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Budget

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Ruling on refunds raises ADM fears

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

AGENTS say they are vulnerable to ADMs after an amendment to a refunds resolution – not communicated to them – came into effect on April 1.

The altered ruling is available in the Passenger Tariff Coordinating Conferences Resolutions Manual under Resolution 024k. It states that, when issuing refunds, cancellation penalties and the residual value eligible for refund or for exchange towards the purchase of a new ticket,

must be calculated using the lata rate of exchange (IROE) for the currency in which the amount is denominated on the date of issue of the original ticket. Agents say previously they calculated values using the ROE available on the date the refund is issued.

An agent who had received the information from one of her Lufthansa reps took to Open Jaw with the news. “I posted it because I didn’t get any notifications on it and I was hoping someone would tell me that I missed the boat,” says **Tracy Teichmann**,

manager of Sure Adcocks Travel. Since it was an lata ruling it should apply across the board and not just to Lufthansa, she says. Tracy says she did a search in the lata handbook that came into effect in June, and the lata portal. She couldn’t find anything on the change to the resolution, she says.

Tracy says she was concerned because she’d done a group booking in May where passengers from an SA-based company were flying in from several destinations

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Austrian returns to SA

AUSTRIAN Airlines will return to South African skies with a seasonal service late next year.

From October 27, 2018, the airline will launch two weekly flights from Cape Town to Vienna.

Inge Dobiha, md of Austria Connection, says the introduction of direct flights to Vienna is very positive for the niche Austrian tourism market. “Austria is popular in the winter months because people enjoy skiing there and I am absolutely delighted at the opportunities these flights will bring for the outbound

tourism market.”

Although the Cape Town-Vienna route is aimed primarily at the inbound market, the reintroduction of the flights offers convenient connections for South Africans flying into Europe, says Lufthansa group gm for Southern Africa, Dr **André Schulz**. “Vienna’s airport is a good choice for travellers looking to make efficient connections into Europe, and on to a large selection of destinations around the world.”

Austrian Airlines last flew to Cape Town between

To page 2

Fastjet flies JNB-VFA again – and more

CANDICE MAY

FASTJET will reintroduce direct flights between Johannesburg and Victoria Falls on July 31. Ceo of fastjet, **Nico Bezuidenhout**, says the reintroduction of the route is one of the steps in the fulfilment of the airline’s stabilisation plan.

The carrier will also be bulking up its HRE-VFA route with daily and, at times, twice-daily frequencies. Its HRE-JNB route will be boosted with a fourth flight on peak-demand days. In addition to its existing fleet,

the airline will deploy two Embraer E145 aircraft on these and local Zimbabwean routes on July 31.

Another step in the stabilisation plan was the purchase of the airline’s brand rights from easyGroup, fastjet’s publicly listed company on the London Stock Exchange, which remains a shareholder of the airline. Nico says the purchase will allow the airline to build a tangible brand – “the African low-cost airline for everyone”.

He says the possibility of adding new routes is also

on the horizon. “We will potentially be moving further south and crossing the continent toward the western seaboard.”

Tickets for JNB-VFA are currently on sale. The schedule is as follows:

On Mondays and Thursdays, flight 8501 will depart VFA at 12h10 and arrive in JNB at 13h45. Flight 8502 will depart JNB at 14h10 to arrive in VFA at 15h50. On Sundays, flight 8501 will depart VFA at 13h35 and arrive in JNB at 15h10. Flight 8502 will

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Sean Bradley, gm of sales, fastjet looks forward to visiting Vic Falls on the new service. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

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India introduces biometric visa requirement

EFFECTIVE July 17, all travellers need to give their biometric data when applying for an Indian visa. Applicants must submit fingerprints and have a facial photograph taken with their application. Travellers applying at

VFS India visa applications centres must schedule an appointment so that VFS officials can digitally capture the data. Those who have applied for an e-visa will be required to submit their biometrics upon arrival. All biometric data remains

valid for 59 months, however the Indian diplomatic mission may request applicants to re-enrol data. **Zimkhita Mafanya**, spokesperson of VFS Global, says the new requirement is to improve security and bring application processes in line with global standards. ■

Ruling on refunds raises ADM fears

From page 1
and she had to cancel and rebook some tickets. At the time, she had issued refunds by using the exchange rate on the date she did the refund. "If there's a mistake in the refund amounts, we'll definitely see an ADM," she says. Another agent, who preferred to remain anonymous, says: "When something like this is changed, we aren't notified and poor agents have to pay the price." The agent says airlines are the ones who are part of lata and it is their responsibility to communicate such information. "But I think airlines don't want to be clear about how such rules should be applied, because issuing ADMs is a good way of making money." **Nicolene Van Blerk**, BSP Teamleader of Club Travel, says: "Agents should be made aware of new amendments or resolutions by lata and not the airlines as it is a ruling

imposed by them. Airlines say if you are unsure of what rule to apply, to check with them first, so the onus is on agents and has been so for years." She adds, however, that this ruling has apparently been in place for years. **"Airlines don't want to be clear about how such rules should be applied, because issuing ADMs is a good way of making money."** Delta Air Lines, Qantas Airways and Singapore Airlines say they are compliant and have been for some time. "Qantas has always applied resolution 024K for refunds and always uses ROE from the date of issue. This has been our policy for a number of years and we have therefore not communicated this to agents as this

information is available to them. Qantas raises an ADM to agents who do not apply the ROE from the date of ticket issue," says **Michi Messner**, regional manager Africa of Qantas. Ceo of Asata, **Otto de Vries**, says the resolution is not handled under the APJC/PAPGJC forum and therefore the association wasn't informed. When *TNW* asked lata about the ruling, it issued a statement saying the change came into effect on April 1 and that airlines were informed. "Member airlines agreed to clarify how the cancellation penalties are applied in the refund process. The changes are applied to the default process, and its usage is up to each airline in accordance with their commercial policy. Travel agents should contact airlines concerned for how they apply the rule," the statement reads. ■

Austrian returns to SA

From page 1
1997 and 1999. Industry players say the airline scrapped the route due to stiff competition. At the time, Alitalia and Sabena also flew CPT-VIE and all three airlines couldn't sustain flying there because of a price war, a source who prefers to remain anonymous told *TNW*. The source says the introduction of the flights is a good move for the Lufthansa group as the other airlines in the group don't offer the

same connectivity to Eastern Europe as Austrian Airlines. Some industry players have expressed speculation that the Lufthansa group may be launching these flights in efforts to possibly replace Lufthansa's seasonal CPT-MUC route. But André says there aren't any plans to halt the route. Business class, economy class and premium economy class will be available on this flight, as the new Boeing 777-200ER will be deployed on

the route. Tickets go on sale from October 27, 2017. Flight OS32 will depart Cape Town International Airport at 00h20 on Wednesdays and Sundays to arrive in Vienna International Airport at 10h50. Return flight OS31 will depart Vienna at 10h15 on Tuesdays and Saturdays to arrive in Cape Town at 22h40. The flight time is about 11 hours. At this stage, the airline has no plans to fly to Johannesburg. ■

Fastjet flies JNB-VFA

From page 1
depart JNB at 15h35 to arrive in VFA at 17h15. The JNB-VFA route was suspended in January. The decision was part of the same stabilisation

plan, which required a full overhaul of the business, says Nico. The plan was implemented when the business found itself in trouble in mid-2016. "Fastjet's capacity exceeded

demand in many of its markets and immediate contraction, fleet change-outs and a reimagining of the business were required to make it sustainable," he says. ■



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Johannesburg-Lomé flight pushed back, again

ETHIOPIAN Airlines' launch of direct flights between Johannesburg and Lomé, Togo, has been delayed again. The flights, operated via codeshare agreement with Togo airline ASKY, were first planned to launch on April 8 and were bookable for travel from May 17.

A source told TNW that some flights had operated but many were cancelled. Ethiopian Airlines regional manager for Southern Africa, **Abel Alemu**, has since confirmed that the flights have been suspended. "Due to operational reasons related to the peak season, we have made an adjustment on the Johannesburg-Lomé schedule and it will resume later this year," Abel told TNW. He could not provide an exact date when the flights would resume. "We will advise the travel date ahead of time on the recommencement of the route." ■

Flyafrika Zimbabwe postpones relaunch of services

FLYAFRICA Zimbabwe is targeting a late August relaunch of all its services. The airline had previously aimed to resume services by mid-June, but this has since been delayed. Chairman of Flyafrika Zimbabwe, **Cassidy Mugwagwa**, says the airline will relaunch all its routes, and will look at expanding and adding more routes later on. "It's been a hard slog. We're working hard to get everything done. We are going to relaunch Flyafrika and offer all the services and routes that passengers knew and loved," says Cassidy. He says the airline has received its renewed Foreign Operators Permit from the South African government, which will enable it to once again offer flights to Johannesburg. TNW previously reported

that the airline had stated its intention to introduce daily flights between Harare and Johannesburg, and thrice-weekly flights between Bulawayo and Johannesburg when it resumed operations. Flights to Gaborone and Lusaka are also in the pipeline. The airline has acquired two B737-700s, which will be deployed when the airline starts flying again. ■

Latam ups JNB-GRU frequencies

LATAM Airlines will add two flights to its Johannesburg-São Paulo route for summer. Currently, the airline operates flights between Johannesburg and São Paulo on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Monday and Saturday flights from Johannesburg will now be added. The flight schedule for the two new flights is as follows: From November 17 to February 16, 2018, flight JJ 8163 will depart OR Tambo International Airport at 11h25 on Mondays and Saturdays, to arrive in São Paulo – Guarulhos International Airport at 17h30 the next day. Return flight JJ 8162 will depart São Paulo on Fridays and Sundays at 18h20 to arrive in OR Tambo at 07h40 the next day. The schedule changes between February 18 and March 23, 2018, when flight JJ 8163 will depart OR Tambo at 12h25 to arrive in São Paulo at 17h30. Flight JJ 8162 will depart São Paulo at 18h20 and arrive in OR Tambo at 08h40 the next day. ■

To the point

The Namibia Tourism Board has announced increases in border crossing fees. The old prices were R254 for all vehicles and R154 for all trailers. The new fees are as follows:

- R177 for motor cycles, motor tricycles, motor quadru-cycles, caravans and light trailers;
- R277 for motor cars, single and double-cab vehicles, 2x4 and 4x4 vehicles and minibuses (fewer than 25 passengers);
- R579 for light goods vehicles and delivery vehicles (GVM < 3 500kg).

Travel agents should ensure that clients travelling to Namibia by road are aware of these new prices. For more information, agents can contact the Namibia Tourism Board.

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 **Budget**



Diners Club collaborates with GBTA SA to upskill the industry

Diners Club is doing its bit to promote education and training in the travel industry. The financial services provider recently hosted delegates of the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) Southern Africa's Advanced Principles of Business Travel Management course at its offices in Hyde Park.

The South African travel sector, like most industries in the country, constantly needs to recruit, develop and retain talent within the industry. Add to this the impact of constant changes in corporate travel, whether they are regulatory, company policy or personal preferences, and it becomes even more necessary for travel agents and travel buyers to receive ongoing and relevant training.

This was the message from Diners Club head of corporate cards, **Kevin Lomax**, who was speaking on the sidelines of industry association, GBTA SA's Advanced Principles of Business Travel Management course.

The training session, which took place over two days, was hosted at the Diners Club offices in Hyde Park in Johannesburg. The course is intended for travel buyers overseeing a managed business travel programme and focuses on the key competencies required of business travel professionals.

"Constant training helps travel professionals understand the changing landscapes that they – and their clients – operate in, and equips them to serve their clients better," Kevin said. "Many people have come into the travel industry without necessarily having a background in travel. These courses offer a means for them to



Pictured here at Diners Club head office in Johannesburg, where the GBTA SA course was hosted, are Diners Club managing director, Lesego Chauke-Motshwane, and head of corporate card, Kevin Lomax.

receive formalised training," he said. Even if someone had been in the travel industry for many years, the fact that the industry was constantly changing meant there was always room for

"This is why we try to do our bit as Diners Club to contribute to upskilling the travel industry,"

development, said Diners Club managing director, **Lesego Chauke-Motshwane**. "This is why we try to do our bit as Diners Club to contribute to upskilling the travel industry," she said.

"Associations and travel companies are welcome to get in touch with us to enquire about hosting their training sessions at our offices. We want to collaborate with associations and companies to upskill the

industry, while showing the travel industry who we are and illustrating why we are such a strong player in this sector," Lesego said.

Diners Club is a platinum sponsor of GBTA SA. The association, which is a non-profit industry body, offers various educational platforms to industry professionals, fuelling knowledge and advancement in the marketplace. **Howard Stephens**, chairperson of GBTA SA, said collaborating with sponsors was key to fulfilling this aim.

"We don't take training seriously enough in the travel industry. Professionals need to take the time to develop and learn from one another. Through collaboration, we as travel associations and companies can do this efficiently, to the benefit all parties concerned," said Howard.



GBTA SA chairperson, Howard Stephens directed the content of the course, which focused on travel programme administration, buyer/supplier relationships, data and analytics as well as strategic business planning.



National Treasury's Potso Makgatho, deputy director of strategic procurement at the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer, was one of the delegates who attended the training session.



TMCs and corporate travel managers recently attended the GBTA Advanced Principles of Business Travel Management course.

Bringing it home

Diners Club is prioritising the upskilling of its own staff as well. Last year, all Diners Club relationship managers completed the GBTA SA's Fundamentals

of Business Travel Management course in a bid to learn what it is like to be a travel buyer. A few more Diners staff will go through

the Advanced Travel Management courses during this year, so that they fully understand the challenges of their clients.

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Sha'p Sha'p!

Local is lekker! City Lodge Hotels has 54 hotels across all SA provinces. Here is the latest news in domestic tourism.

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Lentaba Safari Lodge. Photo: Lalibela Game Reserve

Historic farmhouse becomes safari villa

LALIBELA Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape is converting a 1902 historic farmhouse into a five-bedroom hillside private villa, scheduled to open on August 15. At the same time, Lalibela will reopen its completely refurbished Lentaba Lodge, which closed mid-May. The

Edwardian-style farmhouse is positioned on a hill overlooking a waterhole, and will suit families or friends looking to book out an entire safari lodge for exclusive use. Facilities will include a bar, lounge and dining room, a swimming pool, sun deck, fire pit and barbecue area where

alfresco dinners can be served. Accommodation comprises five double, or twin bedrooms, all en suite. The villa can accommodate a maximum of ten guests. A private game ranger, vehicle, chef and housekeeper are all on the property to cater for guests' needs.

Upgrades for Port Elizabeth airport

MAJOR upgrades are on the cards for Port Elizabeth International Airport. Airports Company South Africa plans to turn the airport into an international travel hub within the next 10 years.

While developments are still in the planning phase, Acsa has consulted with municipal officials, tourism authorities and business leaders in the metro. The airport can handle two million passengers a year,

and saw 1,6 million people pass through the terminal in the 2016-17 financial year. Acsa's target for the next decade is to upgrade the terminal and facilities to be able to accommodate four million passengers a year.

Local hotel group expands foothold in Gauteng

THE Royal Elephant Hotel and Conference Centre in Centurion, Gauteng, has joined Guvon Hotels and Spas. The Moroccan-themed property is close to three airports and offers corporates a multi-purpose centre, seating up to 320 people banquet style, 600 cinema style and up to 300 delegates schoolroom style. The hotel comprises 40 bedrooms and one presidential suite and certain wings and floors can be set aside for

high-profile visitors who request additional privacy. Facilities include four boardrooms and five multi-purpose venues, including Bondev House for large events. The Royal Lounge is reserved exclusively for in-house guests and is adjacent to the Zagora Grill room where all meals are served, and a bar that overlooks the pool deck. Teambuilding activities take place on the lawns bordering the Hennops River.

SA wine tourism website goes live

A NEW portal has been launched to let visitors explore what South Africa has to offer in wine tourism. The portal provides a co-ordination platform on wine tourism, with relevant information, links and online bookings also in the pipeline. Visitors are steered across a wide network of wine routes and regions on the website, providing big and small wine regions with a platform on which to promote themselves. The one-stop searchable wine tourism portal is a key

project of the Wine Industry Strategic Exercise (WISE), and aims to bring the wine and tourism sector together to attract a larger share of international and domestic travellers. "We believe that this new platform will facilitate co-operation and communication within the wine industry, and allow each of our diverse wine routes to showcase its distinct offerings, stimulating local economic development where it is most needed, at rural and local level," says Siobhan Thompson, ceo of Wines of South Africa. ■



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US laptop ban lifted on most Mid-East carriers

THE controversial personal electronic devices (PED), or laptop ban, on Middle East flights to the US is waning. Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, Etihad and Emirates all confirmed that laptops and electronic devices could, once again, be taken on board flights to the US.

For Turkish Airlines, this is valid for all US-bound flights from Istanbul Atatürk Airport, and for Emirates, it applies to all US-bound flights from Dubai. Ceo of Turkish Airlines, **Bilal Eksi**, also tweeted and said he expected that the ban could be lifted on flights to the UK too, but no formal announcement has yet been made.

A spokesperson for Emirates said the lifting of restrictions came after the introduction of heightened

security measures. All passengers carrying electronic devices on board US flights from Abu Dhabi will be subject to additional security screening following the lifting of the ban.

“All passengers carrying electronic devices on board US flights from Abu Dhabi will be subject to additional security screening following the lifting of the ban.”

Saudia, the national carrier of Saudi Arabia, told the Saudi state news agency SPA that it too expected the ban on electronic devices on its flights to the US from Riyadh and Jeddah to be lifted by July 19. At the

time of going to print this could not be confirmed. At time of publication, EgyptAir could not comment whether a similar lifting of restrictions was expected on its flights to the US.

The US Department of Homeland Security introduced the PED ban on flights to the US from Mid-East airports on March 21. Emirates, Turkish Airlines, Etihad, Qatar, EgyptAir and Saudia, which operate indirect services to the US out of SA, use hubs that were included in the ban.

The UK then followed with its own ban on devices larger than 16cm x 9,3cm x 1,5cm on flights from Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Middle East countries that do not have services to SA. There is no word yet on whether the UK is planning to also lift restrictions. ■



Chill out with Legacy

Legacy Hotels and Resorts is offering a special on a relaxing night at the Michelangelo from R3 300 for a single and R4 220 for a double deluxe room. The special includes a three-course dinner and breakfast at the Piccolo Mondo Restaurant; and either a 30-minute hot stone or warm candle wax back and neck massage. Valid until January 31. Pictured here are (left) **Sharon Scholtz**, spa manager, and **Prema Naidoo**, reservations manager. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

To the point

From July 1, a Goods and Service Tax (GST) applies to all flights originating from India. Economy class on both domestic and international flights will be taxed 5% of the base fare plus the fuel surcharge (YQ/YR), and business class will be taxed 12% of the base fare plus the fuel surcharge. Any bookings ticketed before July 1 are not subject to the tax. Bookings ticketed on or after July 1 are subject to the tax. This also includes any amendments made to the booking. Passengers who are flying on business will be able to claim the tax back after travel and must register with the Indian authorities to obtain their GST number.

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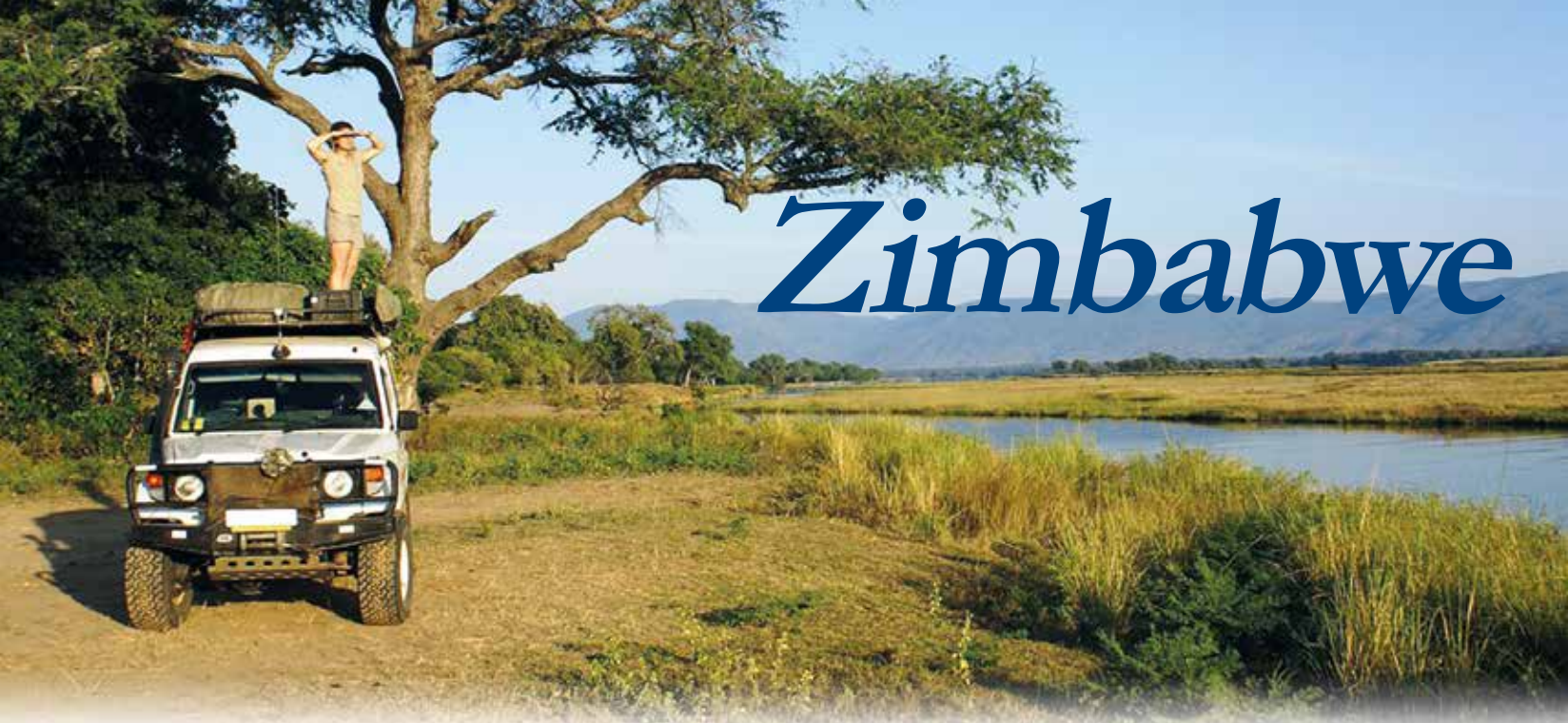
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Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's reputation as a self-drive destination has taken a knock. Dorine Reinstein reports on the latest developments.

Improvements make self-drive a great option

WHILE Zimbabwe has always been a popular self-drive destination, the recent media coverage of excessive roadblocks has deterred a great number of travellers, tour operators have reported.

However, **Francis Ngwenya**, President of the Zimbabwe Council for Tourism, says now is the best time to take a self-drive holiday in the country. He says self-drive tourism is set to improve considerably, as the two key barriers – poor road infrastructure and roadblocks – are both being addressed.

“Zimbabwe is a fantastic country to drive yourself around. Not only is it beautiful and safe but, barring the odd pothole, the roads are pretty good. Everybody can speak English. Major towns and areas of interest are normally only a few hundred kilometres apart and these can easily be reached within a morning's drive.”

Fewer roadblocks

Francis says government also ordered that, effective June 25, only four roadblocks may now be mounted per province. This is in response to the outcry from international and local tourists and motorists in Zimbabwe.

“Zimbabwe is a fantastic country to drive yourself around.”

Thomas Dhlwayo, tour operations manager of Jenman African Safaris Zimbabwe, confirms that the situation has improved considerably. “Slowly, we are experiencing fewer roadblocks. When I drove to and from Victoria Falls and Harare this week, there was a significant reduction in the number of roadblocks to the extent that some roadblocks – which were almost permanent at some locations – were missing from their usual spots. In most cases, we were not even stopped, and it was

satisfying that we drove without a single fine or any hassle from the police.”

Insider advice

Travel agents should reach out to local suppliers and tour operators for advice and information, says Francis. “I suggest that travel agents use a locally based tour operator who can assist with the hire of a suitable vehicle and help plan a good route.”

Sally Wynn, director of Wild Zambezi, agrees but says travel agents can also rely on a number of good websites and Facebook pages for information. “There is a Facebook Group called ‘Dear ZRP’, which is worth joining because it is filled with tips and advice from people who live in Zimbabwe and can be very useful for advising clients who are planning a self-drive trip.” She adds that there is also a useful Facebook page for information and help about crossing the border at Beit Bridge: www.facebook.com/crossingbeitbridge.

Road rules to keep in mind

Mareike Pietzsch, digital marketing and communication specialist of Giltedge, provides some useful tips for travellers heading to Zimbabwe.

Car requirements

Tourists who are entering Zimbabwe with a rented car need to make sure their car has working lights (indicator lights, tail lights and hazard lights) and working number plate lights as the police tend to check them at the road blocks. Tourists also need to have a fire extinguisher and reflective triangle in their car.

Documents

On arrival at the Zimbabwean border, tourists need to make sure their passports are stamped with the correct number of days they are intending to stay. It's

always advisable to put in an extra week in case of any delays in the country.

Customs

At the Zimbabwean border, tourists should proceed to the customs counter, Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (Zimra), to get a Temporary Import Permit. It is also advisable to allow for extra days so there's no inconvenience should their trip take longer than planned, ensuring the permit doesn't expire before they exit the country.

Tourists need to buy local insurance for their rented car and to pay road access fees at Zimra.

The person who will be driving the car must have their name on the Temporary Import Permit; if tourists are going to be sharing the driving then they need to state this when getting the permit.



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How to react in case of a roadblock

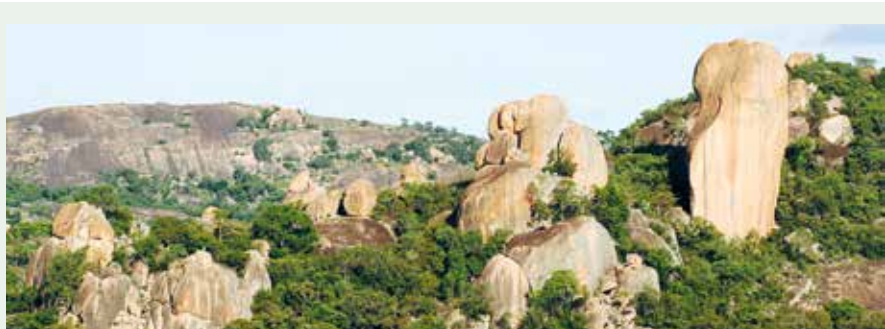
SALLY Wynn of Wild Zambezi says travellers should stay calm and friendly and avoid confrontation when stopped on a self-drive trip in Zimbabwe.

The key advice, according to Sally, is for travellers to:

- Make sure they know the rules and regulations;

- Always pay their fine if they are in the wrong;
- Make sure they know their rights (and stand up for them if they know they are in the right);
- Always be patient and polite and never lose your temper;
- Never resort to bribery. Says Sally: "Unfortunately a lot

- of visitors (especially from South Africa) are intimidated by the Zimbabwe police. They do not stand up for their rights and tend to try to get out of the situation quickly by resorting to bribery instantly, which does not help the situation."
- Try to avoid being in a hurry.



Matobo Hills, the site of Cecil Rhodes' grave.

Three great self-drive routes

1. Harare to Eastern Highlands

Francis Ngwenya of the Zimbabwe Council for Tourism says driving east from Harare to Nyanga provides visitors with an amazing self-drive experience. This area is known by some as 'Little England' due to the cooler weather and green vegetation. He says there are many attractions to be found along the three-and-a-half to four-hour drive. These include botanical gardens, trout fishing and hiking to see some of the area's famous waterfalls.

2. Victoria Falls to Kariba and Mana Pools

Sally Wynn of Wild Zambezi, says she has many requests from self-drive visitors to Zimbabwe about the road

network linking Victoria Falls and Hwange with Kariba or Mana Pools, along the southern edge of Lake Kariba.

"We always warn that this route is for adventurous, self-sufficient travellers only." She says it is a long, slow and very remote journey, mostly along unpaved roads that can be in poor condition, especially after the rainy season.

Says Sally: "Travellers should be totally self-sufficient (with food, water and vehicle spares) in case of breakdowns. It is advisable to travel in convoy with at least one other vehicle, because of the remote nature of this journey."

The distance between Victoria Falls and Kariba is roughly 770km; and the

distance between Vic Falls and Mana Pools, is about 800km.

However, time is the real problem, according to Sally, and it's not advisable to attempt this trip in one day.

3. South-North self-drive

Zimbabwe Holidays offers a south-north self-drive option. On the first day, travellers cross the Beit Bridge border post to Masvingo and on to Great Zimbabwe, where they can explore the ancient stone structure. On the second day, they make their way to Bulawayo and on to Matobo Hills where they can see 'the View of the World' at Cecil Rhodes' grave. The next day's drive will take travellers to Hwange for a safari experience and on the last day, they drive to Victoria Falls.

Cresta Churchill undergoes refurbishment

CRESTA Churchill Hotel in Bulawayo is undergoing a major refurbishment. The first set of refurbished rooms was completed in time for the recent Zimbabwe International Trade Fair and the second phase will be completed in time for the next big event in the city, the Mine Entra exhibition later this month.

The refurbishment includes the complete refitting of bathrooms, introduction of electronic keys, installation of flat-screen televisions, new

bedroom floors, international plug points, USB chargers and other fittings, as well as repainting.

Glenn Stutchbury, ceo of the Cresta Hotels group, said: "We are pleased with the stylish and modern look of the new bedrooms and suites and we are confident these will quickly earn a reputation for being the best in the market in Bulawayo. What we have sought is ease and convenience, as well as a classy, clean look that suits all travelling types, both local and international."

Chinese investors secured for Vic Falls development

By KYLIE GRANAT

MEDIA reports from Zimbabwe say the country has signed an agreement with Chinese investors to develop land near Victoria Falls. The development has been on the cards since 2013, with an estimated cost of US\$460m (R6bn). There has been much speculation around whether the development includes the concept 'Disneyland in Africa'.

Tourism Minister, **Walter Mzembe**, said the theme park and conference centre were part of the vision for a US\$6bn (R80bn) tourism industry in Victoria Falls, which is classified as a Unesco World Heritage Site. "We have signed an overarching agreement with some Chinese developers for a master plan to develop 300

hectares of land between the airport and the Masue River," said the Minister.

Despite rumour around the proposed Disneyland-style project, a source told *TNW* that a theme park was not being built. The allocated area for the development will see a 'new Victoria Falls' equivalent to a revamped CBD for the area.

However, other stakeholders believe the project is not appropriate for the location.

Charlene Hewat, ceo of the conservation group, Environment Africa, says: "I am not really sure that this is the right kind of project for one of the seven wonders of the world. The Victoria Falls does need a conference centre but it needs to be done in a way that fits in with our environment and the surrounds."

Book it!

Air Holidays is offering two-night Vic Falls packages, inclusive of return flights between Johannesburg and Livingstone, cross-border transfers and breakfast each day. Rates for The Rainbow Hotel start from R1 845, Cresta Sprayview Hotel from R2 490, A'Zambezi River Lodge from R3 050 and The Victoria Falls Hotel from R6 550. All rates are pps and exclude approximate airport taxes of R3 265. Valid until October 31. ■



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Sometimes winning your clients over to the idea of a holiday in the US can be difficult, but there are compelling reasons to recommend the country – particularly when it comes to family travel. Mandy Watson reports.

Experiences to suit every type of traveller

THE US is as diverse as it is vast. It has something to offer every traveller, so the key to selling the destination is a clear understanding of what kind of experience your client is looking for.

Theresa Szejwallo, md of The Travel Corporation in South Africa, says: “The US is a country with a diversified tourism offering that will appeal to a very broad demographic of travellers. From Washington to the Wild West, the US is a mix of 52 very diverse states, each extremely different from the next. This means that the country really has an experience for every traveller and is sure to leave no one indifferent.

The key for travel agents is to understand what their clients want and match their expectations with an experience and destination within the US.”

Proper planning

Annemarie Lexow, sales and marketing manager of Travel Vision agrees. “Every state in America is diverse, with vast distances to travel between destinations. Travellers who only have seven to 10 days for a visit might need to consider flying between points to make the best of their visit.”

Although flying internally will affect a budget, Annemarie encourages agents to spend time with their clients to determine

exactly what they want to see and experience to ensure proper planning of an itinerary. “If it’s big cities, then ask them to decide if they want to do the East or West coast as opposed to both. If country and blues music is what the client is after, send them down south to Tennessee. Nature lovers have a huge range of options to choose from in America, from the Grand Canyon in Arizona to Niagara Falls, and everything in between.”

Escorted tours

Escorted tours are a great way to experience such a vast destination. **Janine Pienaar**, sales and marketing manager – Globus



Janine Pienaar

Family of Brands, suggests two escorted touring brands in the US – Cosmos Holidays for a three-star-plus

experience and Globus Holidays for four-star-plus clients.

She says one of the main benefits of escorted holidays is the amount of ground travellers can cover at an affordable cost. One of the top sellers for Cosmos Holidays is the Trans-America Adventure, which is a 23-day cross-country road trip from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Beginning in New York, it takes in America’s must-see sights and cities such as Niagara Falls, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, Mount Rushmore, Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, Salt Lake City, the Grand Canyon and Las Vegas, finishing in Los Angeles.

US cruising on the up

THE number of South Africans choosing to cruise out of American ports is increasing.

This is according to **Thaybz Khan**, brand manager of Cruises International, who confirms that Caribbean cruises are the operator’s second most popular option for South African cruise clients. Although Cruises International doesn’t handle the land portion of bookings, it is aware that many clients add a stop at Walt Disney World before or after the cruise. She says: “South Africans prefer to cruise out of Florida, and favourites are

the Eastern and Western Caribbean cruises.”

MSC Cruises has seen consistent growth out of American ports, says **Ingrid Roding**, pr agent of MSC Cruises. “Over the last three years we have seen an increase year on year in the number of South Africans who are booking cruises in the US.”

Cruises to the Caribbean often start in Florida, home to Walt Disney World. **John Ridler** pr and media manager of Thompsons Holidays, agrees that families sometimes opt to extend a cruise with a few days at Disney World before or after their cruise.

“A short stay at Disney Orlando, Universal Studios and Kennedy Space Center is the perfect add-on for families on a cruise out of Florida.” He says Florida Keys and the Everglades are also popular destinations.

The introduction of an Emirates flight to Orlando has opened up connections to Cape Canaveral, Fort Lauderdale and Miami, says **Annemarie Lexow** of Travel Vision. “It’s so much easier to arrive on time for cruises.” She adds that most people prefer to stay in Orlando before continuing on a cruise.

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Disney remains a firm family favourite with the SA market.

The most family-friendly holiday on earth?

DISNEY remains a firm family favourite for the SA market. **John Ridler** of Thompsons Holidays says: "Disney is one of the most family-friendly holidays on the market. The entire Disney operation is geared to entertain people of all ages. Their operations are very well organised, from transport to accommodation and, of course, the wonderful attractions. This is one of the best ways to stimulate creativity in children." A trip to Disney is not just about the rides and attractions. Says **Annemarie Lexow** of Travel Vision:

"Orlando has so much to offer with Downtown Disney (Disney Springs), Universal Studios, the Kennedy Space Center and so much more. Staying at a hotel inside Disney World offers you benefits like extended hours in the parks as well as transport between parks and resorts." She adds that guests residing inside the resort are also able to make use of the complimentary Disney Magical Express to and from Orlando airport and port. Trafalgar Tours has itineraries that offer families a Disneyland extension. Says

Theresa Szejwalo: "Families who want to treat their children to an unforgettable Disney experience can, for example, opt for Trafalgar's 'Western Discoverer with Disneyland extension'. This 16-day itinerary not only includes a full day at Disneyland Park or Disney's California Adventure Park, it also lets travellers explore three different US states." A tour like this visits two national parks, the major metropolises of San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles, wine country as well as the ocean and deserts.

USA & DISNEY

Five great specials

TNW rounds up some of the best US and Disney specials currently on offer.

Thompsons Holidays is offering a special rate of R11 534pps for a three-night Halloween cruise on board the *Disney Dream*. The rate includes return transfers, three nights' accommodation in a deluxe ocean-view stateroom, three meals a day, daily on-board entertainment, taxes, fees and port expenses.

The cruise departs from Port Canaveral, Florida and visits Nassau and Castaway Cay in the Bahamas. Valid for set departure on Sep 22-25.

Travel Vision's Northeastern USA Rail Tour package starts from R21 785pps for eight days. Travellers will visit Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington DC.

Rates include seven nights' accommodation, Amtrak rail ticket between cities, admission to Newseum and airport shuttle transfers in Washington DC. Valid until October 31.

Kulula holidays is offering a special Boston to Washington DC by train package starting from R20 985pps. Rate includes two nights in a three-star hotel in Boston, two nights in a three-star hotel in New York and two nights in a three-star hotel in Washington DC. It also includes second-class rail tickets between the three cities,

Beantown Trolley tour in Boston, hop-on, hop-off bus tour ticket in New York and DC monuments by moonlight tour. Valid until September 30.

Thompsons Holidays' five-night Walt Disney World packages start from R25 707pps ex-JNB, R27 420pps ex-DUR and R28 445pps ex-CPT. Rates include return flights to Orlando (incl. taxes), return Disney Magical Express transfers and five nights' accommodation at Disney's Pop Century Resort. It also includes a four-day Magic Your Way ticket with Park Hopper option, permitting entry to more than one of the following theme parks per day: Magic Kingdom Park, Epcot, Disney's Animal Kingdom and Disney's Hollywood Studios. Valid between August 13 and September 28.

Travel Vision's six-day Walt Disney World packages start from R25 409pps. Rate includes return airfare and taxes from Johannesburg, five nights' accommodation at a Disney All Star Resort (weekdays only), five-day Magic Your Way Base Ticket, roundtrip airport transfers by Disney's Magical Express and complimentary transportation throughout Walt Disney World. Valid from August to October.

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Disney World, Cinderella castle.

Beware the 'Trump slump'



“People are more sensitive to how the rand is performing against the US dollar when making a decision to travel to the States.”
Annemarie Lexow

THE new presidency in America may have implemented some policies and be discussing others that could affect travel into the US, but most operators in South Africa believe that local travellers are more affected by the rate of exchange than what the President and his administration are doing.

Annemarie Lexow of Travel Vision says people are more sensitive to how the rand is performing against the US dollar when making a decision to travel to the States. **Janine Pienaar** of Globus Family of Brands agrees. “We have noticed that Cosmos Holidays are still popular. This is Globus’s value product offering as opposed to its four-star product. Travellers still enjoy the benefit of escorted travel, with ample free time to explore their destination the way they want, as well as longer stays in key cities to immerse themselves in local culture.” “There is no reason that



Hollywood Boulevard and the Production Courtyard.

Trump will dissuade tourists at this stage,” says **John Ridler** of Thompsons Holidays. “There are pending new restrictions in applying for US visas but this will not affect bona-fide tourists.”

Theresa Szejwallo of Trafalgar agrees. “The new presidency is contemplating putting a certain number of travel restrictions in place, including a tightening of

the visa process.”

There is some concern that additional travel restrictions may be a deterrent for prospective travellers. Theresa says: “When the UK decided to introduce visas for South African travellers a few years ago, we saw a massive drop in demand for the UK. We decided to change our entire Europe programme, allowing

travellers to bypass the UK and rather start and end their Trafalgar trip in continental Europe.”

However, as Trafalgar’s US travel director, **Gregg Martin**, explains: “Politics shouldn’t break your travel spirit. Some of the best experiences have nothing to do with the Statue of Liberty, Hollywood signs and Trump.”

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USA & DISNEY



The Naked Agent

Show clients that you care

Scenario: A family holiday for two adults and their eight-year-old daughter to Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. The family would like to travel for five nights during the October school holidays – dates were flexible within that period. Package should be as fully

inclusive as possible, including entrance fees to all the parks. Budget was R25 000 each and should include a special for the daughter to share at a reduced price. All three agencies were contacted via email links or addresses on the company's website.



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Flight Centre, Norwood Mall

I emailed this branch via the contact page on Flight Centre's website and received an automatic response saying my request had been received and someone would contact me



Michelle Benedetti

shortly. **Michelle Benedetti** called me less than 10 minutes later. The automatic response form detailed the dates and information I had included in my initial message, a great way to confirm that I had noted everything I wanted the agent to know before she called.

Michelle was excited that we were planning this trip and started by checking the dates I had selected and whether we had US visas. Turned out the dates overlapped the end of the holiday period so we chose new dates. I reminded her that our dates were flexible.

She also asked whether we would prefer to travel for seven nights due to the distance. As soon as our dates were finalised she asked how many days we would like to use for visiting the parks; I

suggested a three-day pass and said we'd used that before at Disneyland and it was plenty. Michelle immediately reminded me that Disney World is much larger with a lot more parks to visit and experience, and suggested she quote me on both a three- and five-day Flexihopper Pass. She suggested the pass option that would allow us entry into more than one park per day, as well as multiple access to the same park in one day.

She said Emirates had a special on and that she would look at those flights, promising to get back to me as quickly as possible

with written quotes.

Michelle called back within 24 hours to say she had the quotes ready for me, utilising accommodation in the All Star Resorts, and based on that she wanted to know whether our daughter preferred movies, sport or music so that she could select the ideal resort for us.

She emailed the quotation through the next day, with options for three- and five-day passes. Both quotations fell within the budget.

Although I didn't ask for it, both quotations included travel and medical insurance which was a nice add-on touch and within budget. I chose Michelle as the winner based on her knowledge, confident nature and constant communication with me. I felt that she was really invested in making sure we had the family holiday of a lifetime.



Pentravel, Rosebank

I randomly selected an agent from the list on the Pentravel website. That same afternoon I received a quotation with a very friendly email advising that the agent would call me shortly to discuss the quotation that had been sent. The call came through before I had even opened the quotation so we were able to go through it together.

The agent was very knowledgeable and excited about our trip and checked that we had US visas before getting into the quotation. He mentioned that he had used Emirates for the flights as the airline currently had a sale on

and was the best option for our needs.

We discussed what meal packages were available and he mentioned that food inside Disney World could be pricier than eating outside of the park. His quote included an add-on meal option. He selected the All Star Movie Resort for us, without any input from me. He also selected the Park Hopper option which would allow us multiple access to the same park each day as well as more than one park per day.

Although he had never travelled to Disney World himself, the agent was very

knowledgeable about the destination. He mentioned that if I took too long to make a decision the quotation could be affected by any currency fluctuations. I found the Pentravel quote to be a really user-friendly and attractive format. I was hard-pressed to choose between this agent and the winner and finally based my decision on the fact that the winner had been more deliberate about keeping in contact with me while this agent only followed up the initial phone call six days later.



Sure Interlink World Travel, Norwood

I picked up the agency via an Internet search and sent an email to the listed address on the website. The email address appears

to be directed at a person rather than a general info/enquiry email address, but I received no response at all to my email, not even

the usual electronically generated response that most companies use.



Michelle's Top US & Disney tips

- Most important is to find out what the client enjoys and likes to do in order to choose the destination best suited for them.
- Ask the right questions to

show them that you care.
• It's important for me to put myself in the clients' shoes and give them the dream they so look forward to at good value as well.

- Listening is very important as you need to give them what they want and not what you like. We are the experts, we must give advice.

Take note!

The purpose of the Naked Agent in this series is to assess the experience from only a sales skills perspective and not the effectiveness of the travel agency. *TNW* believes that sales skills are increasingly important to travel agents and, in many cases, improvement in selling skills is the easiest way to increase the prosperity of the agency and its consultants. The Naked Agent is designed to raise awareness of the opportunity and build awareness of the need. ■

Club Travel gives a helping hand

CLUB travel is turning 30 this year and to celebrate, it decided to fulfil 30 wishes for deserving members of the public or charity organisations, one for each year it has been in business. Consultants from a variety of agencies had until May 31 to submit their nominees for the recipients

of the wishes. So far, seven wishes have been fulfilled. One of the recipients, Sikelela Pre-School, was given much-needed educational toys and storage supplies. On The Go Tours was part of the project, and helped by contributing to the Animal Welfare Society of Stellenbosch's

sterilisation programme. Another wish made as a birthday gift to the agency saw Development Promotions donating 300kg of mielie meal, 80kg of sugar and 100kg of rice to Little Lambs, a non-profit organisation that works with children in the Dunoon township.

Seeing things differently



Sandown Travel has launched its mission statement, Vision and Value. The agency decided to look through the eyes of children, and Sandown Travel consultants' children were asked to draw pictures demonstrating their understanding of words such as professionalism, reliability and courtesy. The subsequent artworks were displayed at the Sandown Travel head office. Pictured here are Rejoice Ngwenya (left) and Gayle Morgan, senior travel consultants, with some of the illustrations.

Uniworld unveils 2018 brochure



Uniworld launched its 2018 brochure to agents at The Marion on Nicol on June 17. The brochure shows the new itineraries, including Enchanting Danube & Prague and Remarkable Rhine. The brand's new campaign, 'The World is Your Canvas' was launched at the same time. The campaign aims to encourage travellers to explore the world through cultural immersion and local authenticity. Pictured at the event (from left) are: Lisha Cretten, Pentravel The Glen; Melanie Wilding, XL Sandown; Elmarie Pretoria, Pentravel Cresta; Gail Gilbert, Uniworld marketing manager; and Madeleine Rall, Pentravel Cresta.

Appointments

■ **Tom Rutherford** has been appointed new gm of the Saxon Hotel, Villas and Spa. Tom began his career at The Cape Grace, where he served in both the guest relations and food and beverage



management departments. He has managed various lodges for the Singita group and was also gm of the Sabi Sand properties, which include Boulders, Ebony and Castleton.

■ **Natalie Harling** has joined Agentivity as its new global support and customer success manager. Natalie has 20 years

of travel agency experience, ranging from finance and consulting to management and product support. Natalie will be based in Johannesburg.

■ **Roland Busch** will start as the general representative and head of future finance at Lufthansa from January 1, 2018. He was previously the cfo of SWISS.

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Senior Tour Consultant – German Speaking – KZN – Westville

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Leisure Consultant – Durban

Lee Botti & Associates
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Senior Travel Consultant – Johannesburg

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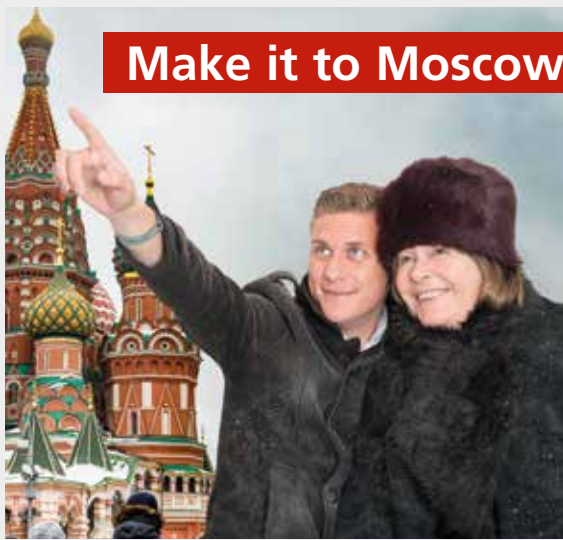
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Make it to Moscow



Thompsons Holidays has two specials to Moscow on offer. Winter In Moscow and St Petersburg Combo is a seven-day, six-night trip ex-JNB from only R16 620pps. Valid September 30-December 18. The Winter In Moscow Weekend Special is a four-day three-night trip ex-JNB, from R12 405pps. Valid until December 18. Both offers include return flights from Johannesburg to Moscow/St Petersburg (including airline levies), a stay at a four-star hotel and breakfast daily. Pictured, are **Malcolm Slaughter**, reservations consultant and **Kay Ellison**, product and contracting executive – International, Product and Contracting Department. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Here's to Laurie, the legend

TARYN NIGHTINGALE
AND CANDICE MAY

HIGHLY respected and admired industry influencer, **Laurie Wilkinson**, died on Friday, July 7.

Laurie filled big shoes. He was not only respected for his professional prowess, but also loved for the heart he put in the industry. Past president of Asata, Laurie was the co-owner with his wife, **Mary**, of Sure Travel Studio since 1991. He was a board member of Sure Holdings Pty Ltd from 2007-2016 and sat as a chairman on that board from 2006-2016.

He and Mary never missed an industry event, says ceo of Sure Travel, **Vanya Lessing**. "Laurie was a legend in the industry and was available to guide, assist and support – I could always rely on him," she says.

"He was a fantastic, humble guy who would never hesitate to help," says md of Sure Viva Travels, **David Pegg**.

The trade has lost a giant who gave so much to the industry he loved, not for personal gain but because



Laurie Wilkinson

it was the right thing to do, says **Gordon Wilson**, president and ceo of Travelport. "His influence on me was more profound than I probably ever told him and I became a better businessman and person as

a result of knowing him," he says. Ceo of Asata, **Otto de Vries**, says Laurie played an instrumental role in the development of the association and always showed immense commitment to the industry. ■

New Durban routes in the pipeline

NEW routes from King Shaka International Airport are on the cards. This comes after Air Seychelles and Ethiopian Airlines announced their suspension of services to the city.

Air Seychelles will suspend services as soon as July 27 and Ethiopian Airlines from August 1.

In a statement, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Route Development Committee says it is focused on opening up direct air services to London, Mumbai, the Far East, and the US.

Although the committee didn't reveal which carriers it had approached for these new routes, industry players say both RwandAir and Singapore Airlines are potential players.

SQ denies it is looking at reintroducing flights to Durban after it stopped operations in 2003, but

RwandAir's country manager for South Africa, **Themba Dladla** says the carrier is exploring the possibility of flights to Durban in the near future.

RwandAir would offer Durban travellers much-needed additional connections to Mumbai via Kigali, as the withdrawal of ET and HM has left a gap in the market.

"Air Seychelles' decision to withdraw its services from Durban is very sad, as it offered the best alternative to Ethiopian Airlines on the route to Mumbai," says **Dinesh Naidoo**, group operations director of SWG.

Dinesh says the airlines' suspension of services won't have a major impact on fares on the route, which is still serviced by Emirates, Turkish Airlines and Qatar Airways. But, with less competition, discounted fares will be few

and far between, he adds.

Air Seychelles cited the low fares as one of the reasons to halt operations to Durban.

Roy Kinnear, ceo of Air Seychelles, said: "The competitive nature of the route and volume of alternative options paired with extremely low fares being charged on the Durban to India traffic flow unfortunately meant this was not a viable ongoing commercial operation."

The Dube TradePort Corporation anticipates the immediate impact on both leisure and business travel to be minimal. "International passenger volumes continue to grow at King Shaka International Airport with latest month-on-month data showing a 7% increase. Overall, Durban's passenger numbers have grown 155% since 2010," it said in a statement. ■

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