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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

INSIDE

NEWS
E-TOLLS

Could they be scrapped soon?

Page 2

NEWS
ETIHAD AIRWAYS PARTNER


Carrier expands global footprint

Page 7

FEATURE
ADVENTURE TRAVEL

Agents urged to check safety standards

Page 11



Flyafrika – four countries in the next few months

NATASHA TIPPEL AND DORINE REINSTEIN

FLYAFRICA.COM will launch operations in four countries over the coming months.

The airline announced plans to establish a Namibian operation, with fares starting from R799 to Johannesburg from Windhoek. Fares exclude airport taxes of around US\$35 (R386) The airline does not apply a fuel surcharge.

“This is part of our strategy to establish flyafrika as a pan-African airline. By December we’ll have announced a third destination in Southern Africa, followed shortly by a fourth,” group ceo, **Adrian Hamilton-Manns**, told *TNW*.

The airline has also applied for a domestic licence to operate in South Africa. The Department of Transport said the application still needed to be presented to the Air Services Licensing Council for adjudication.

“This is with more of a long-term view,” Adrian said. “We hope to launch operations late next year.”

Namibia flyafrika is the second airline launched by the flyafrika.com group, following Zimbabwe, and is a joint venture between Nomad Aviation, a Namibian-based airline, and Flyafrika Ltd, a Mauritius-based private equity aviation investment group.

The airline will operate scheduled regional flights from Namibia to South Africa, Zambia, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Windhoek to Johannesburg is the first route to be announced, with daily flights from Windhoek to Johannesburg from February 2. Sales via flyafrika.com opened on October 21.

“Windhoek to Cape Town will follow shortly,” Adrian said.

Clifford Strydom, ceo of Nomad Aviation, says: “Nomad has been operating a successful airline in Namibia since 1989 but we have always wanted to offer more to the travelling public. Our partnership with flyafrika.com delivers what we have always wanted: low fares and exceptional service. Travellers to Namibia have paid too much for too long and the launch of Namibia flyafrika will change that.”

Collin Thaver, Albatros Travel gm for Southern Africa, says regional travel among South Africans has increased over the past few months. “Any new player that can bring in meaningful competitive rates that will help drop travel costs is received with bated breath. The rates being offered by flyafrika when compared with other established carriers are very favourable and this will have a positive effect, especially as locals start planning their December holidays,” he says.

David Wood, Air Holidays head of marketing and product development, says the fare of R1 600 return is higher than the fares on Air Namibia but he adds that the “no fuel surcharge” is a big positive for flyafrika.

“Where our issue lies, and we have discussed it many times with them, is that the fare of R799 is available to the public, the travel agent and the wholesaler, with no element of nett fares. We, as a wholesaler, need to make a small margin as well as

To page 2

20 is all it takes



Inside this week’s *TNW* you will find a Lux Resorts and Hotels loose insert, incorporating an agent incentive. Hold on to it because it could get you to Réunion! The formula is simple: book 20 full-paying adults at either the Lux Ile de la Réunion or the Lux Hotel Le Recif by May 31, 2015, and you and a partner will find yourself lounging on a Réunion beach. The offer excludes group bookings. Pictured here (from left) are Lux’s **Alexis Bekker** (head of sales and marketing), **Glen Taylor** (sales executive) and **Evi Moller** (sales executive). Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Insurance – stick to the facts!

DORINE REINSTEIN

TRAVEL agents are urged to brush up on their knowledge of travel insurance policies – particularly with new requirements implemented by states following increasing concerns about the spread of Ebola – as misinformation can lead to costly mistakes.

TNW recently received information from a traveller who had booked an expensive tour to China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan on a South African passport. All three countries require

‘Letters of Invitation’ before visa applications can be submitted. When the traveller was advised that the Uzbekistan Letter of Invitation was verbally denied “for fear of Ebola in Africa”, the traveller decided to cancel the trip. Her travel agent advised her to get in touch with her travel insurance provider, as she would be able to claim for the cancellation costs. However, what the agent didn’t know is that her client’s claim would be denied, as no actual visa application had been submitted.

To page 16



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7-4

Could e-tolls be scrapped?

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE possibility that e-tolls could be scrapped in the near future might be welcome news to motorists in Gauteng but will pose some hurdles for the car-rental industry.

The ANC in Gauteng recently publicly rejected e-tolls in the province during a three-day elective conference, a development that has been welcomed by **Wayne Duvenage**, OUTA chairperson. He says now that the Gauteng ANC has joined the protest, things could move more quickly. "The e-toll bill was opposed by every political party in Parliament, except the ANC, who used their numbers to force the issue. Now that the ANC has turned against the scheme, this factor cannot be ignored."

Sherl Camera, Hertz gm of business development, says, however, that scrapping e-tolls will have consequences for the car-rental industry. She says Hertz incurred significant costs to prepare the company for e-tolls in terms of compliancy, administration, technical and in-house systems and IT developments. The company also had to up-staff to cope with the additional administrative workload.

She says, should a decision be taken to discontinue e-tolling, the investment that Hertz has made to make e-tolling a working reality could not be recouped.

"While it would take some time to disband the system, car-rental companies could also be faced with either a staff redeployment or

retrenchment situation."

Despite some negative consequences related to scrapping the e-tolls, Sherl says a fuel levy could be a fair and equitable taxation option and serve to level the playing field. "With no exemptions, as is currently the case with e-tolling, all parties using the Gauteng road infrastructure would be uniformly taxed, dependent on road usage and fuel spend."

Wayne believes the fuel levy

"The e-toll bill was opposed by every political party in Parliament, except the ANC, who used their numbers to force the issue."

is without a doubt the better option. "The fuel levy attracts zero administration costs while the e-toll process costs over R1,3bn to administer every year, before one rand goes into the tarmac." Wayne says it is now merely a matter of time before the government decides to turn the system off and negotiate an exit from the agreement. "We expect around January 2015, once the Gauteng e-Toll Advisory Panel has given its report to the minister, as it may be the tool they need to try and salvage some dignity from the debacle."

Marc Corcoran, president of the Southern African Vehicle Renting and Leasing Association (Savrala), says e-tolls are not the most efficient and cost-effective method of collecting

the necessary funds for infrastructure upgrades and improved public transport. "We believe there are other more efficient and cost-effective methods of collecting funds. As per our presentation to the Gauteng e-toll panel, we believe that there are various other opportunities to use the existing e-toll equipment."

However, **Vusi Mona**, gm of communications at Sanral, says a dedicated ring-fenced fuel levy is currently not in line with National Treasury policy. "It is also important to note that only approximately 8% of total vehicle kilometres travelled in Gauteng, is on the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project network. Therefore, a fuel levy, if applied in Gauteng only, would also affect 92% of the vehicle kilometres not travelled on the GFIP"

Vusi further warns that the fuel levy would have to rise between R1,35 and R2,80 a litre to cover the costs. He says that if e-tolls were abandoned, Sanral would forfeit the debt it incurred to upgrade the roads along the GFIP network. "This would require a bail-out from government, which means taxpayers would, in one way or the other, ultimately have to fund the roads."

However, information provided by OUTA suggests an extra 10c/litre would be required to pay for GFIP upgrades, says Marc.

"I have neither clarity nor understanding as to how Sanral calculates the R2,80 fuel levy requirement.

"The calculations and motivations need to be made transparent." ■

Flyafrica – four countries

From page 1

pay the travel agent their commission; therefore we would be selling the airfare

back to the man on the street at around 20% higher than they can get direct online. This is the reason we have stayed

away for now. But should flyafrica decide to amend its model, we would certainly be interested," he says. ■

Letter to the Editor

An LCC with genuine low fares

I NORMALLY wouldn't write regarding a flight but I feel that the travel trade should be aware that, at last, there is a low-cost carrier that has genuinely low airfares, a crew whose smiles are genuine (both flights!), aircraft that are well maintained and cabins that are clean.

I had the good fortune to fly to Victoria Falls from Johannesburg with the new low-cost airline, flyafrica.

I recommend all those operators who have, up until now, been paying high fares to get passengers to and from the Falls to look at this airline.

It truly was an eye opener – even to an 'old hand' like myself. We left on time and arrived early on the way back.

You can book online or you can actually speak to a real person. One email to request a group booking and I received an answer within two hours!

I do hope that through the support of the trade this airline is given a fair chance. It certainly made my life easier. They have my passengers, no question.

At this time the schedule is limited to Harare and Victoria Falls on certain days but with support this may increase.

Thank you, flyafrica.com.

Jan Jenkins
Md, Umvuselelo Tours & Travel



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eTravel - Garth Wolff (CEO) and Tammy Hunt (Operations Director eTravel).



Joanne Visagie (Beachcomber) and George Harb (Travelport).



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Club freshens up

Club Travel md, **Wally Gaynor**, was excited to present the company's new logo to clients and partners at the launch of its new corporate identity. "We felt that in light of the rebrand by our BEE partner, Thebe, earlier this year, it was the perfect opportunity for us to give our logo a bit of a nip and tuck with a clean, modern makeover," said Wally. He added that the travel industry was facing critical times but that Club Travel was poised to grow.

EK ups Durban flights

CHANA BOUCHER

EMIRATES is again increasing its presence in the South African market by adding four new flights between Durban and Dubai to its December/January schedule.

The additional flights will operate on December 17, December 27, December 31 and January 11.

Fouad Caunhye, Emirates regional manager for Southern Africa, says: "The move to add extra flights out of Durban during December/January, as with

all commercial decisions, was driven by anticipated passenger demand. Families like to travel around milestone events such as the new year, and we anticipate growth."

Dinesh Naidoo, group operations director of Serendipity Tours, says there has been increased demand for people wanting to fly internationally direct from Durban. "Durban has the capacity to handle one or two more international direct flights. We would have loved to see [Emirates] open more flights during this period for all of us to sell." ■

Second Anantara hotel opens in Mozambique

MINOR Hotel Group's Anantara brand has opened its second hotel in Mozambique, following its joint venture with Rani Resorts in August last year.

The hotel, which was previously Rani Resorts'

Medjumbe Private Island, has been rebranded Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort & Spa.

The hotel will undergo refurbishments but will remain operational.

The resort offers 12 thatched Beach Pool

Villas, with direct beach access, private pools and hammocks.

Features include the Anantara Spa, the Bahari Lounge Bar and the Jahazi Restaurant where guests can request Anantara's signature 'Dining by

Design' experience and either choose from a selection of gourmet options or collaborate with a chef to create their own menu.

Anantara Bazaruto, previously known as Indigo Bay, joined the portfolio in

December 2013.

A third resort will be added next year – the 24-villa Matemo Island, which is currently closed for refurbishment. When it reopens, the hotel will be rebranded Anantara Matemo Island Resort. ■

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Etihad takes on global airline alliances

DORINE REINSTEIN

ALTHOUGH Etihad Airways maintains that it is not planning to form a 'fourth alliance', the new Etihad Airways Partner brand will see the airline considerably expanding its footprint across the globe through its equity partners.

Initially, six airlines will participate in the new partnership: airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Jet Airways, Darwin Airline and Etihad Airways. Any airline can become an Etihad Airways Partner, even if it was part of an existing alliance, such as airberlin, which is a member of oneworld, the airline said in a press statement.

In a press release announcing the new brand, **James Hogan**, president and ceo of Etihad Airways, lashed out at the global alliances for having complex and confusing loyalty structures.

James said the formation of

the new Etihad brand would see increased benefits for frequent travellers, such as standardised mileage and tier benefits across all partners with no blackout periods.

"Frequent flyers will benefit from the formation of Etihad Airways Partners as it will remove the complexity and confusion that exists within the global alliances. We're aiming to deliver a consistent experience for frequent flyers when they travel, and a consistent framework for earning and using their miles."

Chris Karanja, spokesperson for SkyTeam, says Etihad's Partnership Brand is not a threat to the existing alliances, which represent almost 60% of the market. "Smart alliances enable members' migration to the constantly changing environments." Chris says there is still space for another platform, but asks what value will it be to its members and how much of a global footprint will it be able to offer.

Chris Zweigenthal, ceo of Aasa, says all Middle Eastern carriers have become a force to be reckoned with as they are currently already dominating the airline industry. He says Etihad, Qatar and Emirates have huge ambitions to grow their offering and that the new Etihad brand is just another example that illustrates this. "They are definitely creating an interesting dynamic within the airline industry." He says, as the three Middle Eastern carriers go from strength to strength, certain countries may start to limit their rights for their own national carriers to survive in the future.

Germany recently started blocking Etihad from selling tickets for 34 codeshare flights operated by partner, airberlin. Etihad and airberlin have, in the past, shared codes on flights to around 60 destinations, meaning their number of shared flights will more than halve. ■

BA launches terminal app for pax

BRITISH Airways will launch its new iPhone app this month, which will send push notifications to customers using Heathrow Terminals five and three, informing them when their gate is open and when the aircraft is boarding.

The app is one of the first to take advantage of a new feature in iOS 8, the latest version of Apple's iPhone software. Customers can now find their flight status in the iPhone notification centre, letting them stay up to date

without even opening the app.

iPhone customers with the British Airways app will receive a personalised welcome pop-up message and WiFi password when entering the Terminal 5 lounge. BA is the first UK airline to use iBeacon technology in its lounges to show notifications based on location.

Drew Crawley, coo of BA, said: "We have a unique opportunity to address customer needs and offer intuitive ways of making their

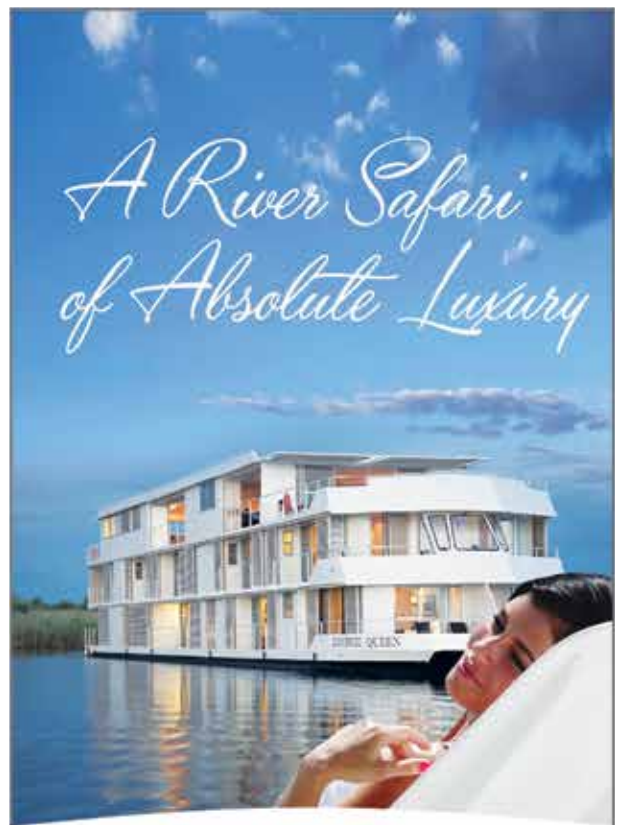
journey even smoother. It's these thoughtful features – from alerting customers to gate announcements, to WiFi passwords, that truly add value.

"The potential to optimise mobile and digital technology is endless but requires a careful balance of adding value without bombarding customers."

The app is also available on Android, Amazon Appstore, BlackBerry and Windows Phone models. ■

Nikita Tavlet selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **MSC Cruises.** Dubai special – inside cabin from R6 429pp sharing. Offer includes seven nights on-board *MSC Orchestra*, meals and entertainment. Departure dates: December 13, 20 and 27 and January 17, 24 and 31. Child under 18 cruises free when sharing a cabin with two full paying adults.
- **Vineyard Hotel – Cape Town.** Special occasion package, from R1 245pp sharing per night. Rate includes accommodation with breakfast, five-course set menu, sparkling wine in the room, romantic turndown, late check-in at 14h00, free upgrade to next available room type. Offer expires April 30.
- **Recreation Africa Leisure Industries.** Weekend retreat package at Misty Hills Country Hotel (Muldersdrift). Deluxe room on a bed and breakfast basis. Rates from R650pp sharing or R1 032 single. Offer valid until December 28.
- **Travel Vision.** USA – Disney's All Star Music Resort from R23 935 per adult sharing. Package includes return airfare from Johannesburg, airport taxes, seven nights' accommodation, Magical Express return airport transfers, five-day Magic Your Way Base Ticket, free transportation throughout Disney. Kids under 18 stay free and only pay for entry to Disney Parks, flights and taxes. Valid for travel from January 5 to February 11.



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Cape hospitality has room to grow

CHANA BOUCHER

A RECOVERY of the hospitality sector since 2012 and increasing demand could see new inventory entering the market within the next three years.

This is according to a report by Pam Golding Properties. **Kamil Abdul-Karrim**, md of Pam Golding Tourism & Hospitality, says the hospitality sector is currently trading at occupancy levels above 60% compared with around 50% in 2011. "Currently July 2014 year-to-date average occupancies in Cape Town are running at 66,6%, well ahead of any other city in South Africa. Positively, the South African market as a whole is far more exposed to the corporate traveller than the leisure tourist – both international and local – and for this reason the recovery has been more pronounced in major metropolitan areas," he adds.

Clifford Ross, ce of the City Lodge Hotel Group, says occupancy for the group to June 30 was 63% countrywide, with Cape Town performing better during this period but likely to be

affected by seasonality. He adds that it is difficult to predict whether or not this trend will continue in Cape Town in the current economic climate and with pending visa changes to be implemented by the Department of Home Affairs.

According to **Joop Demes**, ceo of Pam Golding Hospitality, hotel property values in Cape Town and the surrounding Winelands have seen a sharp increase but he believes there are underperforming hotels that offer sound investment opportunities. "Underperforming hotels typically offer the investor the opportunity to refurbish and rebrand and to enter a booming Western Cape hotel market literally within three to four months, as opposed to a greenfield project that will typically take three years plus."

Joop says hotel groups such as Accor, Hyatt and Fairmont that already have a presence in South Africa, should consider this approach as they "without doubt, need presence in Cape Town".

He says he is very positive about the hotel industry and

its prospects. He forecasts the average occupancy in 2014 for Cape Town to exceed 70%. "The increasing demand for hotel rooms is spilling over into the Winelands and the rest of the Western Cape, and the average occupancy will grow further as demand is increasing and will continue to do so for at least three years until new room inventory enters the market."

According to Joop, the increasing demand for rooms, with insufficient inventory in Cape Town, will see hoteliers' yield improve, resulting in higher average daily rates. "What we are already experiencing is an overflow into the Winelands, the Garden Route and Route 62, where prices are generally more negotiable," he adds.

Clifford says if occupancies continue to rise slowly, operators will begin to look to increase rates as demand increases. "There has been a very long period where hotels were pricing below sustainable levels and will now try to use renewed patterns to get these rates to more sustainable levels." ■

Royal Palm reopens after major refurb

BEACHCOMBER'S Royal Palm in Mauritius has reopened after more than four months of major renovations, with all suites and public areas being refurbished and redecorated. The hotel now offers 69 suites with sea views and 15 brand-new Ocean Suites. The new Ocean Suites feature a spacious bedroom, a separate living room, large bathroom and a double terrace overlooking the gardens and the sea. Chef, **Michel de Matteis**, now offers new menus in the redesigned Goélette Restaurant and Le Bar Plage. La Brezza restaurant on the open-air terraces overlooking the lagoon has been rebranded and a new 25-metre pool has been built along the beach, facing the lagoon. The *Royal Princess*, a luxury yacht, measuring 20 metres, lets Royal Palm guests experience a unique marine adventure with either a day charter to the northern islands, a sundowner cruise or an overnight trip.

New hotel opens in Lusaka

THE Latitude Hotels Group has opened Latitude 15 in Lusaka, Zambia. Facilities at the 18-room hotel include free WiFi and laundry, an à la carte restaurant, bar, pool and garden. Rooms are equipped with LCD televisions, Nespresso machines and a mini bar. Rates start at US\$220 (R2 428) per night single occupancy and US\$270 (R2 980) per night double occupancy, breakfast included.



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Virgin territory



Virgin Atlantic recently hosted media at one of the latest properties to be added to the Virgin Limited Edition portfolio, Mont Rochelle wine estate in Franschhoek, to celebrate the launch of the airline's final season of Cape Town flights. The flights will operate with a 308-seat Airbus A340-600 (compared with 240 last year on an A340-300), with 45 seats in Upper Class, 38 in premium economy and 225 in economy. According to **Darrin Thomas**, Virgin Atlantic marketing and communications executive, Cape Town forward loads are reasonable with inbound traffic from the UK promising. The airline will support the route until the end of April 2015. "We remain committed to South Africa. We just celebrated 18 years of flying to Johannesburg. It is a strategically important service at the heart of our network and one that we know is very important to our corporate clients. Cape Town is a leisure, seasonal route, so a very different destination." Enjoying the spectacular views from the Mont Rochelle Country Kitchen are **Liezl Gericke**, head of sales and marketing at Virgin Atlantic, and **Darrin**.

Emperors unveils new conference space

DEBBIE BADHAM

THE new 1 800-sqm conference and meeting facilities at Emperors Palace will effectively cater for emerging trends within the business tourism and meetings space.

Ceo of SAACI, **Adriaan Liebetrau**, says emerging trends in the business tourism and meetings space include shorter stays, smaller groups and smaller budgets. "Delegates no longer want to stand during conference breaks but prefer to have the ability to sit. WiFi is an absolute must and dietary requirements have

become more complex."

In line with this, additions to the Emperors Palace Convention Centre include five 100sqm breakaway rooms that allow for greater intimacy, along with an extended pre-assembly area for networking. It also includes the 440sqm sub-divisible Fabia room and the 220sqm Julia room. Additional seating in the pre-assembly area enables guests to sit down between sessions and relax or check their emails.

The centre now features state-of-the-art presentation technology, which can support HD content viewing via cable or wireless from any device. It

also provides up to 500MB of free WiFi per day. New touches such as magnetised walls for presentation purposes all add to the venue's enhanced functionality.

"We have spent a significant amount of time engaged in operational and strategic planning, focused on determining what delegates want," says **Wayne Hill**, gm of hotels and resort operations at Emperors Palace. "As such, our newly refurbished convention centre now caters for the trend of smaller meetings geared towards networking." A big reveal of the new facilities is planned this month. ■



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AFRICA CORPORATE

Air access continues to be a challenge for corporate travel on the continent.
By Chana Boucher

More access needed at competitive prices

ALTHOUGH air access across Africa has improved in recent years, industry stakeholders agree that more needs to be done to cater for the growing corporate sector.

Says **Jegie Padmanathan**, coo: hotel and resorts for Peermont: "A few airline operators have monopolised the market with uncompetitive airfares into Africa, which has also hindered the growth of the corporate market into Africa. Africa is considered to be the last remaining continent for major growth, therefore the improvement of air access at competitive prices is critical for the future growth."

Bronwyn Philipps, md of HRG Rennies Travel, says air traffic to and from Africa has expanded dramatically over the last decade as a result of economic growth and air travel being the best transport option. Infrastructure remains limited, she points out, with roads often in disrepair and

rail travel scarce.

However, she says, there are some challenges the aviation sector needs to overcome on the continent. A lack of direct flights is one, while airfare costs are high due to fuel prices and airport taxes. Further, many African airlines have poor safety reputations, with almost 50% of those on the EU blacklist coming from Africa.

On the positive side, Bronwyn says: "We are starting to see an increase in the competition on internal routes within Africa and growth in this sector should ultimately start to drive prices down. An increase in the introduction of direct flights is also relieving challenges in terms of transit visas, security inspections, change of aircraft and long transit times for passengers."

Tlali Tlali, spokesperson for SAA, says many airlines operating in Africa come from a very low base of services. "Not so long ago there were

hardly any services between the geographical regions of Africa. The increase in services has been phenomenal, to the extent that almost every country is now served by more than two African airlines. However, even with all that growth, the continent is still underserved in terms of frequencies and capacity serving all market segments, not just the business community. There is room for much more growth and development and this will be part of the implementation of an African open skies policy," he says.

According to **Richard Bodin**, fastjet's chief commercial officer, the low-cost carrier's entry into the regional market has seen a change in the market. "Our research shows that 38% of our passengers are first-time flyers. This means that fastjet's affordable fares have made it possible for more people to use air travel to get to their



"An increase in the introduction of direct flights is also relieving challenges in terms of transit visas, security inspections, change of aircraft and long transit times for passengers."
Bronwyn Philipps

destination for the first time."

But, he says, the continent remains in desperate need of aviation connectivity. Very few countries in Africa are sufficiently serviced by local airlines, including South Africa, where some carriers benefit from government protection

and overcharge. "This means that there is great potential for the low-cost carrier model on the continent, and fastjet is working hard to expand our network to stimulate the African aviation sector to the benefit of passengers and local economies."

Jegie believes the entrance of low-cost carriers in the regional market will grow the market. "It creates a more competitive airfare environment and allows for increased frequency of corporate travel as more people will have the financial means to afford this kind of travel. The entry of low-cost airlines will also allow for a greater selection of destinations that previously may not have been viable with the bigger airlines."

Tlali views the operations of low-cost carriers as a welcome addition to the already existing legacy carriers, noting that they are answering a need in new market segments. ■



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Adventure travel

Research into self-regulation of the local adventure tourism sector holds lessons for both domestic and outbound travel, writes Max Marx.

Agents urged to check safety standards

FOLLOWING a directive from the National Department of Tourism (NDT) last year, the Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (SATSA) is researching how best South Africa's adventure tourism industry can regulate itself. The aim is to promote South Africa as the leading adventure tourism destination in the world.

A national steering committee has been set up by SATSA, under the auspices of the NDT, and long-time adventure tour operator, **Bill Harrop**, ceo of Bill Harrop's 'Original' Balloon Safaris, is chairing the International Best Practice self-regulation sub-committee.

So far, the sub-committee has been looking at the regulatory frameworks of different countries that govern adventure tourism and has consulted with major adventure tourism players in South Africa and other private- and public-sector stakeholders to plot the way forward.

As a result of this research, Bill says "responsible" agents must be seen to conduct their affairs with due diligence to avoid employing a dodgy operator and ensure the safety of their clients. He offered some questions agents can ask adventure operators to assess whether they're the real deal. These are valid for both domestic and outbound adventure travellers.

- Does the excursion provider have a valid operating licence and are their vehicles, aircraft or boats licensed?
- Do they have up-to-date public liability insurance and how much?
- Do they have an operations manual and code of conduct?

- Can they prove staff competency levels in operations and first aid and what is the staff-to-participant ratio?
 - Are vehicles and equipment registered where necessary and inspected and maintained?
 - Are regular or pre-activity checks carried out in the environment of the tour to ensure the safety parameters are manageable by the operations staff?
 - Do pre-activity checks include general equipment functionality, emergency equipment, safety apparel, radio communication equipment, navigation equipment and passenger restraining devices?
 - Are there documented safety, accident and emergency procedures covering evacuation, safety equipment, staff member roles, first-aid training, communications and equipment?
 - Are there accident and incident records available for inspection?
 - Are there safety notices regarding fires, fire-fighting equipment and fire escape routes where applicable?
 - Are there first-aid kits with content suitable to deal with the relevant risks involved?
 - Are participants given a safety briefing in their own language?
 - Are there alcohol consumption limitations, smoking restrictions, or height or weight limitations?
- In the domestic arena, there is a proposal on the table, says Bill, to form an adventure tourism accreditation body, under the auspices of SATSA, that will recognise adventure operators who adhere to

specific, yet-to-be-finalised criteria.

"Becoming accredited will be voluntary, but will be advantageous to adventure operators, as the accreditation will be a mark of quality that operators can market both internationally and domestically.

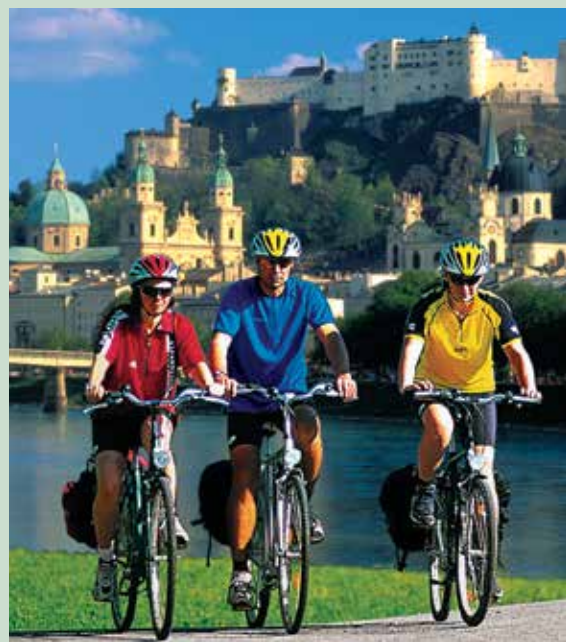
"It will also give travel agents and tour operators who book these adventure tour operators peace of mind, knowing that they are working with a reputable organisation, rather than a fly-by-night operation with poor safety standards."

In many instances the bar is set too high for adventure tour operators to operate legally, says Bill.

"At present, the adventure tourism industry is governed by a tangled web of regulation by various bodies and government institutions. This has made it nearly impossible for many adventure operators to avoid flouting one or other regulation, even though they may run a very good and reputable operation. This affects these operators who cannot be promoted by the likes of SATSA, SA Tourism or the NDT."

In terms of qualification requirements, the regulations are also too stringent, says Bill. For certain lower-level jobs, practical experience is most needed but often an academic qualification is required.

His committee is also exploring the proposition for a moratorium to be considered to allow those currently behind the curve to catch up, with the caveat that employees must be enrolled in relevant courses and achieve benchmarked progress towards the goal of a specific qualification.



Most routes are on dedicated cycle paths.

Photo: Austria Connection

European cycling options from Austria Connection

AUSTRIA Connection's new brochure features an expanded offering that includes a number of adventurous cycling options.

There are cycle tours in Austria, Hungary and Slovenia, as well as bike and boat tours in Austria, Hungary, Romania and Croatia. The majority of cycle routes are on dedicated cycle paths with no danger from traffic. Detailed maps and help-line phone numbers, in use seven days a week, are supplied. Arrangements are made to transport luggage from stop to stop, relieving travellers of this task. Bike rental is an extra cost and hire options include seven-speed, 21-speed or electric cycles.

The routes are graded according to three levels of difficulty but many are on flat, paved tracks all the way. One of the best-known in Europe is the Danube cycle path and here Austria Connection has a seven-night level-1 cycle tour from Passau to Vienna. It is suitable for beginners and even children. The Slovenia Bike and Wellness trip combines a level-3, slightly hilly route, with culinary highlights and afternoons spent relaxing at hotels with thermal baths for the aching legs.

Croatian cycle cruises provide seven nights on a gulet sailing between the islands, along with cycling around the islands amidst the picturesque villages and scenery.

Did you know?

A new glass floor at the Eiffel Tower offers another perspective on Paris, the world's most-visited city, one that is expected to become as big an attraction as the viewing platform at the top. From a height of 57m, visitors can now look down through a solid glass panel, offering a dizzying sensation of walking on air.

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Adventure travel



A tiger safari is a 'must-do' for South Africans. Photo: India Tourism

India – emerging adventure hotspot

INDIA is blessed with a wide range of adventure tourism opportunities spread throughout the country.

With sun, sea, sand, snow, wildlife and majestic mountains, opportunities for adventure are endless.

India is home to 73% of the Himalayas, a beautiful and large coastline, the colourful desert state of Rajasthan, and national parks that make it a global bio-diversity hotspot. There are nearly 100 national parks, 400 wildlife sanctuaries and 30 tiger reserves.

With some of the world's tallest peaks, the Himalayas lend themselves to adventure activities, from skiing to white-water rafting, hiking, trekking and paragliding. Kashmir

and Jammu have excellent powdered snow for skiing and travellers can hire all the necessary equipment there. The best time to ski in India is January to March.

India's Ministry of Tourism recently launched the '777 days of the Incredible Indian Himalayas' campaign to promote adventure tourism in the Himalayas. It has also adopted the Adventure Tour Operators' Association of India's Basic Minimum Safety Guidelines and the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria to ensure that India is a safe, sustainable and responsible tourism destination.

Manas Ranjan Pattanaik, Incredible India's director, says South Africans love

trekking and mountaineering in the Himalayas and going on wildlife safaris where they can see Royal Bengal tigers, lions, the Gujarat leopard, elephants, buffalo, single-horn rhinoceros and the Indian bison.

"For South Africans who enjoy wildlife, I would recommend tiger safaris, expeditions to search for the elusive snow leopard, and birding safaris. Caving in Meghalaya is also a new activity that they will enjoy."

Adventure enthusiasts can also enjoy mountain biking, scuba diving with elephants in the Andaman and Nicobar islands, snorkelling, sea kayaking, camel safaris, and multi-day river rafting expeditions.



Cresta Riley Hotel. Photo: Cresta Hotels

A fresh look for Cresta Riley's Hotel

CRESTA Riley's Hotel, perfectly situated on the banks of the Thamakalane River in Maun – Botswana's gateway to the Okavango Delta and all its adventure activities – caters for leisure and business travellers.

The hotel has just completed a major renovation, giving it a contemporary look and feel, while retaining its African style.

Fifteen of the 51 rooms and suites, all with private balcony, have been refurbished – the remainder were renovated in 2010.

The two conference rooms have also been refreshed, and a newly built gym is a popular addition to the hotel's amenities, which include a 24-hour reception service, Internet access, swimming pool and poolside bar, restaurant and the acclaimed Harry's Bar.

"We've received extremely positive feedback from our guests, who have all had wonderful things to say about our new-look bedrooms and the hotel's refreshed public spaces," said **Jonathan Cox**, group operations manager.

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Adventure travel

Getting intimate with Réunion

KATE ELS

THE Réunion Island Tourism Board in partnership with Air Austral and LUX* Resorts whisked away 24 travel agents recently on a Mascarun – an exciting FAM trip filled with quizzes, physical challenges and lots of laughter.

The agents were split into eight teams, each with its own name and colour, who then competed over four days for the chance of a return trip

to Réunion Island to compete in the global Mascarun challenge. The travel agents all got a chance to know the island and its layout intimately, as well as all the activities available for visitors.

The challenges included jam tasting, hiking, traditional Maloya dancing, quizzes after a visit to a vanilla plantation and even creating a themed cocktail.

Each challenge was scored individually and added toward

the teams' final scores.

With a close finish, the winning team was announced on the final day at a function sponsored by Réunion Island Tourism Board, Air Austral and LUX* Resorts at the five-star LUX* Ile de la Réunion hotel. The winning team of **Johnathan Hollard**, **Tamarin Seymour** and **Jenna Berndt** will return to Réunion in 2015 to compete in the global Mascarun against teams from other competing countries. ■



Jumping on the moon... or the Martian landscape of the Fournaise volcano, are (from left): **Tamarin Seymour** (gold travel counsellor at Travel Counsellors); and **Debbie Beckett** (travel counsellor at Travel Counsellors).



Just trying to stay afloat! (From left): **Reena Laloo** (Fast Link Travel); and **Bridgette Mashala** (travel consultant at XL Nexus Travel).



Standing proud! One of the winning South African Mascarun team, **Johnathan Hollard** (retail travel agent at Flight Centre Benmore).



Enjoying the sunshine and the views of Cilaos after completing all the challenges are (from left): **Cathy Keefe** (travel consultant at Sure Giltedge Travel) and **Sarah Kieck** (senior consultant at South African Traveleaders Travel Centre).



Celebrating a successful cocktail challenge at LUX* Ile de la Réunion are (from left): **Maritza Venter** (junior consultant at Flight Specials Secunda); **Esnel Smit** (manager at Flight Centre Shelly Beach); and **Diana Steele** (travel consultant at Travelstart).



Dancing queens from the red team, donning their Maloya traditional dancing skirts, are (from left): **Veronica van Zyl** (senior international travel consultant at CY Travel); **Makotseng Molepo** (consultant Indian Ocean Islands at Thompsons Holidays); and **Marlene Botma** (travel adviser and branch manager at Sure Glenwood Travel).



The blue team were (from left): **Candice Lee Giloi** (travel consultant at True Blue Surf & Island Travel); **Debbie Beckett** (travel counsellor at Travel Counsellors); and **Peter Tait** (Kifaru Travel).



Chantelle Pearson (Travel with Options) learning to drive a Segway over 4x4 terrain.



Tasting jams and testing oils after a hike into the Mafate caldera on day one, are (from left): **Stephan Nieuwoudt** (travel consultant at Travel Experience); **Natasha Hazell** (personal travel expert at Pentravel); and **Siobhan du Toit** (account manager at Corporate Traveller), and tour guide **Nico Cyprien**. Photos: Kate Els

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.



Pentravel Rosebank reopens

Pentravel Rosebank, one of the first Pentravel stores in Gauteng, has officially reopened. To celebrate, staff and industry suppliers gathered at the store on September 11 for the official opening. Zurich Insurance's Karen Toerien (left) and ceo of Cullinan Holdings, Michael Tollman (right) cut the symbolic ribbon, joined by the store's manager, Cleo Geldenhuys.



Making a splash!

World Leisure Holidays recently hosted an educational to sunny Mauritius, taking agents on a tour of all the properties represented by WLH on the island. Enjoying the sunshine at La Pirogue are Jessica Solomon (FC Sea Point); Lyndall de Luca-Evans (FC Clearwater); Chad Winter (FC Cape Gate); Zelda Folkus (FC Long Beach Mall); George de Lange (FC Canal Walk); Amy Thomas (FC Kempton Park); and Tracy Prinsoo (WLH).

Appointments

■ Sun International Zambia has appointed its first sales manager, **Barbara Ngorima-Moono**. Barbara has worked in sales since 1996, including a six-year tenure as sales manager at another premium hotel group. Based in the Lusaka office, she will be responsible for driving the sales strategies for Sun International's Zambian properties, including the Royal Livingstone and Zambezi Sun. Barbara holds a number of qualifications and is known for her creativity, passion and dedication to excellence.



■ Hilton Durban has appointed food and beverage manager, **Cameron Townend**. Cameron brings more than a decade of local and international experience to his new role. In his former role as food and beverage manager at Fancourt Hotel and Spa Resort, he was responsible for all bars, restaurants, banqueting, room service and major concerts that attracted around 3 000 guests.



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Cruise lines tighten Ebola checks

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE cruise industry has taken steps to reduce the risk of Ebola being brought on-board ships, with major cruise lines handing out comprehensive health questionnaires.

Thaybz Kahn, product manager & marketing assistant of Cruises International, says Royal Caribbean International and other cruise lines will deny boarding to all passengers

and crew who have travelled to, in or through Sierra Leone, Guinea or Liberia during the 21 days before embarkation. Passengers who have been in physical contact with, or helped care for, a person with Ebola during the same time frame will also be denied boarding. "The health and safety of our guests is of utmost importance, and all the cruise lines we represent will not compromise this in any situation," she says.

A number of Caribbean countries, including Jamaica

"The health and safety of our guests is of utmost importance, and all the cruise lines we represent will not compromise this in any situation."

and Guyana, have announced bans on entry to foreigners who have travelled through

Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. Passengers from Nigeria will also be required to present a "recent medical certificate" clearing them of the virus. Colombia has gone one step further and also included Senegal and Nigeria in its ban.

The new screening procedure comes in the wake of a recent Ebola scare on the *Carnival Magic*. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention discovered that a laboratory worker

who had handled Ebola specimens had boarded the vessel. The lab supervisor was voluntarily quarantined in her cabin.

After being turned away in Belize, the ship, with more than 4 000 on board, headed to Cozumel, Mexico, where officials denied authorisation for a scheduled port visit. The passenger has since tested negative for Ebola, and the 21-day incubation period has passed. ■

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TNW7127

FlySafair – it's lift-off!

NATASHA TIPPEL

FLYSAFAIR launched its first flight between Cape Town and Johannesburg on October 16, with fares starting from R499 one way (excluding taxes of around R500). It's a welcome relief for SA travellers who are used to paying almost double on the route.

FlySafair will soon launch flights between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth and Cape Town and George, with fares starting from R399 (excluding taxes).

At the FlySafair launch event, deputy dg of the Department of Transport, **Zakhele Thwala**, said it was time South

Africans had more choice. He said it was time "we expand our base and make sure it's sustainable" and that FlySafair would bring needed competition.

Meanwhile, in a recent statement, Mango ceo, **Nico Bezuidenhout**, said another start-up was expected to enter the market before mid-2015. "The introduction of a second new airline in the domestic market will exhaust the sector. The market has contracted substantially since 2008 and, with margins under pressure again this year it is a fact that the sector cannot sustain more capacity on popular

routes such as JNB-CPT and JNB-DUR."

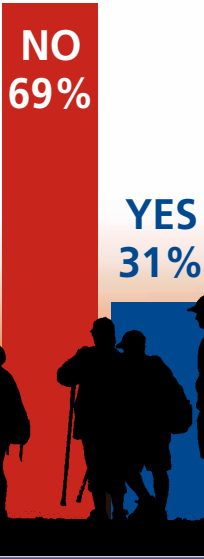
While below-cost fares fed airline launches, they would be impossible to sustain, he added. "The environment pre the global financial crisis proved far more conducive to airline start-ups.

"Today, given capital scarcity and increased competition, an investment proportionately greater than that required a couple of years ago may be necessary to sustain an airline well beyond its launch. Even with the lowest cost base in the industry, Mango's consistent profit history was not easily achieved." ■

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TNW7067

Insurance – stick to the facts!

From page 1

The traveller told *TNW*: "I question the value of travel insurance when the policy wording leaves gaps and creates confusion that [leads to] misunderstanding by the purchaser of the policy, their brokers and travel agents."

These kinds of miscommunications can have costly implications for the travel industry, says **Uriah Jansen**, md of Oojah Travel Protection. She says that in terms of the FAIS (Financial Advisory and Intermediary Services) Act, travel agents should restrict their services to giving factual advice on the procedure for buying the travel insurance policy. "Advising a client that a claim is covered or not covered is seen as providing an intermediary service for which neither company is licensed," she says.

Jason Veitch, head of TIC, says it is only a matter of time before South Africa will move towards a model where only certified travel

agents can offer advice and sell policies. Non-certified agents will then only be able to promote travel insurance products without actually being able to sell them. "I anticipate that we are at least two to three years away from this being a reality."

"Providing the client with your opinion could lead to a fine of up to R10m or even 10 years in jail."

He says in a case like this the insurer will undoubtedly be the responsible party but that there is always a degree of responsibility that lies with the person who made the incorrect statement, and this could compromise the agent's relationship with their client.

Jason adds that the travel agent's responsibility does not lie in telling the client what is included in the travel insurance. Insurance policies can be technical in nature,

so it is always best to refer matters to the specialists, he says.

He says it is the travel agent's duty to understand everything about the territory that they are sending their client to so that they can ensure the client has a successful journey. "With the increased worldwide concern about Ebola, travel agents need to make doubly sure they know all about the access to certain destinations."

According to Uriah, insurers have a difficult time getting agents involved in much-needed travel insurance training. "Training is perceived as boring and agents usually feel they 'know it all'. They don't give the representatives from the insurance companies enough time to transfer their knowledge. But providing the client with your opinion could lead to a fine of up to R10m or even 10 years in jail. We don't want to see someone being fined, for the industry to 'wake up'," she says. ■