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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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28-day reprieve for SAA Voyager members

NATASHA SCHMIDT

SAA has extended the redemption period for its loyalty programme's members to enable them to continue to process AnyDay and MileageKeeper Awards until February 28 at 23h00 (SA time).

This follows an outcry by travel agents last week, who felt their clients were disadvantaged by the changes that took effect when the new SAA Voyager programme launched on February 1.

"This extension is given, without hesitation by SAA, in response to feedback from our members in terms of the new Dynamic Awards introduced by SAA Voyager."

According to agents, Voyager miles "devalued drastically overnight" when SAA changed its loyalty programme from a mileage-based to a revenue-based system. See last week's TNW (February 11).

"It was well understood that members who have earned miles as per the mileage-based model, could feel disadvantaged by the revenue-based redemption model when requesting high-yield fares and therefore all members were given 64 days to exercise their right to redeem miles as per the mileage-based model if required," said **Suretha Cruse**, SAA executive of Customer Loyalty.

"This extension is given, without hesitation by SAA, in response to feedback from our members in terms of the new Dynamic Awards introduced by SAA Voyager. This will allow members a further period to review their options available," she said.

SAA Voyager's new value proposition enables members to earn miles at 1 mile for every R1,60 spent on the base fare and fuel levy paid when travelling on SAA-operated flights.

"The redemption value for SAA-operated flights is transparent, whereby members are assured by SAA Voyager of a 5% return. In other words, for R5 000 spent on SAA-operated flights, a member will have R250 to spend towards future travel on SAA-operated flights," says Suretha.

These redemption seats will not be capacity controlled and miles will be converted as form of full payment for the base fare and fuel levy with a set conversion.

Furthermore, SAA has negotiated discounted fares for its Voyager members compared with the available fares to revenue passengers. These discounts, which may vary between routes and regions, will be passed on to members when miles are converted to the required ZAR value for an SAA-operated flight for redemption purposes.

Do you have any questions about the new Voyager programme that you would like SAA to respond to? Let us know by emailing natashas@nowmedia.co.za. ■



Celebrating luxury

Crystal Cruises is celebrating its silver anniversary with special deals on selected 2015 voyages in Asia, South America, Mediterranean, Baltic/North Cape, Caribbean and New England/Canada. Travellers can enjoy savings of up to US\$3 000pp (R35 120) in all categories of accommodations. All-inclusive luxury cruise fares start at just US\$1 730pp (R20 315). These special offers are valid for bookings before March 2. As Crystal celebrates 25 years of luxury cruising, guests will be treated to commemorative parties and receptions. Ready to host your travellers is **George Argyropoulos**, md of Cruises International. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

SA travellers chase special deals

DORINE REINSTEIN

FLIGHT Centre has started the new year on high note, recording R18m in sales at its annual Travel Expo, which was held at the Coca-Cola Dome in Johannesburg on February 7-8.

The group saw an increase of 62% compared with last year when it wrote R11,1m in business. The number of visitors also increased by 27% with



16 524 prospective travellers visiting the Expo this year.


Andrew Stark, md of Flight Centre, says the success of the show is because customers are now aware that the Travel Expo is coming and they purposely saved up for the event, knowing they could take advantage of great deals.

Cathie Bester, national sales manager

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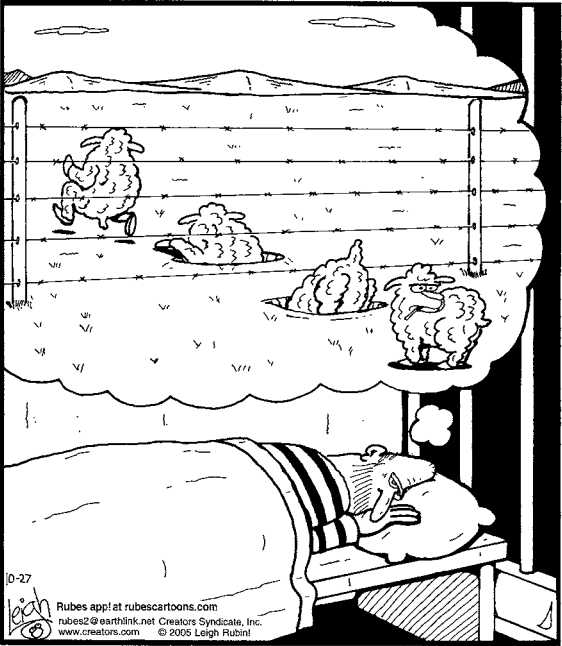
More direct flights between SA and Zambia

RWANDAIR will commence direct flights from Johannesburg to Lusaka from March 28. "RwandAir's fifth freedom rights for Zambia and South Africa have made this direct

route possible," says **Sarah-Jane Middlemas**, marketing manager for RwandAir in South Africa. Flight WB101 will leave Johannesburg at 07h45 and arrive in Lusaka at 09h45 (Tuesdays, Thursdays and

Saturdays), with return flights leaving Lusaka at 21h50 and landing in Johannesburg at 23h50 (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays). The airline will use B737-700s on the route. ■

Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



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Tsogo's move to acquire W Cape casino stake halted

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE Competition Commission has advised against a R2,1bn deal that would allow Tsogo Sun to obtain a 40% stake in Sun International's SunWest and Worcester Casino in the Western Cape. The Commission said in a statement that the proposed transaction would be likely to substantially prevent or lessen competition in the

relevant market due to likelihood of co-ordination between the merging parties, post-merger. SunWest operates the GrandWest Casino and Entertainment World (GrandWest) and Grand Hotel in Goodwood, Cape Town. Worcester operates the Golden Valley Casino and Lodge complex. **Marcel von Aulock**, ceo of Tsogo Sun, told TNW there would be no anti-competitive issues

arising from the deal. "It's a financial deal for us, where we are getting exposure to a gaming market that we have very little exposure to at an attractive price. "The deal has not been blocked. The Commission makes a recommendation to the Tribunal, which then holds a hearing and the Tribunal then makes a decision on the deal. The hearing is scheduled to start on April 7." ■

To the point



South Africa has removed the requirement for travellers to produce proof of a yellow fever vaccination for travel between South Africa and several African countries. The removal of the requirement applies to travel between South Africa and Tanzania, Zambia, Eritrea, Somalia and São Tomé and Príncipe. The announcement was made at the end of January, with immediate effect.

SA travellers chase special deals

From page 1
 of World Leisure Holidays, agrees, saying most visitors were genuine and had done their homework before the Expo and knew what they were looking for in terms of where they wanted to travel. "They came to the show to take advantage of the phenomenal special offers that were available," she says. The fact that clients wait until the Expo to book their holidays is a sign of the need for special offers in this market, says **Flora Fubbs**, senior manager of The Holiday Factory. She

adds that there was a lot of demand for honeymoons as well as some forward bookings for December. "We also saw a few browsers looking for info for trips planned in 2016 and beyond." Other operators say that chasing special deals was only a secondary motive for travellers visiting the show. "Our stand was completely overrun with visitors who wanted to know more about what our offering was and where they should go. The special Travel Expo deal was secondary," says **Theresa Szejwallo**, md of Trafalgar.

Theresa adds that many people seemed to be planning trips and used the Expo as a means to get the expert opinions and information they were looking for. "The interest was there and people were ready to book. It didn't faze people that they were required to pay their deposits at the Expo." Theresa says the show is a good indication that there is definitely an interest for travel again and that there could be a pent-up demand from last year when many travellers put their overseas holidays on hold due to the tough economic climate. ■

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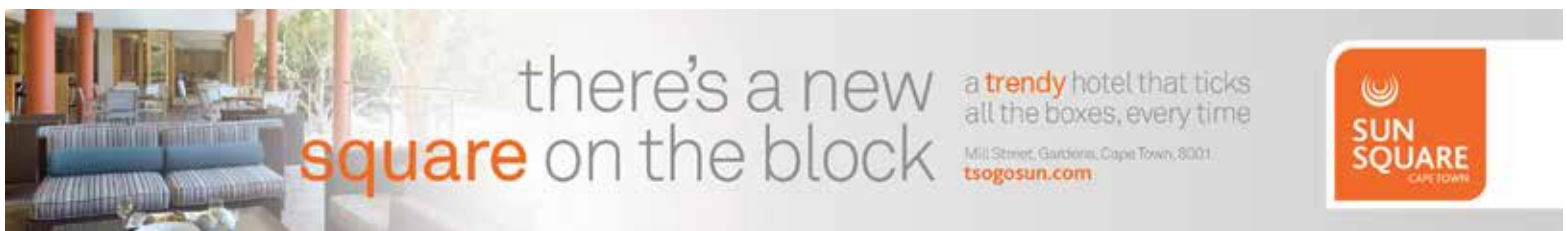
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HWT Kimzan walked away with the HWT Office of the Year Award. Pictured here with md of HWT, Marco Cristofoli is Claudia Pillay (md HWT Kimzan).



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Ladies in travel. Back, from left: Cathie Bester (World Leisure Holidays), Denise Kotze and Angelique Lennox (SAA). Front, from left: Michi Messner (Qantas) and Carla da Silva (Air Mauritius).

HWT agents shine!

HARVEY World Travel recognised its top performing agencies and agents for 2013/2014 at an extravagant gala event, held at the Montecasino Ballroom on February 7.

- The top awards went to:
- Lifetime Achievement: **Briggs Miller** (HWT Parktown North)
 - Preferred Supplier Supporter of the Year: HWT Holiday Travel
 - Admin Person of the Year: **Cecilia Sambo** (HWT Nelspruit)
 - Top Junior Consultant: **Candice Dunlop** (HWT Boksburg)
 - Top Senior/Intermediate Consultant: **Maria Mthombo-Dlamini** (HWT Manzini)



HWT Benoni cleaned up in the supplier award categories, winning several for the top-performing agency/most growth. Here, Michael Millard of HWT Benoni (left), is pictured with Mohamed Ravat (HWT Sandton Drive) and Gina Stanford (Beachcomber Tours). Photos: Natasha Schmidt

- Top Manager of the Year: **Dawn Weir** (HWT Holiday Travel)
- Harvey World Travel Office of the Year: HWT Kimzan. ■

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Thebe launches 'travel now, pay later' card

FLIGHTSITEAGENT is tapping into a new market – South Africa's rising black middle class – through a new television reality show.

'Holiday Swap KZN', takes two teams of three friends on a different adventure every week where they compete for the ultimate dream holiday in KwaZulu Natal. Sponsors KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Thebe Tourism Group have created holiday packages featuring places visited and activities undertaken during the TV show.

After the show, audiences can contact FlightSiteAgent and plan their dream holiday using a pre-paid or travel now, pay later credit plan using the

Thebe Travel card. Travellers can pay for their holiday packages via monthly cash instalments before departure or opt to repay the card after their trip. The card is available through FlightSiteAgent or online via the Thebe Tourism Group directly.

FlightSiteAgent national networking consultant, **Chris Arnott**, said the TV show would serve as a case study for the travel card, after which it would be explored whether the payment facility would be expanded to include other destinations and activities.

Thebe Tourism Group ceo, **Jerry Mabena**, says: "It is important to us as a company that we make travel affordable

and accessible for everyone. The Thebe Travel Card makes travel accessible in an instant. We are committed to supporting small businesses through the involvement of FlightSiteAgent as our booking agent in the Holiday Swap KZN travel packages on offer."

Ndabo Khoza, ceo of KZN Tourism, says: "The majority of South Africans have never experienced a holiday. Through Holiday Swap KZN, we believe that many people will see opportunities and activities that they never knew existed in KwaZulu Natal. This show will attract new travellers to our beautiful province and also highlight some of our hidden gems. The packages

will give viewers a one-stop shop option, where all their needs are taken care of – from transport, to accommodation and activities."

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, **Michael Mabuyakhulu**, says: "Our focus now is to increase the culture of travel amongst the majority of South Africans and to effectively compete for disposable income. Travel and tourism have increasingly faced stiff competition in the pecking order of how people spend their disposable income. Therefore, with this initiative we are encouraging people to choose travel over many

other competing demands. We are doing this by packaging and selling experiences that resonate with our customers in the manner in which the majority of South Africans buy and or make buying decisions. Transforming the tourism sector is not only about changing the profile of the owners of the tourism businesses; it is also about changing the profile of the travellers as well."

FlightSiteAgent, a subsidiary of Club Travel which is owned by the Thebe Tourism Group, gives independent agents access to competitive nett fares to sell on to others under their own brand via a web-based platform. ■

SAA, Proflight Zambia join forces

SAA and Proflight Zambia have signed an interline agreement that will enable passengers to make joint SAA-Proflight Zambia bookings and be issued a

single combined ticket.

This will enable seamless connections to and from Proflight's domestic destinations, Lusaka, Ndola, Livingstone, Mfuwe, Solwezi,

Kasama and Lower Zambezi, and its two international routes, Lilongwe in Malawi and Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It will also allow Proflight customers to book flights to 57 destinations within the SAA network, and for passengers to travel more easily to provincial

destinations throughout Zambia.

Special fares across the two airlines are also expected to be introduced. ■

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Cresta Hotels hits the road

BRUCE DENNILL

CRESTA Hotels hosted a roadshow this month to meet with travel trade partners and update them on developments at the group's hotels in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

A full refurbishment of Cresta Riley's in Maun, Botswana, was completed last year. The project, which cost BWP4m (R4,82m), included the addition of WiFi facilities at the hotel.

Regarding the introduction of 15% tourism VAT in Zimbabwe, Cresta Hotels CEO, **Glenn Stutchbury**, said the process had caused confusion but that Cresta Hotels had finalised its rate cards and business would continue as normal.

The travel trade also received an update on the Victoria Falls Airport expansion programme. Glenn said the facility, designed to handle 1,5m passengers a year, was already attracting attention from a number of



Pictured at the roadshow are (from left): **Francois Joubert** (corporate & MICE sales manager, Cresta Hotels); **Glenn Stutchbury** (Cresta Hotels CEO) and **Mireille Mbuyi** (Akilanga DMC & Events). Photo: Yolanda Katsi

big airlines and that a direct Cape Town-Victoria Falls route was becoming a likely reality. He also noted that increased airline competition should help bring down the price of flights to the new airport.

Three airlines have engaged in preliminary discussions to introduce direct flights to Victoria Falls following the

large scale expansion of the airport. **Priscilla Mawire**, acting director of the airport, told *TNW* that Etihad Airways, Kenya Airways and Emirates Airline had shown interest in launching direct flights but that the Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe still needed to engage in a more serious approach with the airlines. ■

A snapshot of the week's airline news

SA Airlink drops fuel surcharge

SA AIRLINK has reduced fuel surcharges as of February 9. The carrier has reduced the fuel levy 'YQ' on the GDS following the recent fall in oil prices. **Karin Murray**, marketing and sales manager, said while the reduction in the price of jet fuel did not correlate directly with the fall in oil price, airlines had enjoyed some reprieve. The reduced fuel levy will amount to a saving in the overall airfare. FlySafair and Mango have also dropped their fares in accordance with lower fuel charges.

Emirates adds new A380 destinations

EMIRATES is to operate daily A380 services to Düsseldorf and Madrid, the first scheduled superjumbo services to the two cities. From July 1, EK055 will leave Dubai at 08h30 and land in Düsseldorf at 13h25. Return flight EK056 will depart Düsseldorf at 15h25 and arrive in Dubai at 23h55. From August 1, EK141 departs Dubai at 07h40 and arrives in Madrid at 13h40. EK142 will leave Madrid at 15h30 and land in Dubai at 00h45 next day.

Kenya Airways launches Vietnam route

KENYA Airways will launch direct flights to Hanoi from March 3. Flight KQ763 will depart Johannesburg daily at 13h20, arriving in Nairobi at 18h25. KQ870 departs Nairobi at 22h20 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, arriving in Hanoi at 11h55 next day. Return flight KQ871 will depart Hanoi at 01h05 on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, arriving in Nairobi at 06h25. KQ762 leaves Nairobi at 08h45, arriving in Johannesburg at 12h00. KQ will also work with SkyTeam partner, Vietnam Airlines to provide travel options into Japan, Malaysia, Korea and China. KQ will resume NBO-Freetown and NBO-Monrovia flights on March 29. The routes were suspended in mid-2014 during the worst of the Ebola epidemic.



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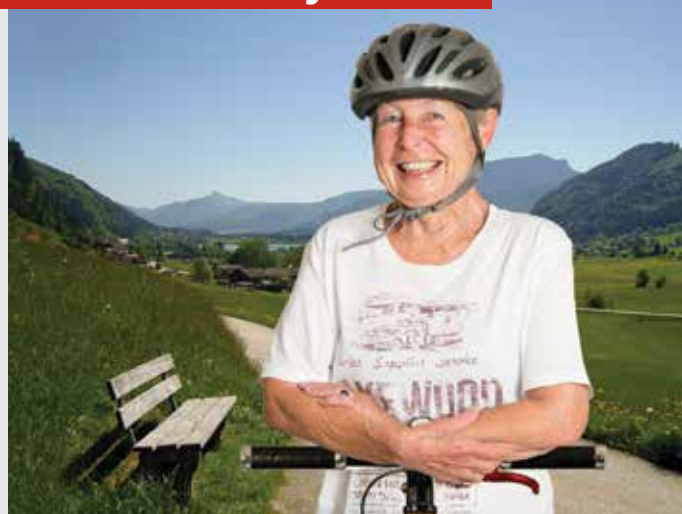
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Make an early start!



Austria Connection is offering early-booking discounts on many of its tours. One special includes 5% off all cycling tours, for bookings and full payment received 60 days before tour departure. For more deals, see Travelinfo. Pictured here, taking the scenic route, is Austria Connection md, Inge Dobihaal.

Photo: Shannon Van Zyl



From Louis the Lawyer – POPI

Advocate Louis Nel discusses SPAM in his series on the Protection of Personal Information Act

PROCESSING of personal information (PI) of Data Subject (DS) for the purposes of direct marketing (definition corresponds with that in CPA) i.e. ‘approaching a data subject via electronic communication or mail for the purposes of promoting or offering to sell goods or services or to request a donation of any nature’ (DM) – section 69.

It includes by means of automated calling machines (i.e. no human intervention), fax machines, SMS or e-mail and it is prohibited unless the DS has consented or is a customer of the responsible person (RP).

If it is a customer, the following requirements must be met:

- The contact details (not defined) of the customer must have been

obtained in the process of a sale of products or services;

- The purpose of the DM must be must be the RP’s own similar products or services;
- DS must be given a reasonable opportunity to object, ‘free of charge and in a manner free of unnecessary formality’ to use of his/her electronic details (Compare ‘contact details’ above):
 - at the time the information was collected, and
 - each DM communication, if such use was not initially refused [opt out]
- Each DM communication must contain the following:
 - Details of sender/party on whose behalf it is sent;
 - Address for DS send a ‘stop’ request. ■

New Midrand hotel for City Lodge

THE City Lodge Hotel Group has opened the 149-room City Lodge Hotel Waterfall City in Midrand, between Johannesburg and Pretoria.

The R130m property is the 16th City Lodge-branded hotel

in the 55-hotel City Lodge Hotel Group, comprising 52 hotels in South Africa and three in Kenya and Botswana. City Lodge Hotel Waterfall City is also the first new hotel the group has opened in South Africa since 2010.

Waterfall City is one of Africa’s multi-use property developments and is being developed around the R3,5bn regional Mall of Africa shopping centre within the 311ha Waterfall Business Estate. ■



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EUROPE



An increase in LCCs and low fares have not tempted South Africans to fly in Europe, reports Dorine Reinstein.

SA travellers prefer rail to LCCs

THE LCC market in Europe has grown considerably over the past few years, creating affordable and broad airline access throughout the continent. This comes after big full-service airlines such as Air France KLM and Lufthansa, started to extend their networks by introducing hybrid, or low-cost carriers for their short-haul flights. However, the emergence of more LCCs and lower fares has not encouraged South Africans to explore the continent by air. Tour operators say SA travellers largely prefer high-speed trains in Europe.

Ian McPartlan, managing consultant at Advito, an

international travel industry consultancy and part of the BCD travel group, says Lufthansa has gradually transferred all its domestic and regional European services that do not operate from Frankfurt or Munich to its LCC, Germanwings. Meanwhile Air France has combined three of its regional subsidiary airlines to form Hop!, which will operate 30% of AF's domestic and regional services. And at International Airlines Group, British Airways and Iberia have completed the full acquisition of Vueling, their LCC based in Barcelona.

Megan D'Arcy, product manager at Holiday Tours, says



Megan D'Arcy

Europe has always been very accessible through the various modes of public transport, with South African travellers usually able to combine countries

within the EU with ease. "The addition of various LCCs has definitely upped capacity, however it has had no direct major impact on our figures."

Megan says rail travel, whether the high-speed trains or regular services, remains a firm favourite with SA travellers. "Rail travel is a fantastic way to travel as it allows passengers to enjoy views of the countryside between cities. There is also a shorter check-in period compared with flying and passengers can generally walk or take a short cab ride to their hotel in the city centre, making rail travel an easy, no-fuss way of travelling.

Provided that a rail journey makes sense logistically and fits within the time and budget framework as advised by clients, our consultants try to offer rail tickets where possible to enhance our Europe packages."

John Ridler, spokesperson for Cullinan Outbound Tourism, says: "Not only are rail passes affordable but it is a great way to see Europe. City-to-city travel by rail is hugely time saving and takes away the aggravation of crowded airports. Rail passes also offer flexibility, which is seldom available on LCCs, which penalise any changes to your route or dates flown."

KLM revamps long-haul fleet

AFTER updating its Boeing 747-400 World Business Class cabin, KLM is now also upgrading its B777-200 fleet, with a team of Dutch designers and specialists creating a more personal, comfortable travel experience. The B777-200 fleet of 15 aircraft will be

updated before the end of the year.

The new economy-class cabin will feature new seats that offer more 'living space'. The seats are the lightest in their class and will save fuel, according to the airline.

A new inflight entertainment system will also be installed

for both travel classes, with rich content, a 'seat chat' option, 3D interactive moving map and intuitive HD touch screens with navigation available in 12 languages.

World Business Class will feature fully flat seats that offer maximum comfort and privacy.

Book it!

Delicious Rome

Holiday Tours is offering a four-day Delicious Rome tour with a travel period from June 1-21, from R6 999 per person. It includes four nights at a three-star hotel in Rome, return airport transfers, an espresso and ice-cream tour as well as a cooking lesson in the Italian countryside.

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Trends to look out for in 2015

DESPITE the recent terrorist attacks that gripped Europe, the continent remains a firm favourite with South Africans.

France and Belgium have recently been put on high terror alert but this has not been a deterrent for travellers from South Africa.

John Ridler says most travellers tend to take isolated incidents in their stride and will only avoid places with sustained conflict, such as Iraq and Syria. He says the action by French police and army in the recent terrorist attack in Paris was swift and this tends to reassure travellers

that Europe is a relatively safe destination.

Megan D'Arcy says Holiday Tours has slowly started growing its Europe-based product again. "The newest additions are Budapest, Vienna and Prague. Lisbon has also been brought back as an add-on to

Spain itineraries," she says, pointing out that these destinations have been added following demand from Holiday Tours' client base.

With Europe continuing to be a popular destination, TNW looks at the top four trends to expect this year.



Hot-air ballooning over Cappadocia, Turkey. Photo: Pixabay

1 Hot destinations

Turkey

Megan says Turkey has been identified by SA travellers as both a standalone destination and a great add-on option to Greece packages.

Theresa Szejwallo, md of Trafalgar, agrees and says Turkey is "definitely right up there for South Africans". She says a Turkish visa is easily obtainable online at no charge, which is a big advantage. "Turkey is a hot destination right now as it offers a taste of east meets west. For culture, history and religious iconography, Turkey is hard to beat."

Greece and Italy

Megan says Greece has always been a staple for Holiday Tours, as is Italy.

"We have seen a fair amount of enquiries for these destinations already this year, even though we are not yet in the traditional Europe booking season."

Theresa agrees: "We believe Greece is in the ascendant and we've also introduced a new Greece guided holiday that encompasses Corfu."



Mykonos, Greece. Photo: Pixabay

2 In-depth, personalised experiences

Inge Dobihal

, owner of Austria Connection, says travellers are looking for a more in-depth experience, allowing them to really get to know a country. She says travellers no longer feel that once they have seen Prague they have seen the Czech Republic, or once they have seen Vienna they have seen Austria.

Theresa says more travellers are looking for a smaller, more intimate setting, which is why Trafalgar has introduced Hidden Journeys. "Hidden Journeys takes smaller groups deeper into the destinations the company already serves. The 11 Hidden

Journeys trips will each have no more than 26 travellers. Destinations include Italy, France, Ireland, Switzerland, Greece, Turkey, Newfoundland, Panama, Japan and China." She says the new product is all about access. "We have introduced selected trips that take our guests into the hardest-to-reach destinations. Hidden Journeys is an extension of Trafalgar's Insider Experiences, which launched in 2011 and offers dining in the homes of locals, introducing travellers to native industries, talks with local experts and inside-access activities."

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TNW6876SD

EUROPE

3 Culinary tours

Inspired by Masterchef and Gordon Ramsay, travellers are increasingly enquiring about culinary tours.

Megan says she has definitely seen an upward trend in gastronomy-related tour requests, one of the reasons Holiday Tours decided to introduce 'delicious' city stays throughout Europe.

According to Theresa, Trafalgar is also continuously expanding on its culinary offering. "On our Flavours of Italy trip we ramp up the whole culinary experience. In Florence our guests visit a food market with Libero, a local chef who gives guests



Travellers enjoy local delicacies. Photo: Austria Connection

an insight into Italian cuisine. Purchasing the produce from the food market is followed by a cooking lesson where everyone spends time together preparing a delicious lunch, which is then shared over a glass or two of wine!"

Inge has also seen increased demand for culinary tours, leading her to design a few self-drive programmes. These include the 'Wine, Beer and Culinary Delights' tour,

which takes travellers to cities such as Prague, Salzburg, Budapest and Vienna to sample the local delicacies.

"We have been asked, how we can offer a wine, beer and culinary self-drive tour.

"Well, the answer is quite simple. During the day sample the culinary highlights and in the afternoon/evening enjoy the wine and beer specialities."

4 Family travel

Family travel continues to be a popular trend for travel to Europe, according to Theresa. She says Trafalgar has released an entire brochure dedicated to the perfect family holiday where mom, dad, gran, grandpa,

uncles, aunts and all the kids can travel and learn together.

John agrees that family holidays are on the increase and says demand from families includes self-drive and rail

packages as well as the ever-popular Paris Disney combinations. "Cruises in the Mediterranean are also popular as well as Croatian cruises that have access to small ports and coves – away from the crowds."

Book single trips with Trafalgar

THIS year Trafalgar will cater for single travellers by waiving or significantly reducing single room supplements on many of its packages. The discount is usually about 50%, but can

be as much as 100%. These single-friendly deals will be valid on selected departures for 17 of the popular itineraries.

"Single guests often feel

penalised because they have to pay more, so we've addressed this by creating portfolios that have been branded for the single traveller," says Theresa.

Book it!

Wine, Beer and Culinary Delights

Austria Connection has introduced the 'Wine, Beer and Culinary Delights' tour from €1 038pps (R13 569). It includes nine nights with breakfast in three-star hotels, eight days' car hire group A with unlimited mileage, CDW, theft insurance and VAT. This special also includes the Vienna Card (includes Hop on, Hop off bus), a sightseeing tour in Budapest, Salzburg and Prague, a boat trip in Budapest and Prague, coffee and cake in Vienna, Budapest and Prague, the 'Original Mozart Kugel', and a three-course traditional meal in Vienna, Budapest, Salzburg and Prague. ■

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

Obituary

■ South African travel industry stalwart, **Loekie Lavery**, died on February 4 at the age of 68. Loekie began working in the industry at the age of 18, when she joined Lufthansa in the reservations department in 1962. She stayed with the company for 30 years, also working as part of the sales team. She moved, briefly, to

Austrian Airlines before joining Kenya Airways, where she worked in the sales department for 10 years. Loekie then launched her own business, Loekie Travel Promotions, which she ran for two years before being approached to join the Planhotel



Johannesburg-based South African women's travel club.

Hospitality Group, where she was working in the marketing department at the time of her death. Loekie was a past president of Travelbags, the

A swell of support

MSC Cruises' latest charity event in support of the Ukuthemba Foundation raised R600 000. The event, held on board the *MSC Opera*, featured a performance by The Voice UK finalist, **Nomakhosi**. The Ukuthemba Foundation works to give disadvantaged South African children and babies a safe place to call home. The Cape Town-based organisation now runs five homes. **Kim Killeen** from Ukuthemba says: "We endeavour to help children



Here, **Kim Killeen** (left) and **Nomakhosi** pose next to an artwork auctioned to raise funds.

and ensure that during their passage into adulthood they get the relevant protection and care. We work tirelessly to

instil our children with a strong moral framework to allow them become active members of South African society."

Getting into the swing!



Emirates hosted some key travel industry players at the South African Open Pro-Am Championship, on January 6 at Glendower Golf Club. Seen here clubbing together are (from left): **Cathy Wesley** (Emirates); **Matthew Fubbs** (The Holiday Factory); PGA professional, **Richard Sterne**; **Andrew McDonic** (Tourvest Travel Services); **Ronel Marais** (Emirates); restaurateur, **Jonny Meyers**, and **Fouad Caunhye** (Emirates).

Appointments

■ **Bronwyn Strydom** has been appointed marketing manager for Trafalgar.



"Bronwyn comes to Trafalgar from the IT industry and brings with her a wealth of marketing knowledge and experience gained at industry-leading companies such as Pink Elephant and contractors for EOH," says **Theresa Szejwallo**, Trafalgar md.

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Is it time to review overrides?

DORINE REINSTEIN

TOUGH economic times have many South African retail travel agencies discounting their service fees on the 'front end', while relying on override commissions at the 'back end' to keep them afloat – a risky business model, some say, as there is growing pressure on preferred suppliers' agreements.

Geraldine Boshoff, marketing manager of Sure Travel, says the travel business is changing and the current business model will undoubtedly change as well. "Suppliers are looking to decrease their distribution cost and at the same time they want to encourage the retail travel industry to sell their product."

Geraldine adds that the override model has proved to be the most effective for both the supplier and the travel agent so far as it combines the need for an incentive with the need of the supplier to keep the distribution costs down or at least in line with the required volumes of sales. She explains that if volume targets are not met, the agency that relies too heavily on overrides will find itself out of pocket. "In the event that the model changes or targets are not met, this can be disastrous to the cash flow of any agency. Consortiums in general are heavily reliant on it as it forms a large percentage of their income."

Jonathan Gerber, director of TAG, says overrides are still prevalent globally and are here to stay. He says service fees are just part

of the answer in what is a complex business model in which overrides also have their place. "I wish the industry would stop treating overrides like a secret or a dirty word. Overrides are here to stay and while they may well vary over time, it is a trusted and proven business model."

Rod Rutter, ceo XL Travel, agrees, saying travel agents create much-needed volume and market share for suppliers. "Suppliers won't risk cutting their income stream from travel agencies," he says, adding that he is not against service fees as an additional income for travel agencies.

"Suppliers are looking to decrease their distribution cost and at the same time they want to encourage the retail travel industry to sell their product."

"Agencies must take charge of their own financial future and not place it in the hands of a disinterested group of shareholders," says **Nolan Burris**, president of Future Proof Travel Solutions, based in Canada. Nolan has done consulting work with South African companies such as Uniglobe, Sure Travel and Harvey World Travel.

"As long as commission is your primary source of revenue, you are placing your entire wellbeing in the hands of a third party that may or may not have your best interests at heart. We know from experience that these purse strings

can tighten with little or no notice. It's happened before, and will again. Fees allow you to gain some degree of control over your own destiny," he says.

Nolan says, to succeed, fees cannot be merely for bookings. Agents have to give their customers something worth paying for and this takes planning, preparation, and marketing. In some cases, it might require entirely reinventing the business, he says. "Consumers see bookings as the least valuable part of the travel equation. Professional fees are for advice, guidance, support before/during/after the trip, connections with suppliers, ongoing training, advocacy if something should go wrong, and more."

Nolan says US agencies have taken professional fees to the next level by creating a new category of agency. "Many call them boutique or concierge agencies. Their numbers are growing fast. They are all about extreme service and advice. Their fees generally start at US\$250 (R2 918) and go as high as US\$3 000 (R35 025)."

Marta Gaughen, vp of Bronwell Travel in the US, says the agency expects consultants to have their service fees as one of the top three revenue sources. "We began charging fees for our services back when the airlines stopped commissions. At that time the airlines were providing us with almost 75% of our income. We have turned that around and now we no longer rely on any outside source of revenue, although we happily accept it." ■

Changes to Dubai visas

DORINE REINSTEIN

TOURIST visas for Dubai are now non-extendable.

The General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA) in Dubai announced earlier this year that a 30-day tourist visa would 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 Combrink**,

spokesperson for the Dubai Visa Processing Centres (DVPC) in South Africa.

She adds that a tourist visa for Dubai now costs R1 095 instead of R900. 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 says

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 VFS Global/DVPC to process its visas, as the airline 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," she says. ■

Marketing Method	Percentage
Word of mouth	56%
Social media	21%
Print advertising in newspapers/magazines	9%
Google ads	7%
I rely on head office/associations such as Asata	7%