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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

TNW6244SD

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'We're not a new business' – FlySafair

NATASHA SCHMIDT

NEW to the LCC game but not new to aviation, FlySafair launches its first flight this week on October 16.

Ceo, **Dave Andrews**, told TNW the response from the South African market had been good but that the travel trade was slow to get on board. "We've seen consistent growth, week on week, in ticket sales. Things are certainly headed in the right direction." But Dave admitted there had been hesitance from the trade, who had the stance "when you start flying, then we'll talk".

However, unlike many other start-up low-cost

carriers that have come and gone in the South African market, the airline has 40 years' experience in the aviation industry. "Our biggest benefit is that this is not our only business and we're not a true 'new' business. Safair has been around a long time; we have a lot of experience and assets. We're not solely dependent on our low-cost operation," Dave said.

He added that the oil price seemed to be heading in the right direction, which boded well for all airlines. Another advantage was that Safair's traditional business is outside the country, with dollar earnings, so the

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Ready for take-off

Dave Andrews, FlySafair ceo, is ready to fill those seats. "Things are certainly headed in the right direction," he says. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Kulula partners with SkyTeam members

CARO MALHERBE

AIR France is the second SkyTeam alliance member to partner with kulula.com following the implementation of a codeshare agreement with Kenya Airways earlier this year, marking the start of what could be an interchangeable network with SkyTeam partners throughout the alliance.

This is according to **Erik Venter**, Comair ceo, who spoke at the launch of the Air France-kulula codeshare partnership on October 2. Partnering with other international carriers is something kulula would be looking at for the future.

Air France will add its code to kulula's domestic route network, allowing customers to seamlessly connect to and from Cape

"BA branding and franchising for Comair will continue as usual; from a kulula perspective, we can pretty much do what we want to."

Town, Durban, George and East London by purchasing a single Air France ticket, with the convenience of

one-stop check-in and baggage transfer.

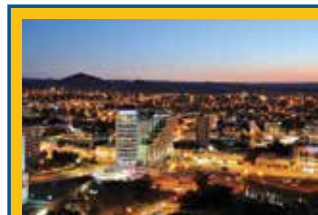
Erik said it would take a while to get all the technology systems and policies aligned but that the airline had already entered into talks with other SkyTeam members to extend its service offering.

It made sense to have interchangeability with all SkyTeam members, Erik said. "So if you want

to fly Delta from Atlanta to Durban, you can fly all the way through and fly SkyTeam all the way back again."

These new partnerships would not conflict with Comair's arrangement with big brother, British Airways, Erik said. "BA has no real say about what happens in operations at all. BA branding and franchising

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- SAX and SAA – another bail-out?
- Thailand considers new safety measures
- AF and kulula announce codeshare
- KZN beach – is nude rude?
- Ebola – Daily update for travellers



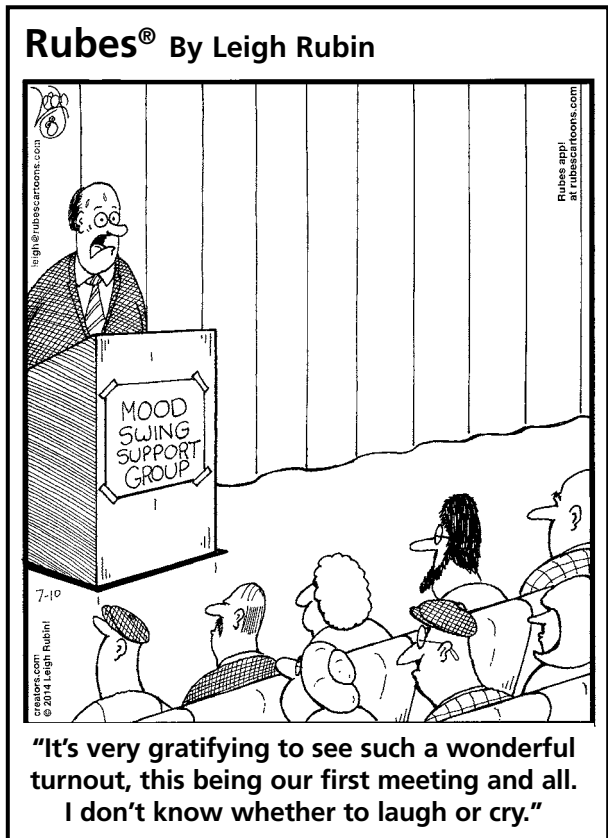
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Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



“It’s very gratifying to see such a wonderful turnout, this being our first meeting and all. I don’t know whether to laugh or cry.”

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Emirates inks deal with TAAG

DORINE REINSTEIN

EMIRATES has embarked on the first step of its plans to aggressively expand operations in Africa by over 40%, by signing a 10-year management contract with TAAG Angola Airlines.

The Gulf carrier will work closely with the Angolan government and TAAG to formulate and implement a business plan, provide management support and devise fleet and route network strategies to strengthen the

airline’s position.

Both airlines will also co-operate through bilateral codesharing and participation of customers in both airlines’ frequent flyer programmes.

Emirates will not contribute equity under this agreement but appoint four senior managers to work for TAAG.

“Through this partnership, Emirates aims to provide deeper reach and better connectivity for our passengers in Central and South Africa,” said **H.H. Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum**, chairman

and ce of Emirates. He said Emirates would continue to grow its presence in Africa by opening new routes, increasing flight frequencies, and upgrading aircraft to meet the increasing demand.

H.E. Augusto da Silva Tomás, Angola’s minister of transport, said staff would be retained. He added that TAAG would remain an Angolan company operated primarily by Angolans. “The signing of this agreement today marks a very decisive step towards the restructuring of TAAG.” ■

Arik launches loyalty programme

CHANA BOUCHER

DESPITE a slump in travel to West Africa, Nigerian carrier, Arik Air, has forged ahead with plans to launch a frequent flyer programme, Arik Affinity Wings.

Isla Moffet, sales and marketing manager for South Africa, says although passenger numbers have dropped since the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, prior to this the South African market was growing for Arik Air. “Since our inception and sustained service on the Johannesburg route, we have seen continual passenger and revenue growth, month on month. Our regular South African travellers will be delighted that they now

have an added value on to the tickets that they are purchasing.”

Frequent flyers can earn miles on domestic, regional and long-haul flights. The miles can be used to fly to any destination on Arik Air’s network, to upgrade tickets and make payments for excess baggage. Members of Arik Affinity Wings are also entitled to benefits such as extra baggage allowance, access to Arik Air’s business lounges and priority check-in at the airport.

Michael Arumemi-Ikhide, Arik Air’s global ceo, says: “Arik Air has been the success story of Nigerian commercial aviation and we are delighted to be able to reward the loyalty of our

customers by offering a frequent flyer programme. Affinity Wings is just one in a long line of upgrades to our customer offering and we plan on announcing a number of additional benefits to the programme over the coming months.”

To join, Arik Air customers can log on to the website and complete an online enrolment form. They will receive 1 000 bonus Affinity Miles and a personal membership number. Members begin at Affinity Wings Pearl level and move to Bronze, Silver and Gold as they accumulate Affinity points.

For more on loyalty programmes, see *TNW*’s feature on page 7. ■

Iata warned against ‘discriminative practices’

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE European Commission has warned that it will closely monitor “Iata’s intent to preserve anonymous shopping”, saying the New Distribution Capability could lead to discriminative practices.

The advisory body on data protection (WP29) recently issued a letter to Iata saying: “References have been made to potential discriminatory practices in the process of price formation related to the amount of personal information provided in advance by the potential customer that could result in surcharges linked to anonymous ticket offer requests.”

The European Technology and Travel Services Association (Ettsa) welcomed the letter, saying it leaves space for Iata to work with

stakeholders on the current privacy concerns. **Christoph Klenner**, secretary general of Ettsa, said: “It is a stern warning, which we welcome.”

Christoph told *TNW* there were several privacy concerns with the NDC’s data collection, and since the NDC had not been formally implemented yet there were no safeguards in place. “An important first step would be to provide data privacy guidance to airlines and distributors. We have reached out to Iata with the proposal to work together on producing such guidance.”

However, **Yanik Hoyles**, Iata’s head of NDC programme, FDS Transformation, says the letter doesn’t constitute a “stern warning” and that this is “all in Christoph’s over-heated imagination”. He says: “While the WP29 wants to monitor the implementation of the NDC standard in the future, we were encouraged that they identified

nothing to warrant any action at this time.”

Yanik says Ettsa worked with Iata to offer the US DOT specific language to include in its approval of NDC to preserve anonymous shopping.

Christoph says, however, the language in the Iata/ Open Allies agreement reads ‘Approval of Iata Resolution 787 does not constitute approval of any agreement among Iata member airlines to require the disclosure by any passenger of personal information of any kind’.

He says: “This means that in the US if multiple airlines wish to require disclosure of personal data from consumers that is subject to separate scrutiny by the US government. The provision does not resolve any specific data protection issues, and is an open question to what extent it applies to EU and other jurisdictions.” ■

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A snapshot of the week's airline news

BA adds new routes from Gatwick

BRITISH Airways has added Seville, Funchal and Las Palmas to its 2015 Gatwick schedule. The flights are open for bookings, with the first flights taking off in March, operated by A319s and A320s. From December this year, other new leisure destinations served from Gatwick are Fuerteventura, Friedrichshafen and Grenoble.

Kenya Airways unveils new lounges

TWO new executive lounges will soon be available to passengers flying on Kenya Airways and its SkyTeam partners at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Kenya. The Pride Lounge and the Simba Lounge will feature free WiFi, a soundproof transit passenger sleeping area, dining lounge, washrooms and showers, a cigar room, piped music, a kiddies' zone and a dining/working area.

Thai Airways introduces MSC

THAI Airways has introduced Amadeus married segment control (MSC) effective September 12 to increase the efficiency of its seat management. Agents will now need to book long-haul itineraries with connecting flights from the place of departure through to the final destination, rather than in segments.



Hello summer!

Contiki has unveiled its new 2015 Europe brochure, featuring eight new trip styles that cater for the different experiences young people want from their holidays. Travellers will no longer choose their itineraries based on accommodation but rather based on their travel style, whether they enjoy the bright lights of major cities or prefer relaxing on world-famous beaches. The new line-up offers 16 new trips, including new destinations Morocco and Portugal. Contiki representatives **Chantelle Negppen** (standing), **Lauren Blaine** (left) and **Nicola Louw** (right), hit the road with their promo boys to visit agents and share the news. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl.



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Air Mauritius launches stopover packages

AIR Mauritius has officially launched its Mauritius Stopover Plus Travel Package, which offers passengers up to two complimentary nights in Mauritius as part of their journey.

"Being a global carrier with an effective footprint in Australia, India, China, Malaysia, Europe, Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands,

it is key for Air Mauritius to promote its beyond Mauritius destination strategy," says Air Mauritius regional manager, Southern Africa and Latin America, **Carla da Silva**.

Depending on the connectivity, passengers can spend a night on the island on either a bed-and-breakfast or half-board basis. Passengers can choose to extend their stopover by adding an

extra night or two.

The Mauritius Stopover Plus Package lets passengers choose from around 16 hotels, ranging between three- and five-star. Urban hotels in Port Louis have been included to meet the needs of corporate travellers.

"A family of four can expect to save as much as R5 500 at the current rate of exchange," Carla adds. ■

More flight options to NZ

SINGAPORE Airlines and Air New Zealand will enter into a codeshare on January 6, with flights already on sale for services between Singapore and New Zealand on both airlines.

Alvin Seah, gm for Central and Southern Africa at Singapore Airlines, said both carriers would operate one return service each per day on the Singapore-Auckland route and Singapore Airlines would operate a daily return service between Singapore

and Christchurch.

The alliance will also give Singapore Airlines codeshare connectivity to a further 40 destinations in Air New Zealand's network. In turn, Air New Zealand will codeshare to a further 50 destinations on the Singapore Airlines and SilkAir network.

Alvin said: "Through increased frequency between Singapore and New Zealand and new codeshare destinations, it provides

numerous benefits to our customers."

Air New Zealand ceo, **Christopher Luxon** said: "Our alliance with Singapore Airlines going on sale is an exciting milestone in our growth strategy. We are looking forward to operating to Singapore for the first time in eight years, with this alliance allowing us to further expand our long-haul network and open up a wide range of new codeshare destinations for our customers." ■

Airlink ups CPT-Upington flights

AIRLINK has increased its flights between Cape Town and Upington, effective October 6. With the additional frequencies, the airline now offers 10 return flights a week on the route.

The new flight departs CPT at 12h15, with the return

flight departing UTN at 13h55 on Mondays and Fridays. On Sundays there are now two flights. The first departs CPT at 10h45 with the return flight departing UTN at 12h50. The second flight departs CPT at 13h15 and the return flight departs UTN at 15h00.

Flights are operated by a 37-seat Embraer 135 regional jet.

Airlink also recently introduced same-day return flights between CPT and Windhoek and is offering double Voyager Miles until November 30. ■

travel counsellors



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Paul Eftychis, Travel Counsellor

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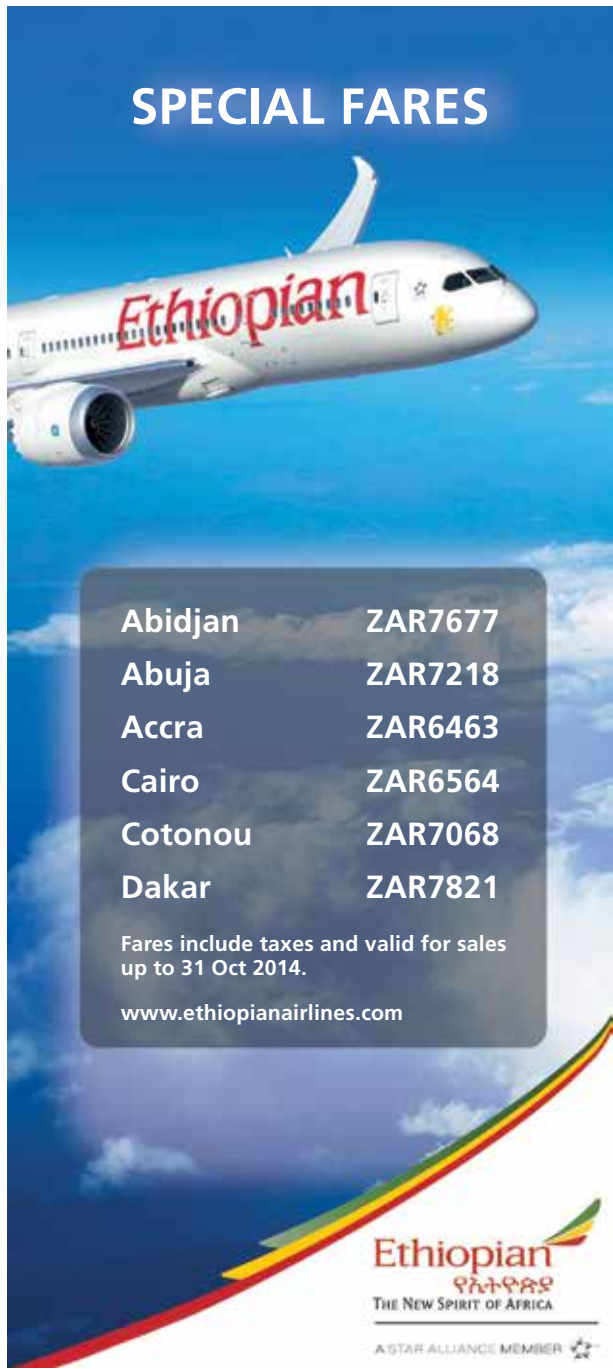


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Late starters, fast movers

THERE is a new scramble for Africa. The battle is among international hotel groups trying to create a significant footprint on the continent, which is regarded (along with South America) as one of the last frontiers.

Andrew McLachlan, Carlson Rezidor vp of business development for Africa and Indian Ocean Islands, says the reasons for this breakthrough are: African politics have become more stable in the past 10 years; many African natural resources are untapped; and there have been new oil and gas finds recently, which are always followed by developments in the banking and telecoms sector.

Carlson Rezidor Group is currently top of this future-facing pile, according to a recent W Hospitality survey, with the largest number of rooms (6 300) and hotels (30) planned and under development in Africa.

Its brand, Radisson Blu, leads all brands in the survey, with its Park Inn brand in third place after Hilton.

The group has put a lot of faith and investment into the continent, despite the chain's late start with Radisson Blu Cape Town in



“Travellers need this type of hotel in areas where infrastructure and outsourcing opportunities are lacking.”

Andrew McLachlan

2000. The reason, Andrew told *TNW*, is: “We look for political stability, manifest in a second round of democratic elections, GDP growth and quality airlift, which in itself is a good indicator of growth. We look at the economic community and build hotel ‘routes’ in a region. For example, in West Africa we service the demands of the region, building hotels in financial hubs even if they are not

capital cities. We are more interested in cities than countries.”

The chain's leading brand is the iconic full-service, upmarket Radisson Blu, which it often uses as a lead-in to a region. “Travellers need this type of hotel in areas where infrastructure and outsourcing opportunities are lacking. Radisson Blu is usually followed by our midscale Park Inn brand.”

Returning to the topic of airlift, Andrew sees immense improvements in this area, with increased activity by SAA, Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, Asky, Emirates, and SN Brussels. This has created more demand for quality hotels and Carlson Rezidor is now a first mover into some of these markets, going where competitors might not, says Andrew.

Currently, the African strategy has two key markets: Nigeria and South Africa, in each of which it aims to have 15 hotels by 2020. It has plans too for five hotels each in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Ghana and Angola. Add to this at least one hotel apiece in Abidjan, Lomé, Ouagadougou, Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, Juba, Gaborone and Lilongwe.

SA projects in the pipeline

Ground-breaking on the 120-room Radisson Blu project, 8km inside the Kruger National Park, should take place early next year. Rooms comprise environmentally sound

tented structures. Andrew says the project will fill a gap at four-star level, between luxury and the SanParks offering. Also, he believes international visitors will be attracted to the known

reliability of the brand.

The 122-room Park Inn Newlands is set to open during October.

The old Le Vendôme will reopen early next year as a Radisson Blu. ■



freedom to connect

Airlink moving to King Mswati III International Airport on 30 September 2014.

Airlink, in collaboration with Swaziland Airlink, will be offering convenient daily flights between Johannesburg and the new Swaziland King Mswati III International Airport (Sikhuphe). Facilities at Sikhuphe include VIP lounge, quick boarding and disembarking from the aircraft, and car hire. Visit www.flyairlink.com

AIRLINK
Freedom of the African Sky

Loyalty Programmes

Spend, rather than miles, is the new philosophy of airline loyalty programmes. Dorine Reinstein reports.

The changing face of loyalty

THIS year an increasing number of airlines have switched from a miles-travelled reward programme to an amount-spent reward programme.

Although the trend is mainly in the US, with Delta, United, American Airlines and US Airways pioneering it, the rest of the world is expected to follow suit. With the new model, travellers earn more miles when they spend more money, not necessarily when they travel more. The rewards are also higher for elite status members.

For airlines, the amount spent is obviously a much better indicator of who their most profitable customers are than the amount of miles flown. A customer flying once a year on a full-fare premium-class ticket is likely to be a more valuable customer than someone who flies 10 times as much, but on cheap tickets.

For TMCs, the new loyalty structure can become quite a headache, as it tempts corporate travellers to book outside their travel policy. The cost of loyalty programmes to a company and the ensuing non-compliance can be considerable. For example, if points are awarded based on the ticket price paid, travellers may consider booking their ticket seven days in advance of travel (when prices tend to be higher) rather than 14 or more days in advance.

An analysis conducted by the US CWT Solutions Group, Carlson Wagonlit's consulting division, confirms this trend. It shows that as a traveller's status increases within a loyalty programme, so does the average ticket price (ATP). The ATP for tickets booked by travellers with airline status measured 15-20% higher than the ATP booked by travellers without status on the same routes.

Ben Langner, md of Carlson

Wagonlit Travel, says loyalty programmes often come at a cost to the company. "If the corporate travel programme is not closely managed, certain traveller behaviour, driven by participation in loyalty schemes, may result in conflict with the organisation's support objectives for suppliers with whom they have agreements. This may result in the corporate missing support performance targets and, therefore, losing out on rewards that may be in the form of discounts, rebates or added benefits."



Adam Weissenberg

Most leisure travellers don't welcome the changes to loyalty programmes either. A survey by Colloquy, a loyalty marketing firm, shows that more than half of frequent flyers, 58%, are confused about how to earn or redeem miles because of recent programme changes. Almost one-third of travellers say they have switched airlines based on changes to their frequent flyer programmes.

Henry Hartevelde, aviation analyst and founder of the Atmosphere Research Group, warns that if airlines want to create loyalty, they'll need to introduce more perks. "Loyalty is an emotion, loyalty is about

fidelity. What the airlines need to strive for is to be the best friend with the best benefits so the customer will think of the airline first and fly it even if it is less convenient, more expensive, or both."

Adam Weissenberg, vice chairman for US travel, hospitality, and leisure at Deloitte & Touche, says airline loyalty programmes are currently failing to engage travellers. He is quoted in a recent study conducted by Deloitte, *Rising above the Clouds*. Adam says 44% of business travellers and 72% of high-frequency business travellers currently participate in two or more airline loyalty programmes. He adds that two-thirds of travellers have also reported that they are at least open to switching to a competing loyalty programme, even after achieving highest status levels.

According to Adam, there is no overriding formula when it comes to loyalty. "An undifferentiated, one-size-fits-all approach to loyalty improvement will seldom be fully successful because no two travel cohorts, and no two individual travellers, are identical in what matters to them in the air travel experience, airline loyalty programmes, and the manner in which they prefer to engage and be engaged. Airlines need to embrace this fundamental premise."

He says if airlines want to strengthen loyalty, they will have to follow four steps. They'll first need to redefine loyalty, and then they'll need to refocus on individual customer preferences. Once they've done that, they'll need to reinvent programmes and experiences by making rewards more meaningful and provide more accessible rewards. Lastly, they'll need to reinvest in foundational capabilities and infrastructure.

Travellers want more choice

AS MOST airlines begin changing their loyalty programmes to truly reward only their most profitable clients, it's not surprising that travellers are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the programmes.

According to a customer engagement survey released by loyalty marketing firms, Colloquy and FanXchange, more than half of American members of loyalty and frequent traveller programmes (54%) are unhappy with the options offered by their loyalty programmes and 48% of travellers are frustrated with the redemption process.

Pet peeves with loyalty programmes included:

expired points (43%); not having enough points to redeem (39%); and reward items not being available (37%). The study also found that consumers would rather receive tickets for live events, such as concerts or sporting events, than for air travel.

Other surveys and studies point to the same trend. In a recent WebFlyer survey, 81% of respondents agreed that loyalty programmes had 'got worse in rewarding loyal customers over the past 25 years'. Ninety-three per cent of respondents agreed that loyalty programmes were not serving loyal customers but were primarily a marketing tool.

Sharing rewards is the new trend

SEVERAL airlines have started adapting their rewards model to allow corporate and frequent travellers to share their miles with loved ones.

Air Mauritius recently adapted its loyalty programme to allow travellers to share miles with a nominee (spouse and children or father and mother). Travellers can share up to 50% of their travel miles.

KLM too now allows its customers to transfer miles into someone else's account.

The new miles transfer service makes it possible for travellers to share their awards with anyone they please, as long as they are Flying Blue members. The process is simple and straightforward. Clients can just tell the airline how many miles they want to transfer as well as the Flying Blue number and last name of the person they are transferring to. Each block of 250 award miles transferred will incur a €3 (R43) fee.

Did you know?

Delta's new loyalty programme will launch in 2015. **Margaret Copeland**, commercial director Southern Africa and Angola, says feedback from Delta's elite members so far has been very positive.



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LOYALTY PROGRAMMES

Airlines				
Programme	Mileage expiry	Partners	Non-related point accrual	Unique selling features
Air Austral Capricorne	Three years	Codeshare flights carrying UU numbers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award flights on UU on one-way basis • Automatic upgrade twice yearly to premium Capricorne status when 12 500 points reached in 12 months • Awards for companions, excess baggage or upgrades • Additional benefits for higher tier members • Priority wait listing • Extra 5kg baggage allowance
Air Botswana Teemane Club	Three years. Status is evaluated towards end of every second year for downgrade/upgrade or to maintain the same status	The airline is working on establishing partners, which will be announced in due course		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority wait listing, check-in and boarding, excess baggage, and exclusive benefits • Use of Pula Lounge at Gaborone and Shongololo & Mashonja at OR Tambo for Gold and Diamond members. Diamond members can invite one guest • Miles credited post-travel with proof, i.e. boarding pass • Members have the catalogue redemption option where they can buy merchandise using miles
Air France KLM Kenya Airways Flying Blue	20 months. May be indefinitely extended depending on activity	SkyTeam members, Alaska Airlines, Airalin, Air Mauritius, BA Comair, Bangkok Airways, Air Corsica, Copa Airlines, GOL, Japan Airlines, Jet Airways, Ukraine International Airlines, Hop!	Hotels, car rental and retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flying Blue Petroleum Club: an exclusive Air France and KLM service for oil and gas industry professionals • Flying Blue Golf membership • Members can purchase or gift miles • Priority check in, baggage drop-off and boarding • Priority waitlist • Additional baggage allowance • Free or discounted seat plus economy comfort seats • Business-class lounge access
Air Madagascar Namako	Three years			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free tickets • Excess baggage allowance (10kg on international flights)
Air Mauritius Kestrel Flyer	Three years		Car rental, hotels, duty-free outlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority waitlist • Family points • Extra baggage allowance • Up to 15% discount on helicopter services • Dedicated reservations/check-in counters • Bonus 300 miles for Internet check-in • Cash and miles redemption • Additional benefits for higher tier members
Air Namibia Reward\$	Five years. Awards requested before expiry must be used within 12 months			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferable to family or friends • Free flights, excess baggage payment and upgrades • Enrolment bonus of 500 miles on first flight after enrolment • Bonus 300 miles for online registration and provision of e-mail • Corporate enrolment plan
British Airways/ BA Comair Executive Club	Avios points valid as long as customer collects, spends or purchases at least one Avios point every 36 months	Aer Lingus, Alaska Airlines, Open Skies, oneworld alliance members	Hotels, car rental, foreign currency, credit card companies, BA and other retail outlets, airport and valet parking, household accounts, petrol and supermarket purchases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reward Flight Saver allows members to fly JNB-MRU for a R700 flat fee return • Priority check-in • Over 170 lounges worldwide • Flight upgrades for two • Silver partner card • Luxurious Concorde Room lounges • Two additional bags when travelling in World Traveller/economy class or Euro Traveller on any route
Cathay Pacific Asia Miles The Marco Polo Club	Three years	oneworld alliance members	Travel, leisure, dining, retail, telecoms, finance and insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guaranteed seat reservation • Extra leg-room seat • Priority waitlist • Excess baggage allowance • Lounge access • 2 miles earned for every HK\$5 spend on inflight duty free
Delta Air Lines SkyMiles	No expiry	SkyTeam alliance partners, Air Tahiti Nui, Alaska Airlines, GOL, Great Lakes, Hawaiian, Virgin Atlantic, Virgin Australia	Co-branded credit card, car rental, entertainment, wireless, financial, travel, dining, retail, hotels and shopping, partner points to miles conversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mileage upgrades from M/B/Y-class to business class • Higher tier Medallion members qualify for extra luggage, priority check-in and waitlist, unlimited upgrades on domestic flights, discounts or free seats, same-day stand-by, same-day confirmed, discounts on Delta Sky Club • Diamond and Platinum members qualify for options including upgrade certificates, bonus miles, Delta Sky Club one-day passes • The 2015 SkyMiles programme: earn miles based on ticket price and SkyMiles status; one-way awards; Miles + Cash • Additional benefits for higher tier members
EgyptAir EgyptAir Plus	Three years	Star Alliance members	Hotels, cruises, car rental, restaurants, shopping, financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrades, lounge access, extra baggage allowance, priority standby and baggage handling • Membership for up to five family members • Additional benefits for higher tier members
EI Al Matmid	Three years	American Airlines, Qantas, SAA, AeroMexico, Sun d'Or. Also codeshare agreements on SWISS, Czech Airlines, Iberia, Vietnam Airlines, Siberia Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines	Hotels, car rental, restaurants and shopping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonus tickets valid for one year • Purchase of upgrades, economy-class-plus seats and extra bag for TL members, utilising points • Additional benefits for higher tier members
Emirates Skywards	Three years	Japan Airlines, Korean Air, Qantas, SAA, TAP Portugal Operating in other regions: Alaska Airlines, easyJet, Jet Airways, JetBlue, Jetstar, Virgin America	Hotel partners, car rental, financial, retail, leisure and lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority waitlist/check-in/boarding/baggage delivery • Instant upgrades at check-in • Excess baggage privileges of 12kg-20kg depending on tier • Lounge access for Gold members even when travelling in economy class • Lounge access for a guest on the same Emirates flight, when member is travelling first or business class • Special member offers • Guaranteed seat reservation, even on fully booked flights



Airlines				
Programme	Mileage expiry	Partners	Non-related point accrual	Unique selling features
Ethiopian Airlines Sheba Miles	Three years	Star Alliance members, ASKY Airlines, TACA Airlines	Shopping, lifestyle, car rental, hotels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority waitlist, standby, check-in, boarding, baggage handling Personalised luggage tag Extra baggage allowance Lounge access
Ethiad Airways Air Seychelles Ethiad Guest	Three years	Brussels Airlines, Oman Air, Jet Airways, Sri Lankan Airlines, Virgin Australia, American Airlines, airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Air New Zealand, Alitalia, ANA, Asiana Airways, Bangkok Airways, Czech Airlines, Garuda Indonesia, Hainan Airlines, Korean Air, Malaysia Airlines, Royal Air Maroc, Ukraine International Airlines	Car rental, hotels, telecommunications, shopping, financial partners, leisure and lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Mile Redemption: fly once and enjoy instant rewards Miles Plus Cash: Use miles and cash combo for redemption, while still earning miles on cash spent Earn one mile for every mile flown, even on promotional or discounted tickets No black-out periods Redeem miles on flights, upgrades, products and services using exclusive Reward Shop
LAM Flamingo Club	Two years		Hotels, car rental, fuel products, telecommunications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive desk check-in Additional 5kg luggage on domestic/regional flights; 10kg on intercontinental flights Waitlist priority Special benefits on partner programmes Additional benefits for higher tier members
Lufthansa SWISS Miles & More	Three years	Star Alliance members, 21 additional carriers	Car rental, hotels, shopping, telecommunications and more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers with a lump sum of 18 000 award miles can use miles to pay for taxes and fees on award flights within Europe operated by Lufthansa and selected Miles & More airline partners No black-out periods Use miles to pay for special events
Qantas Qantas Frequent Flyer	No expiry if member earns/uses points once every 18 months. Excludes family transfers	Emirates, oneworld alliance and others	Credit cards, hotels, car rental, travel, shopping, financial, entertainment, dining and business services (Note: some point accruals are not applicable to non-Australian members.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra checked baggage allowance Preferred seating and access to selected Qantas Classic Award seats Priority waitlist, airport standby, check-in Additional benefits for higher tier members
RwandAir DreamMiles	Silver, Gold and Diamond tiers: two years Emerald tier: none	Codeshare and interline airline partners		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guaranteed economy-class seats on international and domestic flights Priority waitlist Access to business-class counters Seat upgrades Priority baggage tags Extra baggage allowance Business-class lounge access when travelling in economy Dedicated assistance number 500-mile bonus for flights taken during member's birthday month
Singapore Airlines KrisFlyer	Three years	Star Alliance members, SilkAir	Over 120 global non-airline partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miles earned on lower booking classes; 50% of miles flown in Q Class and 10% of miles flown in V Class Miles can be used to pay for all or a part of the airfare 5 000 miles required to start redemption
SAA Voyager	Three years; can be extended by one year (T&Cs apply)	Star Alliance members, SA Express, Airlink, Airlink Swaziland, El Al, Jet Airways, Qantas, Emirates, Virgin Atlantic, US Airways, TAM, Etihad, Mango (redemption only)	Car rental, financial, hotels, property, retail and lifestyle, fuel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade to Silver Status at 25 000 miles or the required sector criteria, to Gold at 50 000 miles or the required sector criteria, and to Platinum at 100 000 miles or the required sector criteria Upgrade to Lifetime Platinum tier at 100 000 tier miles or the required sector criteria on the services of SAA only, for six consecutive years Additional benefits for higher tier members
Thai Airways Royal Orchid Plus	Two years	Star Alliance members and others	Airline, hotel, car rental, credit card companies and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10kg extra baggage for Silver status; 20kg extra baggage for Gold status Complimentary upgrade on Thai flights for Gold members Access to Thai and Star Alliance lounges for Gold members Priority boarding 50% award redemption for Gold members Priority award promotions
Turkish Airlines Miles & Smiles	Three years	Air Canada, Air China, Air New Zealand, EgyptAir, Lufthansa, Shenzhen Airlines, Singapore Airlines, SAA, Spanair, SWISS, TAP, Thai Airways, United Airlines, Jet Airways	Hotels, car rental, financial, telecommunications, technology, vehicle purchases, fuel products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn through the Shop & Miles credit card Free tickets or upgrades for traveller and companion Membership card can be used for self-service check-in Online check-in Priority reservation Meal selections Additional benefits for higher tier members
Virgin Atlantic Airways Flying Club	No expiry if account is active. Alternatively, three years	Air China, Air New Zealand, All Nippon Airways, Cyprus Airways, Delta Air Lines, Gulf Air, Hawaiian Airlines, Jet Airways, Malaysia Airlines, SAS (earning only), Singapore Airlines, SAA, US Airways, Virgin America, Virgin Australia (formerly Virgin Blue)	Hotel partners, car rental, credit cards, dining and rail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two Clubhouse lounge passes if a member achieves 60 tier points in a year A one-cabin, round-trip upgrade for two people on any booking made directly if Gold member achieves 80 tier points in a year Birthday bonus of 2 000 miles for Gold members 2 000 miles bonus for Silver members on renewal of status

Key

- oneworld alliance partners: Air Berlin, American Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Finnair, Iberia, Japan Airlines, LAN, TAM Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Qantas, Qatar Airways, Royal Jordanian, S7 Airlines, Sri Lankan Airlines.
- Star Alliance partners: Adria Airways, Aegean Airlines, Air Canada, Air China, Air India, Air New Zealand, ANA, Asiana Airlines, Austrian, Avianca, Brussels Airlines, Copa Airlines, Croatia Airlines, EgyptAir, Ethiopian Airlines, EVA Air, LOT Polish Airlines, Lufthansa, Scandinavian Airlines, Shenzhen Airlines, Singapore Airlines, South African Airways, SWISS, TAP Portugal, Turkish Airlines, Thai and United.
- SkyTeam partners: Aeroflot, Aerolineas Argentinas, AeroMexico, Air Europa, Air France, Alitalia, China Airlines, China Eastern, China Southern, Czech Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Garuda Indonesia, Kenya Airways, KLM, Korean Air, Middle East Airlines, Saudia, Tarom, Vietnam Airlines, Xiamen Air.

LOYALTY PROGRAMMES



Hotels			
Programme	How to earn points	Participating partners	Benefits
Accor Le Club	Stay at 2 000 hotels from budget to luxury	Club Med, Europcar, Lenôtre (France only), Shell, TAM, Itau (Brazil only), HSBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four tier membership: Essential, Connected, Upgraded and Even More VIP • Transfer points to participating partners • Points never expire • Priority check-in • Late check-out • Free Internet • Advance access to private sales on accorhotels.com • Extra benefits on higher membership tiers
Carlson Rezidor Gold Points Gold Points Plus	<p>Club CarlsonSM offers 20 Gold Points per US\$ spent on hotel nights, plus all meals and beverages charged to the customer's room. Bonus points earned for online bookings.</p> <p>Club CarlsonSM for Planners is a rewards programme exclusively for meeting and event planners.</p> <p>1 000 participating hotels</p>	Budget, Avis, and selected airline partners	<p>Red tier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Points for hotel stays, food, beverage, meetings and events • Discount on food and beverage • Free Internet • Free awards nights <p>Silver tier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as Red, plus: • Complimentary room upgrade • Early check in, late check-out • Elite member service line <p>Gold tier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as Silver, plus: • In-room welcome gift • Guaranteed room availability up until 72 hours <p>Concierge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as Gold, plus: • Guaranteed room availability up until 48 hours • Free continental breakfast
City Lodge The Lodger Club	Points earned by processing bookings online while logged into your account (valid for three years)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discounts on rack rates • Free accommodation offers • No loss of points when redemption bookings are cancelled/amended
Hilton HHonors	Points accrued at 4 000 hotels and resorts in 90 countries, and with participating partners	Airlines, car rental rail, cruise, mobile, online, financial, shopping and dining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick reservations and check-ins • Late check-out • Free spouse stays • No expiry of points while members stay active • No black-out dates • Upgrades for elite members • Earn points and air miles for same stay
InterContinental Hotels Group Priority Club Rewards	Hotel stays at any of IHG's over 4 700 hotels worldwide, airline and car rental with partners	Points for everyday spending with IHG Rewards Club partners and while shopping and dining. Members can use their points to redeem hotel stays virtually anywhere in the world – even competitor hotels. Car rentals with well-known local and global providers at airports worldwide with Cars Anywhere. Flights on over 400 airlines with Flights Anywhere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No expiry on points and no black-out dates on Reward Nights • Free Internet • No black-out dates for Rewards Nights • Fast track to Elite status when guests explore IHG's portfolio of hotel brands • Members can redeem faster rewards by using a combination of Points & Cash
Premier Hotels and Resorts Royalty Club	Hotel stays and food and beverage spend		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room upgrades • Late check-out • Electronic quarterly newsletter • Qualifies for specials • Receive 10% back as credits in Royalty Rands on accommodation, restaurant and bar spend for all Royalty Club Members on an individual basis • Credits on selected purchases at each hotel (1 Premier Royalty Rand = 1 Premier Credit)
Protea Hotels Prokard	Earn up to 10% of accommodation spend in Prokard rands at Protea and African Pride Hotels	Budget Rent a Car	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 10% discount on BAR of the day in SA and 20% in Africa • 5% off online special offers • Room upgrades • Early arrival/late check-out • Members earn up to 10% of their room revenue back in Prokard Rands • Guaranteed redemption of Prokard Rands, even during peak periods • Prokard rands can be redeemed as partial or full payment on hotel bill • Dining discounts of up to 50% for Gold members even if not staying in the hotel
Tsogo Sun Frequent Guest	Earn Sun rands on accommodation rates and services. Valid for two years	American Express, Nedbank Greenbacks, SunSwop and Europcar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earn 5% to 15% Sun Rands on qualifying rates and items • 10% accommodation discount at luxury and full service hotels, 5% accommodation discount at select service hotels • 7,5%-20% F&B discounts at hotel-owned restaurants and bars • Pre-registration for a faster check-in • 1 GIG Free Wifi per room, per day • Monthly email/sms • Redeem SunRands towards accommodation or meals and drinks at Tsogo Sun hotel-owned restaurants and bars • Entertainment and event discounts as determined for each event • Like-for-Like status match at Tsogo Sun casinos and entertainment destinations
Starwood Starwood Preferred Guest	Earn points at more than 1 100 hotels. Starpoints do not expire as long as there is activity once every 12 months	Airlines, car rentals, financial, retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free nights, free flights, room upgrades, gift certificates, and transportation • No black-out dates • Rewards for hotel services • Online redemption • Access to Once-In-A-Lifetime Moments, an exclusive online auction where Starpoints can be used to bid on extraordinary events and once-in-a-lifetime experiences
Three Cities Exceptional Rewards Programme	Up to 10% CashBack rewards on accommodation spent at participating hotels	Lifestyle partners, car rental and more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early check-in, late check-out • Room upgrades • Up to 25% off dining • Accommodation discounts loaded electronically on to membership card • Free accommodation vouchers and free birthday stay for Gold card members • Rewards can be used to settle guest accounts in part or full • Automatic room upgrade to a suite (subject to availability) • Exclusive communication (news, magazines, competitions)

LOYALTY PROGRAMMES



Car Rental

Programme	How to earn points	Participating partners	Benefits
Avis Rent a Car Presidents Club Preferred Service Small Corporates and Individuals Programmes Wizard Card Club Red car rental bookings by travel agents	Vehicle rental		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guaranteed reservations on key car groups • Vehicle upgrades • Preferred parking of vehicles at rental locations • Waiver upgrades • Rental discounts • Global recognition • Signed master rental agreement • Preferred service counter • Renter profile in Avis Wizard System • Free rental days • Avis Roses can be redeemed via E-Bucks (Club Red) • Airline frequent flyer miles • E-invoicing and statements
First Car Rental First Club Card Corporate Show & Go Card	Vehicle rental	Hotels, American Express Hotel Express	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle upgrades • Discounts • Free days • No branch visits • Direct from plane to car • Mobile checkout in one minute
Hertz Hertz Gold Plus Rewards	Qualification period runs January 1 to December 31. Membership status updated the following April		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guaranteed reservations for President's Circle tier • Access to designated parking stalls for Five Star and President's Circle members • Car class upgrades • Rewards and exclusive offers • Free rental days for President's Circle tier and Five Star members after 10 rentals in one calendar year

Disclaimer: The table contains a selection of the benefits offered by those loyalty programmes that supplied information.

Did you know?

Air Mauritius's miles can be redeemed for upgrades, free tickets, excess baggage, discounts on SIXT car rental, discounts on on-board duty free, and more. The biggest advantage for corporate travellers still lies in upgrades, says **Carla da Silva**, regional manager for Air Mauritius. She says corporate policy often

dictates that corporates need to fly in economy when the flights are less than eight hours long. If the traveller has enough miles he can then upgrade his economy ticket, which has been purchased by the company, to business class with his miles. She says: "Then corporate compliance is adhered to and the traveller is happy sitting in business class."

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TNW6443SD

Who should benefit – the company or the traveller?

LOYALTY is an issue that has been debated for years in the corporate travel world. According to **Monique Swart**, founder of African Business Travel Association, loyalty programmes have always been a challenge for travel buyers, with the core issue being, who owns the miles – the traveller or the company that sends them on business?

She says travellers argue that they are entitled to the rewards as they suffer the discomfort of long travels. Companies argue that travel is part of the job description and, as the company pays for the travel arrangements, the rewards belong to the company.

For the airlines the matter is clear. Loyalty miles belong to



Carla da Silva

the traveller. **Carla da Silva**, regional manager Southern Africa for Air Mauritius, says: "Our loyalty programme, like all others – whether

other airlines, a retail store or a financial institution – is designed to benefit the individual and not the company where the individual is employed."

Delta Air Lines' **Margaret Copeland** agrees.

"Our passengers are the members and we wouldn't be part of any arrangement between the passenger and his/her company."

Margaret adds that Delta does have a web-based programme for small companies that do not have enough spend for a corporate agreement. "This programme is called Skybonus. The company manages the programme online and there are rewards for both the company and passenger," she says.

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TNW6442SD

Win with SAA Voyager!

IN CELEBRATION of its 20th anniversary, SAA Voyager has launched a promotion, giving members the chance to win 200 000 miles. Members who fly on any domestic SAA flight in business class during

the months of October and November stand a chance to win by registering online.

Voyager is also running promotions and competitions from various partners. These include earning double miles from

Airlink; 10 000 miles from InterContinental Hotel Group; one million miles from Seeff Properties; and the chance to win up to two free nights at Oceana Beach & Wildlife Reserve – just to mention a few.

Tangible benefits drive loyalty

LOYALTY programmes still drive allegiance, despite what critics say, according to **Sharon De Leur**, group loyalty and direct marketing manager for Peermont Hotels. "We believe that tangible benefits that provide real, added value, coupled with excellent customer service, drive loyalty and therefore better business."

Sharon says loyalty programmes have evolved over

the past few years to provide more relevant value by offering increased personalised and customised service. "It has become mandatory to offer access to a variety of convenient, lifestyle brand options, alliance partnerships and tangible services that appeal to customers' specific needs," she says.

To achieve the necessary level of customisation, clients

are asked to share their details, likes and dislikes. Sharon says: "Once customers experience the value of sharing this information, they become more willing to part with additional information, further enhancing our ability to tailor-make experiences and customise services unique to their individual requirements. Of course, everyone is looking for freebies or better value."

AHA-Three Cities merger won't affect loyalty

THE acquisition of the Three Cities Hotel Group by African Hotels and Adventure (AHA) will not affect the existing loyalty programme.

Ruzandri Stoltz, marketing manager for AHA, told TNW: "Three Cities has an established loyalty programme that we will implement across all AHA properties. We will furthermore review and enhance the current programme, making it more

appealing to the customer."

The Three Cities programme has Silver, Gold and Black tiers. Silver is free, Gold costs R1 200 and Black is by VIP invitation only. Members can earn cash back on accommodation and receive exclusive travel and accommodation offers and discounts. They also receive:

- further 5% discount on advertised specials
- free birthday accommodation

valued at about of R1 500

- one night's stay e-voucher, also with an approximate value of R1 500
- A pay one, stay two nights accommodation-only e-voucher, valid for two people sharing a double room (value ±R1 500)
- A pay two, stay three nights accommodation-only e-voucher, valid for two people sharing a double room (value ±R1 500).

News flash!

SAA Voyager's November online newsletter will be replaced by a special SAA Voyager news bulletin during the month to present significant programme and benefit changes for 2015. ■

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DELTA



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Club Travel celebrated Heritage Day this year by showcasing the diverse cultures represented by the staff at its Cape Town head office. Each department was assigned a different theme according to which they dressed up, decorated their desks and prepared meals. Staff went all out, dressing up in colourful traditional wear and preparing delicious delicacies. Showing off their creative sides are Club Travel's (back from left) **Eric Yakaba, Jill Dickenson and Collin Austen** (middle from left) **Roeshda Sylvester and Leticia Alexander** and (front from left) **Nazlie Cornelison and Kaye-Lin Isaacs**.

Club Travel culture!



Martin Lydall

Reducing vehicle emissions

THE Sasol Solar Challenge, an eight-day endurance challenge that tests the performance of solar-powered vehicles, ran from Pretoria to Cape Town between September 27 and October 4, and was supported by Europcar SA. Europcar chief commercial officer, **Martin Lydall**, says harnessing solar power will challenge SA businesses to uphold SA's environmental values. Europcar ensures selective vehicle emissions are reduced across its Southern African fleet and is the first SA car-rental company to offer the eco-friendly option of the Polo Blue Motion.

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TNW7220

CATHAY PACIFIC DRAGONAIR

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Rebates & Administration Officer on a 1 year contract - Reservations

Purpose of the job
To handle all rebate/staff travel along with accommodation/travel insurance etc when needed. To provide back-up to the reservations department ensuring that efficient, professional and knowledgeable service is given to Travel Agents, Frequent Flyer Members, Commercial business sectors and the general public in order to achieve the highest standards of Customer Service within the industry.

Requirements:

- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
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- Proven customer service excellence
- Team player with a high level of cultural awareness
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- Fluent in English, Mandarin will be an advantage
- Prefer 2 years travel industry experience
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TNW7218

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TNW7219

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TRAVEL INFO PLUS

TNW7106

'We're not a new business' – FlySafair

From page 1

airline had a bit of a hedge against the exchange rate.

FlySafair's primary focus is to get operations running and then engage more travel agents. "It's very difficult. With our fares priced the way they are, there's not a great margin for commissions to be paid but we certainly believe there is a way we can do things together with the trade," he said.

Meanwhile, with its pricing structure, FlySafair hopes to stimulate a new segment of the market. "If I look at

the enquiries we've been getting through our call centre, there are a lot of first-time fliers and this is a market we'd like to see developed," said Dave.

The airline will initially launch flights from Cape Town to Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and George. "It's important to first get up and running and then we can look at connecting the dots domestically," Dave said. He added that the airline was interested in looking at regional operations but that was "quite down the line". ■

Kulula partners with SkyTeam members

From page 1

for Comair will continue as usual; from a kulula perspective, we can pretty much do what we want to.

"There have been kulula initiatives in the past that have not fully aligned with BA's own strategy. It's two different businesses and both businesses have to do the best they can," he said.

The big opportunity was to make the kulula product available throughout Europe, Erik said, which would be beneficial in creating a distribution footprint internationally. "Hopefully, we'll see a lot more take-up of the product in Europe as well as seeing a bigger Air France network in Africa."

As part of the partnership,

premium Air France customers will have access to the SLOW lounges in the domestic terminals at OR Tambo International, Cape Town International and King Shaka International airports.

Discussions are under way to include the Flying Blue frequent flyer programme, which would allow members of the programme to accrue and redeem miles on the codeshare flights.

Bookings will open for sale at a later date, pending the South African Department of Transport's regulatory approval.

Air France KLM will operate 24 flights to Johannesburg this South African summer. ■

Acsa reports biggest profit yet

DORINE REINSTEIN

Acsa has reported its highest profit ever – R1,7bn for the financial year ended March 31, 2014, despite falling passenger numbers. The airports company reported an increase of 73% on 2013 figures, when it posted a significant R991m profit.

The airports company plans to invest R7,7bn in capital expenditure, including infrastructure developments at South African airports, over the next three years but there are no significant passenger tariff hikes on the cards.

According to the annual report Acsa recently tabled in Parliament, the Regulating Committee will grant a zero tariff increase permission for the current financial year.

Bongani Maseko, Acsa ceo, says the company recorded a profit for 2014 despite reporting stagnating passenger numbers for a second year. "As predicted,

domestic passenger traffic remained flat, and we note that levels closely align to the country's GDP. However, international traffic increased by about 4% from the preceding year, probably on the back of the weak rand and from some positive signs of growth coming from the United States and elsewhere."

"The increased profits are partly the result of the major capital expenditure programme."

Acsa cfo, **Maureen Manyama-Matome**, says: "The [financial] results are primarily driven by a growth in revenue as well as reduction in the finance costs. The increased profits are partly the result of the major capital expenditure programme, which was completed by 2010."

She says 61% of the funds for the capital expenditure will come from cash generated from operations and cash carried over from this year. The funding shortfall requires new borrowings of R1,3bn in 2016 and R1bn in 2017.

Almost half of the R7,7bn investment (49%) will be spent on refurbishment and replacement of assets, 29% on capacity, 13% on efficiency and technology, 6% on compliance, 2% on rehabilitation and 1% on commercial operations.

Chris Zweigenthal, ceo of Aasa, says the increase in profits was expected for 2014. He adds that the announcement of the capital investment plans don't come as a surprise and that no major expansions are on the cards for the next five years. The main projects on the cards for 2015 include the realignment of the runway and new domestic terminal at Cape Town International Airport. ■

Visa prices aren't excessive – Competition Commission

DORINE REINSTEIN

AFTER investigating allegations of abuse of dominance against the visa company VFS Global, the Competition Commission will not refer the complaint to the Competition Tribunal for adjudication.

The Commission investigated the issue that VFS was charging excessive pricing as a result of its exclusive contracts with various foreign embassies, but the Commission ruled that as "VFS does not determine the prices independently, it is unlikely that its prices are excessive".

The exclusive contracts VFS signed with various foreign governments also came under scrutiny. The Commission admitted that the exclusive contracts the governments signed with VFS were likely to restrict competition in the market but said it didn't have power over 'governments or organs of state'.

The Commission said: "the Competition Tribunal held that the Act shall only apply when the state/government acts through a vehicle like

a firm. The Competition Tribunal further held that it does not have the power to instruct a state functionary exercising a public power to act in a particular manner or to desist from acting in a particular manner. Further, for an entity to qualify as a firm, it must engage in an economic activity."

Haniff Hoosen, Democratic Alliance's Shadow Minister of Economic Development, disagrees with the Commission's ruling. "I find the response from the Commission very interesting, in fact to the point that I think it is quite hypocritical. It does not make sense that on the one hand they agree that VFS and its operations are anti-competitive but cannot hold governments accountable because they are not a 'firm'. I believe the Commission doesn't have the courage to rule against the government."

Mava Scott, spokesperson for the Competition Commission, told TNW that although the Commission would not be investigating the matter further, it is pursuing the advocacy route in dealing with the issues that have been raised.

She said the Commission was in the process of communicating with the various foreign embassies on the matter. She said: "Advocacy efforts are currently under way, working with various embassies relating to their arrangements with VFS."

She said the Commission would also engage the South African government as it had similar agreements with VFS. The SA government recently awarded VFS Global a R1bn visa facilitation tender to process visas for South Africa.

Jaco Badenhorst, md of Visa Request, says he is "extremely disappointed" because the Commission confirmed market dominance by VFS Global but is not willing to pursue the case.

Jaco says he has requested the Commission to send him the list of embassies with which they've communicated but that they refused. "The Commission is hiding something! After this experience, I do not trust the Competition Commission to protect the South African population against unfair competition due to market dominance." ■

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