to the pressure, Clarence says.

"But we are starting to clean things up now." Under Kevin's leadership, the Birchwood will restructure.

The company is also looking at new opportunities to improve customer service, with the introduction and expansion of products such as Silverbirch@Birchwood – an offering launched in March to appeal to the discerning corporate traveller. "In a way, we are entering an exciting phase because it is almost like we are re-launching the Birchwood. With Silverbirch, we can go back to what we know and what the customer wants while bringing in people who are talented enough to be able to create that experience," Clarence says.

New carrier to fly Harare-Jo'burg

ZIMBABWE has welcomed its newest airline, Rainbow Airlines, which, at the time of publishing, planned to launch flights on August 26. It will fly the Harare-Johannesburg route already serviced by flyafrica.com, SAA, BA Comair and Air Zimbabwe.

Andries Ntjane, deputy director of licensing and permits at the South African Department of Transport, told

Travel Buyer the department had accepted Rainbow's application for designation to fly to South Africa, however the new airline has yet to apply for a Foreign Operator's Permit. "At the moment, they have been accepted to fly as a carrier from another country but we still need the Foreign Operator's Permit," he said.

The airline's website also lists Cape Town, Victoria falls and Kariba as planned destinations.

Flyafrica Namibia finally gets the nod

FLYAFRICA will officially launch its second airline – Namibia flyafrica – from September 2. The new airline plans to offer low fares between Johannesburg and Windhoek, with one-way tickets starting at R299 per person, excluding taxes.

Initially planned to start operations in March this year, Namibia flyafrica was forced to delay flights due to legal complications with another carrier. Such delays saw flyafrica

refund over R5 million to passengers who had booked early.

Namibia flyafrica ceo, **Clifford Strydom**, says: "We have been frustrated and angered that our airline has been dragged through court simply to stop travellers from saving money." Strydom added that the competitor airline "now has real competition".

Initially, Namibia flyafrica will offer three weekly flights from Windhoek to Johannesburg.

From Jo'burg to the rest of Africa and The Middle East in comfort

ZAR 4,678
JOHANNESBURG - LUSAKA

- 35% discounted fares to Libreville, Douala, Lagos, Accra, Entebbe, Nairobi, Dar es salaam, Kilimanjaro and Brazzaville
- Travel in a group and the group leader earns a free ticket
- Enjoy the unique proposition of our Dreammiles program like corporate and family pooling accounts

For more information:

Johannesburg City Sales office
156 Bram Fischer Drive, Randburg
+27 11 289 8050

OR Tambo International Airport
Terminal B, International Departures
+27 11 390 3223
sales.johannesburg@rwandair.com

RwandAir
Fly the way you see the world

More changes for SAA

SAA saw its sixth change of leadership in three years when it suddenly announced that acting ceo, **Nico Bezuidenhout**, would return to Mango, effective immediately.

On the evening of July 29, just two days before Nico was expected to arrive in Ghana to attend the launch event of SAA's first flight between Accra and Washington DC, SAA staff received a communication from chairperson, **Dudu Myeni**, to say that "at the request of the Mango Airlines Board, the SAA Board has acceded to Mango's request that Mr Bezuidenhout be returned to his primary role as ceo of Mango Airlines".

She continued to say that the 90-Day turnaround plan, which was led by Bezuidenhout, was "now fully operational and the compelling need for Mr Bezuidenhout's continued role at SAA has normalised compared to the need for his position as ceo of Mango".

Human resources gm, **Thuli Mpshe**, has taken over the reins of the airline. She has several qualifications, including a BCom from Unisa and a postgraduate certificate in Business Management from Warwick University in the UK. She started her career in banking and has worked for two of the top banks in South Africa.

MHG plans 50 African hotels in five years

MINOR Hotel Group has officially opened a regional office in Johannesburg to represent its ten properties in Southern Africa – a strategic move that will enable it to strengthen its position and maximise opportunities within Africa.

“Now that we have set up an office in Johannesburg, expansion into Africa will be easier,” says ceo **Dillip Rajakarier**, noting that the group continues to look for opportunities to add to its portfolio of 26 hotels in Africa. “Our goal is to have at least 50 hotels in different locations in the next five years,” he adds.

Specifically, MHG sees significant opportunity to launch its Tivoli brand because of the link between the brand’s origin in Portugal and former Portuguese colonies on the continent.

Five hotels in Southern Africa were rebranded to MHG’s AVANI brand at the beginning of July. The five properties form part of the portfolio in which MHG invested a total of R679,5 million in its strategic partnership with Sun International, announced in August last year.

The 212-key Zambezi Sun in Zambia has been rebranded to AVANI Victoria Falls Resort; the 196-key Gaborone Sun in Botswana has become AVANI Gaborone Resort & Casino; the 158-key Lesotho Sun and 105-key Maseru Sun, both in Lesotho, have been rebranded to AVANI Lesotho Hotel and Casino and AVANI Maseru Hotel respectively, and the 173-key Kalahari Sands in Namibia has reflagged to AVANI Windhoek Hotel and Casino. The sixth property in the portfolio, the Royal Livingstone Resort, will not be rebranded.

Hola España!

IBERIA is considering re-introducing direct flights to Johannesburg in either 2016 or 2017. The Spanish airline suspended its thrice-weekly

flight between Madrid and Johannesburg in April 2012, citing the sharp rise in fuel prices and the continuing world economic crisis as the main reasons.

Airbnb eyes SA expansion

SHARING economy platform, Airbnb, plans to establish a local presence in South Africa as it looks to build on the “rapid growth” that has seen the country become its largest market on the African continent.

This was revealed by newly appointed gm for the Middle East and Africa, **Nicola D’Elia**, who spoke to *Travel Buyer* on the sidelines of a recent visit to Johannesburg.

“We will have local representation such as a regional marketing manager based in South Africa working closely

with the Airbnb community and brand ambassadors,” D’Elia said.

The team will focus on forging relationships with the local government as well as tourism bodies to propel the reach of the product, he said. “I think we are in a unique position to help boost tourism, both outbound and inbound, and this shows in the results.” To date, Airbnb has enjoyed over 160% outbound travel from South Africa and over 230% inbound.

Ceo, **Brian Chesky**, added that the African market was growing faster than the US, almost doubling every year. ■



BUSINESS TRAVEL DOESN'T KEEP BUSINESS HOURS. AND NEITHER SHOULD YOUR COMPANY'S TRAVEL SPECIALIST.

Traditional travel agencies may seem like the most affordable option, but when 5 o'clock comes, your traditional travel consultant is nowhere to be found.

Independent Travel Consultants (ITCs) who use eTravel offer your business a fresh take on corporate travel. Our distinct partnership separates travel admin from travel consulting, giving your ITC the time to focus on what matters most... the best travel options for your business.

This alliance ensures maximum efficiency and personal care. Furthermore, as a self-employed contractor, your Independent Travel Consultant has a vested interest in the success of your business travel – and not just during business hours.

You get:

- Expertise
- Continuous cost savings on flights and accommodation
- Use of eTravel's extensive list of preferred partners
- A dedicated interest in your business
- Superior service delivery that you can count on

Your business deserves the best travel management solution. All the time.

WE'RE ALWAYS HERE. CHOOSE AN eTRAVEL ITC.

To get started call Tammy on 0861 eTravel or email info@etravel.co.za. Or visit etravel.co.za for further information. Venture into new territory. A wealth of opportunity awaits.



Work for yourself. Not by yourself.

TB1889SD

SAA's new frontier

The launch of SAA's inaugural flight between Accra, Ghana and Washington DC in North America last month is the first of several routes planned for the region, forming part of the airline's strategy to strengthen its presence in West Africa. **Natasha Schmidt** attended the festivities as a guest of SAA.

THE launch of flights between Accra and Washington, on which SAA has fifth freedom rights to offload and pick up passengers, is a pilot project – a foothold in West Africa from which SAA can open up travel between the underserved region and North America. **Kendy Phohleli**, SAA's executive of African Hub Projects, told *Travel Buyer* on the side lines of the launch event, which was held at the Labadi Beach Hotel in Accra on August 2.

"SAA has been working on

establishing a presence in West Africa for eight years. Seeing this come to fruition is momentous as it forms a fundamental part of the airline's Long Term Turnaround Strategy," he said. "South Africa is so far south it makes sense to have a feeder hub close to the equator to move traffic between Africa and North America and Europe." The next North American destination on the list, following Accra to Washington, is Toronto, Canada.

SAA plans to use Ghana as a launch pad. It is negotiating

with other countries to expand its presence in the region, establishing similar arrangements between West Africa and French markets, for example, Phohleli said. "Ghana has been a good learning curve. We can take this experience and now look beyond to other high yield markets, with great demand and little competition."

SAA has established a commercial co-operation agreement with Ghanaian domestic carrier, Africa World Airlines (AWA), which will offer

customers further connections into West Africa, including Kumasi, Takoradi, and Tamale in Ghana as well as to Lagos, Nigeria.

In North America, connections to and from over 50 markets will be offered through SAA's airline partners United Airlines, JetBlue Airways and Virgin America.

The Accra-Washington route will be served by A340-600s on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, featuring 42 lie-flat seats in business class and 275 seats in economy class.

The schedule

SAA now operates daily flights between Johannesburg and Accra, with four of the flights continuing onwards to Washington; and three onwards

to Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Three of the current weekly flights between Johannesburg and Washington will continue operating from Johannesburg via Dakar, Senegal.

Flight	Day of the week	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive
SA209	Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Sunday	JHB 17:25	Accra 21:45	Accra 22:45	Washington 06:05 the next day
SA210	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday	Washington 17:40	Accra 07:40	Accra 08:40	JHB 16:30
SA210	Saturday	JHB 16:55	Accra 21:15		
SA052	Saturday	Accra 22:30	JHB 06:20 the next day		
SA056	Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday	JHB 12:50	Accra 17:10	Accra 18:10	Abidjan 19:10
SA057	Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday	Abidjan 20:10	Accra 21:25	Accra 22:30	JHB 06:20 the next day



SAA continues to expand its West African network and celebrated its inaugural flights between Washington DC and Accra Ghana on August 3.

Airport upgrades

ACCRA's Kotoka International Airport is undergoing a massive upgrade.

By the end of December 2015, passengers travelling through KIA should have some relief from congestion and long queues. Expansion works on Terminal 2's arrival hall are underway. The first phase involves the expansion of the existing floor area, new baggage handling equipment and carousels, additional immigration booths, and the replacement of air-condition systems.

Other on-going projects include the installation of state-

of-the-art security systems, the reconstruction of the taxiway, and the construction of a third Terminal for international flights, which is expected to be completed by August 2016.

Meanwhile, Tamale Airport in the North of Ghana is being developed to handle international operations, including the seasonal Hajj Pilgrimage flights between Ghana and Mecca. On completion, the airport will serve as an alternate to KIA, able to accommodate wide body aircraft. The project is expected to be completed by January 2016.

Where to stay

BUSINESS is booming in Ghana, with mining, insurance, telecoms and banking sectors bringing massive development to city centres like Accra.

A major challenge for corporate travellers is finding accommodation that is of a high standard, and consistently so. The Labadi Beach Hotel, which is part of the Legacy group, ticks all the boxes. It is situated close to the airport – 10km from Kotoka International – and 15km from the city centre. (Travellers should be warned though that traffic in Accra is often congested and short journeys can still take some time.)

The hotel features 162 rooms and suites, all of which have individually controlled air-conditioning, colour TV with 15 satellite channels, a mini-bar, and luxury private bathrooms. The hotel's Akwaaba Restaurant serves a full English breakfast as well as an extensive buffet for both lunch and dinner. On Sundays the hotel hosts



Labadi Beach Hotel

PHOTO: LEGACY HOTELS AND RESORTS

a spit braai, with a delicious spread, which is popular with locals. Overlooking the swimming pool, the Terrace Bar is a casual, alfresco venue open until 22h30. The hotel also features the Cocktail Bar and Lounge, open 24 hours a day and a beach bar, located on the beach front, which is kept spotlessly clean

and cordoned off for privacy from traders.

The hotel has seen a significant increase in conferencing since February, after the ban on meetings (following the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014) was lifted earlier this year.

Labadi Beach features a new

conference centre, The Omanyee Suite, which opened in early 2014, which can cater for up to 600 people. The room can be divided into four breakaway rooms. The hotel also features the Labadi Suite, which cater for up to 120 delegates, and can be split into two separate units. ■

THE PERFECT PARTNER.

SHINE WITH BUSINESS TRAVEL BY CWT

Copyright © 2014 CWT

To meet your targets and shine as an organisation you need to ensure travellers receive the necessary support to be productive and safe on the road, and that you have access to information and tools to quickly adapt to evolving dynamics. Carlson Wagonlit Travel has the expertise, products, tools and services to help get the most out of your travel programmes and uncover savings, while providing superior service.

A never-ending commitment to the perfect trip

Visit carlsonwagonlit.co.za or contact Phumi Mazibuko on pmazibuko@carlsonwagonlit.co.za or + 27 11 628 2300



Cummins focuses on Africa

HAVING recently taken over the role of travel manager for Cummins Africa, **Nicole Fonzari** has already put in place a number of exciting new initiatives across the organisation.

While the new role is her first as a buyer, Fonzari is no stranger to corporate travel. She began her career at Lloyds Travel in Bryanston almost 20 years ago after completing a diploma in travel. Three years later the travel bug bit, leading her on a gap year to the US and UK, where she got the opportunity to really experience life.

The next phase of her career began at Seekers Travel in Wynberg under the guidance and direction of the

Geldenhuis brothers. In the years to follow, Fonzari grew her career across the Seekers and American Express Travel Services (Amex) brands, gaining years of experience in the corporate travel space, including in-house experience with the likes of Dimension Data. During this time she also explored the property industry, as well as again heading overseas to travel and live new experiences.

This journey led her to the position of key account manager for Amex where Cummins was one of her global clients. "Then last year, **Kovilan Naidoo**, the former travel manager for Cummins, informed me that his position would be opening up and suggested that I apply. My application was successful and I started in October."

She reveals that the transition from TMC to "corporate client" has been both challenging and exciting. "Cummins is an amazing brand, and dynamic company. Management is open to new ideas and ways to make our travel policy more effective."

Local nuances

When it comes to the Cummins travel programme, Fonzari says she views the company's 300-plus travellers as her clients. In Africa, the company's travel management is something of a hybrid. While travel in South Africa and the rest of Africa is managed centrally, its travel in Nigeria is managed by Amex in Nigeria. She explains that her mandate with regard to the travel policy is

Cummins Africa is tightening up and improving on a number of its travel services. **Debbie Badham** speaks to travel manager **Nicole Fonzari** to find out more.

to manage suppliers according to the lowest total cost of ownership.

Domestic travel is currently booked using Amadeus's booking solution, AETM. While it is mandatory for travellers to use the online booking tool for domestic travel, they are encouraged to rather use the company's TMC partner for more complex routings. Amex travel agents, who operate offsite, will then assist with these.

In house, the travel team consists of travel support and a travel analyst, who both report to Fonzari. Interestingly, one of the travel analyst's primary roles is to assist with data management.

Fonzari says Cummins is governed by a global policy but one of her major drives at the moment is to update its local policy to include clauses more relevant to the local context. She says the company is fairly open to investigating changes or additions to the local policy if they will enhance the employees' well-being and travel experience – as long as these changes aren't less restrictive than the global policy.

Fonzari emphasises the importance of understanding the nuances surrounding travel in Africa and guiding global teams in their understanding of these unique challenges. She notes that, during her time at Amex, she had the opportunity to travel to both Ghana and Nigeria, allowing her to experience some of the difficulties travellers face on the continent.

Data accuracy

Data accuracy is one of the travel team's greatest challenges, reveals Fonzari. This relates particularly to the collation of relevant and up-to-date data. "It's a challenge

when it comes to global versus local data and making sure that these match up."

Expense management has a significant part to play in this. Employees who travel for Cummins more than twice annually should apply for a company credit card. At the moment, company credit cards are then manually expensed by the employees on a monthly basis and employees are responsible for submitting all expenses within 10 days of statement cut-off.

However, Fonzari says that Cummins has plans to introduce new technology that will help improve the collation of this data. She explains that the company has plans to roll out Concur's automated expense management system across the business in South Africa by the end of the year. "This will definitely help us in more effectively monitoring our travel spend."

Another way in which Cummins plans to improve its data accuracy is through "traveller profile clean-ups" which will immediately provide the company with more accurate information on its travellers.

Traveller tracking

Data leakage is part of the challenge – and Fonzari says this tends to happen when travellers bypass the TMC when booking itineraries.

She reveals that Cummins has a Safe and Secure Programme and that, as part of the programme, Amex feeds traveller data to risk

management company, iJet, which then tracks those travellers. However, should travellers book outside of the policy this doesn't happen.

"At Cummins we believe strongly in safety and security so we need to make sure that this happens," Fonzari comments, adding that the company's global security director is dedicated to this cause and keeps well up to date with potential risk threats and levels.

One of the ways in which the travel team endeavour to curb rogue travellers is through monitoring the current expense process. "When travellers later expense their travel, we can see whether or not they have booked through the TMC and in so doing monitor non-compliance," she explains.

In terms of the nature of the policy itself, Fonzari notes that it is quite strict. She says, however, that Cummins is very aware that its deliverables should not be compromised by this. "The nature of our business means that, at any given time there might be an engine that needs to be replaced in a remote location and as such our policy has to allow for urgent business travel."

When asked how Cummins Africa differentiated between last-minute travel for urgent business and that which was a result of disorganisation, she responded by saying that compliance within the organisation was a project that she has plans to focus on. In particular, the travel team has emphasised the importance of better compliance to the

credit card policy and ensuring that travellers are expensing correctly. "However, to a point we have to accept that travel is ever changing and one cannot always account for this," she maintains.

Consolidating spend

Another project that Fonzari has been tackling since her appointment in October has been the consolidation of Cummins' hotel spend. She reveals that this was previously negotiated on a local basis. The consolidation of this information is particularly important for Africa.

The company makes use of a hotel tool called Lanyon – this provides Cummins' TMC partners with access to hotels used by the company across the world. "Cummins is experiencing huge growth into Africa and it's important for our employees to have access to safe and vetted hotels," Fonzari says. This also means increased buying power across the continent.

She furthermore reveals that the travel team at Cummins is in the process of putting together two major RFPs for visa companies and transfer companies, noting that the company will look to consolidate that spend as well.

One-stop online community

Fonzari reveals more about one of the company's most innovative new projects. Cummins has an intranet called Cummins Connect. Leveraging off of this, the travel team is now working on an online community that will serve as a one-stop travel shop for the company's travellers, providing them with access to everything they need to know about travel, including all processes and visa requirements. ■

Cummins is an amazing brand, and dynamic company. Management is open to new ideas and ways to make our travel policy more effective.

New conference centre on the Zambezi

Meeting planners can now take advantage of a brand new conferencing facility right on the edge of the Zambezi. **Tessa Reed** attended the launch of the new centre as a guest of aha.

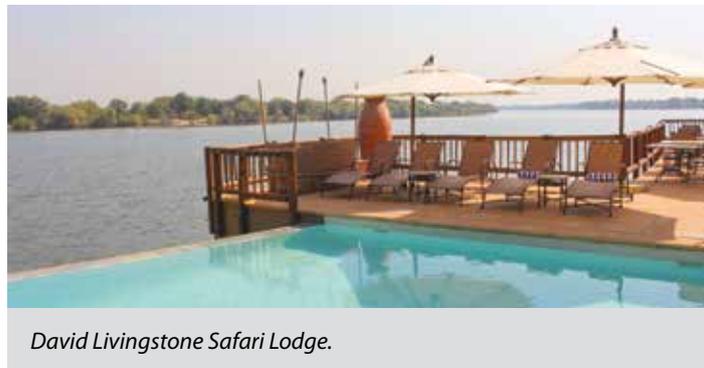
HOTEL and lodge management company, african hotels and adventures, has officially opened a conference centre and boma at the David Livingstone Safari Lodge on the Zambezi River just outside Livingstone, Zambia.

Speaking at the opening of the centre, **Glen Byrom**, MD of destination management company TWIICE, said the triangle of Livingstone, Victoria Falls and Chobe was the most powerful adventure MICE destination in the world. He added that the area offered authentic Africa, set on the banks of the Zambezi, with great weather and an array of activities.

Byrom said the new conference centre was a multipurpose venue that would widen the scope of the destination and added that Victoria Falls airport was undergoing expansion, which would be a game changer. "Kazungula is the only place in the world where four countries meet in one spot," he said. He added that the univisa currently in place for Zimbabwe and Zambia was likely to evolve further and that there were not enough beds on either side of the Falls to accommodate the tourists who would come to the destination. "Many predict that Victoria Falls will become the new tourism hub of sub-Saharan Africa."

Esther Banda, Zambian Deputy Minister of Tourism and Arts, said tour operators could promote the property with confidence, adding that it offered guests the unique prospect of spotting passing elephant while attending a conference. "We can also see here today the fruits of hard work, vision, major ongoing investment and commitment to Zambia."

The new conference centre caters for small team meetings as well as larger team-building events and international conferences as an exclusive-use conference venue in Livingstone. It is also suitable as an exclusive-use wedding reception



David Livingstone Safari Lodge.

PHOTOS: TESSA REED

crocodiles and hippos, while waterbuck and elephant are also likely sightings along with numerous bird species.

4. Swimming in Devil's Pool

Trips to Livingstone Island in the Zambezi just above the Falls can be arranged. The trip offers guests the opportunity to swim in Devil's Pool, a unique experience. Devil's Pool is a natural rock pool right on the edge of the Falls, providing the exhilarating experience of viewing the Falls from the very edge. Guests meet at The Royal Livingstone Hotel and take a short boat trip to the island before walking along the top of the Falls to the rock pool. Excursions can be arranged, including breakfast, lunch and high tea, and take between one-and-a-half and two hours. The activity is only available during low-water season (from August to March) and swimming depends on water levels.

5. Elephant encounter

Zambezi Elephant Trails offers guests the opportunity to interact with a group of rescued elephants. The operator says the group consists of elephants that were orphaned during culls or found in distress during periods of drought. Furthermore, according to the operator, the elephants have also been trained using positive reinforcement. During the encounter guests can feed and stroke the animals.

venue or for hosting small business workshops or cocktail functions.

The venue comprises 250 sqm of flexible event space overlooking the African bush and a waterhole frequented by elephant; a 140-sqm outdoor patio area under a Bedouin tent; a reception area; and an open-air Boma and amphitheatre venue. On-site accommodation at David Livingstone Safari Lodge & Spa consists of 72 en-suite luxury rooms and five executive suites, all with spectacular views of the Zambezi River.

The conference centre has capacity for 160 delegates in schoolroom style or 250 in cinema style. In banquet style without a dance floor it caters for 180 guests or 150 with a dance floor.

5 great adventure add-ons

1. Sunset cruises on the Zambezi

Guests at the David Livingstone Safari Lodge have the option of a sunset cruise in the evenings. Snacks and drinks are served on board the three-deck *Lady Livingstone* and the spacious vessel provides ample room for passengers to move around and watch the sunset over the Zambezi. Guests will more than likely spot crocodiles, hippos and elephant. The *Lady Livingstone* has capacity for 144 passengers and the cruise lasts roughly two

hours.

2. White-river rafting

There are probably few experiences that can match the adrenaline rush of white-river rafting on the Zambezi River. Guests do not need any experience as qualified guides will brief them on all safety issues and lifejackets are provided. Operator Safpar's team of guides are all accredited by the International Rafting Federation. Guests can choose between half-day excursions in the morning and afternoon or a full-day trip.

3. Canoeing safari

Guests who aren't up for white-river rafting can opt for the tamer experience of canoeing along the Upper Zambezi River. Here the waters are generally peaceful, with only a few very small rapids, classed as grade two. The experience offers unique game viewing at water level and also great photo opportunities. Guests can expect to see plenty of

INVEST IN YOUR DEVELOPMENT AS A BUSINESS TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL

The Global Business Travel Association Southern Africa is proud to present our **9th Annual Conference**. The conference theme this year is **“Spice up your travel programme”** and will feature unparalleled networking and sharing of ideas and best practices among business travel industry professionals. There will also be opportunities that will help you connect with other dedicated professionals, propel your career forward, and build crucial skills.

The conference programme includes key industry speakers, educational forums covering relevant topics, as well as a **Travel Expo**, providing practical tools, cost savings and exposure to resources that delegates can apply to their corporate travel programme.

The **“GBTA SA Business Travel Innovator Award”** in partnership with Travel and Meetings publication will be presented at conference.

Register for conference and get R1000 off your 2015/2016 membership, and stand to win a 2 night stay for 2 at Protea Hotel Fire and Ice, Menlyn.

About GBTA

GBTA Southern Africa was established in 2006 and is a chapter of the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA).

The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) is the world’s premier business travel and meetings organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. area with operations on six continents. GBTA’s 7,000-plus members manage more than \$345 billion of global business travel and meetings expenditures annually. GBTA and the GBTA Foundation deliver world-class education, events, research, advocacy and media to a growing global network of more than 28,000 travel professionals and 125,000 active contacts.

Who should attend?

- Managers/ Buyers responsible for travel within any size company
- Procurement Managers responsible for travel
- Travel Management Company staff (TMC’s)
- Technology providers in the travel industry
- Suppliers in the travel industry

GBTA Buyer Member Demographics

- The world’s largest group of Fortune 1000 business travel buyers
- 65% of GBTA Buyers report an annual travel volume of US\$10 million or more
- GBTA buyers represent over 20 industries
- Membership includes professionals from over 60 countries
- 32% of GBTA buyers are Procurement director level and above

Venue: Protea Hotel Fire and Ice! Menlyn



Email Nicky du Plessis nduplessis@gbta.org
www.gbtasa.co.za

Is your year-end on target?

Corporates are placing increased focus on the purpose and message of year-end functions before dipping into the company budget. **Liesl Venter** reports.

AFTER a year of grinding hard work, most people in the workplace simply want to let their hair down, sit back and have some fun. Year-end functions have become a great way for employees to connect in an informal manner and for companies to recognise their employees for their efforts, says **Avashnee Subramanien**, talent supply demand manager at Accenture South Africa.

"Year-end functions create an opportunity for employees to relax and get to know each other out of a hectic and deadline-driven work environment. Unlike other corporate events throughout the year, year-end functions are a celebration; employees do not have to be subjected to long PowerPoint presentations and receive a quick acknowledgement from their leadership for all the hard work they deliver throughout the year."

Thuli Mahonga, senior events manager for Nedbank Retail, says while year-end functions are by no means necessary and, in the budget-constrained environment characterising many corporates, have become something that is more a "nice to have" than a must, they remain important. "Employees look forward to it. Having worked hard, year-end functions remain a sure way to validate them and to thank them."

Budgets are a challenge

In recent years, many companies have cut down significantly on events such as



Avashnee Subramanien, talent supply demand manager, Accenture South Africa

these as budgets have been cut. "If budget is the overriding concern in an organisation, then a year-end function won't be considered important. In our organisation there's no doubt we have also had to look at budget, but saying thank you to our employees remains a top priority."

Subramanien agrees, saying it is an important part of Accenture's employee value proposition to say thank-you to its people. "Recognition of employees is a key driver of increased levels of engagement and performance," she says.

But the big events of the past are slowly but surely giving way to smaller, more intimate events because planners, human resources and financial officers agree – to party just for the sake of it just costs money. Regardless of the size of the event, there is the common understanding nowadays that the purpose and objective of the year-end party has to be as clearly defined as any other event held during the year.

"We have, for this very



Thuli Mahonga, senior events manager, Nedbank Retail

reason, moved away from the big events bringing all of the employees together," says Mahonga. "Our year-end functions are far more focused towards teams and smaller groups of people who work together throughout the year."

Feedback is fundamental

As the aim of most year-end events is to celebrate staff it only makes sense to take their wishes into account.

Subramanien and Mahonga say their organisations require ongoing feedback from employees throughout the year to ensure that the needs of staff are met. "It becomes very easy to gauge what staff want if one is engaging with them throughout the year and not just holding a year-end event as this big once-off party every year. Staff need to be recognised continuously," says Mahonga, who points out that the end-of-year party should never be confused with incentive and recognition and rewards programmes.

For this reason many organisations also tend not to combine staff and client year-end functions. "Generally we keep our staff and client events separate," says Subramanien.

"Accenture is governed by policies around entertaining clients especially if they are from state-owned enterprises or are public officials. We adhere to strict and rigorous approval processes to ensure that our brand is protected against any possible improper and inappropriate influence."

Mahonga says at its heart there are very different messages for clients and staff, therefore combining these events would serve no purpose. "We are communicating one thing to our staff and something completely different to our clients. At Nedbank we have taken a very purposeful approach to organise smaller events that have a deeper meaning and so our approach is far more focused. People seem to take home more from the smaller events and it is working well in our space.

"Year-end functions do not have to be glitzy and glamorous – they just need to be authentic. In our experience, employees prefer to have informal and low-key events, usually without partners. Year-end functions are seen to be non work-related and are more about getting to know those you work with out of the day-to-day work environment."

What works?

Successful events take a wide variety of forms, says Subramanien. "We have had cooking competitions combined with a dinner, booze cruises, lawn games, burlesque entertainment shows, high tea or a show at a theatre. What is important is that it is fun, entertaining and goes beyond the usual conference venue or hotel.

"People are looking for something different – creativity. The aim is to take a blank canvas and transform it into something unique that celebrates your staff for a few hours."

HOW TO choose the right teambuild

FOR YOUR OBJECTIVE

When it comes to teambuilding, one size definitely does not fit all. Matching an activity to preset goals and requirements is vital to success. **Liesl Venter** reports.

TEAMBUILDING activities are as varied as the universe is big. From saving rhinos to playing an instrument to jumping over obstacles, the options available to corporates are endless. Matching activities to goals and outcomes, however, is not as simple as choosing options for a fun day out of the office.

According to **Gerry Skerritt**, director at Dream Team Catalyst, there are literally hundreds of distinct products in their portfolio. "But each one has a defined business benefit built in, so one size won't fit all. Some of the processes are diametrically opposed," he says. "For example, about half of our activities are collaborative and the other half are competitive. Clearly if a company wants to drive home a message of 'One team, one company, one goal' it would be counter-productive to choose an activity that is very competitive."

Cany Bugler, managing director of Tri Active Events Management, agrees saying it is vital to match activities to outcome. "The onus is on the teambuilding company to match these outcomes with the focus area of the corporate and ensure they are choosing

something that meets their needs and produces the intended results."

Ask the right questions

When planning teambuilding events, corporates should start by asking some simple, yet essential questions, says Bugler. The question of why you are teambuilding must be answered first. "And not only why but why now, what must be achieved, who should attend, and when must it happen?" she adds. "Only when you have very clear answers to these questions can you look at how to match your objective to an activity."

More sophisticated tools, such as Event Finder, have also become available to assist corporates. Event Finder is used to filter the most appropriate activities for a particular portfolio. According to Skerritt, this tool simply assists in ticking boxes. "By entering data such as group size, time available and required outcomes (simply checking boxes) a list of suitable activities are displayed and clients can click through to get a more in-depth idea of what the activity is all about," he explains.

"However, there really is no substitute for a meeting with one of our skilled and experienced facilitators. They will take time to understand your unique challenges and help you to define the ideal situation and then discuss options for getting there. They will find out about your people, company culture, business and strategy and get valuable insight into previous interventions. What has worked before, what hasn't and what are the 'no-no's'? We will then be able to confidently offer a proposal with options and in-depth information for the client's consideration."

Both Skerritt and Bugler agree that teambuilding organisations play a vital role in guiding and providing the necessary tools to choose teambuilding activities, but corporates need to provide the data to make them work.

Put the objective first

Too much choice (sometimes mind-boggling choice) can be a challenge, say both Skerritt and Bugler. "This becomes a barrier when a client doesn't have a very clear idea of the purpose of the teambuild or the desired outcomes," says Skerritt.

"Another challenge arises when a theme is decided upon and then it's a scramble to make everything else fit. It's definitely a case of putting the cart before the horse when the ad agency decides that a space theme with a pay-off line, 'To Infinity & Beyond' should be the central driving force for the entire conference from invitations to décor, to gala dinner, presentations and the teambuilding. The 'silver bullet' solution that we have for the client's current realities is not even considered, as there is no way of

squeezing a space ship or some light sabres into the programme!"

5 top tips

1. Know the reason why you are doing teambuilding, says Bugler, and then brief your supplier as well as possible.
2. Bugler suggests making the activity as inclusive as possible, taking into account physical and intellectual abilities, cultural mix and the levels of hierarchy attending.
3. Attention should be given to the time allocated for the activity and whether the objectives can be met in the time allocated. "Be realistic about this and don't expect miracles in a three-hour session – it is a progression over a longer time period," says Bugler.
4. Share the budget from the outset. "Clients are often reluctant to supply a budget for their event. I am never sure why – perhaps they have been ripped off before but it is so vital for the supplier to know the ball park of the budget, so we can pitch the right level of activity to suit the budget, or at least advise the client that their anticipated budget will not stretch to meeting the chosen objectives," Bugler comments.
5. Skerritt notes the importance of demonstrating that your team members are valued. "Not considering the entire team's preferences results in an activity being chosen that only appeals to the boss or the organiser. What's more, cutting corners and opting for the cheapest option does not go unnoticed. Is cheap and uninspiring in line with your brand? Hiring the best that you can sends many valuable lessons to the troops. Not least of which is that they are worth it and that the company also believes in quality for internal customers and doesn't just insist they deliver it to the clients."



5 top Midlands meeting spots

Just north of Pietermaritzburg is one of South Africa's most picturesque areas and the home of over 200 arts and crafts studios and home industry outlets. **Liesl Venter** rounds up some top meeting spots for the Midlands.

Nottingham Road Hotel

A visit to the Midlands Meander is not complete without a stop at this quaint hotel. Established in 1854, its unique charm and attraction have answered the needs of many travellers seeking a hotel steeped in history, beauty and reputation, say the owners. The conference venue at the Nottingham Road Hotel can accommodate 60 delegates, depending on the seating style. It also has two breakaway rooms for smaller meetings.

Redlands Hotel

Situated in the northern suburb of Wembley, the Redlands Hotel has a tranquil atmosphere. While it is only five minutes from the

Pietermaritzburg CBD, it has no feel of the city to it and is ideal for delegates who don't want to head out into the country but are still looking for a Midlands experience. The Redlands Hotel has two dedicated conference rooms that can accommodate up to 80 delegates. The hotel also boasts a boardroom, ideal for smaller functions and meetings.

Lords of the Manor

Commonly referred to as the 'Jewel of the Midlands', this elegant and beautiful hotel at the start of the Midlands Meander has a distinct feel of an era gone by. Sprawling lawns, 150-year-old oaks and a manor house are all part and parcel of this historic venue. Conference and meeting

facilities for up to 60 delegates are available in a venue that is undoubtedly different. With stone walls and enormous Swiss bay windows, it's a grand country affair.

Old Halliwell Country Inn

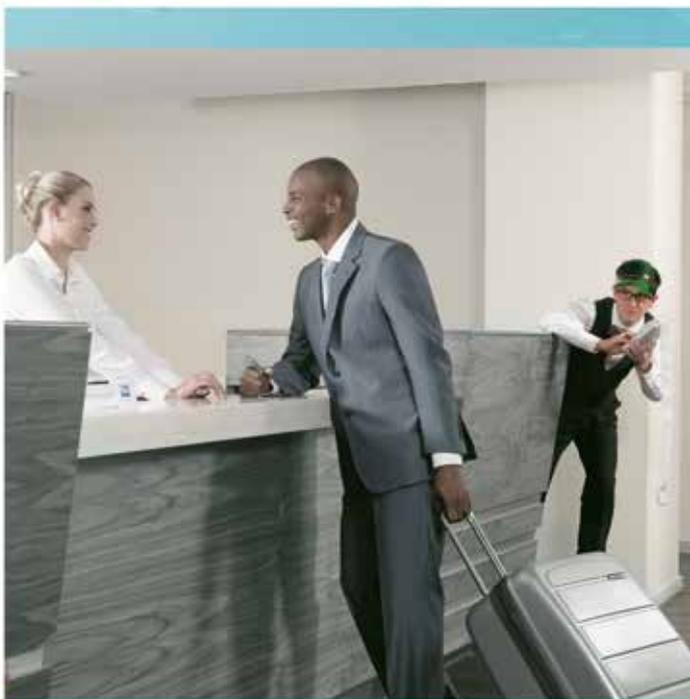
The Old Halliwell Country Inn, which is set on 100 hectares of rolling hills overlooking the Karkloof Valley, dates back to the 1830s. The main building was originally a fortified farmhouse and still retains its gracious charm as a cosy library, restaurant and small cigar lounge. The property can host up to 360 people in its venue, Halliwell Hall. It can also accommodate small meetings groups with ease.

Rawdons Hotel

With an on-site brewery, considered to be the country's most successful microbrewery, Rawdons Hotel is a must for any visitor to the Midlands. Nestled in the heart of the Midlands it is a charming country estate with a lot of character where naturally brewed ales and lagers with names like the Pickled Pig Porter, the Tiddly Toad Lager and the Pye-Eyed Possum Pilsner can be enjoyed. Meeting and conferencing takes on a unique twist at this venue as delegates are able to not only make but also label their own beer. The hotel has conference facilities that can accommodate up to 100 people and is fully equipped for audio visual. Smaller meeting facilities are also available.



CORPORATE
PAYMENT SOLUTIONS



BTAPowerlinkSM is your 24/7 accountant.

Now you can keep control of your travel budget online.

American Express[®] BTAPowerlinkSM gives you easy and instant access to your travel-related spend data, where and when you need it. The single online working environment and seamless integration with your existing processes allows for closer, more efficient interaction with your Travel Management Company.

It's transparent, cost effective, and puts you in control.

For more information, please contact your account manager or call us on **0860 102 191**.

American Express[®] Cards is operated under licence in South Africa by Nedbank Ltd Reg No 1951/000009/06. An authorised financial services and registered credit provider (NCRCP16).



What premium travellers want

How are airlines adapting their offerings to meet evolving traveller demands? **Max Marx** reports.

TODAY'S premium traveller wants it all – technology, comfort, control and quality – all tailored to suit their individual needs. Indeed, SAA spokesperson, **Tlali Tlali**, says the new trend in premium class is personalisation at every touch point of the customer experience. “From a technology perspective, this includes a personalised welcome note on the passenger’s personal television and the ability to link a passenger’s mobile device to the entertainment system. This means that while customers watch a movie they can use their smartphone, tablet or laptop to view other applications such as the route map or duty-free shopping application.”

Another significant trend is on-board connectivity. **Jimmy Eichelgruen**, Delta Air Lines’ director of Sales for Africa, the Middle East and Indian subcontinent, says WiFi is becoming a fundamental part of travel, and airlines that don’t have it will soon be left behind. “Being able to answer emails en route means

businesses can stay productive while in the air or avoid missing out on deals because they couldn’t log in on time.”

Sally George, Singapore Airlines’ market development manager, says a WiFi connection is available to all Singapore Airlines’ premium-economy passengers. “Having on-board connectivity opens up many possibilities in terms of passenger servicing and interaction throughout the travel journey.”

SAA, Delta Air Lines and British Airways have equipped their cabin attendants with tablets or phablets that are being used to store passenger preferences, take passenger orders, solve problems and access information via the Internet.

Tlali points out that while real-time connectivity is trending in the Northern hemisphere, SAA’s research shows mixed demand to be connected throughout the flight as many of SAA’s long-haul flights are at night. “Research also shows that customers are not prepared to pay high amounts to be

connected,” says Tlali.

Wireless content distribution is a trend SAA is following closely. “A server with TV programmes and other entertainment is being installed on board the aircraft and passengers can connect to the server using their own devices. This is of particular interest to passengers on longer regional flights where limited entertainment is being offered,” says Tlali.

Camilla Barrett, BA’s deputy head of International PR Europe, Africa, Asia Pacific and Middle East says BA’s premium customers are increasingly turning to technology to check in online using the BA app and, on some routes, even print their own bag tags, which saves time at the airport.

The power of choice

Premium passengers are seeking customised, top-quality service on the ground and on board and want to choose services that increase their comfort at their own

convenience, says **Tjalling Smit**, senior vp E-Commerce Air France KLM. “Ancillary services offer customers choice, such as finding flight offers; booking, viewing and changing flights; selecting seats; check-in; accessing boarding passes and more.”

In terms of premium-class seating, Tlali says the trends are increased privacy, aisle access for each passenger and greater comfort. “Power and now added USB ports are a must to ensure that all portable electronic devices can be powered. Noise cancellation headsets are equally a must.”

On-board dining options are another attractive selling point, with some airlines offering à la carte menus in first class and gourmet dining options in economy class.

With Delta’s Dine and Rest option in its new DeltaOne cabin, passengers receive all courses at once so they can eat quickly and focus elsewhere. And Singapore Airlines’ Book and Cook service features curated dishes that premium-economy passengers can pre-order.



AIRFRANCE KLM

The only difference from home is waking up in a different continent

Visit agentconnect.biz

KLM
Royal Dutch Schiphol
The Netherlands
Journey's of Engineers

TB1998SD

Solving your toughest cost containment challenges worldwide

- THROUGH QUALITY MANAGEMENT
- INTELLIGENT ANALYTICS
- ROBUST REPORTING
- PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Because your bottom line is our top priority



www.wings.travel

OFFSHORE | MARINE | CORPORATE

Increased comfort, lower cost

With airlines squeezing as many passengers into economy class as possible, and business and first-class fares simply too expensive for many passengers, demand for premium economy seating is on the increase, especially on long-haul flights.

While premium economy has been around for many years – Virgin Atlantic first launched premium economy as Mid Class in 1992 – many airlines have recently upgraded their premium economy cabins as part of large-scale upgrades across all cabins.

This month, Singapore Airlines becomes the latest airline to launch a premium-economy class, while other airlines such as British Airways, Air France, Delta Air Lines, Virgin Atlantic Airways, KLM and Lufthansa have recently undertaken or announced cabin refurbishments and refreshes.

There has been a move by many airlines to offer some sort of hybrid – something better than economy but cheaper than

business class, says Linden Birns, md of Plane Talking PR. “It has really been driven more by the airlines than customers, because airlines are looking to maximise the yields they can generate from a flight.”

The premium-economy cabins of today have much of the bells and whistles of business class but without the lie-flat seat. These cabins have taken on-board experiences to the next level. There are wider seats, more leg-room, greater seat recline, WiFi connectivity, universal power sockets, in-seat USB ports, high-tech entertainment systems and a fantastic choice of meal options.

Services offered in premium economy make it a very attractive option for corporates and higher-end leisure travellers. Take Virgin Atlantic’s newly designed premium-economy product, for example. Premium passengers have a dedicated check-in desk, priority boarding, get a pre-flight drink, a complimentary newspaper and a choice of meals served on china dinnerware, in-seat laptop power and a comfortable, spacious seat that rivals the comfort in business class.

Next level luxury...

First-class cabins have also been taken to the next level. The Residence by Etihad, for example, is a three-room private cabin in the sky that

offers a living room, double bedroom and en-suite shower. It comes complete with butler and gourmet à la carte meals or a custom menu.

BA introduces more efficient services

BRITISH Airways passengers who have an Apple Watch, can now keep track of their flights with a glance to their wrist, using the BA app.

Through the app and the watch, they can check their flight number, departure time, on-time status, gate status and even the weather at their destination.

At selected airports, passengers can also use their watch to display their mobile boarding passes for scanning at security check points and boarding gates.

BA passengers can also use the app to check in online,

choose their seat, download their mobile boarding pass, get boarding area WiFi passwords, and trace their Avios points.

Business-class passengers also have dedicated speed-through channels at Heathrow’s Terminal 5 while the airline’s Club counters enable speedy check-in at many airports for business-class passengers who haven’t already checked in online.

And for speedy entry into the US, BA’s business-class-only service from London to New York enables customers to clear US customs and immigration at Shannon Airport in Ireland, enabling them to arrive in the US as domestic passengers.

Singapore Airlines unveils new premium economy

FROM August 9, South Africans travelling on selected flights to Sydney from Singapore will be among the first to experience Singapore Airlines' new premium-economy class on its A380 aircraft.

"We've worked hard to give our customers more space, comfort and freedom in premium economy to make flying more enjoyable," says **Sally George**, Singapore Airlines' market development manager.

Premium economy will also become available on other routes served by the airline's A380s, its B777-300ERs and its future fleet of Airbus A350s. It will be progressively introduced on the Beijing, Delhi, Hong Kong, Frankfurt, London, Mumbai, New York, Shanghai, Tokyo and Zurich routes later this year and early in 2016. The premium-

economy seats range between 47cm and 49,5cm in width, and recline to 20,3cm, and have 33,7cm full HD monitors, the largest in their class.

Seats also have calf and foot rests, two USB ports, and stowage space for mobile phones and laptops.

Premium-economy customers also have a wider choice of food and beverage on board, including free-flowing champagne. They can select meals from the Book the Cook service, enjoy priority boarding and baggage handling, as well as a baggage allowance of 35kg.

KrisFlyer members receive 10% more miles when flying in premium-economy class.

There are no plans as yet to introduce premium economy on the South Africa-Singapore route.



► Did you know?

Etihad Airways passengers qualify for a complimentary 96-hour visit visa when they stop-over in Abu Dhabi. Passengers can choose from the following discounted accommodation rates through Hala Abu Dhabi:

- Three-star Ibis Abu Dhabi Gate for US\$49 (R) pppn.
- Four-star Radisson Blu Abu Dhabi Yas Island for US\$70 (R) pppn.
- Four-star Novotel Abu Dhabi Gate for \$72 pppn.
- Four-star Southern Sun Abu Dhabi for \$80 pppn.
- Five-star Grand Millennium Al Wahda Abu Dhabi for \$83 pppn.
- Five-star Hyatt Capital Gate for \$97 pppn.

Prices are based on a twin share basis and are inclusive of breakfast, the service charge and tourism fee.

Travellers can apply for a complimentary visa until October 31.



PHOTO: KLM

KLM brings new business-class service to SA

KLM's new World Business Class service is expected on the Johannesburg - Amsterdam route before the end of the year.

One of the first Boeing 777-200 aircraft fitted with this cabin has already begun service on the Amsterdam-Cape Town route. The new service provides business-class passengers departing South Africa with priority check-in and boarding as well as priority bag pick-up at their destination.

Features of the cabin include a 202cm-long sleeper bed with increased leg-room and

is equipped with a massage unit, a privacy canopy, personal entertainment system and in-seat power.

Customers can also enjoy a three-course meal on board, extra baggage allowance, access to KLM's Crown lounges and can also earn up to 175% in Flying Blue loyalty miles.

Economy-class passengers travelling on KLM can upgrade online to Economy Comfort seats up to 48 hours before departure, while passengers already on board can also request an Economy Comfort seat, where available.

AIRFRANCE
FRANCE IS IN THE AIR

THE SOARING PALACE
New La Premiere Suite; discover absolute comfort and five-star service throughout your journey.

AIRFRANCE KLM
WWW.AGENTCONNECT.BIZ

TB1999SD

FIRST CLASS

Airline	Aircraft	Seat width (cm)	Seat pitch (cm)	Recline	Seats	Configuration
Air France	A380 (JNB)	61	200	Flat bed	9	1-2-1
British Airways	A380	57	229	Flat bed	14	1-2-1
	B747-400 (CPT winter)	53	198	Flat bed	14	1-1/1-2-1
	B777 (CPT winter)	81	216	Flat bed	14	1-2-1
Lufthansa	A380 (JNB-FRA)	79	216	Flat bed	8	1-2-1
	A340-600 (CPT-MUC)	78	213	Flat bed	8	1-2-1
SWISS	A340-300	56	208	Flat bed	8	1-2-1

BUSINESS CLASS

Air France	A380 (JNB)	53	175	Flat bed	80	2-2-2
	B777-200 (CPT seasonal)	53	175	Flat bed	35	2-3-2
Air Mauritius	A340-300	66	152	170°	34	2-2-2
Air Namibia	A330-200	46	191	Flat bed	30	2-2-2
	A319-100	53	137	160°	16	2-2
Air Seychelles	A330-200	-	-	Flat bed	18	2-2-2
Arik Air	A340-500	51	191	Flat bed	36	2-2-2
	A330-200	51	191	Flat bed	30	2-2-2
	B737-800	48	112	-	16-20	2-2
British Airways	A380	64	183	Flat bed	44-53	Main deck 2-4-2 Upper deck 2-3-2
	B747-400 (CPT winter)	51	185	Flat bed	52-70	Main deck 2-4-2 Upper deck 2-2
	B777 (CPT winter)	54	185	Flat bed	56	2-4-2
Cathay Pacific	B777-300	53	-	Flat bed	40	1-2-1
Delta Air Lines	B777LR	51-66	112	Flat bed	36	1-2-1
Edelweiss Air	A330-200	52	114	Flat bed	22	1-2-1/2-2-1
EgyptAir	A330-243	51	148	39cm	24	2-2-2
	A330-300	51	152	Angled flat bed	36	2-2-2
El Al	B767 and B767ER	-	152	165°	24	2-2-2
Emirates	B777-300ER (JNB)	52	183	Flat bed	42	2-3-2
	B777-300ER (DBN)	53	163	Flat bed	42	2-3-2
	B777-300ER (CPT)	53	183	Flat bed	42	2-3-2
Ethiopian Airlines	B787	58	165	Angled bed	24	2-2-2
	B777	53	165	Angled bed	34	2-2-2
Etihad	A330-200	51	185	Flat bed	22	1-2-1
Kenya Airways	B737-300	51	102	19cm	16	2-2
	B737-700	51	102	25cm	16	2-2
	B737-800	52	119	33cm	16	2-2

Airline	Aircraft	Seat width (cm)	Seat pitch (cm)	Recline	Seats	Configuration
KLM	B777-200 (JNB)	51	152	170°	35	2-3-2
	A380 (CPT)	58	157	Flat bed	34	2-2-2
Lufthansa	A380 (JNB-FRA)	52	163	Flat bed	78	2-2-2
	A340-600 (CPT-MUC)	51	163	Flat bed	56	2-2-2
Qantas	B747-400	55	203	Flat sky bed	56	Main deck 2-3-2 Upper deck 2-2
Qatar Airways	B787-788	76	203	Flat bed	22	1-2-1
RwandAir	B737-800NG	50	130	18cm	16	2-2
	B737-700NG	50	94	13cm	12	2-2
SAA	A340-600	63	183	Flat bed	42	2-2-2
	A340-300E	63	183	Flat bed	38	2-2-2
	A330-200	63	183	Flat bed	36	2-2-2
	A320	53	98	18cm	24	2-2
	B737-800	45	90	10cm	32	2-3
	A319	49	90	10cm	25	2-3
Singapore Airlines	B777-200ER	76	130	Flat bed	26	1-2-1
SWISS	A340-300	52	200	Flat bed	48	Angled layout 1-2-1/ 2-2-1
Turkish Airlines	A330-300	56	198	177°	28	2-2-2
Virgin Atlantic	A340-600	56	202	Flat bed	45	Herringbone angled layout 1-1-1
PREMIUM ECONOMY						
Air Austral	B737-800 NG	44	89	115°	18	2-2
Air France	A380 (JNB)	48	97	123°	38	2-3-2
	B777-200 (CPT seasonal)	48	97	123°	24	2-4-2
British Airways	A380	47	97	20cm	56	2-3-2
	B747-400 (CPT winter)	47	97	18cm	36	2-4-2
	B777 (CPT winter)	47	97	18cm	44	2-4-2
Delta Air Lines	B777LR	46	89-94	15	36	3-3-3
Edelweiss Air	A330-200	52	114	Flat bed	22	1-2-1/2-2-1
Cathay Pacific	B777-300	49	97	20cm	32	2-4-2
Lufthansa	A380 (JNB)	48	97	20cm	52	2-4-2
	A340-600 (CPT)	46	97	20cm	28	2-3-2
Qantas	B747-400	50	97	23cm	32	2-4-2
Virgin Atlantic	A340-600	53	97	21cm	38	2-3-2

Disclaimer: Travel Buyer has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this table but accepts no responsibility for incorrect information supplied by the airlines. Where airlines did not respond to requests for information, details were taken from Travelinfo.

Tight budgets impact premium travel

IN THE midst of the challenging global economic climate, companies are scrutinising every cent of expenditure and implementing cost cutting measures wherever possible. Often, the corporate travel department is one of the first casualties,

according to **Kim Parker**, head of business development: corporate Sub-Sahara at Wings Travel Management.

When travel departments are informed that their budgets have been cut, they are forced to make do with a smaller budget allocation, says Parker. This means that travel buyers have to look at all areas of their travel programmes to cut costs, particularly the class of transportation their travellers are utilising.

“When faced with the choice between flying in a lower class or booking less travel trips, most companies opt for the former,” Parker notes, adding that Wings has seen many of its clients implementing restrictions or complete bans on business or first-class travel in the last few years.

Depending on the budget however, these restrictions can take many forms – such as reserving business and first-class travel for C-level executives only, no business or first-class travel on domestic and regional routes, or even just restrictions on business and first-class travel on international routes that exceed a certain number of hours.

“The problem with implementing a new policy with regards to flights is not with the

accounts department, which has the responsibility to take a rational stance, but with the executives who suddenly have to get used to travelling in a lower class,” says Parker. Therefore, when these policies are implemented, buy-in from top management is absolutely vital, she says. “Even then, there will always be those who try to bend the rules to their will.”

Clearly outline exceptions

Parker argues that while a managed travel programme should always have a travel policy that is measured and updated regularly; policies require a certain amount of flexibility in the case of certain exceptions – such as an employee that needs to step directly into a meeting off a long flight and needs to be well rested.

“However, whenever exceptions are made, others might see the

opportunity for abuse,” she explains. It is for this reason that all reasonable causes for exceptions need to be outlined clearly in the policy document. “The decision on exceptions should rest with one senior official,” adds Parker.

“This policy should also extend to the other aspects of travel, as many regular travellers have become used to the products and services that were previously available to them,” says Parker. She argues that while some of these are luxuries, others are necessities, therefore the policy around them needs to be clear. “As is the case with the choice of flight class, there may be different provisions for different levels in the organisation, so the policy should look at areas such as airport transfers (including chauffeur services); in-flight entertainment, in-flight data, connectivity, and telephony; flat-lying bed, lounge access, private lounge access and flexibility,” she says. ■

“When faced with the choice between flying in a lower class or booking less travel trips, most companies opt for the former.”

Here time doesn't pass. It flies.



Ferrari World Abu Dhabi



On the fastest rollercoaster on earth,
the only thing quicker is your pulse.
Here, imagination meets adrenaline.
And exhilaration is pushed to its very limits.
Every twist is electric. Every turn designed to thrill.
Arrive with your head racing. And heart pounding.
Leave with all your senses rediscovered.
Abu Dhabi. Travellers welcome.

Call us on 011 463 1645 for any information on Abu Dhabi.
Discover more: visitabudhabi.ae



KEEP YOUR PERSONAL SPACE PERSONAL.

Enjoy more privacy and uninterrupted sleep with direct aisle access for all 180° flat-bed seats in Delta One.™

For more information, please contact your favourite travel agent or Delta on (011) 408 8200.

TB1951 8D



KEEP CLIMBING



DELTA



LCC competition drives down fares

Low-cost carriers have driven down the cost of airfares but are they low enough to attract the corporate market? **Darise Foster** investigates.

EARLIER this year, Travelstart released results of a study indicating that new entrants to the domestic aviation market, FlySafair and Skywise, had driven down the cost of air tickets on the routes they operate. According to the study, there was also a significant increase in the number of people flying domestically since these airlines took off in October 2014 and March 2015 respectively.

"We have found the demand for air travel has definitely increased and this is largely because it is much cheaper to fly now," says Travelstart head of communications, **Russell Jarvis**. On the Johannesburg-Durban route, for instance, capacity has increased by 49% between January and June 2014, and January and June 2015.

This also follows the 2012/13 financial year that saw South African Airways' subsidiary Mango Airlines achieve the highest turnover and bottom-line profitability result in its history. Meanwhile, Comair's kulula.com currently operates more than 400 flights a week across 14 domestic destinations.

More corporates flying low cost

The corporate market is no exception to this trend. **Kim Parker**, Wings Travel Management head of business development – corporate: Sub-Saharan Africa, says the TMC has seen a definite increase in the number of corporates choosing low-cost carriers, specifically for domestic travel. "The number-one reason for this is the cost-saving factor of domestic low-fare airlines," she says. "The competitive airfares are allowing

corporates to save on their direct costs within their travel programme at the point of sale."

FlySafair and Skywise fares start at R499 one way between Johannesburg and Cape Town, while the average domestic fare on a kulula.com or Mango flight could easily cost almost half of that of their parent airlines. While flying low cost comes with certain restrictions – such as penalties with regard to date and name changes, infrequent flight schedules with regard to frequency and the limited routes within the low-cost carrier network – both Parker and Jarvis believe that the cost-saving factor outweighs these challenges. "Some clients who are not as cost conscious will

not use low-cost carriers for this reason, however in our experience at Wings, flying on a low-cost carrier results in significant savings and, as

such, corporates will deal with the penalties for changes as they occur," says Parker.

Elmar Conradie, ceo of FlySafair, believes route network and frequency make all the difference. "Until now, I think corporates have been cautious towards us, however since we announced the inclusion of East London and Durban into our network, there has been a change in attitude because our network is now complete," he says. "In addition, we will have six daily flights to Cape Town from October, so corporates can fly with us, knowing they can take another flight an hour later."

Jarvis, meanwhile, believes that these airlines are not only faced with the task of convincing the company to use their services, but they need to take the business traveller into account as well. "The corporate itself benefits from the saving of

airfares in the travel programme. The complication comes in the form of the business traveller who needs to become accustomed to this form of air travel – which is likely not what they would have been used to in the past."

As Jarvis notes, companies regularly enter into corporate agreements with certain airlines, and regular business travellers also belong to loyalty programmes with certain airlines. They will therefore be less likely to switch over to another airline – much less one that has yet to prove its sustainability.

Reputation is key

Jarvis points out that while most business travellers are price conscious, the low-cost model is still a fairly new concept for South Africans.

Shaun Pozyn, head of marketing for kulula.com echoes this sentiment, arguing that the South African aviation industry does not have a good record when it comes to the longer term sustainability of carriers, and it would therefore be expected for corporates to want these low-fare airlines to prove their staying power before shifting their loyalty from the legacy carriers. "Since 1991, there have been nine airlines that started operating flights within South Africa and have since failed, resulting in many stranded customers who ended up losing their money," he explains. "The industry also suffers huge reputation damage."

However, this has not stopped low-cost carriers from targeting corporates. Conradie told Travel Buyer his airline would introduce a business product that would cater specifically for the corporate market. "I do not want to call it a flexi-ticket because everyone calls their tickets flexi-tickets when in reality they do exactly what a



Elmar Conradie, ceo, FlySafair

normal ticket does," he says. "So let's call it a business product that we would like to launch before the end of the year specifically for the corporates, who are an entirely different class altogether and need to be considered in isolation." Skywise co-chairperson, **J. Malik**, added that his airline had introduced a free shuttle service to and from the airport on its Wise Fare in order to attract more corporates.

A welcome disruption

Although the industry has seen an increase in competition with the entrance of new low-cost carriers, stakeholders believe this will benefit travellers in the long run. "Low-cost carriers are making their products more transparent by offering a menu of products and services that provides corporates with the ability to purchase the specific items that are important to them," Pozyn explains. "Consequently, there has been a shift towards corporates travelling more and more on low-cost carriers."

"There is most definitely a space for low-cost carriers in the corporate market because there is a real benefit to the client with regard to cost savings and transparency," Parker agrees.

Regional travellers still weary

WITH Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia all becoming hotspots for business travel, corporates are increasingly investigating means to save costs on medium-haul travel. However, while they might continue to warm to the idea of flying on low-cost airlines for domestic travel, corporates are still sceptical about the low-cost offering when it comes to regional travel.

There are an increasing number of low-cost offerings available for medium-haul travel. Mango currently flies to Zanzibar, while kulula flies to Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya and Mauritius. Skywise has also revealed that it will launch regional operations before the end of the year. But there is also Zimbabwe's flyafrica.com and Tanzania's fastjet, which make it possible to fly low cost into Africa.

While these airlines have made it possible for travellers to fly at lower fares to more destinations on the continent, **Kim Parker**, Wings Travel Management head of business development – corporate: Sub-Saharan Africa, says flying into Africa requires closer scrutiny. "The travel manager would need to be assured that the standard safety

and security regulations of the aircraft are up to scratch and the additional regulations for air travel into Africa are 100% accurate – such as landing rights etc," she said.

Fastjet chief commercial officer, **Richard Bodin**, points out that the reputation of the African aviation industry supersedes its carrier. "South Africa is very fortunate to have the most developed aviation industry on the continent, but I think there are still real challenges from a corporate travel perspective with regard to reliability, connectivity and, of course, safety. Africa is responsible for 3% of the world's aviation but 11% of the world's safety-related incidents – suggesting that standards across Africa are by no means uniform."

Flyafrica head of fleet management, **Michael Adams**, says regulatory issues are among the strongest challenges faced when operating low-cost air travel in Africa, presenting a barrier to greater low-cost options in the market. "Regulatory issues, high passenger taxes and high airport charges are definitely challenging but governments are beginning to understand the macro-economic benefit of increased passenger numbers and I'm sure this will eventually alleviate the situation."

Mango launches new route

MANGO will launch a new route between Lanseria and Durban on October 15 which will be operated twice-daily.

An additional early morning flight to its Cape Town service will also be added, bringing the total number of flights between Lanseria and Cape Town to four.

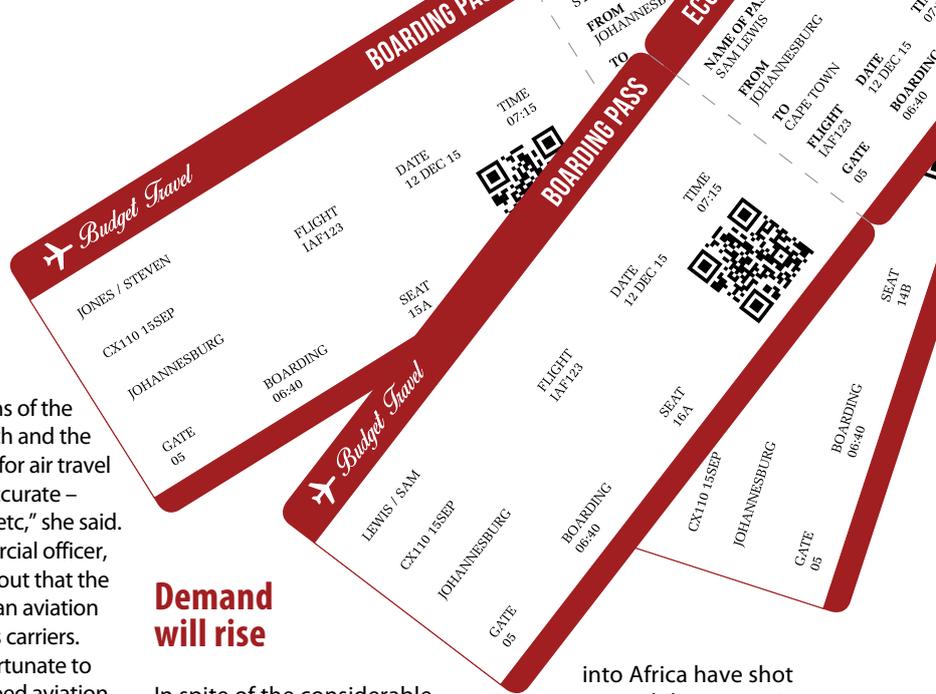
Flights are on sale across all distribution channels for both routes, with a launch fare of R379 between Lanseria and Durban available for limited seats until September 14. This fare is valid for travel between October 15 and November 30.

The twice-daily service to

Durban out of Lanseria will depart at 08h55 and 18h20, while flights to Lanseria will depart Durban at 07h50 and 16h30 respectively.

The new flight to Cape Town from Lanseria will depart at 06h10.

The carrier also revealed plans to add additional aircraft to its schedule later this year with more growth and fleet additions expected during the next two years. Our average load factors have shown that there remains opportunity for business development, in particular our expansions out of Lanseria," says Mango spokesperson **Hein Kaiser**.



Demand will rise

In spite of the considerable challenges, Adams believes price will continue to drive demand. "For example, traders who require maximum checked baggage allowance in only one direction will always stimulate demand for air travel on the African continent," he says.

Bodin agrees, saying that the average cost of business-class travel into Africa will lead to the increase of low-cost air travel within the corporate market. "Business-class prices

into Africa have shot up, so while companies would previously only opt for LCCs for short-haul trips, the envelope has now been pushed further and medium-haul trips are also being considered." He argues, however, that this will not necessarily mean a lesser quality experience for the traveller. "Customers are increasingly getting a better deal in economy class with better quality seats, improved leg-room and better ergonomics," he maintains.

TB1990SD

A GUIDE TO EUROPE BY RAIL

For travellers unaccustomed to train travel, navigating Europe's various stations with their individual differences can be a daunting task. With the assistance of **Terri Wright**, manager of World Travel, **Michelle Colman** puts together a guideline.

EUROPE'S major train stations link destinations just about anywhere on the continent. They are generally located in the heart of cities, their networks offer connections from the busiest of airports to rural villages, and they are points at which all public transportation converges – buses, taxis and underground networks.

Coming from a country with a comparatively confined train travel culture, South Africans tend to under-appreciate intercity train travel and, with large distances to cover, it doesn't feature in local corporate travel. But in Europe, comprehensive networks, high schedule frequencies, speed, reliability and punctuality, make trains a worthwhile option.

Johannesburg-based World Travel has long been synonymous with the marketing of European rail travel. Manager, **Terri Wright**, is a mine of information, and believes that, for journeys of up to four hours, rail is the way to go. She points out that station check-ins are also easier to negotiate than airports – in most cases travellers need only arrive 10-30 minutes ahead of departure.

"Rail travel also assists with many companies' efforts to reduce their carbon footprint and improve sustainable travel," she remarks.

Amsterdam Schiphol Airport (17km southwest of Amsterdam)

The Schiphol station, directly beneath the airport under Schiphol Plaza, offers connections to Amsterdam Centraal Station every 10 minutes, with an average journey time of 15-20 minutes. The station offers the use of business-class lounges.

Popular connections:

From Schiphol, high-speed services travel across The Netherlands and through Europe, connecting with the Thalys for France and Belgium, or ICE International for Germany.

Amsterdam Centraal to Paris: Duration – 3h18

with up to 11 daily return departures

Paris to Brussels: Duration – 1h22 with up to 24 daily return departures

Amsterdam to Brussels: Duration – 1h48 with up to 12 daily return departures

Thalys need to know:

Thalys' business class, branded Comfort 1, offers large, comfortable seats with electric sockets to recharge electronic devices, and free WiFi. Free international newspapers in various languages are available and on journeys longer than 50 minutes, a full or a light meal is served. Passengers can make use of VIP lounges at Cologne, Amsterdam, Schiphol and Rotterdam.

Trains also feature Le Salon – a semi-private meeting space for groups of four – and on some services taxis can be reserved on board for onward transport on arrival. E-tickets bearing a clearly marked barcode can be printed out by passengers.

Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport (23km north of Paris)

SNCF French Rail operates direct TGV high-speed trains to and from Charles de Gaulle Airport and major French cities such as Strasbourg, Aix-en-Provence, Avignon, Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Marseille and Montpellier, with average journey times of under four hours. The TGV also provides regular services to European capital cities.

Charles de Gaulle TGV station is located underneath Terminal 2. Passengers arriving at Terminals 1 or 3 cannot access the station by walking and need to take the CDGVAL shuttle.

The RER B line is a local train that travels to Gare du Nord in Paris in 30-60 minutes. The Eurostar departs from Gare du Nord to London, with a journey time of 2h15.

Popular connections:

Paris to Stuttgart: Duration – 3h40

Paris to Luxembourg: Duration – 2h05

Paris to Avignon: Duration – 2h40

Paris to Strasbourg: Duration – 2h20

TGV need to know:

TGV high-speed trains connect France's major cities at speeds of up to 300 km/h. Both first- and second-class coaches afford comfort for work, rest and relaxation. TGV offers non-smoking trains; large, comfortable seats with individual reading lights and power sockets and spacious luggage storage areas. On some services taxi reservations can be made on board.

London Heathrow Airport (22km west of London)

Public transport operator, National Express, operates high-speed, commuter and regional train services from Heathrow to more than 500 destinations throughout England.

The Piccadilly Underground line travels to St Pancras Station in London for connections to European cities such as Brussels, Paris and Lille using the Eurostar. The high-speed Heathrow Express trains stop at certain terminals at Heathrow Central and travel into London's Paddington Station in 15-20 minutes, every 15 minutes.

Eurostar need to know:

The Eurostar operates from St Pancras Station. This is the only fast train in Europe that requires a check-in time of 30 minutes (most others require just 10 minutes).

It crosses to France in the Channel Tunnel at speeds of up to 300km. The journey from London to Paris takes 2h15, reaching Brussels 1h51 minutes later. The Eurostar also travels to Euro Disney five times a week in under three hours.

There are three classes of travel – business premier class, standard premier and standard class for those on a budget. Travellers in the first two classes can make use of two 'quiet' coaches in which to work and read.

► *Article continues on p24*



**Why not charter The Blue Train as a group
to a major calendar event next time?**

ASK US HOW...



THE BLUE TRAIN

A WINDOW TO THE SOUL OF SOUTH AFRICA

TO CHARTER THE BLUE TRAIN FOR A SPECIAL INCENTIVE GETAWAY, PLEASE CONTACT US.

PTA t +27 (0)12 334 8459 f +27 (0)12 334 8464/8081 • CPT t +27 (0)21 449 3338 f +27 (0)21 449 333
info@bluetrain.co.za • www.bluetrain.co.za

► Article continues from p22

Business premier offers a dedicated, fast lane check-in, which closes 10 minutes before departure, as well as the use of business premier lounges. On board, carriages are air-conditioned and feature reclining seats with generous leg-room, tables and power sockets. 'At seat' catering includes a choice of complimentary reading material and wheelchair space.

Frankfurt Airport (12km southwest of Frankfurt)

Frankfurt Airport train station offers connections to any destination on Germany's Deutsche Bahn network. The station is next to Terminal 1 and has both a regional train station (platforms 1-3, from where S-Bahn services depart) and a long-distance train station (platforms 4-7, mostly for ICE high-speed services). The connection between terminals 1 and 2 is provided by Skyline, an automatic train.

Frankfurt's Hauptbahnhof (Central Station) is reachable in 10 to 12 minutes by S-Bahn commuter trains, located beneath Terminal 1.

How to choose the right pass

MOST business travellers would find a point-to-point ticket more convenient than passes when travelling on a tight schedule," says **Terri Wright**, "however passes may be a good solution when the traveller has greater flexibility and greater distances to be covered."

- The Eurail Global Pass offers unlimited rail travel in 24 European countries on a wide network of high-speed and local trains. Depending on the itinerary, the passenger can select either a consecutive or flexi pass. The package includes over 50 bonus items, from free ferry crossings to hotel discounts.
- The Eurail Regional Pass combines two bordering countries. It is suited to passengers travelling within a specific region.
- The Swiss Travel System covers all Swiss public transport services available to overseas visitors, including trains, Postbuses, boats, urban buses and trams. A selection of all-in-one passes is available through World Travel, giving travellers access for periods of two days to one month. Extra benefits include discounts such as 50% on mountain-top excursions, free admission to certain museums and access to scenic trains (excluding seat reservations).

Seat reservations essential!

FOR Europe's major business cities such as Milan, Frankfurt, Paris and London, high-speed trains are much in demand.

These include the Eurostar (London-Paris/Brussels); Thalys (France-Belgium-Netherlands/Germany); TGV Lyria (Paris-Basel, Zurich, Bern, and Geneva), ICE Germany, Trenitalia and Renfe Spain.

Terri Wright cautions that the increasing popularity of these services warrants pre-booking, especially during the high season. "In

July and August, trains are often sold out very quickly, therefore it is highly recommended that a seat reservation for open tickets or passes is purchased well in advance, prior to departing South Africa," she says.

"High-speed premier train fares include the seat reservation in the cost of the ticket. Pre-booking your rail ticket secures the most favourable departure time, avoids tedious queuing at the station and, in some cases, the language barrier."



PHOTO: SHANNON VAN ZYL

Charter the Blue Train!

The Blue Train offers corporates the opportunity to tailor-make their own Blue Train route. The train can be chartered for strategic meetings, product launches, VIP cocktail parties, Christmas lunches, dinners

and even weddings. The Conference Car, which accommodates up to 22 delegates, is fully equipped with audio-visual and technical equipment for a high level business meeting or a small conference.

Top tips for a smooth ride

INGE Dobihal, owner of Austria Connection, gives some tips for business travellers using trains in Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland.

- Although most cities usually have one main station, some do have two and maybe even more. Some services might depart and arrive at different stations. "My advice is to always make sure from which station the train will depart or arrive," cautions Dobihal.
- On most train routes, tickets can be booked with or without seat reservation. Bookings without a seat reservation have the advantage of flexibility, as one can use the ticket on any train and it is usually valid for up to four days. Come high season, a seat reservation

for a specific departure date and time is recommended to avoid not being able to locate a seat and luggage space even though you have been able to board the train. "There are, however, certain lines where seat reservation is compulsory and these are not necessarily always fast trains," says Dobihal.

- Whether to purchase a pass or normal ticket depends on how many places travellers want to visit. On simple itineraries, point-to-point fares may prove cheaper.
- Business travellers sometimes find themselves travelling to unfamiliar destinations completely off tourist routes and not featured on rail booking systems. This may involve consulting a travel expert on the country for advice.

6 great rail adventures

FOR business travellers wanting to spend some leisure time exploring, train travel is a convenient way to see a great deal. *Travel Buyer* rounds up some enticing options.

Marvel at the Swiss mountains

Contrasts of Switzerland is an eight-day cruise and rail combination trip offered by Trafalgar that showcases the mountain scenery, lakes, resorts and business hubs of the Swiss Rail System on board the Glacier Express, the Golden Pass train and a high-speed train. The package is priced from R33 950 per person twin share including accommodation with buffet breakfast daily, three dinners and all train transport. It includes Insider Experiences such as authentic accommodation at Hotel Baren in St Moritz. Travel dates: August 9-16; 16-23; 23-30.

Wander the wilderness in Canada

Contrasts of Canada is another Trafalgar package offering a 15-day exploration on board VIA Rail's The Canadian. The journey extends from Vancouver on the west coast to Whistler, Banff, Lake Louise, Stanley Park and right across the five provinces all the way to Toronto on the east coast. Insider Experiences such as a Be My Guest

lunch at a family-owned winery and a visit to the location of the 2010 Winter Olympics with a Local Specialist are lined up for Trafalgar's guests. Priced from R66 400 per person twin share, this includes 14 nights' accommodation with full breakfast daily, four lunches, six dinners and all transport as per the above. Sightseeing highlights include city tours of Vancouver, Victoria, Whistler and Banff, visits to the ski resort of Sun Peaks, Views of Lake Louise, Stanley Park, Glacier, Yoho and Mount Revelstoke National Parks, a scenic drive along the Sea-to-Sky Highway and the iconic train journey across the countryside of Canada into the cosmopolitan city of Toronto. Book and pay by November 27 to save up to 10% off with Trafalgar's Early Payment Discount. Travel dates: January 26-February 4; February 10-25; March 1-10; March 15-24; March 29-April 7; plus departures in May, June, July, August, September, October, November and December.

Follow in the footsteps of the Incas

'Footsteps of the Incas' is a ten-day Country Explorer by Trafalgar by rail and coach that showcases Peru. Guests visit Ollantaytambo before heading toward Machu Picchu on board the Vistadome train. Priced from

R50 950 per person twin share this includes nine nights' accommodation with breakfast daily, four lunches and five dinners plus all transport, including the rail trip and internal flights. Book and pay by November 27 to save up to 10% off with Trafalgar's Early Payment Discount. Departures take place throughout the year.

Experience the magic of the East

Travel vision is offering the new G-adventures Trans-Siberian tour connecting Beijing with St Petersburg via Mongolia. In the Arctic Circle, passengers can witness the northern lights from Oslo to Kiruna. One package in particular offers the avid rail traveller a luxury option touring some of India's highlights.

Indian adventures

The Royal Rajasthan on Wheels is an eight-day adventure that explores Indian destinations including Delhi; Jodhpur; Udaipur; Chittorgarh; Sawai Madhopur; Jaipur; Khajuraho; Varanasi; Agra and Delhi. The special starts from R51 180 per person sharing departing on November 29 (prices for other Sunday departures, on request). The package includes on-board accommodation, all meals, sightseeing, entrance fees and taxes. ■

RAIL EUROPE

For stress-free business travel in Europe

TRAVEL BY TRAIN!

Free WiFi inside

► Time for action, make a change! Reduce your carbon footprint and travel across Europe by train.

Tel: +27 (0) 11 628 2319
 rail@worldtravel.co.za
 www.raileurope.co.za





Howard Stephens, ex-cpo,
Nedbank



Melissa Storey, executive
head, First Car Rental



Lance Smith, sales executive,
Avis Budget

E-tolls - an administrative headache

The government's inability to wholly enforce legislation around e-tolls has left corporates without a clear framework on how to handle the expense within the business travel space. **Darise Foster** investigates.

SINCE its introduction in December 2013, Sanral's electronic-tolling system has been fraught with controversy. According to the Opposition to Urban Tolling Alliance, the system saw Sanral spend R17bn on road construction, then a further R2,7bn on e-toll-related infrastructure. R20,6bn later, at a cost equating to almost R100m per kilometre, the project has seen less than 25% of road-users comply with the Government Gazetted legislation.

It appears this nonchalant attitude towards compliance has spilled over into corporate travel. *Travel Buyer* investigated the effects of e-tolls on business travel in Gauteng and discovered that there is little consistency among companies regarding their reimbursement of travellers who pass through e-toll gantries in their own vehicles or company cars while on business.

However, the car-rental industry, which plays a vital role in business travel visiting Gauteng from other provinces, is arguably among the industries worst affected by the e-tolling system because of its adherence to structured e-toll policies.

No standard procedure

While all companies interviewed by *Travel Buyer* confirmed that they compensate staff who pass through e-toll gantries while on business, none of them agreed on an appropriate repayment method, nor do any of them insist their travellers register for e-tags.

Howard Stephens, ex-chief procurement officer at Nedbank told *Travel Buyer* that while his former company respected each employee's personal preference on whether to register for the e-tag, it would only reimburse travellers who produced an e-toll statement. "Moreover, we only reimburse

at the registered e-tag rate as published in the Government Gazette rates," he adds.

Meanwhile, another source said his company did not require travellers to register for the e-tag or produce e-toll statements in order to be reimbursed. "Travellers simply submit expense claims, which the HR department calculates based on the amount of tolls passed while on business, then multiplied by the standard tariff. This amount is then paid into their bank account and they pay the e-toll themselves when the statement arrives," they said.

"It is a very tricky situation as we can only reimburse for actual expenditure," says Stephens. "We cannot demand that staff pay tolls but we will not reimburse if they cannot prove that they used the toll road."

Additional complications for car rental

Car-rental companies have also had to endure administrative headaches to ensure that their cars are e-toll-ready for business travellers. "The car-rental industry in Gauteng has most certainly felt the impact of e-tolls," First Car Rental executive head of strategy, development and marketing, **Melissa Storey**, told *Travel Buyer*. "We have had to buy equipment, develop software and provide support staff to facilitate the e-tag and transaction query process," she said.

Europcar says on its website: "It is the law to pay for e-tolls and we as a company comply with all applicable legislation." It added that even those who did not pay for e-tolls in their personal capacity would have to pay the charge. "When renting our vehicle, you agree to Europcar's terms and conditions of rental, which include the payment of



Conferencing unaffected

E-TOLLS have not had a significant effect on conferencing in Gauteng. This is according to **Barba Gaoganediwe**, senior manager of destination and corporate communications at the Gauteng Tourism Authority, who argues that the payment of e-tolls would not be a reason for conference organisers to dismiss Gauteng as a destination for their event, because the cost of the toll is not considered in isolation from the total transport budget. "We have not had clients expressing concerns in this regard primarily because e-tolls are not budgeted for in isolation. Perhaps for corporates it is more a question of convenience than cost. Ultimately, Gauteng will always be attractive for business travel because it prides itself on its corporate offering," he explains.

Howard Stephens agrees, arguing that the cost of business travel in Gauteng is not excessive. "E-tolls are a part of doing business and the cost is not enough to drive people away from Gauteng. However, it is encouraged for regular business travellers in Gauteng to get an e-tag."

Melissa Storey believes that customers have had no choice but to become used to the e-tolling system, "but it is still a major concern," she adds. **Lance Smith** confirms that, although the car-rental industry has been severely burdened by e-tolls, there has been no effect on the volume of business conducted in Gauteng as a result. Avis Budget's **Rainer Gottschick** adds: "Initially, when e-tolls launched, Avis Budget received a significant amount of queries, however, these queries have decreased significantly over time as the general public have begun to better understand how e-tolls work." ■

tolls. Therefore, refusal to pay the billed toll charges will result in breach of contract and we will have to take legal action against you for the recovery thereof."

Avis Budget sales executive, **Lance Smith**, echoes Storey's sentiments: "There has been a significant administrative burden placed on the car-rental companies, who have had to change billing systems, build inventory systems to manage the e-tags and change operational procedures to ensure every car is tagged when it comes on to the fleet, then check that the tag is still in the car and working while the car is on the rental fleet and then de-tagged when the car is de-fleeted and sold."

Car-rental vehicles are fitted with an e-tag that records each gantry passed through by car-rental customers. The total value of e-tolls accumulated by the vehicle in question will then be included in the final rental invoice at the standard e-tariff rate. According to Storey, while the billing procedure remains exactly the same as was the case before the e-tolls were introduced, complications arise because the industry has to pay Sanral within seven days, yet most corporate clients only pay after 30 days.

Moreover, Europcar notes that there is now a delay in the deposit refund as a result of e-tolling. "Due to delays in receipt of data from Sanral, the refund will be delayed by a further 24 hours. Rental deposits have also been adjusted with an increase of R450 to cater for e-toll use," the company says.

Following the launch of a new e-toll fees dispensation on July 2, car-rental companies have now started billing customers at the actual new e-toll rate as published by Sanral. Avis Budget told *Travel Buyer* that it would include an additional R10 rental admin fee to recover costs.

Meanwhile Uber, which is frequently used by

business travellers, remains fairly relaxed when it comes to its e-toll policy. **Alon Litz**, gm of Uber Sub-Saharan Africa told *Travel Buyer* that it was not even a prerequisite for his drivers to register for the e-tag. "However if they do pass through the gantries, we will reimburse them," he said. "There is no additional cost for the traveller and there is no effect on the fares as a result of e-tolls."

New dispensation to provide clarity

In May, Deputy President, **Cyril Ramaphosa**, announced government's latest attempt to recover the costs of e-tolls. As of July 2, road users will not be able to obtain their renewed licence discs until they have settled all outstanding toll fees. "They will be able to renew their licences but the disc itself will be withheld until such time as all outstanding toll debt has been collected," Sanral explains on its website.

Furthermore, a uniform single tariff for all users of the Gauteng e-roads will come into effect. This single tariff will ease the reimbursement process plaguing corporate travel in regard to e-tolls, Stephens argues, noting that disagreements often arise between the corporate and the traveller "because the rate that the traveller will be charged if he or she does not have an e-tag will differ from the rate charged for those who have an e-tag installed on their cars," he says. "So additional personal liability can result from the difference between the rate which the non-e-tag user is charged versus the rate of e-tag reimbursement from those companies which only reimburse at the registered e-tag," he says. "But things will change with the new legislation as there will only be one rate."

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.

1. Mozambique

Mozambique GSA. Four nights at Flamingo Bay from R10 480pp sharing. Offer includes flights ex-Johannesburg to Inhambane, all airport taxes, return airport-hotel transfers, accommodation in a Water chalet with breakfast and dinner daily. Honeymooners receive additional value-adds. Offer valid for travel until September 30.

2. Germany

World Stays & Events. Four nights at the Park Inn Radisson Berlin Alexander Platz Hotel from R2 480pp. Rate includes accommodation in a standard double room and breakfast. Special is valid until December 15.

3. Vietnam

Kenya Airways. Fly to Hanoi on Kenya Airways from R7 210. Price includes taxes. Special is valid for travel until December 31.

4. Durban

MSC Cruises. Spend two nights on a cruise to nowhere from R3 500. Offer includes accommodation with twice-daily service, all meals, entertainment and kids' and teens' clubs. Price is based on two people sharing an inside cabin on the MSC Sinfonia. Kids cruise free. Mandatory cost of R560 excluded. Travel dates are December 5-7.

5. Dubai

Cruisemasters. Book a seven-night round-trip cruise in Dubai from US\$274 (R3 496) pp sharing. Offer includes



accommodation on board the Costa Fortuna, all meals and entertainment. Excludes port charges and taxes. Offer is valid for departures on December 8, 15, 22 or January 29.

6. Czech Republic, Austria and Hungary

Dream Kist Tours. Visit Prague, Vienna and Budapest from R7 939pp. Rates include three nights at the residence Leon D'Oro in Prague, three nights at Papageno in Vienna, four nights in Agape Apart Hotel in Budapest, breakfast, return airport-hotel transfers and a hop-on, hop-off bus ticket in each city. Special is valid for travel from December 21-31.

7. Cuba

Wandering Free. Eight-day 'Taste of Cuba' package from R14 000pp. Offer includes four nights' accommodation in hotels, three nights' accommodation in casas, all breakfasts, two lunches, two dinners, local transport, tour activities and a tour leader. Special is valid for selected departures until December 30.

8. Zambia

Air Holidays. Spend three nights at the Zambezi Sun in Livingstone from R8 160pp sharing. Package includes return flights from Johannesburg, return airport-hotel transfers, daily breakfast and dinner and unlimited access to the Falls. Offer excludes taxes of

9. England

SA Rugby Travel. Two-match Rugby World Cup packages are available from R18 375pp. Rate includes return economy tickets from Johannesburg, match tickets, official SA Rugby and Rugby World Cup memorabilia, group travel insurance and ground logistics support. Package is based on the SA vs Scotland and SA vs USA games. Special is valid for travel between October 1 and October 8.

approximately R2 400. Special is valid for sales until August 31 and travel until November 30.

10. Seychelles

Beachcomber Tours. Early-bird packages are from R24 990pp sharing. Offer includes return flights from Johannesburg, return airport-hotel transfers, five nights' accommodation in a Garden Villa, breakfast and dinner daily and selected land and water sports. Offer excludes airport taxes of approximately R3 100. A 30-day advance purchase applies. Offer is valid for travel until October 31. ■

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

Data roaming – set your travellers free



Diners Club has recently partnered with data roaming solutions provider, execMobile, to offer its clients a convenient solution to the challenges posed by mobile roaming.

MOBILE connectivity remains a significant challenge in the business travel space. Travellers are quick to turn off their mobile data to avoid bill shock but this leaves them disconnected, unproductive and inconvenienced.

Research shows that travel buyers could stand to benefit significantly from an effective mobile travel solution. In a survey recently conducted by Diners Club in conjunction with ABTA into the major cost pressures affecting corporate South Africa, it emerged that data roaming remains a big-ticket item.

In spite of this, just 40% of respondents indicated that their company had a mobile policy in place that governs roaming abroad. Interestingly, 70% of those surveyed said the traveller covered the cost of roaming and a significant 17% said they had personally experienced bill shock of over R10 000.

Based on this research, Diners sought out a partner to help address the mobile roaming challenges faced by its clients and was impressed by the simplicity of execMobile's proposition. Around 200 companies already make use of PocketWifi, including technology specialists like Dimension Data.

Kevin Lomax, head: commercial card, Diners Club and Standard Bank SA, and founder of execMobile, **Craig Lowe** provide further insight into how PocketWifi can save your company money, increase productivity and save travellers the frustration of being left disconnected.

Q: What are the primary challenges?

CL: Because of the cost of data roaming, around 38% of business travellers turn data off and are driven to use Wi-Fi instead. Not only are public Wi-Fi connections less secure but this also means travellers are hugely inconvenienced by having to wait until they can access a Wi-Fi hotspot before they are connected again – even more problematic because today's travellers are heavily reliant on apps for everything, from Google maps to Uber and Facebook. With mobile PocketWifi, the corporate traveller can connect as soon as he or she lands in a foreign country and start being productive in the taxi from the airport.

Q: How does PocketWifi address these challenges?

CL: Essentially, the traveller can now connect from anywhere where a mobile signal is available, meaning they can also work from anywhere. The connection is as secure as it gets and users are charged just 66c per MB, which is a small cost to pay to avoid the consequences of lost data. The device can be used in 149 countries, including 28 countries in the Middle East and Africa, as well as major destinations in Europe, the US and China.

Q: How does the device work?

CL: PocketWifi is basically a mobile router with an on/off button. It's as simple as that. Travellers don't need to know how to reconfigure anything on their device.

Q: How does PocketWifi compare with other data roaming solutions?

CL: Travellers are often advised to buy and input a new SIM card at their destination but this presents complications because they then have to reconfigure all their apps or they might miss important bank and credit card SMS communications. What's more, a major bonus of PocketWifi is that it enables real-time reporting – we can see everything that happens in relation to the device, including when something goes wrong and needs to be fixed. At the end of the month, we also present companies with a risk report.

Q: What are some of the other advantages of the device, and why is Diners Club involved?

KL: At Diners Club, we provide our customers far more than just a secure

payment solution. We recognise that corporate travellers want additional services such as our concierge service, VIP access at airports and lounge access. In order to offer them reliable, cost-effective and secure comms while travelling, we are offering our Diners Club customers up to two devices per company. While the devices are not expensive, at just R1 999, businesses can share the device amongst travellers, making it a low initial investment. For those travelling in groups, up to 10 people can connect to the router at a time using many different devices, including smartphones, tablets and laptops.

Q: How does uninterrupted connectivity pave the way for a host of other corporate travel benefits?

KL: A major trend we are seeing in the corporate space is real-time data and expense management, which uninterrupted connectivity enables. For example, travellers could eat in a restaurant, take a picture of their bill and immediately upload it to Diners Club Advantage Plus. This will save them from having to reconcile an entire trip's worth of expenses when they return. Virtual card and mobile wallet solutions, such as MasterPass are increasingly important, making it vital for travellers to stay connected in order to transact.

Q: How can interested buyers access PocketWifi?

KL: Diners Club is offering its corporate customers up to two Pocket Wifi devices as part of their overall card payment solution in order to reduce your costs of data roaming. However, non-Diners clients interested in the proposition can contact Kevin Lomax (Kevin.Lomax@standardbank.co.za) or Craig Lowe (Craig.Lowe@execmobile.co.za) to find out more.



Call our Travel Helpline on 011 358 8610 or visit our website dinersclub.co.za
Email address: travelhelpline@dinersclub.co.za



Diners Club SA



@DinersClub_SA



Diners Club South Africa

He **can't** do his business



Next time you're in Gauteng on business, stay at Birchwood. Do your business with us and enjoy comfort, care and delicious cuisine. Our spacious rooms have comfortable beds with quality linen. There is FREE WiFi throughout the hotel, a modern business centre, and over 60 well appointed conference and meeting venues, hosting from 3 to 3000 people. The Cellar, Hotspot Bar & Lounge and The Grill at One Twenty are upmarket venues now available for your private use. Birchwood has all you need in one place, with powerful back-up power to ensure your business never stops!

At Birchwood you can sleep soundly and wake up fully charged, ready to do business!

Talk to us now!
011 897 0000
www.birchwoodhotel.co.za

www.facebook.com/birchwoodhotel

www.twitter.com/birchwood_hotel



BIRCHWOOD
HOTEL & OR TAMBO CONFERENCE CENTRE

Relax, *do* business!

Free WiFi

Business facilities

Restaurants

Comfortable rooms

Free airport transfers

Conference facilities

