

# TNW



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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

TNW6084SD

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# BA clamps down on wily agents

DORINE REINSTEIN

**S**OUTH African agents bypassing British Airways' geographic point-of-sale (POS) restrictions in order to access cheaper fares for their clients face being suspended from issuing BA tickets from November 23 onwards.

Members of the local travel trade have complained that origin and destination pricing strategies are affecting booking patterns and putting them at a competitive disadvantage as travellers have access to cheaper fares through international OTAs (TNW September 10). As a result, some agents have found loopholes to get around POS restrictions, for example by establishing commercial arrangements with overseas agencies.

BA regulations state that, without BA's prior written approval: (i) Agents operating under an IATA number established in the European Economic

Area (EEA) may not sell products and services the access of which is restricted to agents and/or customers outside the EEA; and (ii) agents operating under an IATA number established in a country outside the EEA may not sell products and services whose access is restricted to agents and/or customers outside that country.

**Sue Botes**, BA's commercial manager for Southern Africa, says the airline's trade partners are expected to access appropriate inventory and selling systems pertaining to their own point of sale. "We are establishing robust procedures in response to the unfair playing field being created by some SA agents trying to game the system and, in so doing, protect our South African agents from revenue leakage and loss of business, which is detrimental to all concerned."

"We are in constructive dialogue with  
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## Magical Disney!

Travel Vision is offering a Florida Walt Disney World special from just R23 935pps for seven nights. It includes return airfares ex-JNB, airport taxes, seven nights' accommodation, return airport transfers, a five-day Magic Your Way Base Ticket and transportation throughout Disney World. Kids under 18 stay free and only pay for entry to the Disney parks, flights and taxes. The offer is valid for travel between January 5 and February 11. From left: **Lynette Mkhize** (reservations, Americas Department), **Dharmesh Kooverjee** (ceo) and **Salome van Heerden** (sales executive East Gauteng). Photo: Shannon Van Zyl.

# Agent gets 10 years for embezzlement

NATASHA SCHMIDT

**OWNER** of Club Travel Honeydew, **Wilco van Eeden**, has been sentenced to a direct term of imprisonment of 10 years by the South African court, which found him guilty of embezzlement of millions of rands.

In December 2011, Club Travel head office became aware of the alleged misappropriation of funds and fraudulent activity in the trading of the independent franchise. The

franchisor, which quickly established a crisis team working 24/7 to assist affected customers, set about taking legal action against Wilco with the help of **Christo Snyman**, director of Mazars Forensic Services. Wilco was charged with fraud and theft to amount of R4,3 million in March last year.

After three years of Club Travel investing time, energy and huge amounts of money, Wilco has finally been convicted. He was taken into custody on November 13 and will serve

10 years in prison, without the option of paying a fine.

"Justice has been served," says **Jo Fraser**, Club Travel's franchise director. "Club Travel has zero tolerance for fraudulent activity. This is the outcome we were hoping for."

An observer in court said the Magistrate said that the accused's actions bordered on betrayal as he had operated a franchise, and as a manager he had been entrusted with large amounts of money

that he embezzled.

Furthermore the Magistrate said the accused was not truthful when he claimed that he had given to charities but that he stole the money because of his low self-image and his endeavours to impress others with money that was not his to spend. The presiding officer further stated that none of the sponsorships were for the poor.

Even though the defence counsel argued that the accused was not a

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# No-show? Pay up

DORINE REINSTEIN

**A**VIS is to introduce a no-show fee for renters who don't honour bookings from the second quarter of 2015. The car-rental company announced last year that it would introduce the fee (TNW June 5, 2013) but this was delayed due to two reasons, says **Lance Smith**, executive of sales.

"Namely, the launch of no-show fees in the US and Europe and our decision to wait and see the reaction to the fee in those markets and, secondly, the system changes

to accommodate fees in our region." Lance says Avis has implemented the fee in other countries with no problems or major challenges.

He says Avis is seeing on average 10% no shows and on some peak days they can be in excess of 25%.

Avis is not the only car-rental company in South Africa contemplating this model. Thrifty Car Rental is looking at introducing a no-show in the near future, specifically for high-end and specialised vehicles.

First Car Rental has already started applying a no-show

fee for specific seasons and events, whereby the no-show fee amounts to 100% of the value of the rental. Executive head of strategy, development and marketing, **Melissa Storey**, says First started implementing no-show fees during the Soccer World Cup in 2010.

**Sherl Camera**, gm of business development at Hertz, says it reserves the right to charge a no-show fee if the customer fails to collect the car within an hour of the agreed collection time or – with airport rentals – within two hours of the flight arrival time. ■

# BA clamps down on wily agents

From page 1

all parties concerned to find the best way forward; that's the way we'd prefer to resolve this."

**Andy Hedley**, Travelstart's head of technical business, says the discrepancies in fares brought about by POS strategies are considerable. He says European travel agents often have access to fares that are between R2 000 and R3 000 cheaper than fares available to SA agents for the same route.

Andy says some airlines have accommodated the local trade by changing their strategy to point-of-commencement, which means that the same route is available at the same fare for anyone in the world. Other airlines that continue to

operate on the POS principle, turn a blind eye to agencies working around the system.

"But not BA," says Andy, adding that BA has warned Travelstart not to bypass the POS, or risk having their ticketing plates revoked. "We'll see what we can do. We are not going to lose our plates. We need to back down for now, but in the long run ... I don't know what will happen."

Travelstart is considering legal action to challenge BA's regulations, Andy says. He says the agency's legal department is investigating whether BA's strategy contravenes the Competition Commission's rules. He adds that when Virgin Atlantic pulls out of Cape Town this year, BA will be the only carrier operating the route

and will charge South African passengers considerably more than European passengers.

"The regulations are nonsensical on many levels," agrees **Wally Gaynor**, md of Club Travel. He says BA's rules don't apply to US agents, which means the US-based Expedia can now sell online in SA with better availability than SA agents. "That is anti-competitive; it puts SA agents' livelihood at risk and opens BA to a whole host of legal challenges."

Wally says if an SA agent goes online to an overseas partner agent, makes a booking with that agent who then tickets, they are not breaking any rules. "If BA says otherwise, they are opening themselves up to a legal challenge." ■

# Agent gets 10 years for embezzlement

From page 1

career criminal, the Magistrate stated that the accused's actions were not spontaneous and that he had the time and opportunity to reconcile himself with the fact that his actions were unlawful (as this was over a period of 12 months) but proceeded with the embezzlement of funds none the less. He also slated the accused in that, despite the fact the criminal activities were discovered early in 2012, the accused had not to date lifted a finger to try

and make any repayments.

The Magistrate did say in favour of the accused that he had taken responsibility, had owned up and co-operated with the forensic team and the State.

"Without the detailed forensic report that was put together by Christo Snyman with the help of the Club Travel team, we may not have seen this outcome," Jo says. "Christo and his team did a sterling job."

**Charmaine van Niekerk** from Club Travel was also

instrumental in ensuring this conviction.

"We've learnt so much from this process. It's been incredibly difficult on many levels but it's taught us to be even more focused on our processes and procedures. Once Wilco's activities were discovered, we took immediate action to deal with the situation, pulling together files of information. The team that worked on this case were fantastic. Without them, we would not have seen this result," Jo says. ■

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# Virgin implements new rules on pre-seating

FROM November 18, Virgin Atlantic now charges passengers for the privilege of selecting their seats, limiting the seats travel agents can pre-assign their travellers.

Customers can choose a specific seat 336 days before their flight, for a fee. The cost to assign a seat will be £25 (R440) per person per sector or £50 (R880) per round trip on Virgin Atlantic long-haul flights.

Agents will only be able to assign seats in the GDS for Upper Class and premium economy as well as booking classes Y and B in economy.

The fee doesn't apply to Upper Class and premium economy as well as booking classes Y and B in economy; Flying Club Gold members; Delta SkyMiles Diamond, Platinum or Gold members, customers travelling on all Little Red services, customers travelling on a negotiated corporate fare (this must be present in the PNR); customers travelling as part of a group

via Virgin's in-house Groups department; and customers travelling on or before January 16 who chose their seat on or before November 17.

All other passengers who want to select their seats prior to online check-in will have to use the 'Manage My Booking' function on Virgin Atlantic's website.

Once check-in opens 24 hours before their flight, customers can choose their seat online free (this doesn't apply to extra leg-room and exit-row seats).

### Seating families

Virgin will identify a child SSR present in the PNR and will try to seat families together, free of charge, before online check-in opens 24 hours before departure, the airline said in a statement. "We'll assign seats on a first-come, first-served, basis. If we can't seat all the family together, we'll make sure each child under 12 years old is seated with an adult from the family group." ■

### Airlink awards now available online

AIRLINK frequent flyer awards are now fully functional on the flysaa.com booking engine. Members can use their Voyager Miles to redeem award tickets through Airlink services on the web. "Previously, members would have to go through the call centre in order to have their ticket processed," says Karin Murray, marketing and sales manager for Airlink. "Now they are able to go online, which is far more convenient."

### Air France ups services to Canada

AIR France KLM will introduce non-stop flights to Vancouver from Paris-Charles de Gaulle from March 29. Flights will be operated by a 309-seat Boeing 777-200 with 35 seats in business-class, 24 in premium economy and 250 in economy class. AF 374 will leave Paris-Charles de Gaulle at 10h35 and arrive in Vancouver at 11h50 the same day. AF 379 will leave Vancouver at 14h00 and arrive in Paris-Charles de Gaulle at 08h35 the following day. From March 29 to May 3, flights will operate on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. From May 4 to September 13 flights will operate on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and from September 14 to October 24, the Saturday flights will cease. The new Vancouver flights will be in addition to KLM's seven weekly flights from Amsterdam-Schiphol, and from May 5, KLM will offer three weekly flights between Amsterdam and Edmonton, increasing to four weekly frequencies from June 22.

### SAA and SAX make changes to lounge services

SAA Voyager Gold, Platinum and Lifetime Platinum members travelling in economy class on the SA codeshare flights with Emirates from Dubai will no longer be able to use the Marhaba Lounge in Dubai. A new lounge agreement is being initiated. Meanwhile, SA Express has terminated the business lounge services at Bram Fischer International Airport in Bloemfontein. This will be effective from November 1. Bloemfontein was a significant route for the airline, it said in a statement, however it would discontinue the business lounge services to focus on its core business of flying.

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# Trafalgar revitalises with new products

NATASHA SCHMIDT

**T**RAFALGAR has been busy. The tour operator has launched several initiatives in the last couple of weeks, including an incentive for 'newbie' agents.

To help newbies get a start up the travel ladder of success, Trafalgar has introduced its VIP Novice Incentive. The initiative is designed to encourage travel agent novices to attend one-on-one training, launch events, Trafalgar Travel Talk (with clients) and, of course, to attain a certain level of Trafalgar bookings across the spread of brochures available.

At each step of the process, agents are monitored and mentored by Trafalgar's area sales managers, who will provide marketing collateral to

help capture potential clients and invitations to launches and events. New agents are also given priority training and support through the sales team, as well as priority notification of deals, promotions and new brochures.

The VIP Novice Incentive runs over a period of 12 months and, once all the milestones have been reached, agents can take a Trafalgar guided holiday of their choice.

Trafalgar has also launched 'single friendly' deals. For 2015 the operator will waive or reduce single room supplements in many of its packages, "usually by about 50% but the waiver can be as much as 100%", the tour operator says. The deals will be valid on selected departures for 17 of the popular itineraries.

Also available for 2015, Trafalgar is taking the sting out of tipping with the introduction of pre-paid gratuities.

Trafalgar takes care of tipping for guests, including hotel tips, charges and local taxes and tips for porters and restaurant gratuities for included meals. New for 2015 is the option to pre-pay gratuities for the travel director and driver, allowing guests to pay upfront in their local currency and negate the effects of forex fluctuations.

For example, on Trafalgar's seven-day Italian Holiday, prepaid gratuities amount to R700pp – less than R100 per day for both the travel director and the driver. Pre-paid gratuities on the nine-day Best of Switzerland package amount to R900 per person. ■

## Letter to the Editor



### Dear Naked Agent...

OUR initial reaction when reading your evaluation of Sure Travel Bloemfontein in the Naked Agent column (TNW November 12) was one of sheer shock... surely it was not possible to receive only 25%?

But after some introspection we are immensely grateful for this survey because it was a necessary wake-up call for all of us.

Although the evaluation was based on only one enquiry from one of our less experienced consultants, all of us took the punch.

We continually strongly focus on two aspects, namely staff development and quality control, and have come to the conclusion that, although this was an unfortunate lapse in the high standards that we strive to maintain, the benefits that we will reap from it will, over time, surpass the negative aspects.

We have again committed ourselves to our own Code of Conduct and are striving actively towards 100%!

**Johann Beukes**  
Ceo, Sure Etnique Travel

## To the point



Fastjet now offers passengers flying out of Dar es Salaam access to the Tanzanite airport lounge at a cost of US\$28 (R314). The airline is currently working on gaining access to lounge areas at other airports, including OR Tambo International. For more information refer to Travelinfo.

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<p><b>GABORONE, BOTSWANA</b> <b>THE GRAND PALM</b> From <b>P345</b> pps</p>	<p><b>EMPANGENI, KZN</b> <b>UMFOLOZI</b> From <b>R375</b> pps</p>	<p><b>KLERKSDORP, NORTH WEST</b> <b>RIO RESORT</b> From <b>R450</b> pps</p>	
<p><b>THOHOYANDOU, LIMPOPO</b> <b>KHORONI</b> From <b>R395</b> pps</p>	<p><b>SOUTHBROOM, KZN</b> <b>MONDAZUR</b> From <b>R920</b> pps</p>	<p><b>MAFIKENG, NORTH WEST</b> <b>MMABATHO PALMS</b> From <b>R455</b> pps</p>	

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# Sabre boosts hotel and air content

SABRE-connected travel agencies now have access to shop and book over 50 000 HRS hotels, one of Europe's leading providers of hotels, including a wide range of independent properties.

TMCs that use Sabre will also gain access to the HRS Business Tariff programme, which offers up to 30% off daily room rates for over 35 000 hotels globally.

**Harald Eisenacher**, senior vp of Sabre Travel Network for EMEA, said: "Sabre is continuously growing its hotel content to better meet the needs of our diverse customer base. HRS properties are extremely popular around Europe and we are pleased

to provide this content to all our travel agents globally. Our agreement with HRS will help them drive more sales in the corporate sector to support their international expansion, and provide

**"Sabre is continuously growing its hotel content to better meet the needs of our diverse customer base."**

travel agents and buyers with access to a wide range of the most up-to-date and best-priced travel options so they can easily find properties that match their travellers' needs."

The technology company

has also signed a new multi-year agreement with SAA to make the carrier's airfares and inventory available in the GDS.

The agreement provides Sabre travel agencies and corporations with access to the airline's full range of fares, schedules and availability, including published fares sold through the airline's own website and reservations offices.

"South Africa is an important new market for Sabre and we are especially pleased to renew our agreement at a time when we are seeing strong interest from the industry," says **Greg Webb**, president of Sabre Travel Network. ■

## Mpumalanga hotel undergoes revamp

MALAGA Hotel on the banks of the Elands River in Mpumalanga, has recently undergone refurbishments and will be rebranded as a Protea Hotel in March. The three-star hotel is one of six properties leased and managed by the Boulevard Group and is ideal for families as a stopover en-route to the Kruger National Park or Mozambique. It is also convenient for business travellers as it is close to Nelspruit. All 52 rooms have private balconies with garden and mountain views. There are three conference rooms and a restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating and a menu featuring farm-fresh country fare and organic home-grown vegetables. The hotel is a popular venue for country weddings.

## City Lodge Waterfall to open in December

CONSTRUCTION at the City Lodge Hotel Waterfall City is on track for the first phase of room openings in mid-December. The 149-room hotel will soon be handed over to City Lodge Hotels for the furniture and fittings to be installed. The hotel is expected to open its first rooms during the festive season with the rest coming early in 2015. Situated in Waterfall City, Midrand, close to the Allandale off-ramp from the N1 highway between Johannesburg and Pretoria, City Lodge Waterfall City will be the 16th City Lodge-branded hotel in the group, taking the portfolio to 55 hotels in South Africa, Kenya and Botswana. This is the first City Lodge that has been developed with a choice between rooms with baths and showers and rooms with showers only. Seventy-two rooms (three dedicated for disabled guests) have the shower-only option, in line with growing international trends.

## Blue View opens new luxury apartments

THE Blue View Collection opened its newest self-catering apartments, South Beach Camps Bay, in Cape Town, last month. The five-star property offers nine sea-facing one-bedroom apartments and is within walking distance of all the restaurants and bars on the main Camps Bay strip.

## eLan buys another hotel in Mozambique

ELAN Property Group has purchased Hotel Phaphalati, a newly developed resort on an eight-hectare site in Ponta Malongane, 13km from Ponta do Ouro in Mozambique. Hotel Phaphalati features 54 rooms and self-catering units, as well as conferencing for up to 100 delegates. All double rooms are en-suite with air-conditioning. The forest chalets accommodate two adults and two children in each unit, with a queen-size bed in one room and bunk beds in the other. There is a toilet and bathroom, lounge, plasma TV, fully equipped kitchen and a veranda with a gas braai. The lodge has a lounge and large pool deck with views over the ocean, a bar and a dining room offering lunch and dinner.

## Renovated lodge reopens in Botswana

TULI Safari Lodge, situated between the Northern Tuli Game Reserve and the Limpopo River in Botswana, has reopened after refurbishments. The property's 11 suites have an open-plan design and 'Out of Africa'-themed décor. Eight of the suites are tented, with draped canvas over timber frames and wrap-around decks. The remaining three suites have shaded verandas and air-conditioning. All the suites can be made up as doubles or twins and two children can also be accommodated if required. Safari activities include guided game drives, bush walks, night drives, half-day horseback safaris and community visits.

## Namibian lodge expands, gets a makeover

ETOSHA Aoba Lodge in the Onguma Game Reserve, adjacent to Etosha National Park, Namibia, now offers 11 rooms along the dry Omuramba Owambo riverbed. The rooms include four free-standing Heritage bungalows with air-conditioning; three Bush suites, accommodating four adults in two rooms with an inter-leading bathroom; three new Explorer bungalows; and a Honeymoon bungalow, which is secluded and offers a double hammock in the trees and an outdoor shower and bath. Facilities at the lodge include a swimming pool, thatched bar, lounge and a dining area that overlooks a small active waterhole. Free WIFI is available to guests.

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At the launch of the revamped SunSquare Cape Town are, from left: **Richard Keet** (SunSquare CT gm); **Jack Parow** (musical artist); and **Marcel von Aulock** (Tsogo Sun ceo).

## SunSquare Cape Town opens after revamp

HILKA BIRNS

**T**SOGO Sun has relaunched the De Waal Cape Town hotel in Gardens as SunSquare Cape Town, following a R35m refurbishment and rebranding. Speaking at a media launch on October 30, Tsogo Sun ceo, **Marcel von Aulock**, said the

40-year-old property had been given a new lease of life with a more contemporary style and modern features. All 136 rooms have been revamped and the lobby now extends into a new bar area and terrace, situated next to a new restaurant. The conference rooms can accommodate up to 120 people.

Marcel said the relaunch was an example of Tsogo Sun's focus on product relevance and was in line with the continuing rejuvenation of the Cape Town city bowl. He said Tsogo Sun – a R30bn company – was spending R1bn on property maintenance and R6bn on expansion in South Africa. ■

## KZN levy should be part of TOMSA, says trade

DORINE REINSTEIN

**T**HE tourism industry recently met in KwaZulu Natal to discuss a way forward for the 10% KZN hospitality levy, which MEC **Michael Mabuyakhulu** recently proposed to create a war chest for the province to attract major events.

**Donovan Muirhead**, spokesperson for the National Accommodation Association of South Africa, told *TNW* the industry had agreed during the meeting that the overall objectives of the proposed levy were admirable and would undoubtedly boost tourism to the province and the country. However, the current proposed format was called into question and a number of important details were discussed regarding the collection and implementation of the levy. These details will be summarised in a report and submitted to the MEC during the next few weeks.

The main consensus that emerged from the meeting was that the levy should be collected as part of the existing TOMSA (Tourism Marketing South Africa) levy. This would allow for a countrywide bidding support fund regulated and overseen by the TBCSA. Event organisers around the country could then apply to the TOMSA committee for support of their events. The TBCSA would also be able to decide whether the events would offer sufficient return on investment.

**Adriaan Liebetrau**, ceo of SAACI, says the industry agreed that there was a need for a bidding and/or event support fund for South Africa. However, this fund should not be limited to KZN and should also include other provinces.

He said instead of every province implementing its own levy, a national structure would be more beneficial.

According to Adriaan,

collecting the proposed support fund levy through the existing TOMSA levy would also allow for quicker and easier implementation. If the MEC implemented a separate levy, it would need to be regulated and passed through Parliament. This could take quite some time.

Donovan adds that implementing a separate levy could also prove to be a logistical nightmare for larger corporations, which would have to change their entire IT infrastructure to collect this additional levy.

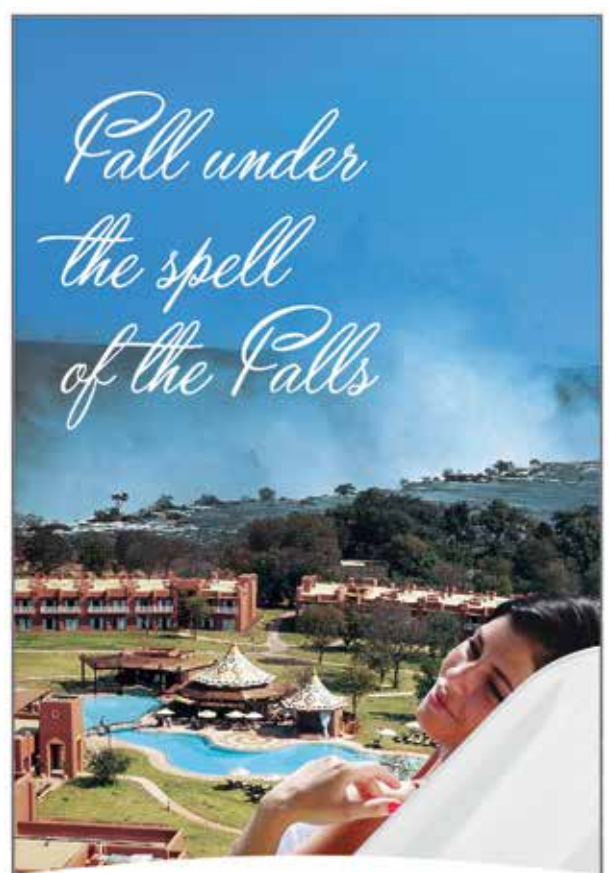
He says the industry also agreed that the levy should be voluntary and should benefit the contributors in some way. He explained that industry players who agreed to contribute to the bidding support fund should receive some benefits in the form of market mapping, product formatting or perhaps free grading benefits. ■

## Ebola: Mauritius removes Nigeria restrictions

**M**AURITIUS has removed Nigeria from the list of countries with travel restrictions. Foreign nationals, including South Africans, who have visited one or more of

the countries affected by Ebola in the two months prior to their travel to Mauritius will not be allowed to enter the country. The affected areas are Guinea, Liberia,

Sierra Leone and the DRC. To see the latest changes to Ebola-related travel advisories in Africa, view *eTNW's* comprehensive map and guide at [www.etnw.co.za/Ebola.aspx](http://www.etnw.co.za/Ebola.aspx) ■



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TNW6845D



## The Holiday Factory's Turnbull started at the bottom

With over 20 000 clients, The Holiday Factory has grown to be one of the biggest wholesalers in the South African industry. How did they do it? *TNW* spoke with md, **Jackie Turnbull**.

**T**HIS month The Holiday Factory moved to new premises to cope with its growth. It has made its mark on the industry. The 3 000 customers it handled in its first year have grown to

20 000 this year. It is actively used by 2 500 agents.

In an interview with *TNW*, Jackie was adamant that there was no magic recipe. It just takes experience and common sense, she says.



### Understanding the business

"I was born in Glasgow and my parents immigrated to SA 40 years ago.

"I started in travel as a receptionist at what is today Sure Witbank Travel. There was little choice for travellers then. TFC Tours was an easy sell because people felt safer and more comfortable travelling in groups. KLM and BA flights to London were the big sellers.

"I went on an educational to Greece with Thompsons and, for the first time, realised there was life outside Witbank. When I came back I moved to

Cape Town and found a job with Gundelfingers. When I moved on to Compass Tours, the wholesale division of Rennies, I had solid experience in retail, which proved invaluable in the future.

"I was in sales at Compass and did not like it but it did give me the opportunity when it was bought by the Thompsons group to manage a new leisure retail division that **Anton Thompson** set up.

It was here that I was introduced to the big picture of the relationship between

wholesale and retail. I also saw the value of hands-on leadership. Anton knew everything that was going on.

"We became the number-one supplier to World Leisure Holidays and in 1991 the md, **Bruce Hutchinson**, approached me to join them as operations director.

"Bruce taught me about marketing. He was quite exceptional and very determined once he set out to do something."

Jackie learned the business thoroughly. She was there for 15 years, the last four as md.

### A new business is born

"When I left WLH the decision was whether to work for somebody else or start something new.

"**Adrian Hollis**, my partner and husband, had been with WLH for 10 years and was the financial director. Between us we had a wealth of experience and strong relationships in the industry.

"We took the plunge despite the economic woes and were

quite confident that if we started out properly and ran it well, The Holiday Factory would succeed. People we knew were counting on us; failure was not an option.

"What we learned was that in hard times, people realised the need to do things differently. Perhaps if times were good, they would have continued in their set ways," she says.

### A successful recipe

"We did not want this to be a garage operation. We wanted to start properly, with good call centre technology and a state-of-the-art reservation system," Jackie says.

It was a call from competitor **Terry Munro** of Beachcomber that put them in touch with the right people.

"We started with the One&Only brand. We also decided not to contract with hotels as general wholesalers but rather work wherever possible, like WLH, as an extension of the hotels we represented. That means we understand the properties better and they go the extra mile for us.

"It has been a real advantage to have a retail background when running a wholesale operation.

I know what it's like for the consultant with the client on the other side of the desk. They need to be able to trust and rely on us to handle things,

including problems, quickly. We have to be fast so consultants can move on to the next client.

"Our system allows us to send multiple options to the client 20 seconds after their call has ended. This also shows them what the client pays and what their commission is. We may not be the biggest tour operator but we aim to be the fastest.

"All departments are aligned to make agents more productive. Our call centre handles about 700 to 800 calls a day. It is a hybrid between a call centre and a one-on-one service where we try to cater for agents who want to deal with a specific person. It is difficult to manage as the person they want to speak to will often be on another call.

"Another touch point is the finance department, where we make it easy for agents to get documents and account information easily."

### Value the key

Jackie believes there is a future for travel agents because they add value that travellers can't receive by going direct.

"International holidays are fraught with problems when people go direct. Things go wrong and who do they call? The cheapest is rarely the best option. In fact when we help agents rescue a sale by analysing an alternative direct quote, a lower price is usually an illusion where taxes, services fees and even breakfasts are left out.

"We really support the

retail trade and believe that, whatever we do, we must do it exceptionally well! We have an amazing team of passionate people here. Every job I have had, I have treated as my own business. We have lots of people at The Holiday Factory with that same philosophy."

Jackie's advice? "Stick to what you know. I know operations, Adrian knows accounting and **Matthew [Fubbs]** knows sales. The secret is that we are hands on – completely and totally." ■

### Facts about Jackie

- She has three daughters – two are attorneys, one a chartered accountant.
- She does not take work home.
- She gets her stress relief from being a self-proclaimed 'Olympic shopper'.
- Her favourite destinations are those with shopping malls.







The Air Namibia Board, Management and Staff are deeply saddened by the news of the untimely passing of Mr. Piet du Plooy. Piet has been a stalwart in the industry and under his leadership, Trip Travel has been the highest revenue contributor to Air Namibia in the Namibian market.

Namibia has lost a compassionate and visionary leader. Our sincere condolences go to his family, colleagues and friends.

May his Soul Rest in Peace.





Photo: TAT

# Shopping destinations

Dorine Reinstein rounds up some popular shopping destinations and investigates how to best get that extra luggage home.

## Shop till you drop – but what about the luggage?

**T**OUR operators in South Africa have seen shopping emerge as a growing component of the travel experience for South

African travellers, either as a prime motivation or as one of the major activities undertaken by tourists at their destinations. But, as

South Africans travel the globe to find that perfect bargain, one problem persists: what about the extra luggage?

### 1 Bangkok – Thailand

Thailand has gained an excellent reputation in the South African market for its shopping opportunities, says **Lesley Simpson**, spokesperson for Thailand Tourist Authority in South Africa.

She explains: “Thai shopping offers quality, cheaper prices, skilled artisans and the opportunity to bargain in a friendly manner.

“Bangkok shopping runs the gamut from ultra-chic malls to energetic street markets hawking everything imaginable.

“With low prices and a vast selection of clothing, textiles, housewares, and knock-off

computer and electronic products, one could easily spend several days in Bangkok immersed in retail therapy.”

Places to shop in Bangkok include the shops in and around Siam Centre and Siam Paragon on Sukhumvit Road, as well as the malls on Petchburi Road, such as the Platinum Fashion Mall.

But Lesley says the ultimate shopping experience is the weekend market at Chatuchak, the largest in Thailand – and the world – with a staggering 15 000 stalls covering 14 hectares.

#### Extra luggage

Thai Airways International has temporarily increased the baggage allowance by 10kg on domestic and international flights, except on flights to and from the US.

Royal First Class passengers may now check in 50kg of baggage, up from the previous 40kg. Royal Silk class passengers are now allowed 40kg, while economy class passengers are allowed 30kg. Royal Orchid Plus members are also entitled to additional baggage allowances based on their respective member status.

### 2 Delhi – India

India, with its amazing number of markets and bazaars, is a fantastic shopping destination. The markets offer everything from brassware to leather, silver and textiles – India’s trademark handicrafts.

Undoubtedly one of the most popular destinations for shopping is Delhi, where Connaught Place, Karol Bagh, Sarojini Market and Chandni Chowk are the main shopping areas. Baba Kharak Singh Marg is another interesting shopping stop, as the market offers famous handicraft artifacts from all the different states of India.

The distinct feature of Delhi shopping is that every shopping hub has its own ambience and speciality. To really experience the culture and traditions of the city, visitors should stroll in its market places, for it is here that contemporary society is most visible.

#### Extra luggage

There are no direct flights to Delhi from South Africa. Here are some of the best options:

##### • SAA – via Mumbai

Business-class passengers are allowed two bags of 32kg each, economy class passengers are restricted to two bags at 23kg each.

The price to bring extra luggage from Delhi to Johannesburg is R960 per bag for business class passengers and R610 per bag for economy class passengers.

##### • Etihad – via Abu Dhabi:

First-class passengers are allowed to carry 50kg, business-class passengers 40kg and economy-class passengers 30kg.

Baggage that exceeds the weight limits and dimensions will be processed through Etihad Cargo and will cost US\$35 (R395) per bag.

### 3 Istanbul – Turkey

Istanbul is a shopper’s paradise with no shortage of tempting goods on offer all over the city.

From ancient bazaars to backstreet markets, alternative designer boutiques and state-of-the-art shopping malls, the city offers immense variety. Some streets, such as Istiklal Street, are particularly renowned for a large concentration of shops.

However, the absolute highlight for any shopping tourist to Turkey is the yearly Istanbul Shopping Fest, where for a few weeks in summer over 90 shopping centres open their doors until 02h00 and many outlets offer big discounts.

There are also street carnival groups, concerts,

games for children, parties, contests, fashion shows and performances.

#### Extra luggage

Turkish Airlines will only allow one bag up to 30kg for business-class travellers and 20kg for economy-class travellers.

For every additional bag, Turkish Airlines charges €15 (R208) to Johannesburg.

However, check with the airline for specials during the Istanbul Shopping Fest, when specials include free baggage allowances in economy and business class over the period. During the 2014 festival, baggage allowance was 40kg for economy-class and 50kg for business-class passengers.

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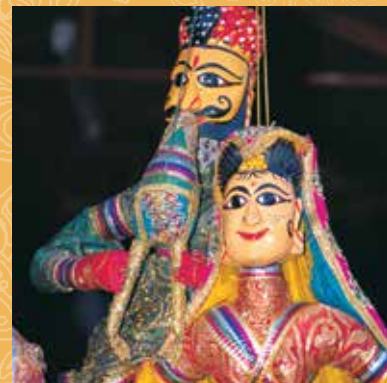
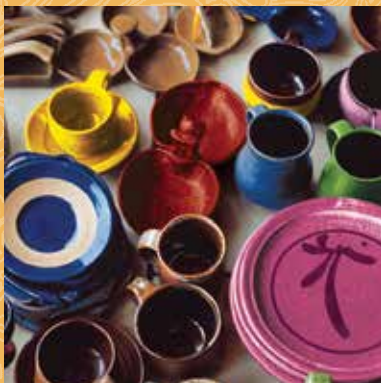
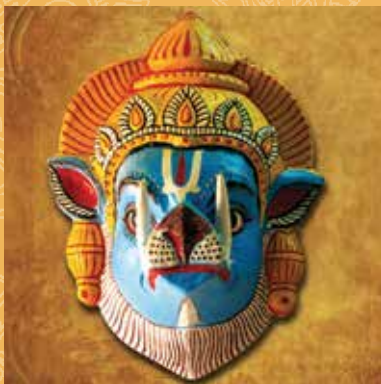
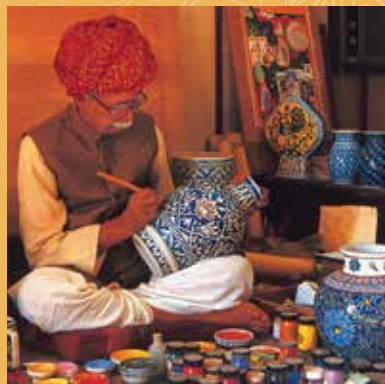
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# Shopping destinations

## 4 Dubai

A shopaholic's haven, the Dubai Shopping Festival 2015 (January 1-February 1) will offer a month-long shopping extravaganza with discounted shopping opportunities, sometimes close on 75%. The festival also features other activities for the whole family such as raffle draws, music concerts, fashion shows, children's events and lots more.

The Dubai Shopping Festival allows big spenders to shop to their heart's content at highly discounted prices at labels such as Gucci, Prada, Versace or Armani. The souks, too, are a hub of activity over the period.

The Gold Souk, with its necklaces, bracelets and bangles, remains a popular



Shopping in Dubai's Textile Souk. Photo: Dubai Tourism

attraction, as is the Spice Souk, with its flavours and colours.

### Extra luggage

When flying with Emirates, travellers can take luggage of up to 30kg in economy class, 40kg in business class and 50kg in first class. However, if travellers exceed the weight limitations, they are charged R370 per kg plus

taxes. Better rates for excess luggage are available online prior to departure.

During the shopping festival, the airline often has special baggage allowance regulations.

Last year Emirates increased its usual 30kg economy-class baggage allowance to 40kg and introduced a US\$8 (R90) per kg special rate on excess baggage up to 500kg.

## 5 Amsterdam

Amsterdam is a great shopping destination, although not many South African travelers regard it as such.

There are a great number of open-air street markets throughout the city. Among the best are the historic Waterlooplein Flea Market, the huge Albert Cuyp Market and the organic Boerenmarkt farmers' market.

The vibrant and colourful Albert Cuyp Market is one of the largest open-air markets in Europe and provides numerous

shopping and food-tasting opportunities.

But the city is also home to fashionable shopping streets, such as Pieter Cornelisz Hoofstraat, the most expensive shopping street in The Netherlands, where visitors will find top brands such as Lacoste, Mulberry, Gucci, Chanel, Hugo Boss, Louis Vuitton, Ralph Lauren, Hermes and Tiffany & Co.

For antique fanatics, a visit to Spiegelkwartier is a must. The area is home to more than 70 speciality shops that

feature everything from furniture and chandeliers to Oriental art, old scientific instruments, music boxes and Delftware.

### Extra luggage

KLM will allow economy-class travellers one piece of luggage weighing 23kg, and two suitcases of 32kg each when travelling in business class. Passengers can order extra luggage capacity online at a discount – €80 (R1 110) for an extra bag as opposed to €100 (R1 388) when purchased at the airport.

## Did you know?

Shopping is the order of the day in India, be it in medieval streets or modern malls. Traveller's cheques can be easily converted and Visa and MasterCard are accepted in most shops. Some outlets also accept American Express. Street vendors, however, and some smaller shops do not take credit cards. Bargaining at local bazaars and roadside shops is the norm. ■

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## Sun and surf

World Leisure Holidays hosted agents on an educational to Mauritius earlier this year. Enjoying the ocean breeze are (back from left): Ilse Diedericks (XL Astra Bloem); Judith Beukes (SATC Park Travel); Michelle Lipparoni (WLH); and Navarre Parker (FC Eastgate). Front from left: Tears Ramaphakela (FCBT Silver Lakes); Frans Smit (WLH); and Kabelo Letsoalo (Boledi Travel).

## Obituary

Flight Centre Nicolway's **Samantha Wilson** was killed along with her boyfriend **Jacques Fourie** in a tragic motorbike accident on November 9.

According to the *Sandton Chronicle*, Samantha and Jacques were out for a Sunday afternoon drive when a negligent driver made an illegal turn, ending both their lives.

Manager of Flight Centre Nicolway, **Francois Du Toit** was quoted as saying, "It's very sad that it happened and all of us are trying to cope as best we can. She was the life of the office, very bubbly, happy and full of life."

## Appointments

**Erik Venter** has been elected chairman of the Airlines Association of Southern Africa (AASA). AASA represents the SADC and Indian Ocean Islands-domiciled airlines on matters of common interest in their respective countries. AASA members also elected SA Express ceo, **Inati Ntshanga**, as the association's deputy chairman.

**Tsogo Sun** has announced new appointments at Garden Court Marine Parade and Garden Court South Beach.



**John Aritho**, former gm of Southern Sun Maharani, has been appointed general manager at Garden Court Marine Parade to lead the hotel's R107 million refurbishment project. **Wayne Smith**, former gm of the Garden Court Blackrock, will take up a new challenge as gm of Garden Court South Beach.



## Master chefs

Beachcomber recently hosted travel agents from Cape Town on an educational to Mauritius. **Michelle Minnaar** (Harvey World Plettenberg Bay) is pictured here cooking up a storm at Le Mauricia Hotel.

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## Saudi Arabian Airlines launches JNB-Medina flights

SAUDI Arabian Airlines will introduce flights from Johannesburg to Medina in the Hejaz region of western Saudi Arabia from February 2. Flights will operate

on Mondays for six months and, depending on demand, may be extended. Flights will depart JNB at 12h50 and land in Medina at 21h00. ■

# Government tightens belt another notch

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE travel sector will feel the impact of more government spend cuts over the next two years, following Finance Minister, **Nhlanhla Nene's**, address at a meeting hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce earlier this month. Planned government expenditure on travel will be cut by no less than R555m in a bid to manage the country's escalating budget deficit.

He said: "We just need two years to rebuild fiscal space that we lost during the crisis. We have to slow down the growth of government debt. To do otherwise would be to place our achievements over the past 20 years at the mercy of fickle global markets."

**Adriaan Liebetrau**, SAACI ceo, says the cost containment measures imposed by the government are among the main challenges facing the travel industry in 2015.

He says government budgets will be reduced on the back of the rate cap that was already introduced by government with the last interim speech in October last year, making it compulsory that officials pay no more than R1 300 for accommodation, breakfast, dinner, parking, the tourism levy and other services. "The interim budget speech strongly suggests that budgets will become even tighter with income tax increases inevitable if we are to reduce the budget deficit."

A spokesperson for the marketing division at BCD Travel says the travel industry in general will feel the impact of the measures announced

by government. "Hotels have realised that if they don't comply with government rate cuts, they will have empty beds. Flights are still full but cheapest tickets are required, not fully flexible tickets. International and any business-class travel are monitored very strictly. There has been a curb on conferences, and the number of employees attending workshops and conferences has been reduced." The cost-cutting initiative will cause a drop in turnover but not transaction, BCD Travel's spokesperson adds.

with government." Since discussions between Asata and Treasury began in May, the joint project has delivered a code of conduct, MOU and the process around the categorisation of government departments and TMCs. This includes tenders, process workflows, best practice and a travel policy. The project's key objectives include:

- Compliance with Treasury regulations with irregular and/or unauthorised expenditure. Wasteful expenditure related to no-shows, last-minute and non-essential travel, resulting in outstanding payments totalling millions that trickle down the supply chain of services.
- Budget deficits as a result of inaccurate tracking of expenditure and misallocations that result in a direct impact on the country's economy.
- Government's requirement for a benefit of scale, resulting in the best return on investment, value for money and a grading of TMCs to qualify and quantify companies to handle the array of travel arrangements undertaken by government officials.

"The joint project is compiling the executive summary that Treasury can present to the minister to highlight what has been achieved to date and what benefits will translate from the project," Otto says, adding that Asata has also established a case log to better track outstanding payments and assist treasury in helping industry recover overdue payments. ■

"The travel industry in general will feel the impact of the measures announced by government."

### Managing spend

The upside of government's efforts to establish a better understanding and a firmer grip on travel spending is that the National Treasury has started working closely with Asata to develop a travel procurement framework for government and to track and recover outstanding payments due to Asata members.

**Otto de Vries**, ceo of Asata, says: "The aim is to initially deal with long outstanding payments and to ensure that an acceptable mechanism is in place to deal with these issues, as and when they arise. This, combined with the other work we are doing with National Treasury, is designed to streamline and improve our members' working relationship

*pulse poll*  
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### No way, UK

UK Prime Minister David Cameron has unveiled plans to roll out a 24-hour visa service in a number of countries, including South Africa, by April 2015. The service fee is a hefty £600 (R10 592) over and above normal visa fee charges and does not in guarantee a visa application will be successful.

Would your clients pay R10 000 to receive a UK visa within 24 hours?

■ No 94%  
■ Yes 6%



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