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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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Is Etihad buying a stake in SAA?

NATASHA SCHMIDT
AND DORINE REINSTEIN

SPECULATION is building in the industry that SAA is considering Etihad Airways as an equity partner, with recent happenings adding fuel to the fire.

Late last month, at the re-launch event of SAA's Voyager loyalty programme, acting ceo **Nico Bezuidenhout**, said SAA had embarked on a 90-day action plan that would help return the airline to commercial sustainability. This is in line with its Long Term Turnaround Strategy, 'Gaining Altitude'.

Nico was vague about the "six-step" plan, saying only that the first step was to look at the "solvency and liquidity of the business", second its "operational interventions", third "compliance", fourth "governance structures", fifth "reorganising assets", and sixth "communicating these changes".

The three-month strategy follows SAA's unsuccessful application to government for a 'going concern guarantee', *City Press* reported on November 30. The article said SAA desperately needed the guarantee to raise funding.

Other options included finding investors to take a stake in SAA, it said.

Earlier in November, Minister of Public Enterprises, **Lynne Brown**, said she would encourage SAA to find a 'strategic equity partner'. Etihad has since been recognised as a viable partner for SAA on popular aviation forums such as Avcom.

At the time of going to print, SAA and Etihad announced they would hold a joint media conference on December 9 to announce the expansion of the strategic partnership between the two airlines.

An aviation source, who preferred to remain anonymous, told *TNW* an equity partnership between SAA and Etihad could prove to be problematic as South African law restricted foreign ownership to 25%. Historic evidence shows that Etihad usually aims for a much larger ownership percentage for its equity stakes. Etihad also tended to negotiate quite strong management contracts whereby they could steer the turnaround strategy of the ailing airline, which would also be problematic under the current South African legislation, he said. ■



Enjoying the silly season and the last *TNW* Thirsty's event of the year are (from left): **Sean Bradley** (SAA); **Robyn Christie** (Travelport); **Antonio Romano** (Travelport) and **Matthew Fubbs** (The Holiday Factory). For more pics of the function, held at the Protea Hotel Balalaika in Sandton, see page 14. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

SA Express seeks bank loan

DORINE REINSTEIN

SA EXPRESS is seeking government approval for a bank loan as the airline is insolvent and unable to pay its debt.

The airline's management met with the Portfolio Committee on Public Enterprises, which conducted an oversight visit at SAX earlier this month. **Inati Ntshanga**, SAX ceo, told the Committee that SAX needed to raise funds with the bank; however, the bank needs a shareholder

agreement in order to secure the loan.

He said an application had been sent to National Treasury and Department of Public Enterprises but that SAX was still waiting for a response.

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public Enterprises, **Dipuo Letsatsi-Duba**, said she welcomed the austerity measures put in place to address the financial challenges and to curb wasteful expenditure at SAX.

Colin Cruywagen,

spokesperson for the Department of Public Enterprises, referred all questions to SA Express.


He said the department could not comment as the carrier had yet to hold its AGM as its financial records were not finalised.

He repeated what Minister of Public Enterprises, **Lynne Brown**, explained recently that state-owned companies must be able to live off their own balance sheets.

SAX could not be reached for comment. ■

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MasterCard has partnered with Empresa Interbancária de Serviços, operator of Angola's only interbank network, enabling cardholders to withdraw kwanza from more than 2 600 ATMs. **Jose Gualberto de Matos**, ceo of EMIS, says: "As a result of this partnership, electronic transactions are now considerably easier for international and intra-regional visitors to the country." ATMs in the country accept MasterCard debit, credit and prepaid cards.



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Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



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At the launch of the improved Travelport Smartpoint are (from left): **Robyn Christie** (Travelport); **George Harb** (Travelport); and **Vanya Lessing** (Sure Travel ceo). Photo: Natasha Schmidt

Travelport launches enhanced agency desktop

THE latest version of Travelport Smartpoint agency desktop marks the global roll-out of Travelport's 'Rich Content and Branding' merchandising solution, alongside numerous other new features that aim to make booking travel easier and more profitable for travel agencies.

The new version of the desktop facilitates improved upselling and cross-selling opportunities, giving travel agents unique access to rich visual imagery and detailed product information from more than 70 participating airlines.

"The new technology empowers agents, giving them access to information they would usually only find

on the airline's website, making it easier for them to compare and sell ancillary products and talk to the customer in a way that consultants using other technology can't," said gm for Southern Africa, **Robyn Christie**, at the launch event in Johannesburg. Agents are also able to see what's included in the price and what upgrades are available.

Other key benefits include:

- Improved navigation, graphical mapping and interactive screens to make selling additional services such as hotel rooms and car hire easier and quicker;
- Enhanced features, including new, interactive graphical airline seat maps

and ancillary services such as baggage allowances and lounge access, which airlines are able to market to different customers at different prices in line with their loyalty schemes;

- The continuing ability to shop and book full-service and low-cost airlines side by side within the existing agent workflow, a major boost to agent efficiency.

The latest version of the desktop continues to offer a virtual account number (VAN) payment solution, which integrates a secure and fully integrated payment solution directly in their desktop environment. This solution is provided by eNett, in which Travelport owns a majority stake. ■

Nikita Tavlet selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Lufthansa.** Promotional fares starting from R1 000 excluding taxes to over 40 destinations. Saleable in December and valid for travel in the first quarter of 2015. Refer to the GDS for fare details.
- **South African Airways.** Economy-class day- and flight-specific fare from Johannesburg to Mauritius from R1 980 return. Valid for sales until February 28. Travel is valid in February only.
- **Air Austral.** Special fare to Réunion - fares are from R2 100 excluding taxes. Sales period until December 14. Travel periods are December 4-28, February 1-March 12 and April 2-May 7.
- **Air Seychelles.** Abu Dhabi business-class special from R10 434,39 including taxes. Tickets must be issued by December 15. Travel to be completed by March 31. Two stopovers in Seychelles (check out their travel trade special on their database).
- **Rove Africa - Islands and Safaris.** Zanzibar - last-minute December 2014 deals. Four-star packages are from R15 890 per person sharing. Offer includes return flights ex-Johannesburg, all taxes, return airport transfers, eight nights' accommodation with three meals plus selected local drinks. Last departure December 17. Three-star packages also available.



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CemAir gears up for holiday season

DEBBIE BADHAM

CemAir has taken delivery of its first Bombardier Dash-8, which will enter service on the Margate and Plettenberg Bay schedules this festive season.

"This is a very exciting development and one that will allow us to further expand our reach in the domestic schedule market and beyond," said Miles van der Molen, ceo of CemAir.

CemAir recently celebrated the first anniversary of the launch of its flights between Johannesburg and Margate. Speaking at a special event, Miles said the airline had seen considerable demand for the route. While CemAir had initially committed to flying between Johannesburg and Margate twice a week, the airline has since increased this to eight times a week out of season,

and 14 times a week during the holiday season.

The flights have seen government and the private sector come together to develop and promote the route. Local officials agreed that the route was an important achievement for South Coast tourism, contributing to the local economy.

"Aside from new aircraft, we are also looking at new routes."

South Coast Tourism ceo, Justin Mackrory, said Cemair was a breath of fresh air to the region. He added that since the launch of the new route there had been significant talk about further developments on the South Coast, such as major convention centres and universities. He said

the Wild Coast Sun, San Lameer and Umthunzi Hotel had all committed their support.

As a result of the Margate success, other small airports in KwaZulu Natal, such as Ladysmith, also want to invest in further development.

CemAir continues to make investments in its service. The airline is now bookable on the GDS and has also introduced passenger screening and improved baggage-handling services.

"Aside from new aircraft, we are also looking at new routes," Miles said, alluding to the launch of a new service to Cape Town.

Based at OR Tambo International Airport, CemAir operates scheduled services from OR Tambo to Margate, Plettenberg Bay/Cape Town and Kathu (Sishen) in the Northern Cape. ■

SAA adds JetBlue as new Voyager partner

SAA has launched a new frequent flyer partnership with JetBlue Airways in North America, providing expanded mileage-earning opportunities for Voyager members.

Voyager members can earn mileage credits on flights across JetBlue's network of destinations in the US, Caribbean and Latin America, while JetBlue's TrueBlue members can earn TrueBlue points on SAA's entire network where SAA

is the operating carrier. The two airlines plan to introduce a redemption programme for award travel for members of their respective frequent flyers during the first quarter of 2015.

As codeshare partners, SAA's code is on JetBlue-operated flights between New York and Washington, DC and 18 other cities in the US, including Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale and Denver. ■

VisitBritain launches online supplier directory

VISITBRITAIN has introduced a supplier directory on its website to provide the international travel trade with a range of resources, features and products.

The core feature of the website enables UK tourism stakeholders to manage their

own listing on VisitBritain's platforms, allowing their business to be searchable and contactable by the overseas trade.

Listings are categorised based on the area of business and the regions of Britain sold and their location. ■



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Sha'p Sha'p!

Local is lekker! City Lodge Hotels has 52 hotels across all SA provinces. Here is the latest news in domestic tourism.

Sha'p-sha'p: (Sharp-sharp) (a)
A South African term used to express
our good health and well being.

ROAD LODGE
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New KZN beach and bush offering

THOMPSONS Africa's new beach and bush package offers guests a six-night stay that takes in Umhlanga and the Phinda Private Game Reserve.

Guests on the Beach & Bush Escape package fly from OR Tambo to Richards Bay, King Shaka International Airport (KZIA) or Phinda Private Game Reserve. From there, they transfer to &Beyond Phinda Mountain Lodge or Forest

Lodge for three nights. The Big Five reserve is also home to rarer species, including cheetah and Black rhino. All meals, soft drinks, house wines, local spirits and beers are included, as well as all scheduled safari activities.

On day four, guests transfer to the five-star Oyster Box for three nights. The hotel, which is on the ocean's edge, is five minutes' walk from Umhlanga village centre and offers quick

access to Durban's city centre, KZIA and numerous shopping centres. Accommodation is in a classic sea-facing room and includes breakfast daily and one 30-minute back, neck and shoulder massage, per person, per stay.

On day seven, guests fly back to Johannesburg.

The package is valid from January 6-December 19, 2015 and includes flights as per the itinerary.

Western Cape top in hotel sector growth

THE Western Cape has been outperforming every other province for hotel investment with Cape Town being the most popular city in Southern Africa for new investments, says **Joop Demes**, ceo of Pam Golding Hospitality.

The national 2014 year-to-date average revenue per available room growth (RevPAR) as at the end of September 2014 is 8,3% compared with the same period last year, with the Western Cape recording RevPAR growth of 19,2% for the first nine months this year compared with the same period last year. The September year-to-date average occupancy in the Western Cape has grown

by 6,8% compared with the first nine months last year.

Joop says the acquisition of the Protea Hotel Group by Marriott earlier this year has sparked foreign direct hotel investment interest that has predominantly focused on the Western Cape and Johannesburg, with the US, China and the Middle East leading the surge.

"We are aware of a 'pipeline' of 11 hotel projects in Cape Town with an estimated 2 102 rooms in total. These hotels are scheduled to open within the next four years and if they all proceed it will create a collective investment in excess of R3,5bn and create in excess of 2 000 direct jobs," said Joop.



The revamped Blue Marlin Hotel in Scottburgh on KZN's South Coast. Photo: The Blue Marlin

Blue Marlin Hotel completes revamp

THE revamp of the Blue Marlin Hotel in Scottburgh on KZN's South Coast is complete.

In April 2013, Dream Vacation Club entered into a partnership with the owners and took over the management of the hotel and the extensive renovation work of the R12m first phase, which included the revamp of all the

common/public areas and the pool.

Phase two, which is now complete, included the renovation of the majority of the rooms at a cost of R14m.

"Upgrading the Blue Marlin is the first and most significant tourism infrastructure development in the area in the past 10 years," says

director, **Sandie Curtis**. "It will have a huge impact on the local economy. South Africans are looking for a good-quality holiday experience that is affordable and we already have a lot of interest from the UK. Saga Holidays in the UK has contracted a block of rooms from January, and these are filling up quickly."

Rehabilitation of road to Drakensberg begins

THE Free State Department of Roads and Transport is in the process of appointing a contractor to rehabilitate the R74, viewed as the gateway to the Drakensberg Mountains.

Tourism establishments in the area saw occupancies drop during the past few years as a result of the poor state of the R74. Some, including Little Switzerland Resort and Sungubala Lodge,

closed their doors as tourists started to avoid the area.

Hillary Mophete, roads department spokesperson, told TNW progress was being made and a tender to rehabilitate and reconstruct the R74 between Harrismith and Oliviershoek was officially published on October 10. Work is expected to start early this month, provided there are no delays caused by weather. ■



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Trafalgar – good news for travellers

FOR 2015 Trafalgar will be waiving or significantly reducing single room supplement charges on selected departures for 17 itineraries.

Trafalgar's Italian Holiday, Scenic England and Best of Turkey itineraries have a 100% waiver of the single supplement, representing savings of up to R3 000.

In addition, with strong 2015 sales, Trafalgar now has more than 70% definite departures across its 2015 Europe and Britain programme. "The feedback we are getting from agents is that they are selling Trafalgar on the 'exclusivity' of what we are offering and it is working," says Trafalgar md, **Theresa Szejwalo**.

The brand offers various 'Insider Experiences', including Be My Guest, Cultural Insights, Local Specialists and Authentic

Accommodation in its packages.

New for 2015 are visits to:

- Oradour-sur-Glane – a French village razed to the ground in a Nazi bomb attack in 1944.
- Torc Waterfall – Ireland's highest waterfall, surrounding scenic lakes, woodland, and the 19th century Muckross Estate.
- Galway – a traditional sheep farm.
- Kambly – where guests will see the famous biscuits produced and explore the origins of the brand.
- Ribot-Bohigas winery near Barcelona.
- Italian Lakes – guests join the Pedrotti family for a Be My Guest experience at their vineyards and winery.
- New authentic accommodation stays at Albergo Dell'Agenzia in Pollenzo, Italy and Kasbah Xaluca in Erfoud, Morocco. ■



Pictured at the preview event (from left) are: Birchwood's **Kevin Clarence** (chairman), **Lindiwe Sangweni-Siddo** (ceo) and **Lloyd Marshall** (gm). Photo: Debbie Badham

Sneak peek at Silverbirch

DEBBIE BADHAM

THE Birchwood Hotel and OR Tambo Conference Centre offered a sneak preview of its latest offering, Silverbirch, at a special event on November 22.

Designed to cater specifically for the more 'discerning' business traveller, Silverbirch draws

on a new 'hotel within a hotel' concept. Silverbirch at Birchwood is in a quiet area of the Birchwood property with separate controlled access and away from the hustle and bustle of the conferencing area.

It also offers a dedicated check-in area within the hotel's main reception. Apart from the main hotel,

153 dedicated rooms have been set aside with the goal of creating a peaceful and comfortable night's rest. Other extras include larger workstations, unlimited and uninterrupted high-speed WiFi access as well as a business centre. Silverbirch is expected to officially open its doors towards the end of January. ■

O&L Leisure opens office in SA

NAMIBIAN hospitality company O&L Leisure Hotels & Lodges, with the appointment of LimoNetworking, has opened a sales and service office in South Africa.

The new office aims to directly support South

African DMCs and tour operators, retail travel agents, professional conference and MICE organisers and their corporate travellers, amongst other business partners.

O&L Leisure Hotels & Lodges Namibia is the owner

and manager of the Midgard Country Estate and the Mokuti Etosha Lodge. It is currently building the Strand Hotel Swakopmund, as well as the Chobe Water Villas on the banks of the Chobe River. ■

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Inspiring new ways

Travelport showcases Smartpoint 4.0 and celebrates 2014 with Cocktail Receptions

Last month, Travelport hosted cocktail receptions at Maximilien Bar at the Da Vinci in Johannesburg, The Oyster Box, Umhlanga and the SkyBar at the Cape Royale in Cape Town for 300 customers in the respective locations, creating an opportunity to network and wrap up the year on a highly positive note.

2014 was a significant year for Travelport in the region, and globally, and some of the team outlined highlights including the successful IPO on the New

York Stock Exchange which took place in September, and the more recent news of the launch of Travelport's leading-edge agency desktop Smartpoint 4.0.

Speaking to partners and customers during these three events, Travelport representatives specifically outlined the importance of the launch of this latest version of Smartpoint. The release marked the global roll-out of Travelport's industry-leading Rich Content and Branding merchandising solution alongside numerous other new features aimed at

making booking travel easier and more profitable for travel agencies.

Since its launch, Travelport Smartpoint has been redefining how travel agencies sell to their customers. Specifically, it has enabled travel consultants to sell a wider range of air, hotel and car content, reduce training time, improve sales productivity, earn new revenues and provide higher levels of service to their customers.

Significantly, the new version of the desktop facilitates improved

upselling and cross-selling opportunities through the integration of Travelport's game-changing Rich Content and Branding merchandising solution for airlines. This industry-leading solution gives travel agents unique access to rich visual imagery and more detailed product information from participating airlines carriers.

George Harb, Managing Director in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, commented: "It's been a great year in many respects for Travelport in Africa and globally with

the flotation on the New York Stock Exchange a few months back and then the launch of the latest version of Smartpoint. We were delighted to host some of our most valued customers in Southern Africa at the recent events in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg and we hope that these developments will have a positive impact on their respective businesses in the coming year."

For more information about Travelport Smartpoint please visit: <http://www.travelportsmartpoint.com/>



Lou Tolken (Fairways Travel), **Robyn Christie** (Travelport), **Jeanette Bigby** (Holidays Unlimited), **Phyllis Hartley** (XL Oceanair) and **Caren Gray** (XL Oceanair)



Inby Naidoo (XL Nexus), **Patrick Sithole** (Travelport) and **Julie Naidoo** (City of Choice)



Brian and Lee-Anne Singer (XL Singer), **Marco Cristofoli** (Harvey World Travel), with **George Harb** (Travelport)



Shanell Badary (Travelport), **Mary Shilleto** (Thompsons Travel) and **Seyton Mac Hattie** (Travel Edge)



George Harb, **Robyn Christie** and **Rabih Saab** (Travelport)



Ina Schlothauer (HWT Blue Planet), **Lea Kotze** (HWT Blue Planet), **Sandy Pretorius** (HWT Blue Planet) with **Yolisa Moila** (Instyle Travel)



A snapshot of the week's airline news

InterAir suspends JNB-DAR service

INTERAIR has suspended its Johannesburg-Dar es Salaam route only five months after launching the service. Interair marketing and communications manager, **Anabela Correia**, says: "We have determined that traffic on the route to Dar es Salaam is too little to be commercially viable at the present time." The airline has also suspended its Ndola-Dar es Salaam route. Flights between Johannesburg and Ndola now operate only on Mondays and Fridays, with no service available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays or Saturdays.

HOP! takes over AF short-haul flights

FROM the 2015 European summer, all Air France short-haul flights will be operated by HOP! Air France. The airline released a statement saying the objective of the shift was to recover profitability on the short-haul market within three years. With the backing of Air France, HOP! will introduce a new commercial offering to the market. This will include the implementation of a new simplified structure and will see the Air France point-to-point teams from Paray-Vieille-Poste and the HOP! teams from Rungis come together in a single centre in Montreuil.

Spectacular new Silverstar



Silverstar Casino has undergone a R560m development. The venue unveiled its new entertainment complex at a grand launch event on November 14. The 'spectacular complex' now offers The Globe, a 2 200-seat dome that can host expos and shows; a Boktown venue where over 1 000 spectators can watch games on a 62sqm state-of-the-art high-definition screen; and a Parker's Comedy & Jive stand-up comedy venue. It also houses six new restaurants; a large Magic Company with the latest arcade games, a 12-lane bowling alley and a 450sqm hi-tech laser-tag games facility as well as a Movies@ cinema complex with the latest 3D technology. Pictured at the launch event are Tsogo Sun's Priya Naidoo and Benny Masekwameng.

Photo: Debbie Badham

New platform planned for Meetings Africa 2015

TESSA REED

MEETINGS Africa 2015 will feature a new business-to-business platform where exhibitors will hold table-top one-on-one meetings with visitors, including corporate travel buyers, business travel agencies, and meeting and event planners.

Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, chief convention bureau officer of the South African National Convention Bureau, told *TNW* the new platform followed a partnership with the Unique Speakers Bureau, which hosted its annual showcase at Meetings Africa this year and will do so again next year.

She said hosting the showcase attracted 500

corporates to the show.

"We started off with the partnership and it was really a success," says Amanda, adding that the only challenge was to get the corporates to meet the exhibitors and walk the floor. "We decided

"We started off with the partnership and it was really a success."

that, as a value-add for our exhibitors, we would host a half-day business-to-business event," she says. For this, the Convention Bureau has selected 50 corporate buyers, while the platform will be open to 50 exhibitors.

According to Amanda, the session will be open

to exhibitors that are members of the Meetings Africa Honorary Exhibitors Guild, a loyalty programme that recognises exhibitors. However, other exhibitors can also apply to take part in the business-to-business session. A small fee will apply for exhibitors taking part in this session but Amanda said it would be an administration fee.

"For us it is a commitment fee to ensure that people are there."

Meetings Africa 2015 will take place from February 23-25 at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg. The business-to-business platform will take place on Tuesday, February 24.

To register, or for more information, visit www.meetingsafrica.co.za. ■



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Air Zim pax fork out for tax issue

CARO MALHERBE

THE Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe (CAAZ) has implemented a policy whereby passengers flying with Air Zimbabwe must now pay airport taxes separately, in cash, before departing Zimbabwe, due to the airline failing to remit its taxes.

This is according to **Memory Siyanata**, accounts manager at CAAZ.

The policy, which came into effect on November 10, requires international travellers to pay US\$50 (R560) and domestic

travellers US\$15 (R168) prior to departure. The taxes are the Passenger Service Charge (PSC) and Aviation Infrastructure Development Fund (AIDF) and must be paid directly to CAAZ at offices at Harare, Bulawayo, Victoria Falls and Kariba airports.

Tilly Leteane, Air Zimbabwe travel consultant in South Africa, told *TNW* the new requirement would not result in a reduction of Air Zimbabwe fares.

CAAZ representative, **Candie Banda**, said those passengers who did not want to pay the amount

in cash could purchase a tax coupon from the airline when purchasing their ticket. These coupons have been pre-purchased by the airline from the civil aviation authority on behalf of passengers and will be collected at Air Zimbabwe boarding gates on departure.

Travel agents can also pre-purchase coupons on behalf of their clients from CAAZ offices or, if based in South Africa, through the post. It's unclear how, during the recent SA Post Office strike, agents would receive the coupons timeously. ■

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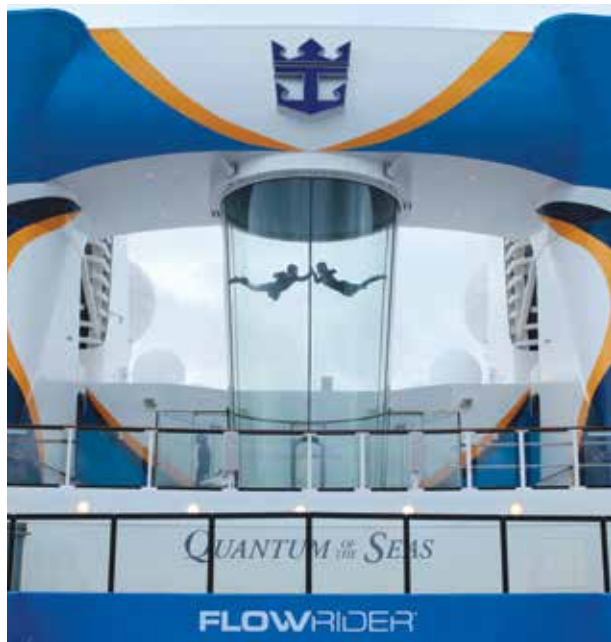


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The skydiving experience, RipCord by iFLY, is just one of the WOW activities available for guests.

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TNW6819SD

The ship that has everything

At only US\$120 (R1 320) per person, per day, cruising offers the most value for money when it comes to groups – whether it's for families or incentives – particularly on board Royal Caribbean's newest, and most impressive ship, the *Quantum of the Seas*. Natasha Schmidt was on board during the pre-inaugural sailing, courtesy of Cruises International.

QUANTUM of the Seas, which set sail in November, introduces a wave of unprecedented first-at-sea experiences, most of which are included in the

price. Superfast wireless connectivity, the world's first robotic bartenders, a skydiving simulator, bumper cars, futuristic entertainment, and partnerships with celebrated

chefs, Jamie Oliver, Michael Schwartz and Devin Alexander, are just a small sample of what the modern age of cruising looks like on board RCI's new cruiserliner.

WOW! entertainment

Quantum's Seaplex is the biggest and most diverse entertainment complex at sea. WOW activities include a skydiving experience called RipCord by iFLY and the engineering marvel, North Star, a glass observation capsule that gently rises more than 300 feet in the air to treat guests to dramatic 360-degree views. More 'firsts' include bumper cars, a circus school with flying trapeze and roller skating. Activity rooms offer live global video gaming, arcade games, and indoor sports.

There's fun for the whole family, with Royal Caribbean's Adventure Ocean youth programme, including a fully equipped Adventure Science Lab and the very first wave pool at sea, FlowRider, which debuts as part of the DreamWorks Animation Madagascar-themed H2O Zone. For teenagers, there's the Fuel



Two70 offers live performances.

Teen Disco, a dedicated night club and a 'teen-only' space.

For adults, there are numerous retail offerings, with a collection of well-known brands. The Casino Royale features slot machines, video poker, blackjack and more. Fitness facilities with all-new options include Technogym equipment, professionally instructed Flywheel, TRX and

Beach Bootcamp classes. The Vitality at Sea Spa offers a range of relaxation therapies and treatments.

And then there are the shows: transformative entertainment venues – the Music Hall; the Royal Theater; and the multi-level great room, Two70 – offer live music shows, Broadway theatre productions, dance classes, 3D movies, and more.



Staterooms on *Quantum of the Seas* are RCI's largest and most advanced.

Rooms with a view

Big on size – an average of 9% larger than those of Oasis-class ships – the 2 090 staterooms on board *Quantum* are RCI's largest and most advanced yet. Guests can choose from a wide selection

of categories, some new, including Family-Connected staterooms that are perfect for multi-generational families or groups of friends; Loft Suites with two decks and a balcony; new balcony and interior

Studio staterooms that were created for single travellers, as well as Virtual Balcony staterooms, which are interior accommodations with large digital screens displaying real-time views.



Quantum of the Seas in New York.



Jamie's Italian, just one of the 18 restaurants on board. Photos: RCI

Dynamic dining

Cruise ship dining has also been modernised on *Quantum of the Seas* with 'Dynamic Dining', where guests can choose from a landscape of 18 restaurants. There are five complimentary, full-service

restaurants that replace the traditional, common main dining room; several casual dining options; and a variety of speciality restaurants (with a surcharge).

Most of these venues, which range from intimate to

large, are available to groups to book out for functions at no extra cost. Want to combine an incentive with a conference? The ship also features conference facilities with audio-visual equipment, coffee-breaks, etc. included.

Staying connected

Quantum of the Seas has more bandwidth than all other cruise ships in the world combined, so guests can check email, Skype, download streaming content – basically stay connected 24/7.

A downloadable app, Royal iQ, empowers guests to manage every detail of their vacation during the cruise. It allows them to call and text

with other app users on board, reserve dining and entertainment options, build a personalised daily calendar, track luggage, and more.

The ship is also a 'cashless society'. Guests are given an RFID WOWband – a wristband – that not only lets them navigate the ship and enter their stateroom with tap technology but also

allows them to pay for any extras. These bands are linked to a credit card, which can be for one or several accounts.

Check-in is done online, taking the fuss out of embarkation, which is similar to checking in for a flight, with considerably reduced waiting times. Also, shore excursions can be pre-booked online when checking in.

Personalised service

Conference and incentive organisers can arrange for personalised amenities, such as giveaways, a dedicated TV channel for delegates, meals and menus, shore excursions, private transport, branding, and more.

Cruises International – which has a dedicated

groups and incentives department as this makes up 40% of the company's business – will meet with the incentive buyer to qualify and personalise, based on the budget and the demographics of the group, the product best suited to their needs, taking the stress away from the

organiser, says md, **George Argyropoulos**. "We represent nine products, so there is an option for everyone. Royal Caribbean is the most popular because of the value for money, particularly when you compare it with land-based options." Cruises International can also assist with airline bookings. ■

Agents only

Agents can earn big with cruise bookings. Cruises International offers between 8% and 13% commission. For groups, a minimum of 10% commission is offered.

Upcoming itineraries include a transatlantic

sailing from May 2-16 (14 nights) from New York to Europe. Travellers can extend the cruise by two nights sailing from Barcelona to Dubai.

After that, *Quantum of the Seas* sets sail to the Far East for the rest of 2015.



Thanks a bunch

We at Avis would like to say thank you for your support throughout the year and wish all our Club Red members a very happy and safe festive season. Because we're not just about cars, we're about the people that drive them too.

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TNW6828SD

TNW's Thirsty's



THE last TNW Thirsty's of the year welcomed a cheerful group of Johannesburg's travel industry professionals for drinks and snacks at the Protea Hotel Balalaika's Bull Run Restaurant in Sandton. The venue's bar provided a

cosy meeting point where friends and colleagues caught up on the latest news and gossip. The first Thirsty's event of 2015 will take place in Johannesburg in February. For more details, email katenathan@nowmedia.co.za. ■



Welcome to the gun show (from left): Karin Pieters (Protea Hotel Balalaika); Sean Bradley (SAA); Martin Lydall (Europcar); and Lorene Du Plessis (Protea Hotel Balalaika).



From left: Carol Anne Cairns (Skills Solutions); Axel Simon (Lufthansa); and June Crawford (Barsa).



▲ Amadeus's Peter Long catches up with the ladies from All Travel Services: Irma De Jager (left) and Barbara Pollastrini (right).



It's a tour operator thing... From left: Kirsten Johnston (Beachcomber Tours); Kelly Jackson (Contiki); and Gina Stanford (Beachcomber Tours).



► Dynamic duo: Fastjet's Justin Glanville (left) and GBTA's Jim Weighell (right).



Looking elegant, from left: Busi Nhlapo (Destination Express); Carla Da Silva (Air Mauritius) and Shariefa Allie Nieftagodien (Nexus Travel).



TNW's Yolanda Katsi (right) networks with Coterie Consultants' Kele Thwane (left) and Thwane Attorneys' Dineo Thwane. Photos: Shannon Van Zyl

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.



Running in the rain

The 41st RAC City Lodge Tough One 32km Road Race took place recently in northern Johannesburg. More than 4 000 runners negotiated the hilly course, with the rain actually making for pleasant conditions. Sponsored by the City Lodge Hotel Group, the race attracted an excellent spread of entries. The City Lodge 'watering hole' – with resident DJ – was again a special feature of the race. **Peter Schoeman** (left), City Lodge's sales and marketing director, was on hand to help out soaked supporters and runners during the race.



KQ joins Ebola fight

Kenya Airways is committed to making a difference not only to the lives of its passengers but to the communities in which it operates. With Ebola taking its toll on parts of West Africa, Kenya Airways' team members in the Johannesburg office decided that more should be done to offer assistance, so they recently collected more than 100kg of soap to send to people in Ebola-hit areas. Cleaning up well are (from left): **Tracey King, Helena Maxwell, David Lentshwi, Nancy Nganga and Rose Muthamia.**

Appointments

■ BON Hotels has appointed new group financial manager, **Martie Wapenaar**. She completed her BCom Accounting Degree at the University of Pretoria followed by a BCom Honours in Taxation. After finishing her articles she worked her way up to become company manager. Martie recently relocated to Cape Town from Johannesburg. **Guy Stehlik**, ceo of BON Hotels, says: "Martie brings excellent skills in the financial space and we are sure she will flourish here."



■ Travel Vision has appointed a new sales and marketing manager, **Annemarie Lexow**. Annemarie has worked for many years in the transport industry, including stints with Unitrans and Avis. She takes over this position from **Sarah Whiteside**.



Medieval Ireland



Tourism Ireland invited tour operators to visit Ireland in October, in anticipation of the New Market Workshops with Irish Tourism in Dublin. Pictured here in front of Reginald's Tower in the medieval city of Waterford are (from left): **Elana Van Der Walt** (United Europe); **Kathy Ridler** (Bobcat Travel); **Donnchadh Ó Ceallacháin** (head of the Waterford Museum of Treasures); **Candice Perry** (Thompsons Holidays); **Wihan Bester** (Travel and Sport) and **Alex Nava** (Travel and Sport).

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TNW7106

SAA overhauls Voyager programme

NATASHA SCHMIDT

SAA frequent flyers will, from early 2015, be rewarded for the amount of money they spend with the airline rather than the number of miles they have travelled.

This was just one of numerous changes SAA made to its Voyager loyalty programme in an effort to attract, retain and reward customers fairly, said **Suretha Cruse**, SAA's executive Customer Loyalty, at the launch of the 'Re5 campaign'.

The changes formed part of SAA's Long Term Turnaround Strategy to transform the group's subsidiaries into independent, sustainable entities with their own board, said acting ceo, **Nico Bezuidenhout**.

There are five key changes to the FFP, most of which will come into effect on February 1:

1) All members will receive one mile per R1,60 spent and the accumulation of miles under this earning structure will count towards tier status.

2) The redemption of miles under the new structure will be applicable to the base fare and fuel levy of a member's requested SAA flights. Government and airport taxes are excluded.

3) Voyager has introduced 'Dynamic Award', which is related to the actual cost of the desired flight and is applicable to all revenue booking classes. During the initial phase Voyager



At the launch of the 'reinvented' SAA Voyager programme are: Suretha Cruse (executive, Customer Loyalty); and Shuping Moleko (Voyager communications manager, Corporate Affairs). Photo: Natasha Schmidt

members will be able to use their miles as full payment. During the course of 2015, part payment of miles and part cash will be introduced.

4) Based on the new SAA exclusive earning and spending structure, SAA Voyager members' loyalty will be rewarded with 5% return on their SAA spend. For example, if a Voyager member has spent R5 000 on an SAA flight, a value of R250 in loyalty miles as a currency (cash) will be available to spend towards flight rewards.

5) Voyager has reviewed and improved the benefits of members based on their tier status, ensuring loyalty

over time is rewarded, which means more benefits for Elite members.

Future expansion plans for SAA Voyager include more third-party redemption partnerships for low and medium frequent flyers, the launch of a new SAA Voyager credit card mid-2015, and the introduction of an SAA Voyager online shop.

The earning and spending structure for flights within the Star Alliance network, codeshare airline partners, SAA marketed flights, SA Express, Mango, Airlink or Swaziland Airlink remained the same for now, Suretha said. ■

Turkish Airlines to fly direct to CPT

BRUCE DENNILL

FROM next year, Turkish Airlines will offer daily direct flights from Cape Town to Istanbul and Johannesburg to Istanbul, splitting the current service that operates to/from Cape Town via Johannesburg.

Both services will use A330-300 aircraft, doubling present capacity on the South African route, effective October 26. "Our load factors are very high and agents are supporting the demand," Turkish Airlines commercial manager, **Ibrahim Ethem Ozdemir** told TNW.

"Most of the business on these routes is transit passengers," says **Muhammed Mehdi Tunc**, gm of Turkish Airlines South Africa.

"From Istanbul, we fly to around 100 destinations in Europe and 42 destinations in Africa. We also fly to New York."

For international transit passengers whose waiting time is between 09h00 and 18h00, the airline offers free 'Touristanbul' packages at no extra charge. No reservations are needed; guests can sign up at the 'Hotel Desk' at the airport after customs control. A guide will host them on a city tour of three or six hours (with meals included) and return them to the airport in time for their flight.

Muhammed added that the airline was planning to expand its African operation further, including new routes to Nigeria (Abuja) and Angola (Luanda). ■

Hahn Air launches agent own-card solution

HAHN Air now permits the use of its UATP-based HR e-Payment Agent own-card solution as a form of payment for issuance of its standard traffic documents (HR-169 e-tickets) in 85 Iata BSP and ARC markets.

Iata has granted permission for the system, "notwithstanding the ongoing applicability of Iata Resolution 890," according to a Hahn Air statement.

HR-169 documents issued using the HR e-Payment solution automatically include the airline insolvency

insurance Securix, a refund-promise, and daily 24-hour support via its global service desk.

In addition, Hahn Air has introduced its Rooster Rewards Programme. For each ticket paid with HR e-Payment, the travel agency earns Rooster Points and receives a credit on its HR e-Payment account.

The virtual card solution for travel agencies is also accepted for the booking of dozens of low-cost airlines and grants access to web fares of network carriers via e-direct, the HR Booking Portal. ■



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