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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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ITCs in spotlight after ticket scam

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE travel industry is calling for a review of ITC models in South Africa, after an independent consultant made headlines in December after allegedly scamming hundreds of SA travellers who were left stranded over the holidays.

The travellers – the majority of whom were expats – booked allegedly fraudulent tickets through **Kim Robbertse**, an independent travel consultant in Polokwane. Customers said Kim had advertised open return tickets on British Airways for a fixed fare of R7 500. They were asked to pay in advance, into her personal bank account, to secure the tickets and were told they could confirm dates later.

Kim was a non-lata travel agent, ticketing through SWG (Serendipity Worldwide Group). However, the allegedly fraudulent tickets were never issued through Serendipity, as Kim reportedly cashed in the money without making the bookings. She is believed to have collected millions of rands from consumers in the UK and South Africa for non-existent tickets.

The incident has put a spotlight on SA ITC models, raising the question of whether some of these models – which merely offer a ticketing platform to their members without any further support or controls – should be reviewed to offer better fraud protection for clients.

Safeguarding the industry

Otto de Vries, Asata ceo, says there has been a massive expansion in the ITC model over the past 10 years in

South Africa. “The question we as an industry now face is to what extent the various forms of ITC models safeguard the interests of the consumer, their host company’s brand, the industry and the individual ITC. As an industry we need to define and encourage a model that minimises risks to any of these parties and encourage ITCs that are not already within the Asata fold to join, contribute to and comply with a strict code of conduct that protects all parties involved.”

Mladen Lukic, gm of Travel Counsellors in South Africa, says unfortunately the incident has put all ITCs in South Africa in a bad light and that it’s not the fact that a consultant works from home that is the issue, it’s that some consultants are working in a non-regulated, non-lata environment. He adds that the travel industry will need to make some changes if it wants to avoid becoming a regulated industry.

Garth Wolff, ceo of eTravel, says there is a fundamental flaw in an ITC model that offers no protection for the ITC, the client or the supplier. “This kind of model is purely based on volumes for commercial benefit.”

He adds that new travel agency owners often have very little knowledge of the business risks associated with cleared funds, cash flow management, debtors and creditors management and they need administrative and business support.

eTravel recently launched a similar model called ‘Just the Ticket’ in an attempt to compete with models such

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A recipe for fun

Serena Hotels recently introduced new activities for guests at its lodges in Tanzania and Kenya, including interactive cooking lessons. Other activities include Swahili lessons, Maasai lectures that teach guests about the culture, dancing, bead making, photography lessons, aerobics and bicycle riding. Getting involved are (from left) Serena Hotels’ **Aayesha Ouamer** (sales account manager); **Karin Sieberhagen** (sales and marketing manager) and **Lusinda Landman** (SA reservationist). Photo: Shannon Van Zyl.

Asata keeps conference local

NATASHA SCHMIDT

ASATA will host its next annual conference in Durban.

In October last year, ceo **Otto de Vries** said the association was considering boycotting KwaZulu Natal for the convention if KZN’s MEC of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, **Michael Mabuyakhulu**, pushed ahead with a proposed 10%

hospitality levy to be implemented in April.

Although the MEC has not withdrawn his intention to impose the levy, Asata told TNW there had been positive discussions with provincial authorities and, as a result, had decided to go ahead with the conference there.

The conference will be held at the Southern Sun Elangeni & Maharani hotel from May 22 to 25. ■

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To the point



The processing time for Moroccan visa applications has been increased from four or five days to seven days. Costs have also increased from R281 to R286 for single entry, and from R421 to R428 for double entry.

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Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



Flyafrica unveils plans for 2015

CARO MALHERBE

FLYAFRICA.com has revealed more details of its plans for a tourist route from Cape Town to Victoria Falls and on to Kilimanjaro, which it plans to have up and running before the end of the year.

Once discussions with Tanzanian authorities are complete, flyafrica will be able to launch the route, says **Adrian Hamilton-Manns**, ceo of the flyafrica group. "It is something we are very much committed to."

Flyafrica Zimbabwe already flies from Harare to Johannesburg daily and Harare-Victoria Falls and Victoria Falls-Johannesburg, both four times a week. VFA-JNB flights will increase to daily on June 1. This is just one of the many developments the airline

group would see this year, Adrian told TNW.

Sales opened in October for the group's second airline, flyafrica Namibia, which offers daily flights from Windhoek to both JNB and Cape Town. From March it will also launch flights from Johannesburg to Lusaka using fifth freedom rights.

"Johannesburg to Lusaka will be the first of many routes where flyafrica does not have an Air Operator Certificate in the country but will use fifth freedom rights, which we can now exercise," said Adrian. The rights will also allow flyafrica to build its hub operation out of Harare with flights to Lusaka, Mozambique and into neighbouring countries such as Malawi.

The launch of two more airlines is planned in the first half of this year. With four airlines, the group's operations

will increase to 16 routes. In the second half of the year and early 2016, flyafrica plans to launch three more airlines, bringing the total number in the group to seven.

Plans to launch a South African operation are on the cards but due to opposition from established South African carriers, Adrian can't provide a set date but expects it to be by the end of the year.

"At the moment we've put in our application with the Air Licensing Council to be awarded an Air Service Permit to operate in South Africa and that is in the stages of being reviewed. The South African airline will be in place sometime this year, unless the objections are such that we are unable to make progress. If that is the case then we will be bringing low fares to the rest of Africa and South Africans will be left out." ■

Cathsseta to establish provincial footprint

THE Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sports Sector Education and Training Authority (Cathsseta) will review its provincial footprint and consider the establishment of provincial offices.

Pumzile Kedama, who has taken over the leadership of Cathsseta since the authority was put under administration in October last year, gave delegates a holistic overview

of the Seta's 2013/2014 performance, which included its achievements, challenges and a brief outlook of the future. He said, following the disbandment of the board, joint working committees would be established to represent all provinces and sectors.

Pumzile added that Cathsseta would review all funding of events and conferences to ensure that

the events in which Cathsseta took part were aligned to the organisation's strategic objectives. Funding for all other events would be terminated.

He called on industry stakeholders to organise themselves and provide the authority with recommendations as a collective to assist in the implementation of skills development initiatives within the sectors moving forward. ■

Sharmaine Scott selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Checkout Tours.** Seven-night package at three-star Sunset Beach in Phuket, Thailand, from R10 865pps. Package includes accommodation with breakfast daily, return airport-hotel transfers. Offer valid from January 26-March 31.
- **Dream Kist Tours.** Three nights and four days in Istanbul from R2 589pp sharing. Package includes accommodation and breakfast daily and Istanbul Uncovered day trip. Offer valid till March 9.
- **Q2 Travel.** Four-star Okavango Delta from R16 140pps, Maun to Maun. Package includes air transfers Maun/lodge/Maun, three nights full board plus two game activities per day. Valid until June 14.
- **Holiday Tours.** Easter Break Special: Pay for six, stay seven from R17 250pps. Includes return flights from Johannesburg to Mauritius on Air Mauritius; all pre-payable airport taxes and fuel levies; return airport-resort transfers; accommodation in a standard room at four-star Preskil Beach Resort & Spa; breakfast and dinner daily; full-day catamaran cruise including lunch and drinks on board. Set departure March 28. Book and pay 45 days in advance to qualify.
- **United Europe.** Seven-night Best of Italy from R6 990pps. Package includes two nights in Venice, two in Florence and three nights in Rome; three-star hotel accommodation, breakfast daily; second class rail ticket. Valid from March 1-31.



TNW

TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

www.etnw.co.za

Published by Travel & Trade Publishing (Pty) Ltd
Printed by Juka Printing (Pty) Ltd

Phone: (011) 327-4062
Fax: (011) 327-4094
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Protea Fire & Ice! Menlyn open for bookings
BOOKINGS are open for The Protea Hotel Fire & Ice! Menlyn, which is set to open in March. The hotel has 178 rooms, five of which are suites, plus a restaurant, bar, lifestyle spaces, swimming pool and underground parking bays. The six-storey hotel will feature a stand-alone, double-storey conference facility adjacent to the hotel, planned as Pretoria's premier MICE destination. The ground floor can accommodate up to 500 people and upstairs there are two 150-seat conference rooms and a variety of boardrooms.

Carlson Rezidor opens Park Inn in Gabon
CARLSON Rezidor has opened the first Park Inn by Radisson hotel in Gabon - the Park Inn by Radisson Libreville. The mid-market hotel is 2km from the airport and city centre and features 140 rooms with views of the Atlantic or Libreville. The hotel offers multiple dining options: La Palette restaurant has a breakfast buffet each morning; Restaurant Olatano serves lunch and dinner buffets, blending international and local cuisine; and Bar Horizon, located on the eighth floor of the adjacent Okoume Palace Hotel, serves cocktails, beers, wines and snacks. The Park Inn by Radisson also shares a business centre with the Okoume Palace hotel. Facilities include four meeting and event spaces for ten to 80 delegates and a ballroom for up to 700 guests



Interior and exterior views of Legend's new clubhouse. Photos: Debbie Badham

Legend launches new clubhouse, unveils extreme offering

Legend Golf & Safari Resort has taken its unique golf and safari offering to new heights with the launch of its new clubhouse. Debbie Badham was at the resort, courtesy of Legend Lodges, for the new facility's official unveiling.

LEGEND Golf & Safari Resort unveiled its new clubhouse offering while putting on a four-day display of all that the resort has to offer during its Legend Extreme Showcase at the end of November.

Ceo, **Peet Cilliers**, believes the new clubhouse is a unique offering, saying that it has no equivalent anywhere else in the South African bush. The facility houses a Sky View Bar, Renaissance Restaurant, Golf Pro-Shop, Clubhouse Boma, Members' Lounge with viewpoint, changing rooms, a gym, a children's play facility and splash pool.

With its 18-hole signature golf course (each hole has been designed by a different golfing legend) and the Extreme 19, which is only accessible by helicopter, the resort has developed its reputation as a 'bucket-list' golfing destination.

International sales and marketing manager, **Mariki Theron**, says the clubhouse's new facilities will further enhance this offering. In particular, the executive members' area, which provides business travellers with an exclusive lounge ideal for closing deals. For a lump sum of between R70 000 and R75 000, guests can acquire hospitality packages that include access to the lounge, as well as unlimited access to the golf courses. The Golf Pro-Shop also adds to the resort's positioning as a 'golf-hub' of sorts.

Mariki says while the resort

has traditionally been more popular with corporates, its new enhanced golf offering is expected to draw a larger number of leisure groups as well. "Our highly unique golf offering has become a must for golfing enthusiasts."

However, golf is not all the resort has to offer. The Legend Extreme showcase completely dispelled ideas that the resort only had golfing and safari experiences to offer. Two whole days were dedicated to showcasing activities completely unrelated to golf or safaris.

"The new enhanced golf offering is expected to draw a larger number of leisure groups. Our unique golf offering has become a must for golf enthusiasts."

While the Doorndraai Dam provides a range of water sport activities, the resort's natural landscape also enables a variety of adventure activities such as abseiling, clay pigeon shooting and helicopter rides. Peet points out that guests' primary concern is that there are so many different options to choose from that they had difficulty selecting their top choices.

For wildlife enthusiasts, Legend Golf & Safari Resort features its own wildlife and cultural centre from which it runs a number of conservation initiatives, including projects for white lions and wild dogs

as well as a rhino orphanage.

The resort has also established a foundation dedicated to the upliftment of local people. By incorporating locals into its Pedi Village, it not only provides a source of income for people living in the surrounding communities but also provides a unique cultural experience for guests.

On the conferencing side, Legend Lodges is able to combine the latest in conferencing technologies with unique bushveld experiences. The venue boasts seven different conference rooms, of which the largest is the Queen of Sheba, accommodating up to 500 people. It also features traditional bomas and shebeens. Mariki says the resort's natural surroundings enable event planners to put together sought-after experiences such as dinners under fig trees.

The Legend Extreme Showcase, which Mariki reveals is set to become an annual event, generated a significant amount of anticipation, particularly amongst golf operators. She says the event was hugely successful. "There was a great deal of excitement with people genuinely interested in what was taking place. Now that they've seen what is on offer, we've found that they are truly astonished to see what we've done with the clubhouse. Our aim is to do extreme things and, because of that, you simply won't find a clubhouse like this anywhere else in South Africa." ■

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Adventure tourism – the next big thing

CARO MALHERBE

THE adventure tourism sector has grown 195% from 2010 to 2013, with further growth expected, although trends show that adventure travellers are increasingly booking direct. These are some of the findings in the *UNWTO Global Report on Adventure Tourism 2014*, released last month by the World Tourism Organisation, together with the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA).

According to the report, in 2010 the first global adventure tourism market sizing study was conducted by ATTA, The George Washington University and Xola Consulting. It found that the global value of adventure tourism was US\$89bn (R991bn). The study was repeated in 2013 and found that 42% of travellers departed on adventure trips, making the sector worth US\$263bn (R2,93 trillion). This was attributed to increases in international departures for travellers on adventure trips and in average spending.

The report showed growing markets for adventure tourism to be mainly from Europe and North and South America. South America, particularly, saw an 11,6% increase in the adventure travel population between 2009 and 2010. "With rising levels of disposable income, many emerging economies have shown fast growth over

recent years, especially in markets in Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa," the report states.

In the adventure tourism sector, the trend has been towards 'disintermediation', meaning the removal of the middle man, a tour operator or travel agent who has traditionally connected the consumer in the source market to the provider or ground handler in the destination market. As the traveller can access information and trusted consumer reviews online, he is more likely to go straight to the provider.

"UNWTO predicts that, by 2015 adventure arrivals in emerging economies will exceed those in advanced economies. By 2030, 57% of adventure arrivals will be in emerging economies"

The AdventurePulse: USA Adventure Traveller Profiles, a study of the US adventure travel market, indicates that 71% of US adventure travellers are making arrangements solely on their own. This trend is more prominent in developed adventure travel markets but will likely cause change in developing countries' supply chain in the coming decades.

While emerging economies are slowly outpacing developed economies for departures and spending, UNWTO predicts that, by 2015 adventure arrivals in emerging economies will exceed those in advanced economies. By 2030, 57% of adventure arrivals will be in emerging economies. To accommodate the surge in demand, supply is expected to increase.

Growing adventure travel activities include cycling, backpacking, trekking and hiking. Cycle tourism is on the rise across the world, with an increased number of adventure tourists embarking on both road and mountain biking tours and taking part in or observing events.

In 2010, the University of Wisconsin-Madison released a study, *The Economic Impact of Bicycling in Wisconsin*. According to **Dr Richard Weston** of the University of Central Lancaster: "This study shows that cycle tourism is more sustainable environmentally, socially and economically. Being less reliant on air travel, cycle tourism disperses visitors to areas that traditionally do not attract tourism and supports employment in local economies."

Growth is focused on developed nations. However, for growth in emerging markets, more knowledge about adventure tourism and investment is needed. ■

Acsa to crack down on hand luggage allowance

ACSA and airlines will roll out a campaign from February 2 at all SA airports to enforce hand luggage regulations.

The lead will be taken by the airlines in this regard, the airports company told TNW. "The need for the hand baggage restriction campaign was identified by the domestic carriers to implement uniform controls on hand baggage, in line with all flights departing from Acsa airports. An agreement has also been reached with international airlines that a uniform policy across all flights

would be in the interest of consistent application of legislation for all passengers."

The hand luggage allowance is as follows:

- Economy-class passengers are allowed one bag plus one slimline laptop bag. Business/first-class passengers are allowed two bags plus one slimline laptop bag. Handbags are considered part of a female's wardrobe and not as hand luggage.
- Slimline laptop bags must be of a size and thickness specifically designed

to carry a laptop and charger. Bags capable of carrying other items such as documents and clothes are not permitted.

- No bag should exceed 56cm x 36cm x 23cm (total dimensions of 115cm) or weigh more than 7kg per bag. Bag weight may vary according to airline specifications.
- If hand baggage does not comply, the passenger will be referred back to the check-in counters to check in the baggage as hold baggage. Extra fees may apply, as per each airline's guidelines. ■

Air Canada: new fares from JNB

AIR Canada has revised its fare structure from SA (JNB) to Canada via Europe or the UK. Low and high seasons have been removed, making fares competitive all year round. Guideline fares for Tango economy class are now R12 565 to Toronto; R13 809 to Calgary; R13 529 to Vancouver and R12 570 to Montreal.

QR launches first new route for 2015

QATAR Airways will operate daily non-stop flights to Amsterdam from June 16 using a B787 Dreamliner, with 22 flat-bed seats in business class and 232 seats in economy class. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, the flight will depart Doha at 08h25 arriving in Amsterdam at 14h00. The return flight will depart Amsterdam at 16h10 and arrive in Doha at 23h15. On Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, the flight will depart Doha at 08h20 and arrive at Amsterdam at 13h55. The return flight will depart Amsterdam at 16h20 and arrive in Doha at 23h25.

Upgraded aircraft for Air France Africa routes

FROM March, Air France will operate a B777-300 to Libreville, Gabon; Douala, Cameroon; and Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The aircraft features a designer suite in the La Première cabin and improved Premium Economy and economy cabins.



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Etihad enters 'ultra-luxury' era

Etihad Airways revealed its new A380-800 and B787-9 Dreamliner aircraft, featuring the airline's new 'Residence' product, at a recent event in Abu Dhabi. *TNW's Bruce Dennill attended, courtesy of Etihad Airways.*

ETIHAD Airways introduced its latest aircraft to media from around the world at an event as large and lavish as the aircraft themselves, showcasing the new cabin products, including the three-room 'The Residence' ultra-luxury cabin.

The A380, the first of a fleet of 10 on order, features 'The Residence' on its upper deck: a unique 11,6sqm cabin with a living room; en-suite bathroom with shower; bedroom with a double bed and flat-screen TV; and a private, Savoy Academy-trained butler and inflight chef.

Tickets for this cabin from Abu Dhabi to London cost approximately US\$20 000 (R230 230), with the price allowing for single or double occupancy. With this new product, the airline plans to target passengers who may otherwise use a private jet at a cost of US\$100 000 (R1,15m) upwards.

There are also nine single-occupancy First Apartments, 74% larger than Etihad's current Diamond First Class Suites, which contain a 77cm-wide reclining lounge chair, mini-bar and an ottoman that opens up to become a separate, fully flat bed (205cm long and 66cm wide).

The A380's 70 Business Studios, arranged in a dovetail configuration, offer a 56cm-wide seat that also combines with an ottoman to make a 205cm-long fully flat bed.

The upper deck also features a central Lobby: a common area with a six-seat circular sofa and a full bar and snack service.

On the lower deck, the A380 has 417 48cm-wide Economy Smart Seats, with a 79-84cm pitch, 15cm recline, adjustable lumbar support, and a camel leather headrest with a fixed wing to make sleeping easier.

The aircraft is already flying to London (operating as EY11/EY12), with a second A380 to be added to the route in the second quarter of this year. After that, Sydney and New York routes will be added.

Etihad has four more A380s on order that will arrive this year, with another three to come in 2016 and the remaining two to be delivered in 2017.

Dreaming big

The B787-9 Dreamliner on show at the launch is the first of a fleet of 41 on order, with 30 B787-10 aircraft also on order – a massive boost to Etihad's capacity.

Etihad currently has two B787-9s in its fleet, with three to arrive this year, three in 2016, nine in 2017 and the rest thereafter. The first B787-10 variants are scheduled for arrival in 2018.

The new B787-9 cabin configuration comprises eight First Suites, 28 Business Studios and 199 Economy Smart Seats.

The First Suite seats

convert into 205cm fully flat beds and passengers are served by an inflight chef and have their own mini-bar.

The Business Studios also feature the dovetail configuration, 56cm-wide seat and 205cm-long fully flat bed used in the A380. Economy Smart Seats are slightly narrower at 44cm.

The first Dreamliner flight is to Düsseldorf on February 1, with routes to Washington DC, Mumbai, Moscow and Brisbane to be added later this year.

"With the launch of these aircraft, we usher in a new era of unparalleled luxury, comfort and service. We aim to be the best, not the biggest, and are consistently using new innovations to improve our offering," said **James Hogan**, Etihad Airways' president and ceo.

Catching a connection

All passengers from South Africa arrive at Abu Dhabi Airport's Terminal 1. Connecting flights depart from the same terminal or from Terminal 3, which is approximately a 20-minute walk in the airport building, with no need to pass through immigration. Passengers can follow the signs to the Transit Desk should they need assistance.

The futuristic Midfield Terminal, which will increase the airport's capacity from 12 million to 25 million, is under construction and is expected to be operational by 2017. ■

An artist's impression of Abu Dhabi Airport's futuristic Midfield Terminal, which is under construction. Photo: Abu Dhabi Airports Company



Etihad Airways' A380-800 in its new livery.



The Lobby on the upper deck of the A380 allows travellers to interact in comfort.



The three-room Residence features a double bed.

Photos: Etihad Airways

Travel Technology

Travel agents will have to keep their fingers on the technology pulse if they are to stay ahead of customer demands, writes Dorine Reinstein.



Mobile technology provides opportunities for agents

ACCORDING to **Wally Gaynor**, md of Club Travel, as most customers nowadays are on smart phones and tablets, it is becoming essential for travel agents and TMCs to have an app to communicate with their clients. In the future, he says, apps will become increasingly specialised and personalised to individual travellers' likes and preferences. "I believe we will communicate via apps that are geared to the client's particular tastes."

Giles Clinton, sales agent for Digital Trip in sub-Saharan Africa, agrees and says today's travellers are looking for a seamless, mobile experience and many also demand unique travel



Melissa Storey

features. He says, for travel agents, the opportunity lies in the enhanced travel options technology can offer.

Giles believes one of the

greatest advantages of mobile technology is the collaboration between key players in the travel industry. "We are seeing more and more airports, airlines and hotels working together to provide relevant and customised information to customers. An example of this is a passenger receiving local hotel suggestions following the delay or cancellation of a flight, via his or her mobile device."

Melissa Storey, executive head: Strategy, Development & Marketing at First Car Rental, says app developers are increasingly building location-based services and object recognition into their offerings. "Object recognition will allow phone

users to perform tasks such as Internet search by photographing items with their phone camera."

She says smartphone users will increasingly expect apps to offer location-based services that tailor content to the user's tastes and location. "Location-based mobile marketing allows users to access location-specific deals and special offers."

Cloud computing is also a fast-growing aspect of mobile technology. Melissa explains: "The main advantage of cloud computing for mobile apps is that users will be able to eliminate the mobile service provider from their mobile app transactions. They will be able to download apps by simply accessing the Internet.

However, this has its own hurdles, such as the speed of the Internet connection. 3G networks are available in the market but connectivity is still a concern, especially in non-urban areas."

Giles says the ability to manage a trip from start to finish and beyond from a mobile device will be something that customers not only want, but also expect. He says: "They want convenient, convenient and relevant information at the touch of a button wherever they are. And where this innovation takes us, only time will tell, but the combination of technology and collaboration looks set to create a travel experience that boldly goes where no travel experience has gone before."

Global Fares System sees big savings

CLUB Travel has become the first consortium in South Africa to offer all its consultants, ITCs and partners access to a Global Fares System,

says **Wally Gaynor**. Wally says the Global Fares System will allow consultants to seamlessly book, access and ticket fares anywhere in the

world. "This is a huge competitive advantage and enables our consultants to offer a price match guarantee, even when competing with

overseas online travel agents like Expedia with access to better seat availability.

"We have seen savings of over R4 000 on an

economy-class ticket on the same airline, the same flight and the same day. In business class, we have seen huge savings of over R30 000."

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Travel Technology

Great apps for agents

Travelport Mobile Agent

Travelport acknowledges that as much as travellers want to be mobile so do travel agents. Travelport Mobile Agent provides access to Apollo, Galileo and Worldspan GDS cryptic terminals, allowing users to change devices and pick up where they left off. Thus, users can start a reservation at Travelport Mobile Agent in their smartphone and finish it on their laptop TTS Web without having to EndTransact before changing devices.

The original mobile app, launched in 2011, has seen over 41 500 installations globally. The recently launched upgrade, version 3.0 of Travelport Mobile Agent, includes features features implemented after



the collection of user feedback. They include a more user-friendly interface, enhanced content with improved data, customisable quick keys, a newsfeed with relevant travel articles and integration with Travelport ViewTrip itinerary tool.

Key features:

- Can be used on multiple devices, such as a laptop, iPhone, iPad, or other smartphones and tablet computers using Android.
- Log in using the same, secure credentials.
- Configure programmable keys to perform complex commands to work the way you want to work.

Sabre's TripCase

The TripCase mobile app is available for iPhones and Android phones and offers customers bundled travel information about their trip.

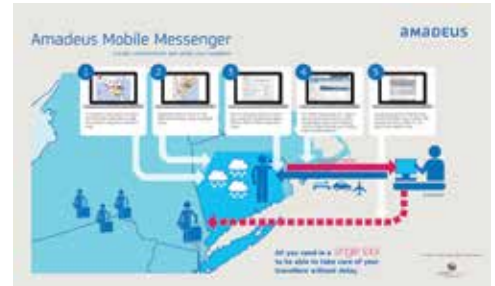
The latest v3.4 release is now available on iTunes and Google Play. New features include push notifications throughout travellers' trips, smartwatch support, deeper Foursquare integration, updated default times (Remember This Place feature), and Uber new user offer.

Key features:

- By popular demand, TripCase is now optimised for viewing on tablets and other larger screen sizes.
- TripCase offers trip notifications about flights and other scheduled events in the traveller's itinerary.
- From seat maps and weather forecasts, to alternative flights and driving directions, TripCase provides valuable tools to assist travellers in a bind.

Amadeus Mobile Messenger

Amadeus Mobile Messenger allows travel agents to locate, communicate and assist passengers, especially during a travel disruption or crisis situation. The tool allows traveller tracking and communications on iPhone, Android, BlackBerry and Windows.



Key features:

- Locating travellers instantly: Itineraries are represented via a dynamic map interface, allowing consultants to quickly pinpoint a traveller's exact location.
- Focus on relevant data: Traveller data is automated and updated in real-time, ensuring users always have the latest information to work with, which is critical for incident management.

Effortless communication:

- The app provides message templates to facilitate the communication of critical information to travellers.
- Workflow optimisation: A number of intelligent features are incorporated that allow consultants to optimise the workflow for incident management, delivering real-time saving and making the process more cost efficient.



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GDSs are ready for ancillaries

AIRLINE ancillary revenue skyrocketed last year, with à la carte ancillaries for services such as more leg-room, luggage and early boarding.

IdeaWorks, an organisation that researches customers' expectations, recently projected that total global ancillary revenue would be US\$49.9bn (R580bn) for 2014, 6.7% of the total projected airline revenue of \$746bn (R8,7trn). Of the \$49.9bn, \$28.5bn (R332bn) will likely come from à la carte services, and the remaining \$21.4bn (R249bn) from sales of frequent flyer miles.

In the light of these numbers, GDS companies are incorporating the sale of ancillaries on their systems.

Gary Broomberg, spokesperson for Sabre in South Africa, says: "Twenty-seven airlines are merchandising and selling ancillaries through the Sabre travel marketplace today. New ancillary implementations are occurring regularly."

Jannine Adams, senior manager marketing at Amadeus Southern Africa, says: "Today thousands of ancillary services are booked by Amadeus travel agents in

more than 110 countries."

Jannine says 52 airlines are enabled for ancillary services in SA. "Each airline prioritises its own merchandise and travel agents need to make a simple entry in Amadeus to check which services are available per airline. With this, Amadeus Light Ticketing is also enabled, making ticket sales on LCCs easy as pie!"

She says the GDS offers travel agents an easy tool for improved customer service and retention, as all transactions are easy to track and commissions can easily be added for each item sold.

Selling travel in 2015, and beyond

NATASHA SCHMIDT

NOT all travellers are price sensitive and looking for the best deal. Customers can no longer be segmented strictly into 'corporate' or 'leisure' bookings. Customers' needs are changing and, thanks to technology, travel agents and suppliers are in a better position to give them what they're looking for.

"It won't be long before travellers are receiving all travel information via their mobile apps."

Technology has empowered customers booking travel – they can shop around, they know more about what's out there and as a result they have more demands, says Sabre's vp for Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa, **Dean Bibb**.

He was speaking at a round table breakfast session hosted by Sabre to discuss travel trends in 2015 and beyond.

But technology has also empowered service providers who now, with Big Data, have the necessary information to tailor make travel experiences, offering the client more in the value chain. "Technology allows agents and suppliers to tap into different segments and market product to clients according to their needs, driving good deals to those who are price sensitive and offering a more personalised service to those that aren't."

"The sale of airline ancillary products has rocketed in recent years and we can expect to see more options become available,"

says **Harold Eisnacher**, Sabre's senior vp for EMEA. "When we talk about ancillaries we refer mainly to the sale of seats and bags, but this is changing. As a result of data mining and analyses, service providers have more information on clients than ever before and, what's more, they're able to capture and use this data to tailor their offering."

It won't be long before travellers are receiving all travel information via their mobile apps, making the experience easier and more convenient. For example, if a flight is delayed, they will receive options via their app to rebook on another flight, he says.

The line between corporate and leisure customers has also become blurred. "Travel is becoming an experience again," says Dean. Business travellers want to make the most of their trips by booking add-ons and taking their families along. These customers are also less price-sensitive because the company is paying a portion of the trip. TMCs are in a good position to service these clients as they have already profiled them and can tailor packages based on this info.

The devices travellers use to book travel also provide suppliers with useful information. Generally, people use their computers to book travel 21 days in advance. They're more inclined to use their iPads or tablets when booking seven days before travel and their mobile phones 48 hours before. More suppliers are using this information to push special deals to clients accordingly, for example offering mobile users last-minute deals. ■

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Appointments

■ **David Mabunda**, former SANParks chief executive, has been appointed the acting ceo of Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife and **Ebrahim Mulla** has been appointed acting cfo for a period of six months. The appointment follows the suspension of Ezemvelo ceo, **Dr Bandle Mkhize** and cfo, **Darius Chitate**, who will undergo disciplinary hearings early this year.



■ **Denise Kemp** of Eastern Sun Events has been appointed the new public officer of the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI). She succeeds **Godfrey King**, who has stepped down after 13 years. Denise is a previous national chairperson of SAACI and winner of the association's 2014 Fellowship Award. SAACI's public officer has a permanent seat on the board and serves on the executive committee with the ceo, chairperson, vice-chairperson and treasurer.



■ **Emmanuelle Moneger** has been appointed gm of The Royal Livingstone Hotel, one of three properties within Sun International's SunLux Collection. Emmanuelle was previously regional manager at &Beyond where she developed luxury travel experiences across Africa and Central India. "Over the past few years my focus has been on developing new safari lodges and I am hopeful that my experience, together with the support of the local team, will ensure that the property is remembered as a destination within the destination," said Emmanuelle.



Cheers to that!

Pure Tours took the opportunity to thank industry partners at its client and trade appreciation evening recently. The event was held at the Schwabinger Stuben in Randburg. Enjoying themselves are: (back from left) SkiTag's **Robyn Kock**, **Nadine Morely**, **Meghan Nancarrow** and **Ayanda Mbalati**, along with (front from left) **Gillian Hurford** (Superlative Incentives) and **Greg Taylor** (Pure Tours).

Photo: Debbie Badham

SAA gets green certification

SAA has completed Stage 2 of the IEnvA programme, a voluntary, two-stage evaluation designed to drive airline environmental performance improvements through independent assessment. Stage 2 ensures that an

airline has implemented all the IEnvA programme standards, identified and mitigated its significant environmental impacts and has set performance targets. It also certifies that an airline has processes to monitor and review its performance against its environmental targets.

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Changes to Dubai visas

DORINE REINSTEIN

TOURIST visas for Dubai have become costlier and are non-extendable from January 1.

Bets Combrink, spokesperson for the Dubai Visa Processing Centre (DVPC) in South Africa, told TNW the 30-day tourist visa for Dubai now cost R1 095 instead of R900. The General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs in Dubai has also announced that this visa will no longer be extendable. "Previously, travellers could go to immigration in Dubai and extend their visa for a month. This is no longer the case," says Bets.

The transit visa for Dubai

has also increased slightly from R750 to R780, but the business visa, which is valid for only 14 days, has dropped from R1 220 to R1 095.

As Dubai does not have an embassy in South Africa, Bets explains that the prices for the visas obtained in South Africa can vary depending on the processing centre. "We are a processing centre for Emirates Airline. Emirates appointed DVPC to process their visas as Emirates is the sponsor of the visa. All other airlines appoint their own selected companies to process their visas. Different DMCs and tour operators charge different fees." ■

To the point



Airbnb and KLM have announced a long-term partnership whereby KLM travellers are able to search for a place to stay on Airbnb through the KLM website while making their flight booking. The site lists accommodations in over 600 destinations around the world.

Terrorism boosts travel insurance

DORINE REINSTEIN

RECENT terrorist attacks – the latest in Paris, which saw the killing of 12 people at the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* followed by a shootout involving hostages at a supermarket in Porte de Vincennes – has led to a surge in demand for travel insurance.

Wybrandt Lubbe, travel manager Bidvest Insurance, says the increased risk of terrorism has more travellers interested particularly in the 'Cancel for any Reason' benefit. Wybrandt adds,

however, that it is important to warn clients that if they want to cancel their trip to a city as a result of a terrorist incident, the same city must not have experienced a terrorist incident within 90 days prior to the terrorist incident that is the

cause of the client's claim.

Simmy Micheli, TIC manager of sales and marketing, says: "We find that many of the



Simmy Micheli

queries we receive will specifically be about recent events and what cover is on offer." Most travel insurance companies cover medical expenses incurred or Accidental Death and Permanent Disability cover for unforeseen terrorism attacks, she says. "The recent attacks,

including those in Sydney and Paris, are good examples of when travellers would be covered."

Europe tightens border controls

Following last week's deadly terrorist attacks in Paris, European ministers have announced that they will start implementing tighter border controls and greater sharing of passenger data.

In a joint statement, following a meeting with

EU ministers from 11 countries, the ministers said they would look into amending the rules of the Schengen Borders Code to allow for information sharing and more comprehensive air passenger checks.

The EU PNR proposal could force airlines to provide EU countries with the data of passengers entering or leaving the EU for use in preventing, detecting, investigating and prosecuting serious crime and terrorist offences. ■

Etihad pax pre-cleared for travel to US

TRAVELLERS on all Etihad Airways flights to the United States will have a smoother journey to their end destination, having pre-cleared US Customs and Border Protection at Abu Dhabi Airport.

From January 15, US pre-clearance opened for the early-morning EY103 to New York JFK and EY183 to San

Francisco flights.

The new early-morning operation complements the mid-morning pre-clearance that opened in January last year, which caters for Etihad passengers on flights to Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Los Angeles, New York JFK, and Washington, DC.

The process allows passengers to pass through

all required checks, including US customs, immigration and security in Abu Dhabi before they board their flight to the US, enabling them to avoid queues on arrival. Another benefit is that air travellers who connect on to a US domestic flight have their baggage checked through from Abu Dhabi to their final destination. ■

ITCs in spotlight after ticket scam

From page 1 as Serendipity.

Garth says, however: "We closely scrutinise all members and only sign up two out of every 10 as we need to ensure that the Just the Ticket ITC has a sound knowledge of business management and risks, as we have less control over their cash flow and business management principles."

Dinesh Naidoo, group operations director of SWG, says there is nothing inherently wrong with ITC models that offer only a ticketing platform. He says SWG does offer its members the option of administrative support but this is not a compulsory service.

Dinesh says it's impossible for any consortium to

safeguard against all fraud, especially when ITCs start advertising false fares on the Internet without even ticketing. However, to better protect ITCs and consumers in the future, he says each member of SWG will, from now, be vetted by Asata.

Wally Gaynor, md of Club Travel, says although the vast majority of ITCs are honest, ethical and care for their clients, there will unfortunately always be rogues. He says Club Travel has put in place strict guidelines and procedures before anyone can become a member. "We do credit and criminal checks. We look into their work history. They have to have been working for a travel agency for many years. We do stringent checks and continue checking

as the ITC does business with us."

Continued checking is key, says Mladen. He says although Asata is a highly efficient organisation, membership alone is not enough. He says one way to avoid fraud is to centralise financial control. Travel Counsellors' ITCs are not exposed to fraud, as they don't collect money from customers; a central service collects the money. This prevents abuse by the ITC and also prevents ITCs from becoming victims of fraud.

Sean Hough, ceo of Pentravel, says it's important that a consortium insists that its members use a corporate bank account. "It's wrong to allow ITCs to transact using their own bank accounts." ■

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Was it the season to be jolly?
How did the December 2014 holiday season compare with December 2013?

- Business took a knock compared with the previous year
- It was good, but I was hoping for better
- It completely exceeded expectations
- It was the same as last December

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