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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

TNW6244SD

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Nico sets bar high for action plan

NATASHA SCHMIDT

“COME March 24, you need to call and ask me: what routes have you stopped operating that have historically lost SAA money? What governance interventions have you effected? Has an AGM been held and SAA’s financial statements for the year ending 2014 been issued? Have you managed to effect changes to your fleet composition? And have you put options on the table for your shareholder in terms of a strategic equity partnership?”

“Etihad is well known to take minority stakes in various entities and that option would be available to Etihad.”

This is from SAA’s acting ceo, **Nico Bezuidenhout**, who in a media briefing early this month detailed the airline group’s 90-day “rapid implementation plan” to put the airline group back on track to achieve its Long-Term Turnaround Strategy, with critical short-term goals to realise R1,3bn in annual savings.

The first and most critical step of the rescue plan was to address the airline’s liquidity position, on-going solvency and medium-term funding requirements, Nico said. SAA is relying on state-guaranteed loans

and requires an extension of the guarantee by government. This includes the immediate review and reconfiguration of loss-making routes such as Beijing, Hong Kong and Mumbai. The airline recently strengthened ties with Star Alliance partner, Air China, which – within the next few months – will see more points through which SAA can service the Chinese market.

With regard to an equity partner, Nico said what the company needed was not a purist equity partner but a strategic one that could not only offer a capital injection into the business but also come to the table with management skills and expertise to help put SAA back on track.

“Etihad is well known to take minority stakes in various entities and that option would be available to Etihad,” Nico said. He added that he, at this point, would not want to talk on Etihad’s behalf of intent expressed but that the airlines were looking to strengthen their commercial ties.

Other steps in the 90-Day Action Plan include a substantial focus on governance failures within the business, a review of all contractual burdens, reorganisation and optimisation of assets, and improved communication.

“In the past you’ve heard about the many plans that SAA has had over the years. This is more about action and delivery and less about a plan and strategy,” Nico said. ■



Light it up!

The City of Ekurhuleni and Emperors Palace are once again hosting the Garden of Lights, a festive range of colourful light displays, from December 5 to January 4. This year, the display includes Happyland, a fun-fair featuring family rides and a Ferris wheel (R10 per person per ride). Entrance to the Garden of Lights is free. There are collection areas where visitors can place donated toys for the Reach for a Dream charity. Feeling festive are Emperors Palace marketing manager, **Lebo Mokwena** (centre), flanked by dancers **Simone Kruger** (left) and **Aobakwe Moroeng** (right). Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Southern Africa on route map of Lufthansa’s LCC

HILKA BIRNS

LUFTHANSA’s low-cost subsidiary, New Eurowings, will fly to leisure destinations in Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands from the end of next year, according to **Axel Simon**, director Southern Africa of Lufthansa and SWISS International Air Lines – but he would not say which.

Speaking at a Cape Town media briefing, he said the long-haul flights

and short-haul ones in Europe would operate from Cologne, where the New Eurowings would be based. It will initially use a fleet of three A330-200s with 310 seats, expanding to seven A330-200s over the next few years.

The first long-haul route will be to Tampa, Florida, which will launch in October. New Eurowings’ long-haul services will operate under the air operator certificate of SunExpress

To page 12

Season’s Greetings!

TNW wishes all its readers a joyful festive season and a peaceful and prosperous New Year. Now Media’s offices close on December 12 and reopen on January 5, 2015.

To the point



The Tunisian embassy in Pretoria has confirmed that South African passport holders no longer require a visa to enter Tunisia for a stay of up to 90 days. Travellers were previously required to apply for a visa prior to arrival at a cost of R600. As of December 1, all that is required for entry into the country is a valid passport. Refer to Travelinfo for more details.

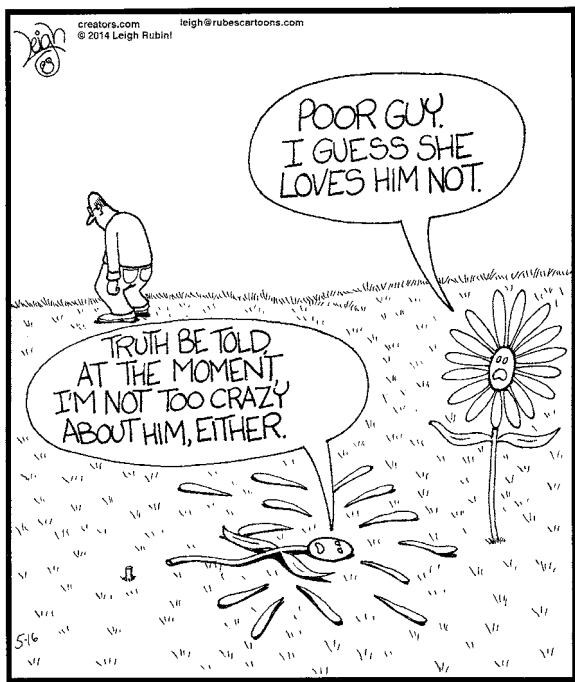


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Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



Twice the fun!

Cape Town International Airport sees international airlines bring back seasonal flights in time for the peak period. For the SA summer – until April 2015 – British Airways has increased its daily flights between Cape Town and London Heathrow to double daily. This is up from 10 flights in the winter season. Pictured here are Ed Frost, BA regional commercial manager East and Southern Africa and Sue Botes, BA commercial manager Southern Africa. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

India launches '72-hour' e-visa

DORINE REINSTEIN

INDIA has launched an e-visa for visitors from 43 countries, which it will roll out to other countries in different phases. South Africa is currently excluded.

Applications must be made online at least four days prior to departure. Travellers must submit a photograph, a scan of the passport's photo page and a non-refundable US\$60 (R689) visa fee.

Within 72 hours, travellers will be notified whether their application has been successful. If successful, they will receive an 'Electronic Travel Authorisation' that

is valid for entry in nine airports: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Hyderabad and Goa.

The e-visa is aimed at tourists travelling to India for "recreation, sightseeing, short duration medical treatment, a casual business visit or casual visit to meet friends or relatives" for only 30 days or less. Travellers can apply for the e-visa only twice a year.

Manas Ranjan Pattanaik, director of India Tourism in South Africa, told *TNW* that the new system would be implemented in stages and he hoped South Africa would soon also be able to benefit from

the new e-visa. He said these decisions were in the hands of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The new visa system is available for the following passport holders: Australia, Brazil, Cambodia, Cook Islands, Djibouti, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Laos, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Myanmar, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue Island, Norway, Oman, Palau, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russia, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, UAE, Ukraine, USA, Vanuatu and Vietnam. ■

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Dark days for domestic tourism

DORINE REINSTEIN

DOMESTIC tourism is expected to be affected by load shedding over the December and January holidays, putting a big strain on hospitality establishments.

Smaller hospitality establishments in particular are seriously affected as they don't have access to a generator or back-up facility.

Chris von Ulmenstein, owner of the Whale Cottage Portfolio in Cape Town, says load shedding happens in the morning and guest houses in Camps Bay and Franschhoek aren't

able to offer guests a full hot breakfast. He says the electric gates at the guesthouses are also an issue.

Donovan Muirhead, chairman of the National Accommodation Association of South Africa, says guests are further inconvenienced as local attractions, restaurants and shopping malls are also affected.

Although larger establishments have generators in place, minimising disruptions, they are also experiencing difficulties. **Wayne Coetzer**, gm of The Oyster Box in Durban, says running

generators is incredibly expensive and eats into the budget of the business. He adds that The Oyster Box also operates on green principles. "Using a generator is not good for the carbon footprint, which concerns us enormously. It's noisy, which doesn't enhance the guest experience. Also, when the electricity comes back on, the surge often causes electrical equipment and appliances to blow, which is inconvenient and can be expensive for travellers, who sometimes have to replace their electrical items." ■

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OTAs accused of price steering

DORINE REINSTEIN

SEVERAL major online travel agencies are using web analytics to steer prices and engage in price discrimination, charging some clients thousands of rands more than others for the same hotel or itinerary.

This is according to a recent study, *Measuring Price Discrimination and Steering on e-commerce websites*, from Boston Northeastern University. Researchers conducted searches on 16 e-commerce sites, including those of six travel sellers—Cheaptickets, Expedia, Hotels.com, Orbitz, Priceline, and Travelocity.

Cheaptickets was found to implement price discrimination by offering reduced prices on hotels to members who sign up free with their email addresses or through their Facebook profiles.

Orbitz was found to steer

prices, which means the OTA tailors the order of search results so that some customers will see the more expensive options first. For example, Orbitz steered Apple Mac OS X users towards more expensive hotels in selected locations by placing them at higher ranks in the search results.

Traditional travel agents in the US have used the highly publicised study to promote the value of using agents. In a recent press release about the Northeastern University study, CookTravel.net agent **Fabrizio Peralta** said: “Algorithms act on mathematical impulse but live agents act on the individual needs of their clients – and the price doesn’t change, no matter who you are.”

Keith Novak, Travelocity’s director of communications, adds that the study is flawed. He says researchers at

Northeastern University found that Travelocity modified prices for consumers who used Apple mobile devices to search for hotel rooms compared with other devices. Keith says the truth is that when customers come

“We don’t engage in price discrimination and steering to make an expanded profit but to present the options the client is most likely to buy.”

to Travelocity on any recognised mobile device, they will often see a handful of hotels listed as ‘Mobile Exclusives’, which will not appear when visiting the desktop site.

A spokesperson for Priceline.com told *TNW* it did not price steer its customers but personalised search results

based on a user’s history of clicks and purchases. Users who clicked on or reserved low-price hotel rooms received slightly different results in a different order, compared with users who clicked on or reserved expensive hotel rooms or clicked on nothing. “Because the different orders did not correlate with prices, this wasn’t considered price steering,” he said.

Andy Hedley, operations director of Travelstart in South Africa, admits that OTAs practise price steering but that they don’t engage in price discrimination and steering to make an expanded profit but to present the options the client is most likely to buy.

He says clients directed to the website via meta-search engines are most likely to be very price-conscious so Travelstart will present the lowest prices, which often come

with more inconvenient itineraries. “We manipulate our inventory according to what people want to buy. Is the client travelling with kids? Then connections are likely to be important. Is the client young and single? Then price is more likely to be the determining factor.”

Otto de Vries, ceo of Asata, says that Big Data is not just about buying patterns. “Sometimes we buy differently for different reasons. For example, you may apply business travel policy when you’re travelling for corporate reasons but not when you’re travelling for personal reasons. That is where the role of the travel agent emerges: to recognise the clients’ needs and preferences and offer suitable solutions.

“Our service is customer-driven and not a one-size-fits-all approach based on the data that has been generated by certain patterns.” ■

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At the launch event of The Capital are (from left): Rumbidzai Munhuwani (American Express Travel Services SA); Abigail Ngubeni (Cummins Inc); and Mukondeleli Mudau (Cummins Inc).

EAH rebrands and expands

EAH Executive Apartments and Hotels has rebranded to The Capital. The hospitality group is poised for significant expansion, set to grow its properties from six to 17.

Its current portfolio consists of six properties in Sandton and future properties will be located in capital cities in and around South Africa and the sub-Saharan market.

The Capital md, **Marc Wachsberger**, says: "We identified an increasing need

for safe and cost-effective accommodation that would directly address the needs of the ever-growing number of blue chip and multi-national firms basing themselves in Gauteng's bustling Sandton business district.

"This growing demand, coupled with a state of economy dictating that company travel expenditure be more closely monitored, meant that executive apartments presented a more affordable alternative: a quality but 'no

frills' product that delivered real value to business travellers."

The Capital's ambition is to have 17 properties by 2018. "We're working towards that goal and the rebrand is one step in that direction. We need a strong foundation as a business so that when we add hotels, we're able to plug them into a strong brand that the market recognises in locations like Cape Town, Pretoria, Gaborone, Windhoek and Namibia," Marc concludes. ■

WTM Africa grows show for next year

TESSA REED

A THIRD day has been added to World Travel Market (WTM) Africa 2015. Next year's show will be attended by 250 hosted buyers, Reed Travel Exhibitions has announced.

Sheree Simpson, gm of WTM Africa at Thebe Reed Exhibitions, told members of the industry at an event in Johannesburg that WTM Africa was unique in that it

was both an inbound and outbound show. "There is no other show in South Africa that has your inbound and outbound buyer," she said. She added that domestic retail agents and corporate travel buyers would also be in attendance.

According to Sheree, the show will feature three speed networking sessions, prior to the opening of the show, where exhibitors will have the opportunity to

meet with hosted buyers as well as members of the WTM Buyers' Club for a few minutes. These five-minute sessions would allow buyers and exhibitors to gauge compatibility and schedule an appointment during the show if they wished, she said.

WTM Africa 2015 will take place from April 15-17 as part of Africa Travel Week at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. ■

Two Kenyan airlines join Sabre

TRAVEL agents can now shop and book Five Forty Aviation (Fly540) and East African Safari Air (Fly-SAX) fares via Sabre. Both Kenyan low-cost airlines, which are based in Nairobi, have signed multi-year technology agreements with Sabre, making their content available on the GDS. **Dean Bibb**, vp of Sabre Travel Network for Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa, said: "Africa is poised for rapid growth and development in the coming years and Sabre is eager to support this by providing our airline partners with the latest technology to expand their reach and brand awareness with leisure and corporate travel agencies around the world." Five Forty Aviation operates under the code 5H and East African Safari Air, B5.

Emirates to go double daily to DAR

EMIRATES will operate a double-daily service from Dubai to Dar es Salaam from January 1. The airline currently operates 12 flights a week on the route. "Our move to a double daily shows the importance of Tanzania as a key tourism and business market," said **Orhan Abbas**, Emirates senior vp of Commercial Operations, Latin America, Central and Southern Africa. The second daily service will be operated with an A330-200 with 12 seats in first class, 42 in business class and 183 in economy class.

Etiha expands Alitalia codeshare

ETIHAD Airways and Alitalia recently signed a major codeshare expansion that, subject to government approval, will result in Etihad Airways placing its EY code on Alitalia's new daily service between Venice and Abu Dhabi. The flights launch on March 29. In addition, the code will be placed on Alitalia's daily service between Abu Dhabi and Milan, which launches on the same day. The flights will combine with Etihad Airways' existing daily service for double-daily frequency.

Air Canada expands new seating offering

AIR Canada has added two new Boeing 777-300ERs to its wide-body fleet and will expand the introduction of its new international business-class product to include all B777-300ER aircraft. It will also reconfigure the aircraft to include its new premium economy-cabin. Air Canada's three-cabin international product and seating standard will be extended to its 25 B777-300ERs and B777-200LRs, consistent with seating on its new B787-8 and -9 Dreamliner fleet. The fleet of eight A330-300s will also be reconfigured with a premium economy cabin. The economy- and business-class cabins of its A330-300 fleet will be unchanged. Conversion of the B777s and A330s is planned to begin in the fourth quarter of 2015 and is expected to be completed by the second half of 2016. Air Canada's new international product will offer 180-degree lie-flat seats in business class, and up to 30 lie-flat executive pods on its B787-8 and -9 aircraft and 40 on B777-300ER and 200LRs.



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Dubai readies for bumper cruise season

DUBAI Cruise Tourism, part of Dubai Tourism, is expecting a bumper cruise season with the opening of the new 27 000-sqm terminal at Mina Rashid and the implementation of a multiple-entry visa for cruise tourists.

A total of 110 cruise ships carrying more than 381 000 passengers will arrive over the next seven months. Passenger numbers are set to be 19% higher than the previous season.

Hamad bin Mejren, executive director of Dubai Tourism, said: "We are set to record significant growth in ship calls and in passenger numbers. We have set

ambitious growth targets for cruise as part of our Dubai Tourism Vision for 2020 as we aim to become the world's leading destination for family tourism. We believe there is an opportunity to grow intra-regional cruise tourism with our Gulf Community Council neighbours."

Tourists who require entry into multiple UAE ports – for example Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Khorfakkan – can apply for the new visa through their cruise line, either at the time of or after booking. The visa is valid for 60 days from the date of issue to the first entry into UAE. After the first entry, the visa remains valid for 30 days. ■

More adventure with Trafalgar



Trafalgar has launched 'Hidden Journeys', an extension of its Insider Experiences concept. Hidden Journeys is designed to take smaller groups deeper into certain destinations. The 11 different options will have no more than 26 travellers on each departure. Destinations will include Italy, France, Ireland, Switzerland, Greece, Turkey, Newfoundland, Panama, Japan and China. Looking like Greek goddesses are (from left) Trafalgar's: **LeeAnne Moses** (reservations consultant), **Lauren Blaine** (area sales manager) and **Chantelle Neppen** (area sales manager). Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Ethiopian to codeshare with All Nippon Airways

ETHIOPIAN Airlines (ET) has announced a codeshare agreement with Japan's All Nippon Airways (ANA),

effective October 26. Travellers can make seamless bookings on ANA and ET from Japan to 49

destinations in Africa through joint connecting airports of both carriers in Bangkok, Hong Kong, Frankfurt, Paris and

London on codeshared flights. Both Star Alliance members have had a joint frequent flyer programme since December

2011. Customers of both airlines will continue to be able to earn and redeem miles on all flights. ■



XL Travel Group celebrate 10 year anniversary Zanzibar style

The XL Travel Group celebrated its 10th year anniversary in style with a members conference in Zanzibar at the amazing Hideaway of Nungwi Resort & Spa. A Leading Hotel of the World, Hideaway of Nungwi hosted 140 members and suppliers over the weekend of 25th October. Although an anniversary celebration the conference was themed, 'One Vision, One Journey, Together' and an agenda packed with high profile speakers including Patrick Holford, Daniel Silke, Vusi Thembekwayo and Lynn Baker gave valuable business coaching to delegates. Themed events during the conference included a Dhow Cruise, a Masai evening full of dancing, music and authentic food and a Gala 10th Year Anniversary Awards Dinner set in the beautiful gardens under the stars where individuals and offices within the XL Travel Group were recognised for significant achievements over the past twelve months. Troye the Hypnotist provided a fun-filled hour of mesmerizing laughter and antics with willing volunteers from the delegation. It was a Gala Night of Awards and Anniversary Celebrations which will live long in the memory of delegates who had the privilege of attending an amazing evening in one of the most idyllic settings in Zanzibar.



▲ The beach at Nungwi was 'taken over' by XL Travel for a Sunset Dhow Cruise followed by a beach braai for delegates

▶ **Allan Wolman** and **Mary Shilleto** acknowledge XL Travel preferred partners attending the conference

▶ A 10th Year Anniversary Cake was one of many surprises in a Gala Evening marking achievements of XL Travel members performance

▼ The XL Travel Board (from L to R: **Allan Wolman**, **Marco Ciocchetti**, **Rod Rutter**, **Dudley Randall**, **Mary Shilleto** and **Brian Singer**) take a pause during the conference plenary session





BON acquires Midrand hotel

AS OF December 1, BON Hotels has taken ownership and management of the 49-room Constantia Hotel in Midrand, soon to be renamed BON Hotel Midrand. The hotel is BON's second property in Gauteng. It will undergo minor refurbishments, upgrades and in-house training with an immediate emphasis on improving the food and beverage offering. Each of the 49 rooms overlooks the pool and surrounding property. There are three conference venues, seating up to 400 guests. **Guy Stehlik**, ceo of BON Hotels, said: "The hotel will very definitely be way above the typical three-star standard and along with the new gm, **Dean Gilder**, the hotel is on its way to renewed popularity as a venue of choice for the corporate and conference markets."

Legacy ends agreement with airport hotel

LEGACY Hotels & Resorts' franchise agreement with The Airport Grand Hotel & Conference Centre in Boksburg ends on January 31, after which the hotel will no longer form part of the Legacy portfolio. Bookings in place prior to this date will not be affected. All future enquiries and bookings should be directed to the hotel on 011 823 1843.



Guests can get up close to the Big 5 on a walking safari. Photo: Legacy Hotels

Bakubung launches bush walks

Bakubung Bush Lodge in Pilanesberg National Park now offers walking safaris for its guests. *TNW's* Vincent Schaffler, who experienced the new offering, reports.

BAKUBUNG's new guided walking safaris take guests through the Pilanesberg bushveld, allowing them to experience Africa's Big Five up close as well as learn about the geology, wildlife and plant-life of the region.

Walking safaris are done on a request basis in groups

of up to eight guests. It's an early start for guests who depart at around 05h00. Walking through the bush at this time provides great opportunities to spot animals returning from nightly foraging and hunting.

It's not uncommon for guests to experience a herd of elephants or a rhino just

15 metres away. All rangers carry rifles and are extremely knowledgeable about the park's flora and fauna.

The walk is around four to five hours and about three hours into the walk, the ranger will find a vantage point to view the park and enjoy the breakfast pack provided by the lodge. ■

Swaziland Tourism appoints GSA

LLOYD Orr Communications has been awarded the account for the Swaziland Tourism Authority with the primary objective of assisting in raising the profile of Swaziland as a

destination of choice for South Africans to visit for leisure or business purposes.

Eric Maseko, ceo of STA said: "Swaziland has so much to offer and it is right

on the doorstep of most South Africans. Our aim is to welcome more of our neighbours and to showcase to them all the experiences we know will appeal to them." ■

Branson adds Virgin Cruises to travel offering

SIR Richard Branson plans to add Virgin Cruises to the travel options already available under the Virgin brand. The venture, to be launched with two new ships, will be based in the Miami and Fort Lauderdale area, with Caribbean

cruises the initial focus. "We plan to shake up the cruise industry and deliver a holiday that customers will absolutely love," said Richard.

A Virgin statement said the ships would be 'brand new, offer exciting new activities,

more choice, great service, and the sense of fun and adventure associated with Virgin' and that the cruise sector of the business would work closely with its established airline and tour operator set-ups. ■



A message from outbound Regional Manager, Carla da Silva

I want to acknowledge and humbly thank the Air Mauritius trade partners profusely as you have all played an important role in making Air Mauritius South Africa a more prosperous and productive place.

Our success is a testimony to each and every one of you. I wish to pay tribute to your dedication, commitment, professionalism, and innovative approach. I count myself most fortunate: I have come to respect you all not only as business partners but as friends too. I will miss you but I am positive about our futures!

Wishing you a fabulous festive season and may 2015 bring much success and many exciting surprises.



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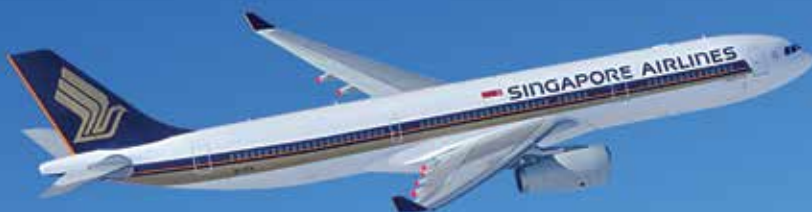
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10 REASONS to visit Madagascar

Madagascar's national parks, many of which are home to species found nowhere else in the world, are a major draw card for visitors who are looking for a unique wilderness experience. Bruce Dennill reports.

1 Tsingy de Bemaraha

Masoala is the largest complex of protected areas in Madagascar, comprising four plots of land and three marine sites around the Masoala Peninsula. Masoala National Park and Nosy Mangabe Special Reserve – dedicated to protecting the rare Aye-Aye lemur – are the major attractions.

Masoala is a 90-minute flight from Antananarivo and a 45-minute flight or 12-hour cruise from Toamasina.



Tsingy de Bemaraha. Photo: Ralph Kranzlein, Flickr

2 Mananara-Nord Biosphere

This area includes a national park and a marine park. There are 12 lemur, 16 rodent, 77 forest bird, 85 amphibian and 59 reptile species, and 1 200 endemic vascular plants and palm trees.

In the marine park, there are seven species of mangroves, 32 algae, 132 cnidarians, 64 mollusc, 16 arthropod, 32 echinoderm, 179 fish, three marine mammal, three aquatic reptile and

11 bird species. Air Madagascar flies from Antananarivo (a 90-minute flight) and Toamasina (45 minutes), and the area can also be accessed by boat from Toamasina (12 hours).

3 Zahamena

This park is home to 112 species of birds, 29 fish, 62 amphibian, 46 reptile and 48 mammal species, including the Indri (a large lemur). The

Ankotsy-Bemoara and Bemoara-Cascade tours are informative ways to explore the park.

The park is 70km north-east of

Ambatondrazaka and east of Lake Alaotra. Guests travel to the village of Antanandava and then walk 8km to the park entrance.

4 Ranomafana

Blanketed in an evergreen rainforest, Ranomafana also features an extinct volcano that produces hot springs (good for rheumatism). The

golden bamboo lemur is the park's main attraction. Ranomafana is 412km southeast of Antananarivo, 65km northeast of

Fianarantsoa and 139km from Mananjary. The RN45 highway and its extension, the RN25, run through the park, allowing access on good paved roads.

5 Sahamalaza

Comprising three major ecosystems – marine, coastal and forest – this park has 220 plant species, nine lemur, 41 bird, 20 reptile and 14 amphibian

species. In the marine area, there are 218 types of coral and invertebrates and 168 species of fish.

The RN6 road to Antsiranana is paved as

far as Maromandia (750km from Antananarivo). By boat, the reserve can be reached from Analalava and Nosy Be (both three-hour crossings).

6 Ankarana

Features include huge limestone rock formations. The Tsingy Rary, Bat Cave, or Green Lake tours, from one to several days' walk, let hikers discover one of Madagascar's richest

natural treasures. Ankarana National Park is 80km from Diego Suarez (a two-hour drive) and 20km from Ambilobe (a 45-minute drive) on the RN6. The park is accessible all year round.

7 Nosy Tanikely

This small island, surrounded by a marine reserve, is covered in secondary forest vegetation. There are 11 reptile and 13 bird

species, seven of which are endemic. The park is surrounded by reefs and sandy beaches.

Access is by boat from the island of Nosy Be only.



Andringitra. Photo: Michael Sale, flickr

8 Andringitra

This national park has the highest accessible peak in Madagascar – Body Peak (2 658m). It has a rich wildlife offering: 54 mammal species, 14 lemur, 50 reptile and more than 100 birds. There are also over a thousand plant species, including orchids and a palm

tree endemic to the region. From Antananarivo to Andringitra, take the RN7 as far as Ambalavao (462km, a 12- to 14-hour drive) and then take a 50km track (two hours) from Ambalavao to Ambalamanandray, the village closest to the park entrance.

9 Tsingy de Namoroka

Visitors can enjoy this park via a guided tour or by light aircraft. Namoroka is rich in flora and fauna and has 218 plant species. Animals include

the rare Angonoky tortoise. Namoroka is difficult to access by land. A ferry across Bombetoka Bay to Katsepy is a better option.

10 Masoala

One of the first places in Madagascar to be listed as a World Heritage Site, this park offers a number of varied habitats and a wealth of wildlife and flora, including 11 lemur species, 50 reptile and 430 plant species.

Tsingy de Bemaraha is 180km north of Morondava, an eight- to ten-hour journey that includes Baobab Avenue and a ferry across the Tsiribihina River.

For more information on Madagascar Tourism, visit Travelinfo. ■



Masoala National Park. Photo: Frank Vassen, Flickr



Michelle's a winner

Michelle Bergset recently won Top Regional Manager for 2014 and the Cape won top and most profitable region for the first time in Pentravel's history. Michelle was the Cape regional manager in charge of all the eight Cape Town shops and has since been promoted to national sales manager of Pentravel. She is pictured here with awards event MC, **Michael Mol** (left) and Pentravel ceo, **Sean Hough**.



RwandAir awards agents

RwandAir recently celebrated its top-performing travel agent partners, with **Leon Smith** of Club Travel in Ontdekkers Rd, Johannesburg, being named Rwandair's top agent for 2014. Pictured here are, from left: **Matthew Simpson** (group marketing manager of Holiday Aviation, RwandAir's gsa); **Sarah-Jane Middlemas** (marketing manager Holiday Aviation); **Dennis Rwilliriza** (RwandAir country manager for SA); **Greg Fuller** (gm of Holiday Aviation) and **Leon**.

Repeat performance

AT THE recent XL Conference in Zanzibar, **Brian Singer** was awarded 'XL Group Brand Ambassador 2014' – the second time he has received the accolade. Brian, a director of the Singer Group, is one of the founders of XL Travel and is also a board member of the travel group.



Top supporters

This month, United and Air Canada hosted a function at the Inanda Club in Johannesburg to thank SA travel agents for their business. One of the top supporters was **Rennies Sasol**. Pictured here are travel managers, **Felicia Cornellissen** (front, left) and **Portia Sekhwela** (back, middle) with the Development Promotions team, **Jackie Adami** (back, left); **Jane Davidson** (back, right) and **Shelley Phillips** (front, right).

Photo: Natasha Schmidt.

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Golf for a good cause

The 10th annual Club Travel JDI Golf Day was held at Westlake Golf Course in Cape Town recently. The beneficiary of the fundraising event was the Masiphumelele-based organisation, Waves for Change. Its aim is to turn previously disused township beaches into hubs for skills training and social justice. The organisation trains local community members and equips them with surfing skills as well as providing programmes where vulnerable youth receive social, health and educational support. The R108 000 raised by the golf day will go towards opening a WFC office in Muizenberg. Club Travel will also give ongoing sales and interviewing training to the WFC coaches. Pictured here (from right), are: **Tim Conibear** (director of Waves for Change); **Gokalp Yazir** (media relations director for Turkish Airlines); **Gary Mulder** (financial director of Club Travel) and **Helena Duk**, trustee at JDI.

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



Ending 2014 on a high note

The Travelbags year-end function was held at the Barnyard Theatre Rivonia recently. Guests were treated to the venue's latest show, 'Battle of the Sexes', which pits famous musical divas against strutting rockers. Enjoying the show and getting into the party spirit are: (back row, from left): **Charry Couzyn** (director, Itseng Africa); **Pierre Du Plessis** (director, Facets The Tour Company); and (seated, from left): **Delmaine Blignault** (project manager, Complete Marathons); **Tania Gomes** (inbound sales, Extraordinary); and **Shannon Hendrickson** (itinerary planner, Itseng Africa). Photo: Shannon Van Zyl



Helping to improve lives

Tourvest finished its corporate social responsibility programme for 2014 with a career day for 29 grade-12 learners attending the charitable organisation Afrika Tikkun's centre of excellence in Diepsloot. Tourvest coo, **Judi Nwokedi** said the projects the group had undertaken with Afrika Tikkun this year included its annual township home building exercise and a donation of ten cash cheques to the families for whom the houses were built to buy school clothes and food over the festive season. **Judi** (centre) is pictured with some of the Afrika Tikkun learners.

Appointment

Wouter Nel has been appointed sales and marketing manager, Southern Africa, for Air Mauritius. Wouter's previous experience includes being brand leader for Flight Centre Niche Brands (Cruiseabout, Student Flights and Online), head of travel for Groupon RSA and direct sales manager at Travelstart. "I have an entrepreneurial approach to business and am passionate about the travel industry with 10 years' travel experience," he says.



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Pax can bag a bonus with Mango

MANGO Airlines will give travel vouchers to travellers who have paid what the airline calls “excessive luggage allowance charges” to fly with its competitors. The promotion runs until January 31.

The airline will exchange R1 million in receipts, for up to R200 per person, against checked bag charges of its competitors on certain competing routes.

Travellers will be able to collect vouchers at Mango Guest Service Centers (in airports where the airline competes with other low-cost airlines) to redeem when booking their next flight with Mango. “Travellers must present their checked bag receipt as well as positive identification to receive vouchers toward their next Mango flight to the same value,” says Mango spokesperson, **Hein Kaiser**. The vouchers will be redeemable against any

Mango flight outside of promotional offers for six months.

“Mango’s checked bag allowance is 20kg and allows for up to two bags combined to reach the weight limit with hand luggage pegged at 7kg,” says Hein.

At the same time Mango has upped its baggage allowance between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth to 30kg checked luggage for the same period.

Kulula.com charges R245 (online and contact centre bookings) or R350 (at the airport) for a second bag under the 20kg limit. On its website, FlySafair, which doesn’t include checked-in luggage in its fares, informs passengers of a R150 (online or call centre) or R250 (at the airport) fee for a first bag under 20kg, with an additional R250 charge for a second bag under that limit. ■



The **TNW** team wish all our readers a very happy festive season and a wonderful 2015. May the holidays be joyful and the New Year prosperous and peaceful. Pictured here are: (back, from left) deputy editor, **Bruce Dennill**; ad co-ordinator **Courtney Canham**; group editor, **Natasha Schmidt**; sales executive, **Yolanda Katsi**; key account executive, **Diana Comminos**; senior designer, **Dirk Voorneveld**; and (front, from left) photographer, **Shannon Van Zyl**; production editor, **Ann Braun**; and publisher, **Kate Nathan**. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Blue Train drops Durban, opens Kruger route

THE Blue Train’s Durban route will be dropped in favour of a new route to the Kruger National Park in 2015.

Demand for Durban has dropped while, according to Blue Train spokesperson, **Themba Masheula**, “the Kruger is in the top-three destinations visitors want to see while on holiday in South Africa”.

The Kruger route will make use of the Pretoria-Hazyview-Hoedspruit railway line. Guests will

disembark at Hoedspruit Station and be transferred in game vehicles to Kruger Gate.

“The Kruger is in the top-three destinations visitors want to see while on holiday in South Africa.”

Final details of the Blue Train package are only being revealed at a later

date but Themba says it will not be restrictive, so guests wanting to extend their holiday can be booked at any game lodge of their choice.

The most popular Blue Train journey remains the Pretoria-Cape Town route. Charter operations are a focus for 2015, particularly for annual events such as the Nedbank Golf Challenge at Sun City, the Macufe Festival in Bloemfontein and the Durban July. ■

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Far East is tops with pax

In which destinations have you seen a growth in interest in 2014?

Destination	Growth in Interest (%)
Asia and the Far East	43%
Indian Ocean Islands	18%
Europe	16%
North and South America	10%
Southern Africa	6%
East Africa	3%
UK	2%
West Africa	2%

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SAA ups frequencies in Africa

SAA has upped frequencies to some of its key African routes.

As of December 1, SAA increased frequencies between Johannesburg and Maputo from 17 to 21 a week and between Johannesburg and Harare

from 18 to 19 flights a week.

From December 4, flights between Johannesburg and Kinshasa increased from six to seven a week, and from Johannesburg to Mauritius from nine

to 10 a week.

“The strengthening of these routes comes in the wake of positive load factors and increased traffic between the countries,” says SAA acting ceo, **Nico Bezuidenhout**. ■

Lufthansa’s LCC

From page 1
– a joint-venture company of Lufthansa and Turkish Airlines.

Lufthansa’s decision to push ahead with its budget airline operations comes as the airline battles to stay competitive against LCCs in Europe and Gulf operators

on long-haul routes, and aims to take advantage of fast growth in the leisure travel segment, which it says now represents 75% of all intercontinental flights.

Axel added that Lufthansa remained committed to maintaining its daily A380 services to Johannesburg

and would introduce its new premium economy on the Johannesburg route on April 22.

He said the carrier recorded a 30% capacity increase on its seasonal Cape Town service for 2014/15, with demand “well above previous years”. ■