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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

INSIDE

NEWS FLYSAFAIR

New route to George

Page 2

NEWS CONFLICT ZONES

What's your pax flight path?

Page 10

FEATURE Zimbabwe

Mixed fortunes for tourism

Page 12

Ebola – panic spreads faster than virus

DORINE REINSTEIN

REMINISCENT of the Bird Flu pandemic in 2009, panic over the Ebola outbreak in West Africa has gripped the globe with countries restricting travel to and from Africa as fears spread quicker than the disease.

Ignorance of African geography has led to a spate of cancellations for trips to destinations such as South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania, which are nowhere near Ebola affected zones. Countries are also starting to tighten their border controls to African citizens – including South Africans.

The Indonesian government recently announced it would require a health certificate from South African travellers to enter Indonesia, as a result of the Ebola outbreak. "There is no indication at this time that Ebola is spreading in the general community in South Africa. Nevertheless, to take precautions to protect the country's health and prevent the spread of the virus to other areas, the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia has advised all travellers who will be visiting Indonesia to produce a health certificate," it said in a statement.

Passengers without correct documentation risk being denied entry into the country when applying for a visa-on-arrival.

India has announced it will restrict medical tourism from South Africa over Ebola. Mumbai's city hospitals welcome between 100 and 150 patients from South Africa a month, according to a report in the Indian newspaper, *DNA India*. **Dr Hemlata Arora** from SevenHills in Mumbai was quoted as saying the hospital was restricting the number of patients from South Africa. "The Ebola outbreak has become a bigger public health problem and it will have a cascading effect on medical tourism. My team of doctors has been put on high alert about treating South African patients," she said.

A post on Facebook has gone viral. **Harriet Harriet**, a South African expat living in South Korea, posted a picture on her page of a notice in the window of a pub in Itaewon, Seoul, which read: "We apologise but due to Ebola virus, we are not accepting Africans at the moment." The establishment has since taken the sign down and posted an apology, both on its shop front and on the social networking site.

Korean Air Lines recently suspended all of its flights to Kenya, a country that doesn't have a single Ebola case and is located over 5 000 km from any Ebola danger zone.

Gregory Härtl, World Health Organisation (WHO) spokesperson,
To page 2



Cartoon: Ernst du Plessis

Kenya rethinks visas for SA travellers

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE Kenyan High Commission has suspended visa requirements for

South African nationals – for now. The Deputy High Commissioner for Kenya in South Africa, **Helen Gichuhi**, told *TNW* the suspension of

the visas could just be a temporary reprieve. "The Kenyan government and the South African government are negotiating, hence a pause

as we await feedback from the negotiations."

In June it was announced that SA
To page 16

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New route for FlySafair

CHANA BOUCHER

FLYSAFAIR has not yet begun operations but has already added a third route to its network, between Cape Town and George. Services will begin when the low-cost carrier launches its first flights on October 16.

The Cape Town-George route will be on sale from R399 one way.

FlySafair ceo, **Dave Andrew**, says: "As part of our commitment to keeping ticket prices as low as possible and to make flying accessible for the general population, our strategy includes offering affordable fares on routes that were previously dominated by high prices."

Monica Horn, product manager of Harvey World Travel franchise support team, says the service between Cape Town and George may take a while to gain traction and could be viewed as seasonal.

However, she says: "The Cape Town to Johannesburg and PE routes are certain to be popular."

As for the absence of Durban on the airline's domestic network, Monica believes the Johannesburg-Durban route is already saturated and is easily driveable from Johannesburg for leisure travellers. "Cape Town to Durban could be a consideration," she says. "We look forward to further route additions in time to come that connect the hubs." FlySafair has not indicated what its plans are – if any – for Durban flights.

The airline's model, which follows that of international low-cost carriers, is new to South Africa. Passengers pay a base rate that secures a seat on the flight with two pieces of carry-on luggage not exceeding 7kg in total. If passengers require any extras, such as checked baggage, these will be charged for.

"It is a departure in pricing models from the more entrenched carriers operating locally, but follows a true low-cost carrier model successful in many countries overseas. For our price sensitive customers it's great – they choose what they want and understand that this will alter the ticket price," says Monica.

She adds that the model could suit SME clients well, especially when travelling to and from a destination in one day.

Although it is still early days, Monica says it would be great to offer customers more choice for domestic destinations both in terms of schedules and pricing. But she adds: "While FlySafair has been born out of a successful airline logistics, leasing and charter company, Safair, we still need to see proven operation, i.e. an aircraft in the air before we consider fully, actively promoting them." ■

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Ebola – panic spreads faster than virus

From page 1

told *TNW* that these heavy-handed travel bans and flight cancellations are against any advice issued by WHO. "WHO doesn't recommend travel or trade restrictions. They don't work. If one closed all airports and even formal land border crossings, people can still go from country to country via the innumerable informal border crossings that exist, so all one would succeed in doing is disrupting travel and trade."

Gregory added that it is also inefficient for countries to block travellers from entering the destination. He says it is much more effective to perform thorough exit

screenings in countries where active Ebola transmission is occurring. "Those who are exhibiting symptoms and those who are contacts of known Ebola victims should not travel. All others should be allowed to travel."

Meanwhile all airlines are on high alert for any passengers from any destination displaying signs of fever or illness. An Emirates plane arriving from Dubai was made to wait on the tarmac at OR Tambo last week as health officials were alerted to the fact that a passenger on board was displaying signs of illness.

Commenting on the incident,

Lucille Blumberg, deputy director of the division of Public Health Surveillance and Response at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, told *TNW* pilots needed to complete the flight manifest stating if there were any ill passengers on board. "This is examined by a port health official as soon as the aircraft lands and if in order, the passengers can disembark. If there is an ill passenger on board a flight, the port health officials will be made aware of this and may board the flight to investigate and attend to the passenger before other passengers are allowed to disembark."

Flight cancellations

Kenya Airways has suspended commercial flights to Liberia and Sierra Leone – a temporary measure based on a risk assessment by Kenya's Ministry of Health. The airline will offer a full refund for all passengers holding tickets for the cancelled flights.

The airline will continue operating all its scheduled flights to Nigeria and Ghana. However, Kenya Airways'

ceo, **Titus Naikuni**, said he reserved the right to cancel flights to any other destination should the situation warrant it.

SAA continues to fly to West Africa but has stepped up measures to protect its passengers, crew and ground staff against the Ebola virus.

The measures include ensuring that the airline has in place vigilant staff who will be on the lookout for

passengers who have visible symptoms associated with the virus. In cases where a passenger at check-in may have visible symptoms, they will be isolated. Passenger interviews and tests will follow, conducted by the health authorities. In the event that there is any doubt regarding the medical condition of any suspected passenger, SAA may deny the passenger boarding. ■

TNW
TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

www.etnw.co.za

Published by Travel & Trade Publishing (Pty) Ltd
Printed by Juka Printing (Pty) Ltd

Phone: (011) 327-4062
Fax: (011) 327-4094
E-mail: tnw@nowmedia.co.za
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Warm up this winter!

Protea Hotel Balalaika is offering winter conference packages until September 30. At just R350 per delegate the package includes tea/coffee/refreshments on arrival, venue hire, parking, standard equipment (data projector, standard screen, flip chart, whiteboard, podium), two tea/coffee/refreshments breaks and lunch as well as complimentary glühwein or non-alcoholic hot beverages in Lords Bar, free WiFi throughout the hotel, and complimentary Gautrain and Sandton shuttle services. Jörg Zwinscher, gm of Protea Hotel Balalaika enjoys some great winter hospitality. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl.



Celebrity Cruises Launches 'Signature Event Sailings'

CELEBRITY Cruises is broadening its holiday offerings in 2015 and 2016 with its new 'Signature Event Sailings' in Europe, the Far East and South America, offering shore excursions to unique events and festivals. Signature Event Sailings include:

- Anzac Day, the 100th Anniversary Commemoration in Turkey: 12-night Turkey and Greece cruise departing on April 22, 2015, on *Celebrity*

Constellation.

- Cannes Film Festival: 10-night Mediterranean cruise, departing on May 11, 2015, from Barcelona on *Celebrity Equinox*.
- Redentore Festival in Venice: 14-night Turkey and Black Sea cruise, departing on July 5, 2015, from Istanbul, visiting Venice during the historic Redentore Festival on *Celebrity Constellation*.
- The British Open in Edinburgh: 12-night British

Isle cruise departing on July 15, 2015, from Amsterdam on *Celebrity Silhouette*.

- Carnival in Rio de Janeiro: *Celebrity Infinity* sets off on a 14-night South America and Rio Carnival cruise, departing on January 31, 2016, from Buenos Aires.
- Chinese New Year in Hong Kong: 14-night Chinese New Year cruise, departing on January 31, 2016 aboard *Celebrity Millennium*. ■

Trafalgar launches new 2015 Asia tours

TRAFALGAR has announced three new Asia guided holidays and a Cambodia extension for 2015.

Trafalgar's Asia holidays now have 14 itineraries to Japan, China, Thailand and Vietnam plus extensions to Cambodia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

- New trips for 2015 are:
- Seven-day Samurai

Discovery – from Tokyo to the temples of Kyoto, priced from R37 825.

- 10-day Timeless Essence of Hong Kong and Mainland China, priced from R33 850.
- 14-day Treasures of China Past and Present. This trip includes Hong Kong and the landscapes of Guilin and Cheng Chau. Priced

from R53 000.

The prices for the above itineraries are all per person, twin share.

Early payment discounts of up to 10% per couple are available for bookings and payments before November 27, with an additional frequent traveller discount of 5% also available. ■

Mantis expands into Lagos

THE Mantis Collection has expanded its portfolio into West Africa with The George Hotel – its first hotel in Lagos – due to open later this year. The five-star hotel has 62 rooms ranging from standard, superior and luxury rooms to studio and luxury suites. There are also four penthouse suites. The Da Vinci restaurant will offer a choice of buffet, à la carte or fine-dining. The hotel offers a number of meeting rooms including an executive boardroom and a business centre, as well as a fitness centre, cocktail bar and pool deck, 24-hour in-room dining and complimentary WiFi.

Marriott expands mobile check-in

MARRIOTT International has announced the expansion of its mobile check-in and check-out feature, with 11 additional brands joining nearly 500 properties in the Marriott brand. They are: The Ritz, Carlton, JW Marriott Hotels & Resorts, Renaissance Hotels, Autograph Collection, AC Hotels, Courtyard, SpringHill Suites, Fairfield Inn & Suites, Residence Inn, TownePlace Suites and Marriott Executive Apartments.

The Cape Milner reopens

THE newly revamped Cape Milner hotel in Tamboerskloof, Cape Town, will open its doors this month. The 57-room hotel has undergone a complete revamp. Additions include a new venue, The Glass Lounge, with bar and lounge area, and a glass ceiling offering views of Table Mountain. The standard rooms and executive suites have new wooden flooring, furniture and lighting and bathrooms have marble vanities, new baths, showers, tiles and taps. The swimming pool and wooden deck received new lounge-style seating areas. Other facilities offered include a business centre, a conferencing facility and gym. Limited WiFi is available at no additional charge.

New game lodge opens in North West

THE Buffalo Thorn Hills game lodge and conferencing venue in Magaliesburg has opened. The lodge lies between Magaliesburg and Rustenburg and is a one-hour drive from Johannesburg and Pretoria. It has four luxury suites and four classic rooms. Suites have private verandas, inside and outside showers, baths, fireplaces and views of the surrounding bushveld. The main lodge has a lounge, with DSTV, dining area and large open boma. The classic rooms start at R1 050 per person per night and luxury suites start at R1 250. Rates include accommodation, all meals, mid-afternoon tea and two daily safari activities. Children under 12 pay 50% of the adult rate when sharing with two adults. Activities include archery, bird watching, clay-pigeon shooting, game drives and guided walks. There is a swimming pool and bar. Buffalo Thorn Hills lodge is also available for self-catering, on request.



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Government sets ambitious tourism targets

ZIMBABWE has set ambitious tourism targets for 2020. At the recent launch of the National Tourism Policy in Zimbabwe, Minister of Tourism **Walter Mzembi**, expressed his vision of a “US\$5bn (R53bn) tourism economy in Zimbabwe by 2020”. Walter said he would set Zimbabwe’s tourism performance at 30% of South Africa’s tourism performance. “Currently, South Africa’s tourism economy is turning over \$1.2bn (R128bn) from 10 million arrivals per annum. By 2020, we forecast South Africa’s tourism

economy to be exceeding \$16bn (R170bn) based on current growth strategies,” he said.

He urged closer co-operation with South Africa for Zimbabwe to benefit from the 9,9 million international tourists who visit SA. He said he wanted to investigate why more international tourists did not take an extension visit to Zimbabwe when visiting SA. He questioned whether this was caused by visa requirements, poor product offerings and pricing or brand perception issues, suggesting these needed to be addressed.

China is also high on Walter’s agenda and he aims to attract at least 5% of the Chinese outbound travel market by 2020. He urged the Zimbabwe government to simplify visa requirements for Chinese visitors. He said currently there were 100 million Chinese outbound travellers spending \$140bn (R1,5trn) at an average spend rate of \$1 500 (R15 979) per visit. “If we commence next year with a target of 0,5%, it will translate into one million visitors and \$750m (R7,9bn) in receipts.” See Zimbabwe feature on page 12. ■

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e-Tourism Africa Summit is back

THE 7th Annual e-Tourism Africa Summit will take place on September 4-5 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre and on September 8-9 in Johannesburg at

the Museum of Africa Design in the Maboneng precinct.

The events will bring together some of the world’s leading online tourism and travel experts

including Facebook, TripAdvisor, Expedia, Twitter, Google and a host of new local and international speakers.

To register visit: www.e-tourismfrontiers.com ■

Disney restricts marketing to protect brand

DORINE REINSTEIN

DISNEY has cracked down on how online travel agencies and tour operators use the Disney trademark in an attempt to protect its brand. “With online marketing practices continuing to evolve, we feel the time is right to take this necessary step to protect the Disney brand,” the company said in a statement.

Disney issued a new online marketing policy, which will come into effect in January. It stipulates that travel professionals will no longer be able to bid on or buy keywords that contain Disney

trademarks or trade names.

The policy also restricts travel professionals from using Disney trademarks, trade names and service marks in domains as either the destination URL or display URL, or as a subdomain.

Although the new policy could impact on travel agencies’ websites, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, Instagram and other social media outlets, **Hennie Olivier**, marketing services executive of Thompsons Holidays, says the new policy is not meant to police preferred travel agencies or tour operators. “This is merely to protect

their brands, hence their policing advertising and marketing with non-preferred operators.”

Hennie says as a preferred Disney partner, Thompsons Holidays receives templates and guidelines from Disney to speed up the approval processes. “All marketing collateral is forwarded to Disney for approval prior to its going live in case of any interim changes on specific templates.” Hennie adds that Thompsons works closely with the travel trade who advertise Thompsons Disney packages to ensure that they meet the Disney guidelines. ■

AmaWaterways launches online check-in

AMAWATERWAYS has announced the launch of online check-in for cruises departing from October 1.

Guests or their travel agents can complete an online check-in by visiting www.amawaterways.com/ check-in, immediately after placing the cruise deposit.

The check-in will ensure that guests’ information,

as it appears on their passports, is correct, allow guests to submit dietary needs and special occasions they will be celebrating on board, allow them to sign up for tours once final payment has been made and ensure that their membership of the ‘Privilege Rewards’ programme is up to date.

Clients must complete the cruise check-in no later than 75 days prior to departure for final documents to be sent in time.

The cruise check-in requires emergency contact, passport and visa information if applicable. A booking number and last name are needed to log in and start the process. ■

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Kenya Airways moves to new terminal

KENYA Airways has moved the following departures to the new Terminal 1A at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. KQ 760 and KQ 762 to Johannesburg; KQ 480 to Dar es Salaam; and KQ 410 to Entebbe. The terminal will initially only handle departures but will become fully operational in 2015. The new terminal is for the exclusive use of KQ and its SkyTeam partner airlines.

BA extends hand-baggage-only fares

BRITISH Airways has extended its hand-baggage-only fares to all short-haul flights from Gatwick, Heathrow and London City airports, in all classes. Passengers can carry on a case measuring up to 56cm x 45cm x 25cm, plus a handbag or laptop bag.

SkyTeam launches cost-saving travel passes

SKYTEAM has launched new 'Go Round Asia' and 'Southwest Pacific' passes, giving customers a flexible way to explore 26 countries. The passes have been designed as a mini 'Round the World' ticket that offers cost savings on flights operated by SkyTeam members serving these regions. Customers can choose from a minimum of three to a maximum of 11 flights for travel in economy or business class. Travel must begin and end in the same country and at least one stop must be in Australia or New Zealand. Travellers can buy a pass three days in advance of their travel dates.

Experience the unusual



Holiday Tours has just launched its 'Experience' products, in which it has packaged unusual participatory items into selected tours. Gauteng agents gathered at 54 on Bath for a delicious tea and a demonstration of cocktail mixology, which is one of the experiences the operator is currently including in a seven-night offer at Preskil Beach Hotel in Mauritius. Also included in the rate (from R13 300pps), is a beginner's course in Scuba. Here, from left, Sue Howells (African Synergy) and Kara Weinstein check on the quality of the cocktails they mixed at the function. Photo: Kate Nathan

Wilderness unveils Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp

WILDERNESS Safaris has opened the Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp in Namibia's remote Kaokoveld.

The camp is in the private Palmwag Concession, straddling the Palmwag area and Skeleton Coast National Park. It comprises eight stylish en-suite tents (including one family unit) each with a shaded outdoor lounge area with views of the desert, while the main area includes a lounge, bar area, dining room, library, fire pit, swimming pool and deck.

Guests can explore the area on foot, by vehicle and by air with Wilderness Safaris guides. Unique attractions include true desert oases found in the Hoanib

floodplains and unique game-viewing opportunities. The area is home to desert-adapted elephant, as well as gemsbok, giraffe, springbok and occasionally lion and rhino.

For itineraries of three nights or more, guests can enjoy a scenic flight to the world-famous Skeleton Coast and its seal colonies and pebble beaches (weather permitting).

"Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp adds a very different and special dimension to our north-west Namibian circuit," says Mike Wassung, Wilderness Safaris Namibia ceo. "Its location in the isolated Kaokoveld makes it an ideal option for adventurous travellers looking for an off-the-beaten-track destination and

the opportunity to see a variety of desert-adapted species."

The camp's low-impact design is sensitive to its fragile desert environment, operating on 100% solar power. In line with Wilderness Safaris' ongoing commitment to Namibia's community-based Natural Resource Management policy, the 20-year concession is a joint venture with the neighbouring community-based conservancies of Anabeb, Torra and Sesfontein.

Hoanib can be combined with Wilderness's other exceptional offerings in the north-west region for an authentic desert experience within Namibia, from Damaraland and Desert Rhino Camps to Serra Cafema in the far north. ■



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Nelspruit 9 Dec '14	All events - 6:00 for 6:30pm	

Join our group: Trafalgar 2015

TRAFALGAR
see the world from the inside

CemAir looks at Pretoria-Cape Town flights

CEMAIR is investigating the introduction of scheduled flights from Pretoria to Cape Town International Airport.

It already operates scheduled services from OR Tambo International and Cape Town International to Margate, Plettenberg Bay and Sishen.

CemAir has been in discussions with Wonderboom

Airport north of Pretoria and said the airport management team were confident that the airport was ready and adequately equipped to offer such a service.

In conjunction with Capital City Business Chamber, CemAir is conducting market research into the demand and economic feasibility of

such flights. An online survey can be completed by clicking on the survey link on either the following websites: www.cemair.co.za or www.flycemair.co.za.

CemAir's CRJ 50-seat regional jets, designed for short- to medium-haul flights, would serve the proposed route. ■



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TNW634SD

Conflict zones – do you know your passengers' flight path?

CHANA BOUCHER

DO YOU know the exact flight paths taken by the aircraft carrying your passengers? Following a spate of tragedies in the aviation sector, most notably the shooting down of flight MH17, travellers are asking questions they expect their travel agents to know the answers to.

"We have had several queries from corporate clients flying within Europe as to the routings of airlines in proximity to the Ukraine and Israel," says **Rachael Penaluna**, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel. She says clients need assurance that agents check the security situation and fly zones in times of war before booking their routings.

Sailesh Parbhu, md of XL Nexus Travel, says: "We cannot predict if anything will happen but an identified conflict zone by the relevant world bodies

should not be taken lightly and we will ensure that our clients are informed of the areas so they too have a choice in the selection of carrier. It is in our best interest to ensure we minimise any additional stress our clients may feel flying over certain unstable areas."

Emirates was the first airline to divert some of its flights to avoid Iraqi airspace and protect against the threat of Islamic militants on the ground. The airline told the BBC it was taking precautionary measures and working on alternative routing plans for flights using Iraqi airspace. "We are closely monitoring the situation along with international agencies and will never compromise the safety of our customers and crew." European airlines, including Air France and KLM have reportedly taken similar approaches.

Sailesh believes international travel will always be a risk

as many factors cannot be controlled. "The aviation industry has largely been a very safe environment. Any air accident will be one too many as the number of fatalities is usually very high. This in itself is what is worrying. The impact on international travel will

"Airlines need clear and accurate information on which to base operational decisions on where and when it is safe to fly."

not be a decrease in flights, [rather] route changes, more vigilance about safety, longer security checks and pre-flight screening of travellers.

"All we can do as a TMC, is keep our travellers alert to security and safety standards and changes. We can ensure that our travellers are well informed of the destination

and routes they are flying. It is important to remain transparent, informed and within constant communication with our aligned carriers as this is a fundamental objective when we offer our services to our clients," adds Sailesh.

While agents hold an airline liable for carrying their clients safely, **Linden Birns**, md of Plane Talking, says airlines rely on information from government authorities on the safety of their airspace.

At a recent meeting between IATA, IATA, the Airports Council International and the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation to review processes for the overflight of conflict zones, IATA dg and ceo, **Tony Tyler**, said: "Airlines need clear and accurate information on which to base operational decisions on where and when it is safe to fly. In the case of MH17 airlines were told that flights above 32 000 feet that traversed Ukraine would not

be in harm's way. We now know how wrong that guidance was. It is essential that airlines receive clear guidance regarding threats to their passengers, crew and aircraft. Such information must be accessible in an authoritative, accurate, consistent, and unequivocal way. This is the responsibility of states."

The organisations agreed to the formation of a senior level task force, comprising state and industry experts to address the civil aviation and national security issues arising from MH17. The industry called on the International Civil Aviation Organization to address fail-safe channels for essential threat information to be made available to civil aviation authorities and industry as well as the need to incorporate into international law, measures to govern the design, manufacture and deployment of modern anti-aircraft weaponry. ■



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iBeacon – the new buzzword

Apple's new iBeacon device is trending in the travel industry. The hype is that the product will revolutionise the way people travel through airports. What do travel agents need to know about iBeacon to give them an edge? Dorine Reinstein reports.

BEACON technology is a way of providing proximity and context information to mobile devices. Beacon devices transmit a signal using Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE). When a BLE-enabled device, such as a smartphone, moves within range of the iBeacon's signal it can trigger an action, such as displaying a message on the phone.

How is it used in the travel industry?

iBeacons provide a proximity-based alerting system that can trigger an app on a smartphone at a great distance, for example, displaying a boarding pass stored in a mobile wallet like Passbook.

Airlines have used iBeacons to simplify and improve the passenger experience with check-in and boarding. Virgin Atlantic has carried out tests at Heathrow using iBeacons to trigger the boarding pass

to appear on the device automatically.

Norm Rose, senior technology and corporate market analyst of PhocusWright, says Beacon technology in general, will have a significant impact on the in-transit and in-destination communication with travellers.

He says iBeacons can provide travellers with airport directions, including gate changes, and marketing messages for airport shops. iBeacons can also be used for marketing hotel shops, restaurants and potentially surrounding activities. It is also possible for restaurants and activities or attractions to send out iBeacon messages with special offers.

What does this mean for agents?

Norm says it is unlikely travel agents will be implementing iBeacons themselves unless they

are an all-inclusive tour operator. He says travel agents need to start investigating how iBeacons are being implemented in cities and by suppliers to see if they can piggyback on Beacon technology. "The bottom line is that travel agents will need to work with suppliers to access iBeacons in transit and in-destination."

What are the pitfalls?

Norm says the main concern with iBeacon is that it will turn into a 'bombardment of unwanted messages'. He says, generally speaking, people don't like the idea of companies tracking their location, nor their phones automatically activating various sensors just because they happen to be in the general vicinity of another device's sensors. "As iBeacon is applied to travel, we need to have the necessary opt-in capabilities to enable control by the traveller." ■

Avis introduces new Mercedes C-Class

AVIS has announced that the new Mercedes-Benz C-Class is available in the Avis Rent a Car and Avis Point 2 Point fleet.

The company has received the largest Mercedes-Benz C-class consignment available in the car-rental industry, providing clients with a convenient way to

test drive the new model.

The vehicle has been placed under the Group H category in the Avis Rent a Car fleet, which is exclusive to the Mercedes-Benz ranges.

The new Mercedes-Benz C-Class rental rates can be accessed at www.avis.co.za. ■

Sharmaine Scott selects the top specials from Travelinfo

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- **Club Med.** Phuket – last-minute offer, departing September 7. Rates are from R14 860pp sharing at the 4 Trident Club Med Resort. Offer includes return flights ex-JNB, taxes, return transfers, Club Room accommodation, three meals a day, all-day snacking, open bar, various sporting activities plus Club Med entertainment.
- **Travel with Options.** Réunion specials – rates are from R13 743pp sharing. Offer includes return flights ex-JNB, taxes, airport transfers, seven nights' accommodation (three-star) with daily breakfast. Self-catering and four-star rates are also available. Offer is valid for travel between September 1 and November 30.
- **Holiday Inn Express Durban-Umhlanga.** uShaka holiday package – rates are from R1 500 per room per night. Offer includes accommodation, free Express Start breakfast and four Combo tickets to uShaka Marine World Wet 'n Wild. Package expires August 31. Book online at www.hiexhotels.co.za.
- **Worldview.** New Year's Eve special to Vienna. Rates are from €532 (R7 542) for three nights to €743 (R10 535) for five nights. Offer is valid from December 30 to January 4. Package includes return airport transfers, accommodation with buffet breakfast, city tour and concert ticket for December 31 in the Musikverein, standing room.



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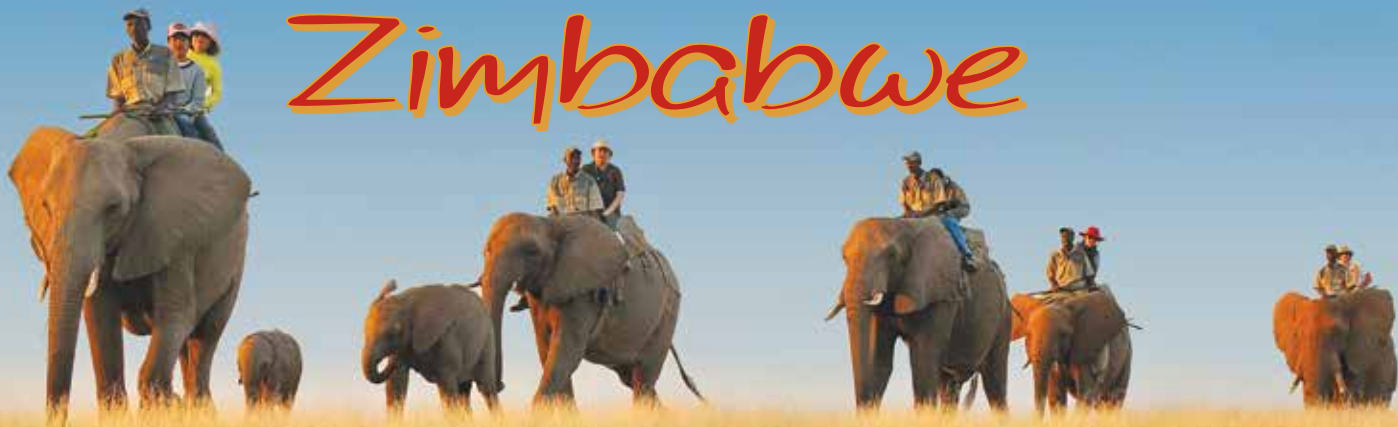
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Zimbabwe



Is tourism to Zimbabwe increasing? Debbie Badham finds varied responses.

Mixed fortunes for tourism

WHEN AIR Zimbabwe launched its bold promotional campaign, *Cruising Altitude*, last year, members of the tourism industry were upbeat about a possible boost in tourist numbers. A year later, tour operators offer mixed responses on whether their optimism has translated into numbers.

Wilderness Safaris has seen strong growth in demand for Zimbabwe over the past year, with a major resurgence in interest for Hwange in particular. "Based on this increased demand, we recently announced that we would be growing our portfolio in Hwange with the new Linkwasha Camp, which will open in 2015," comments **Ron Goatley**, md of Wilderness Safaris Zimbabwe. "Future bookings continue to look positive."

He attributes this growth to greater awareness. Campaigns such as Wilderness's 'Come back to Zimbabwe' promotion, as well as large-scale conferences such as the UNWTO General Assembly and Routes Africa, an African aviation event, have in Ron's opinion, increased confidence in the destination.

While international travellers

from the US, UK and France account for a significant part of Wilderness's market to Zimbabwe, the company reports a considerable increase in "adventurous" South Africans rediscovering the country in recent years.

Travel Vision, too, has seen an increase in corporate bookings to Zimbabwe over the past year. "The US dollar exchange rate has been relatively stable this year and corporate companies that had been waiting for a drop in rates last year have now decided to bite the bullet and travel at the current rate this year," explains **Sarah Whiteside**, sales and marketing manager.

She says the country has a lot going for it, such as its beauty and great service levels. "Zimbabweans have a well-earned reputation for being very friendly and pleasant to work with."

However, not all tour operators report growth. **John Ridler**, media and PR manager for Thompsons Holidays, reveals that, in spite of local activities that remain a popular draw card and the growing perception that Zimbabwe is a safe destination, demand has been static. "This is largely because of prices, which have

increased as a result of land and airline taxes."

Africa Stay has seen a decline in the number of clients booking Victoria Falls as a result of the liquidation of 1time. "When we compare the numbers from when 1time was flying there to now – there has been a slight decline – probably because of the cost of getting to Vic Falls. If you look at a three-night package with accommodation, flights and taxes into Vic Falls, it works out to be more expensive than some of the four-night packages into other destinations such as Zanzibar, which offer more inclusions," comments **Juan Nel**, marketing manager.

He notes, however, that the introduction of FlyAfrica and possibly other low-cost carriers in the future may again increase this demand.

"Improved air access, as well as the upgrades and expansion of Victoria Falls Airport will certainly result in an increase in visitors," agrees Ron. "These factors, coupled with great value for money, excellent weather, an incredible safari offering and friendly people make Zimbabwe a fantastic option for tourists." he concludes.

On the MICE radar

MUCH of the optimism around increasing tourism to Zimbabwe has been directed towards the country's MICE offering, but MICE experts also provide conflicting reports on whether or not this is reflected by demand.

Gill Dewar, md of GCD Consulting, says there is renewed interest, with business and hotels now gaining momentum off the back of the slump of the last few years, primarily because Victoria Falls is seen to stand alone from the rest of the country. "Zimbabwe also has such fantastic options for tourists that it simply cannot be ignored."

Gill maintains, however, that the country is still not quoted as often as it should be, because Zambia offers excellent options just on the other side of the Zambezi, and has taken advantage of the political problems in Zimbabwe to grow its infrastructure.

While **Geoff Saner**, md of Leading Incentives, agrees that there is some renewed interest in Zimbabwe because of its considerable marketing campaign, he says that willingness to

consider the country as an option depends largely on the corporate client in question and whether they have been there before. "For those who haven't, we always include Vic Falls as a close and budget-friendly option."

On the other hand, **Huw Tuckett**, md of Uwin Inwin Incentives, maintains that the incentives business has not seen an increase in requests for Victoria Falls. He adds, however, that Zimbabwe is not alone in this as the company has also seen a decline in demand for other regional destinations such as Mauritius, Mozambique and Zanzibar. "Most requests at present are for cruises and European destinations."

Huw attributes this to the "been there and done that" attitude that many South Africans have towards regional destinations. "What's more, regional destinations do not have the same perceived value as travelling further afield for incentive trips. If you compare a cruise through the Mediterranean with a trip to Vic Falls, the cruise has much higher perceived value," he maintains.

Photo: Wild Horizons

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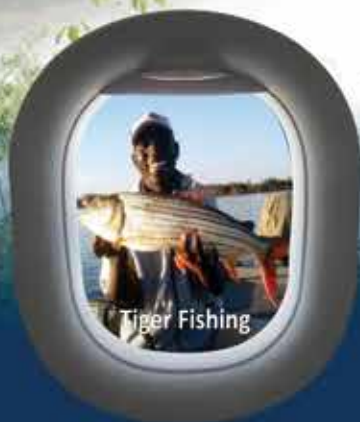
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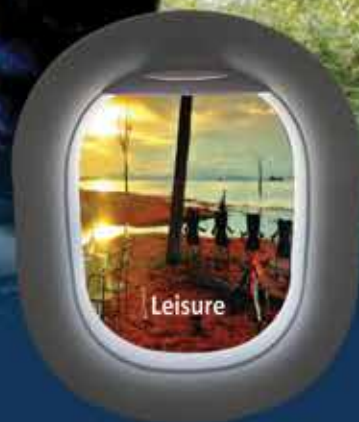
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The Harare-Kariba service uses the MA60. Photo: Wikimedia

Air Zimbabwe re-launches Kariba flights

AIR Zimbabwe re-launched Harare-Kariba flights on August 1. The airline, which has not flown to Kariba since 2006, will again link this resort town with Victoria Falls.

The launch is part of the Zimbabwean government's plans to strengthen the country as an African hub and

simultaneously Air Zimbabwe through the launch of various new routes. The service operates on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays using a 52-seat MA60 aircraft.

Flight UM226 departs Harare at 09h30 and arrives in Kariba at 10h20, departing Kariba at 10h50 and arriving

in Victoria Falls at 12h10. Flight UM227 departs Victoria Falls at 14h00 and arrives in Kariba at 15h20. It departs at 15h50 and arrives in Harare at 16h40.

Passengers flying one-way can also link with Air Zimbabwe's flights between Harare and Victoria Falls.

New white-water adventures

KHANONDO Safaris and Tours is offering full-day white-water rafting packages at Vic Falls.

During the high-water season, guests have the opportunity to experience rapids 11 to 24, and in the low water season rapids one to 21.

Meeting point for the day is at Guest Paradise in the Victoria Falls National Park, where a brief introduction is offered. After the activities, rafters can enjoy beers and sodas at the top of the gorge with lunch on request.

At US\$99 (R1 048) per person, the package includes national park fees, transfers to and from hotels, use of rafting equipment, mineral water, the services of the guide and safety kayakers. The offer is valid until December 31.



A high wire swing overlooks the first hairpin bend of the Zambezi River. Photo: Wild Horizons

Wild Horizons unveils new 360° Lookout

THE 360° Lookout is a brand-new development at the Wild Horizons Lookout jump site. Located on the edge of Batoka Gorge, the Lookout will overlook the Victoria Falls Bridge at the first hairpin bend of the Zambezi River.

While building plans are still being finalised, the basic structure will consist of a 40-seat restaurant on the ground level on an extended balcony overlooking the gorge. The Wild Horizons high wire

operations will also be on the same level, providing a tranquil environment for jumpers to put on their harnesses and undergo briefing and giving family and friends a dedicated space to watch proceedings, while enjoying a meal or drink from the restaurant.

The top level will feature the circular 360° Lookout Cocktail Bar, with a great view of the gorge and bridge. The new facility is expected to open towards the end of the year.



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TNW7172

Long-stay apartment option

CRESTA Hotels recently launched Cresta Oasis Apartments in Harare's CBD. The apartments provide long-stay guests with all the benefits of hotel amenities, while at the same time affording them privacy.

Each apartment is fully furnished with free WiFi, DSTV, secure parking a housekeeping service as well as other amenities such as free tea and coffee packs.

According to Cresta, the long-stay market in Zimbabwe, and Harare in particular, continues to make a significant contribution to the number of visitors entering the capital. It notes that there

has been an increase in technicians heading to Harare for between three and six months who need a temporary home while they conduct their business.

The group says when travellers stay on business trips for several weeks they want greater flexibility than most traditional hotel rooms offer. "There is a growing niche of young professionals who don't want the fuss of all the hidden costs in renting an apartment, preferring something inclusive," says group ceo of Cresta Hotels, **Glenn Stutchbury**. "Cresta Apartments presents them with the perfect option." ■



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Births, deaths, marriages, promotions – we want to know! Please fax or e-mail TNW's Debbie Badham, at debbieb@nowmedia.co.za or (011) 327 4094.



Say cheese!

The Travel Corporation hosted members of the travel industry at its Cheese for Charity fundraising initiative at its offices in Rivonia on August 14. Food security is one of the biggest needs facing vulnerable communities at present and the event was held in support of establishing vegitunnels for needy schools in the wider Soweto region. In total, R10 000 was raised. Vegitunnels are installed with a simple hydroponic system enabling communities to cultivate their chosen produce, such as spinach, which is a great starter as it is hardy and produces a significant amount of product. It is not uncommon for 1000 large spinach leaves to be harvested each week from one vegitunnel, resulting in a retail value of R2 500 per month over and above personal consumption. Joining in the fundraising events were Flight Centre's (from left) Zoe Illingworth, Dmitri Eremin, Kosie Nagel, Angela Thomas and Kate Powell.

Appointments

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group has named **Volkan Vural** as general manager of the Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton, Johannesburg. Volkan was previously gm of the Radisson Blu Al Mahray Hotel Libya where he was responsible for the successful operation of the property. Prior to this he was based in Turkey where he headed up the DoubleTree by Hilton.



The Mantis Collection has appointed **Paul Kavanagh** as the new gm at The George in Lagos, Nigeria. Paul brings considerable knowledge to the new role with an extensive background in the hospitality industry.

Les Murray has joined Mantis as chef at The George in Lagos, Nigeria. Les has been with the Southern Sun group since 1983 and has worked as executive chef at some of the group's best known properties.

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Kenya rethinks visas

From page 1
 passport holders would, from September 1, need to acquire a visa before travelling to Kenya. This was a tit-for-tat move as a reaction to the new immigration laws in South

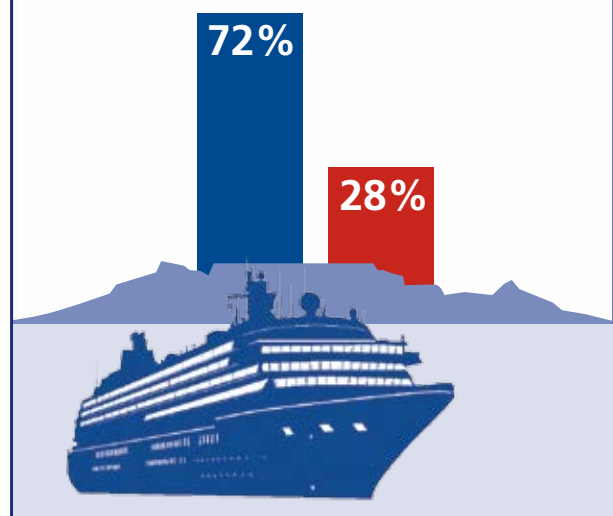
Africa. The decision has been heavily criticised by tourism and travel stakeholders who said the inconvenience and cost burdens would deter travellers from visiting the country. ■



Cruising – Cape departures in demand

The City Cape Town remains supportive of the construction of a dedicated cruise liner terminal. Is there enough demand?

■ Yes
 ■ No



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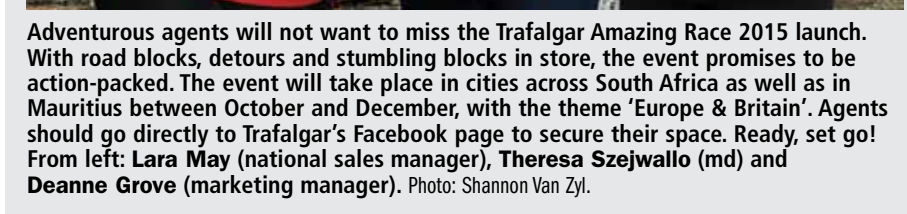
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The race is on!



Adventurous agents will not want to miss the Trafalgar Amazing Race 2015 launch. With road blocks, detours and stumbling blocks in store, the event promises to be action-packed. The event will take place in cities across South Africa as well as in Mauritius between October and December, with the theme 'Europe & Britain'. Agents should go directly to Trafalgar's Facebook page to secure their space. Ready, set go! From left: Lara May (national sales manager), Theresa Szejwallo (md) and Deanne Grove (marketing manager). Photo: Shannon Van Zyl.

'Out the box' or outrageous?

DORINE REINSTEIN

OWNER of Imagine Holidays and Imagine Cruising is taking his retail agency to the next level, setting up shop in popular Stuttafords retail stores. But travel agents have expressed their doubts on whether the concept will work in South Africa.

Imagine ceo, **Robin Deller**, told TNW he is hoping to attract the attention of affluent South African shoppers. "By aligning its brand with Stuttafords, Imagine benefits from a captive audience of loyal shoppers who are the right target market for its cruising and holiday packages, while Stuttafords offers its existing and prospective customers an additional, convenient, and classy travel consultation service in-store."

But agents are doubtful. One ITC voiced her concern

on TNW's online sister publication, eTNW, saying: "The in-store desk was tried in South Africa and did not attract the business anticipated. The cost of installing, maintaining and staffing a unit far outweighs the turnover. Clients know when a consultant does not have the knowledge and expertise. These desks will be competing with existing agencies in the malls where these stores are to be found."

Another agent questioned whether Imagine would be available after hours to assist travellers in case of an emergency.

Robin says, however, that Imagine operates as any other retail travel agency, with the same expertise, service fees and supplier commissions. He says the concession store within Stuttafords is just another distribution channel to reach the target market.

"The fact that these retail stores are located in an area where people are already in a shopping mindset, in a store with a respected brand, lends further convenience and credibility to the shopping experience."

In the UK, the concept of opening up a travel agency within a retail fashion store has proven to be a successful business model. Virgin Holidays opened its first 'concession stores' in two Sainsbury's supermarkets in 2011 and found the concept very lucrative. Virgin Holidays customer director, **Mark Anderson**, says: "Our concession stores give shoppers the chance to buy their dream holiday in an environment they're comfortable in as well as giving them ample opportunity to discuss options, ask questions and consider their choices before purchasing." ■

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