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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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Immigration regulations

Dare we hope?

DORINE REINSTEIN AND TESSA REED

PRESIDENT **Jacob Zuma's** statement at the State of the Nation Address that government would review the controversial new Immigration Act has brought hope to the travel industry, only three months before the unabridged birth certificate requirement for families travelling with children will be implemented, on June 1.

Speaking in a question and answer session at a dialogue hosted by the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA), Tourism Minister, **Derek Hanekom**, said the department would be engaged in a discussion, facilitated by the deputy president and the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, with the Department of Home Affairs on the regulations. He said this would include the requirement that children travel with unabridged birth certificates.

"This is a big step in the right direction," says **Otto de Vries**, ceo of Asata. "We are grateful that President Zuma acknowledged and confirmed that there would be a full review of the Immigration act during his SONA."

Otto adds that, to date, Asata has been assisting government with the implementation of the policy changes. "However, things might change now that government has acknowledged that the unintended consequences of the amendments are having a profound impact on travel and tourism to and from South Africa," says Otto.

"I have no doubt that the concerted efforts of industry stakeholders have played a significant role in us getting to this point.

"Asata and its association colleagues will continue to work closely with the Department of Home Affairs to assist in delivering a win-win outcome for all the stakeholders."

The airline industry is also hopeful a constructive solution will be found. **June Crawford**, ceo of Barsa, adds that the association is eagerly awaiting these government discussions. "Barsa is encouraged that President Jacob Zuma confirmed that there would be dialogue with various stakeholders and that the regulations would be reviewed to strike a balance between national security and

growth in tourism."

But should the industry be hopeful? In a *Business Day* report (February 18), Home Affairs Minister, **Malusi Gigaba**, said the immigration regulations gazetted last May were "not cast in stone" but would still be implemented in full.

Home Affairs spokesperson, **Mayihlome Tshwete**, told *TNW* when asked specifically if the unabridged birth certificate would be reviewed: "That [regulation] kicks in in June and I don't think a review of that is on the table."

Be prepared
Meanwhile, airline representatives in South Africa have adopted a 'wait-and-see' approach. A spokesperson for Lufthansa told *TNW*: "Lufthansa is expecting an update from the Department of Home Affairs in the next month so that the airline can inform its relevant departments of the actual processes that immigration will follow at the airports."

Travel agencies are continuing to advise their clients about the new requirements. **Sean Hough**, ceo of Pentravel, says travellers seem to

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Development Promotions has been awarded the account to represent Abu Dhabi Tourism in the South African market, helping raise the destination's profile in SA. Celebrating the news are (from left): Jane Davidson (DP director) and Jackie Adami (md). Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Abu Dhabi comes to SA

ABU Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) has appointed Development Promotions to represent the destination in South Africa, positioning it as a preferred leisure, business and MICE destination.

Development Promotions will launch a dedicated Johannesburg office headed by former Cruises International commercial manager, **Tracey Krog**. A sales executive will be appointed to liaise closely with the travel industry.

The addition of the South African office comes as

SAA announces daily flights between Johannesburg and Abu Dhabi from March 29, adding additional air capacity to the daily frequency already operated by Etihad Airways.

"It is in direct response to this opportunity presented by an increase in airlift from the region and increased demand that TCA Abu Dhabi has launched this outbound tourism promotional drive from Africa," says **Sultan Al Dhaheeri**, TCA Abu Dhabi's acting executive director of Tourism.

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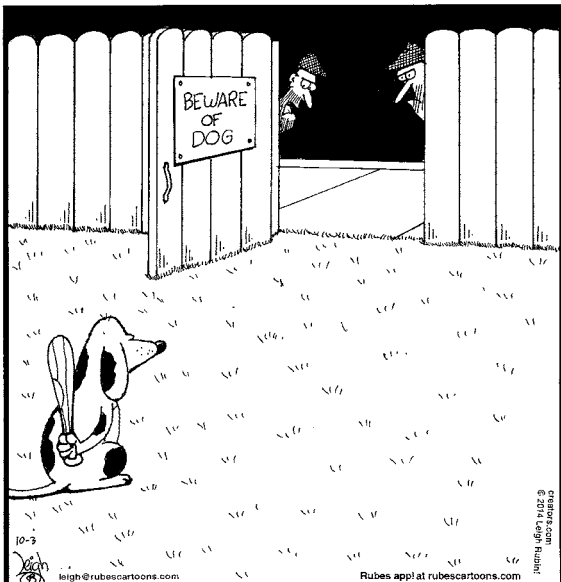
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Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



"That little mutt?!... What a joke. Talk about a bark being worse than its bite."

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Bidvest rolls out new brand

NATASHA SCHMIDT

BIDVEST Car Rental has officially launched its new branding, rolling out the new signage at its various car-rental locations across Southern Africa. Avis Southern Africa will take up the Budget brand, effective March 1.

Bidvest decided not to renew the licence to operate the Budget brand at the end of last year, when its agreement with the Avis Budget Group (ABG) came to an end after 10 years. Since then, Barloworld, which operates the Avis brand in southern Africa, has been granted the Budget Car Rental licence for Southern Africa, effective March 1. This is in line with ABG's dual-brand global strategy.

Besides the rebranding, the existing infrastructure, management and team remain unaffected. "It's been a smooth transition," says Bidvest Car Rental ceo, **Paulette McGhee**. "Our staff – including the senior management team, which have been with the Budget brand for, on average, 17 years – have fully supported the move, and the feedback from customers has been positive."

"At the moment, it's about getting the basics right: understanding our customers' needs, their journey and



Paulette McGhee shows off the new brand.

experience. Our new brand position is 'Because every minute counts', which tells the customer our service is about being prompt and saving them time. People don't buy from brands, they buy from people, so it all boils down to service," she says.

Bidvest plans to roll out the launch of its brand across various media, educating customers about the brand's position. "Our company, our people, our company culture will not change – we will continue to position our brand as different to the traditional

car-rental company," says Paulette.

Bidvest is not only a well-known, strong brand in the South African market but also globally, which puts the car-rental company in good stead. "There has been massive consolidation in the car-rental industry globally and we're likely to see the same in the southern African market. We operate in a high-risk, low-margin environment. Small players who don't have the support of a big shareholder will find this environment particularly difficult."

The history of Budget

The Budget brand was first launched in South Africa 46 years ago.

In 2004, Bidvest acquired McCarthy Ltd, which held the standalone Budget licence for Southern Africa with Zodiac Ltd, and the franchise agreement was renegotiated for a 10-year term to December 31, 2014.

During that period there was global consolidation of various car-rental brands, with the Budget brand being acquired

by the Avis Budget Group Inc based in the US, and which owns the rights to both the Budget and Avis brands to operate the brand in southern Africa.

Until now, the South African market has been somewhat unique in that the Avis and Budget brands operated separately under two big shareholder companies: that is, Barloworld had the licence to operate the Avis brand and Bidvest had the licence to

operate the Budget brand.

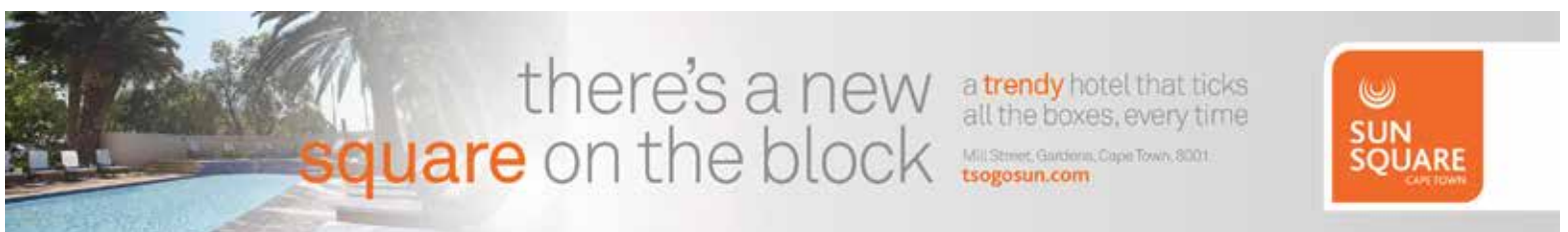
Under the new licence agreement, Barloworld will operate the Budget brand in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as South Africa. Barloworld already operates the Avis brand in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. ■

Abu Dhabi comes to SA

From page 1
TCA Abu Dhabi SA will promote Abu Dhabi through

training sessions and joint marketing partnerships with key travel agents,

tour operators, PCOs and incentive houses, and host a range of fam tours. ■



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AHA expands portfolio

TOURVEST'S Accommodation and Activities division (TAA) has acquired the full management contracts for Shepherd's Tree Lodge and Ivory Tree Game Lodge in the Pilanesberg Nature Reserve through its tourism property management business, African Hotels & Adventures and Three Cities.

Shepherd's Tree Lodge offers 26 standard rooms that can be converted to 13 family suites and four luxury suites. Other facilities at the lodge include an entertainment

deck and outdoor cocktail bar, a rim-flow swimming pool and a health and beauty spa. It also has a conference and event centre that can host a maximum of 70 guests.

Ivory Tree Game Lodge has 60 standard rooms, four luxury suites and a presidential suite. The lodge also has a private villa with its own fire pit, swimming pool and safari vehicle and chef. Additionally, the lodge has two lounges, a gift shop, several dining rooms, a swimming pool a conference centre that can

seat 80 delegates, and an Amani spa.

Tourvest divisional chief executive, **Gary Elmes**, said the contracts would strengthen Tourvest's presence in the North West province, particularly near Sun City, where it offers a range of adrenaline and adventure activities through its Mankwe-Gametrackers operation. "These properties are highly strategic to us in that we can now offer the full spectrum of travel and tourism services in the area." ■



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Helen Johnston selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Qantas Airways.** Economy fares ex-JNB are from R4 110 to PER, R5 870 to SYD, ADL, BNE, MEL and R6 920 to AKL, CHC, WLG, ZQN. Refer to Travelinfo for premium economy specials and fares ex-Namibia. Fares from other SA points are also available. Offer is available for sales until February 28. Travel permitted until December 6 - blackout dates apply. Fares exclude taxes.
- **Singapore Airlines.** 'Summer Sizzler Fare - 2 to Go'. All-inclusive fares to Bangkok are from R7 960 ex-JNB and R8 660 ex-CPT. Ticketing period is until March 14. Travel is valid until March 20, April 15 to June 24 and July 20 to November 30. Two passengers must travel together on entire itinerary. Refer to Travelinfo for special fares to other destinations.
- **Car Hire Brokers.** Valentine's special - rates are from R295 per day. Offer includes unlimited mileage, minimum seven days' rental. Special is valid for pick-ups until February 28. Convertible specials also available in Cape Town - minimum three days' rental required.
- **World Leisure Holidays.** Mauritius Easter rates - pay six nights, stay seven. Rates are from R15 020 ex-JNB and R16 180 ex-CPT. Package includes return flights ex-JNB, airport taxes, return airport-hotel transfers, daily breakfast and dinner, all land and non-motorised water sports plus daily entertainment. Offer is valid for set departures from March 27 to April 11. Book and pay 30 days prior to travel.
- **Mozambique Tours.** Last-minute Inhambane specials - four-night fly-in packages are from R5 295pp sharing, excluding airport taxes. Offer includes return flights ex-JNB, return airport/resort transfers by road, accommodation with daily breakfast and dinner, plus government taxes. Offer expires February 28.
- **Checkout Tours.** Zanzibar holiday specials: four-star packages are from R14 210pp sharing. Package includes return flights ex-JNB, airport taxes, return airport-hotel transfers plus seven nights' accommodation on an all-inclusive basis. Offer expires February 28.



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Voyager of the Seas completes refurb

RCI's *Voyager of the Seas* has just completed a R924 million refurbishment. New features include a FlowRider surf simulator, Virtual Balcony staterooms, a 3D cinema, a new Diamond Club for Crown and Anchor Society members and new dining options. The ship will be based in Sydney for its 2015 winter-spring season. In April, it will return to Singapore for a 10-night cruise to Tokyo, calling at Nha Trang, Hong Kong, Taipei (Keelung) and Nagasaki. The ship will homeport in Hong Kong from June to October, offering 22 round-trip sailings ranging from three to 10 nights and visiting destinations in Japan; South Korea; China; and Vietnam.

Celebrity Cruises unveils new dining option

CELEBRITY Cruises has revealed its Suite Class restaurant, 'Luminae', to be introduced in April. New menus have been created for the venue's complimentary breakfast, lunch and dinner and the wine list will feature more than 400 selections from top wine-producing countries. Celebrity has signed a letter of intent for two 2 900-guest ships, which, at 300 metres long will offer small-ship itineraries with large ship amenities. It expects to take delivery of the first ship in late 2018, and the second in early 2020.

New features for MSC itineraries

THE 2015 MSC Cruises season has seen additions to facilities at Portuguese Island, where the cruise line has invested in infrastructure worth just over R20m. New features include bigger markets, a better beach bar, an additional 650m of decking under shade, a new kitchen, women's ablutions and fresh-water showers. New landing craft that ensure greater comfort for passengers transferring from the ship to the island have a faster transfer time and accommodate up to 85 passengers in individual seats.

SQ opens premium economy bookings

SINGAPORE Airlines' new premium economy class launches on August 9, with bookings for the first route – Singapore to Sydney – now open.

The class will be introduced on routes to other destinations served by SQ's current fleet of A380s and B777-300ERs and future fleet of A350s, including Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo.

The width of the seats ranges between 47cm and 50cm, with a 20cm recline for more comfort. Entertainment options will be screened on a 34cm full-HD monitor, the largest in its class. Seats also feature individual in-seat power supply, two USB ports and additional stowage space for items such as a water bottle, mobile phone and laptop.

Premium economy customers

will have an extended range of food and beverage offerings, including, from April, the premium economy 'Book the Cook service' featuring popular dishes. Champagne will be offered in addition to a selection of curated wines throughout the flight.

Customers will enjoy priority check-in and baggage handling and will have a baggage allowance of 35kg. ■

'Open access' lounge to open at OR Tambo

A NEW arrivals lounge will open at OR Tambo International Airport, allowing travellers from all airlines or travel class to freshen up before the next leg of their journey.

Menzies Aviation, which manages the Shongololo

departure lounge at OR Tambo, will open the Sesfikile Premium Arrivals Lounge in April.

The lounge will be adjacent to the SAA Arrivals Lounge and, as well as being open to passengers who will be able to access it as part

of their airline partners' services, it will also be open to walk-in travellers.

Guests can enjoy drinks and eats as well as complimentary high-speed WiFi. Shower and bathroom facilities will also be available. ■



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SAA and Etihad celebrate collaboration

NATASHA SCHMIDT

"I CAN assure you, there will be more to our partnership than just sharing our codes."

This was the word from SAA chief commercial officer, **Sylvain Bosc**, at a special event to celebrate the launch of SAA and Etihad Airways' new codeshare service linking Johannesburg and Abu Dhabi, which will come into effect on March 29 when SAA launches daily flights to the UAE capital.

Through the partnership, SAA passengers will have access to more destinations in India and China via Abu Dhabi. The airline announced in February it would cut its direct flights to Beijing and Mumbai.

"You can expect more positive realignments and new destinations and direct flights from SAA in the coming months. We want to grow our hub and make sure OR Tambo remains the most prominent hub on the continent," Sylvain said.

This latest milestone marks the commencement of SAA's and Etihad's second phase of the "landmark strategic operation", said **Maurice Phohleli**, Etihad's vp for Africa Sub-Sahara and Indian Ocean. "This partnership allows us to punch above our weight and compete with airlines that are larger and stronger

than we are." From March 29, SA travellers will have access to 49 new codeshare destinations, connecting through Abu Dhabi to Europe, SE Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and Australia. There will also be synergies in terms of the airlines' loyalty programmes – Voyager and Etihad Guest. ■



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1. A strong partnership – SAA's Sylvain Bosc (right) and Etihad Airways' Maurice Phohleli addressed the trade at a special event to celebrate the launch of the airlines' closer collaboration.

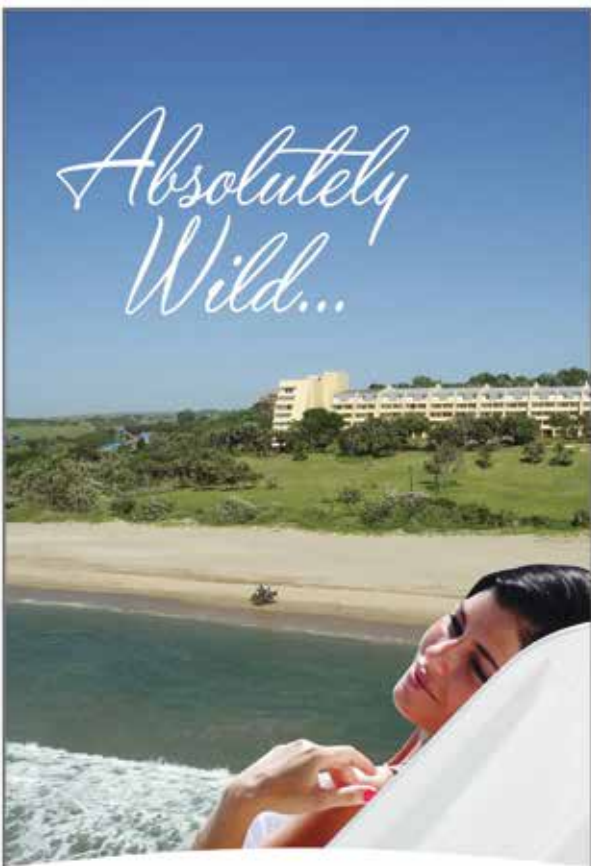
2. Pictured here at the Four Seasons Hotel, The Westcliff, are (from left): Ben Langner (CWT), Kim Thipe (SAA) and John Friel (Etihad).

3. SAA regional gm for South Africa, Ray Nkwe, and new client Stephen Seaka, Absa's head of Public Sector, shake on it.

Photos: Natasha Schmidt



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Family Travel

There's money to be made in selling family travel but agents need to know their stuff, reports Max Marx.

Multigenerational holidays are here to stay

MULTIGENERATIONAL travel is poised for rapid and sustained growth, according to the findings of a study released in December by US-based Preferred Hotel Group, whose 650 hotels and resorts worldwide are tailored to multigenerational travellers.

According to the study, children are calling the shots when it comes to influencing holiday plans, grandparents are increasingly funding the cost of the trip and a significant percentage of Millennials – 91% of those surveyed – say a multigenerational trip is something they try to take every year.

The study confirmed the

desire of families to spend more holiday time together. It also highlighted that multigenerational travellers use the services of traditional travel agents more often than other leisure travellers.

Stacey Barnett, Dreams sales and marketing manager, says shared costs and help with children while travelling is driving the growth of multi-generational travel, although it is still a relatively small sector in South Africa for packaged deals.

"Many destinations now offer a wider variety of entertainment options to encourage multi-generational travel. But agents and operators need to be clear on supplier policies. They

must research destinations as there could be challenges with facilities and service providers. For example, there may be restrictions on the number of people sharing a hotel room, or on a family member participating in an activity due to age or fitness level. Some destinations, for example, don't allow children under 12 on game drives."

Children are increasingly key decision-makers when it comes to the hotels the family stays at, and must be considered when buying hotel services, says **Sibo Gumpo**, Cresta Hotels' group commercial manager.

Alet Steyn, Wendy Wu Tours' business development manager, says today's

multigenerational travellers seek adventure, fun and meaningful cultural and educational experiences that they can share together.

"The biggest challenge, says Alet, is finding the perfect holiday fit, getting the family to agree on a destination and set a date around everyone's busy schedules. "Agents and operators should focus on the experience, educational value and opportunity to share lasting memories and highlight family-friendly activities in the destination."

Theresa Szejwallo, Trafalgar md, says families are focusing on the educational aspects of the holiday where everyone can learn a

new skill like making pizza in Rome or experiencing amazing historical events.

Multigenerational travel is not a new trend in Mauritius or at Beachcomber resorts, where the variety of activities and holiday experiences are designed to engage guests of all ages and interests, says **Joanne Visagie**, Beachcomber's sales and marketing manager.

"Our Beachcomber properties enjoy a high repeat rate of travel, which is an internationally identified trend amongst multigenerational travellers. Research shows they tend to be loyal to destinations and are particularly interested in beach holidays."

Anantara launches family special

ANANTARA Hotels Resorts & Spas in Mozambique has a family offer at its Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort & Spa. It goes for US\$488 (R5 682) per adult sharing per night, with two children under 18 staying free, and a free upgrade to a Deluxe Sea View Pool Villa. The special is valid for travel until March 31 and represents a 35% saving.

The minimum stay is four nights but guests who opt to stay between five

and nine nights receive a further 20% discount off the rate, while those staying 10 nights receive 30% discount.

The offer includes full-board accommodation, return boat transfers from Vilanculos, a 15-minute Mystery Spa treatment, a scheduled daily snorkelling trip to Neptune's nursery, local alcohol and beverages, minibar, non-motorised water sports and emergency medical evacuation.

Among the resort activities are horse riding, dune boarding, snorkelling, game fishing, diving – which includes a children's diving course for kids aged eight and upward – and a coral gardening project.

At Sailfish Bay there's a great picnic spot and families can go on excursions to nearby Pansy and Paradise islands.

There's also a kids' club with dedicated activities during the peak holiday season.

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Must-haves for your clients

TNW asked operators what agents should consider when planning a multi-generational holiday for their clients and the 'must-have' elements required.

Ensuring adequate space is available for everyone to be comfortable is key, says **Stacey Barnett**, whether it's booking two cars or booking an extra hotel room for kids.

"Some families prefer self-catering accommodation while others don't want to spend time cooking and tidying up. They want children entertained in a children's facility while they're enjoying activities such as golf, spa or dinners," says Stacey.

Alet Steyn says agents must keep the different needs

of family members in mind when making destination decisions, create itineraries where families have time to relax together but also time to do things apart. Activities included should suit all travellers concerned.

"I tend to recommend a tailored tour itinerary for a multi-generational family that caters for their diverse interests and is flexible. Some families, however, prefer fully inclusive group tours."

John Ridler, Thompsons Holidays' media and PR manager, says resort-style holidays and cruises are always the most successful for multi-generational travel as there are so many activities

for all age groups. "Mauritius still offers excellent value for families, with many resorts having special dining facilities for kids, and kids' clubs, which are a must to give adults a break for a few hours a day."

Austria Connection's **Inge Dobiha** says if clients want a beach holiday, then renting a house or staying in self-catering accommodation is a good option.

Joanne Visagie says experienced babysitters are a must and that vehicle size and car seat requirements should be discussed at the time of booking.

"Kids' clubs are imperative for a great family vacation, and family units and villas,



Cruises offer activities for all age groups. Photo: Cruises International

available at many of our resorts, allow families to be accommodated together and enjoy the communal areas within these units."

Close attention, says Joanne, should also be paid to room location, taking into account walking distances and stairs when it comes to elderly clients or those with infants and prams.

Zahedah Borat, Holiday Tours' product manager, says villa-type accommodation with multiple bedrooms works best for multigenerational holidays. "This allows families to have common areas for exclusive use (lounges, pool, kitchen) and the privacy of individual rooms. However, some families prefer the traditional fully serviced hotel room."

Save on Vienna family travel

FAMILIES travelling to Vienna can make the most of their stay with Austria Connection's Vienna Family Package.

Just €43 (R569) for children up to age 14 and €90

(R1 190) for adults, it includes:

- A 72-hour Vienna Card, which offers unlimited free travel by underground, bus and tram and reduced

entrance fees and prices at more than 210 museums and attractions, concerts, shops, restaurants, cafés and wine taverns. Travellers will also find a

free cuppa here and there.

- A Combi-Ticket for entrance into Schönbrunn Zoo at Schönbrunn Palace and a ride on the Giant Ferris Wheel.

- A ticket for the train on wheels in the zoo
- A three-course lunch in the restaurant in the zoo (there are two courses for children).

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Looking for good value?

- Thompsons Holidays is offering a seven-night Easter package at the three-star Villas Caroline Beach Hotel, located beside a beautiful sandy beach in Flic En Flac, Mauritius, in a superior sea-facing room. The package, from R20 039 (taxes included) ex-JNB, is valid from March 26-April 11. It includes seven nights' full board accommodation with one child under 12 sharing free with parents and a second child paying just 25% of the adult sharing rate (flights and transfers excluded). It includes selected drinks, airport transfers, water and land activities, kids' disco and entertainment nightly, and a hands-on Creole cooking demonstration. Package prices ex-CPT are R21 186 and Durban R20 311 (taxes are included).
- Thompsons is also offering a seven-night Costa Deliziosa Italy, Greece and Croatia cruise from R21 153 ex-JNB, R23 130 ex-DUR, and 23 930, ex-CPT (taxes included). It includes return flights to Venice from Johannesburg, seven nights aboard Costa Deliziosa in an inside cabin, port charges and taxes, and all meals and entertainment. Two children under 18 sharing with parents cruise free but pay for flights and port charges. The cruise visits Bari, Corfu, Mykonos, Santorini and Dubrovnik.

Family Travel

Top activities...

A FAMILY experience can be as flexible and diverse as you like, featuring the very best each country has to offer, says **Alet Steyn**.

"Normal sightseeing can be made more child-friendly. For example, in China, Wendy Wu can include activities such as flying a traditional Chinese kite in Beijing, sculpting Terracotta Warriors in Xian, learning Chinese calligraphy, cycling along the ancient city wall in Xian, seeing the famous giant pandas in Chengdu or meeting favourite Disney characters in Hong Kong Disneyland."

In Vietnam, says Alet, families can enjoy culinary or cooking tours that blend Vietnamese cuisine and culture, teaching travellers traditional Vietnamese cooking techniques. "They get to shop

for ingredients in local markets and are guided by experienced chefs."

In Mauritius, says **Joanne Visagie**, families can take a catamaran cruise or tackle a zipline or quadbike adventure together. They can visit the lions at Casela Nature Park or just enjoy the enormous array of resort facilities that include pedal boating, kayaking, sailing, tennis, stand-up paddle, wind surfing, aqua gym class and more. Young and old can also learn to waterski or wakeboard and in the evenings enjoy the bands and live shows together.

Theresa Szejwalo says Trafalgar's top three Family Experiences trips – European Wonderland; Wild West Cowboys & Buffaloes (a Wild West family adventure in



Disneyland. Photo: Disney

the US) and Magic & Make Believe (a tour of London and Paris) – offer fun activities for the whole family, such as a guided tour of Windsor Castle, discovering the wonders of the Yellowstone National Park, riding with real-life horse wranglers, and learning to make authentic Italian pizza.

Skiing and cycling, or bike and boat tours make for great family adventures, says **Inge Dobiha**.

Kids stay free with Cresta

"OUR child policy allows up to two children under 12 to stay free when sharing with their parents, and they receive discounted rates on meals and activities. We are continuously striving to improve the family experience at our hotels," says **Sibo Gumpo**.

Cresta Hotels has also created a children's loyalty programme, the Cresta Kids Club, at its city hotels, which

treats children as VIPs when celebrating events such as birthdays. Over holidays such as Easter and Christmas, supervised children's activities are arranged.

"These are designed to encourage kids to foster friendships with other kids and have fun outdoors, away from TVs and play stations," says Sibó.

Adult and child diners are also catered for, with healthy

menus that promote the use of local organic produce. At Cresta Mowana Safari Resort & Spa in Botswana alongside the Chobe River, an imaginative menu includes options for children such as 'Croc Tic Toks' (fish fingers and fries).

Almost 90% of Cresta's hotels have fully equipped outdoor play areas for children, while every hotel has a gym on site or nearby.

Book it!

Until March 28 and between April 13 and September 30, when adults upgrade to a Beachcomber all-inclusive package, children under 18 sharing with parents in standard, superior or deluxe rooms receive free all-inclusive, which covers most meals and drinks during their stay. Children under 18 who share their parents' accommodation until October 31 don't pay an accommodation charge, nor for breakfast and dinner. Beachcomber offers numerous facilities and educational activities for children in Mauritius. Each hotel has a Mini Club for kids aged three to 12, while teenage activities are included at several hotels during the school holidays. Several room categories at Beachcomber resorts allow one or two children to share with parents. Most hotels offer inter-leading rooms or two-bedroom family apartments. Beachcomber consultants also pay close attention to room locations.

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Keep it close to home

ONE of the best times to visit Plettenberg Bay is in February and March, when the weather is perfect.

Holiday Tours is offering a two-night package to Plett's Beacon Island Resort until March 31 for R3 589 ex-Johannesburg (supplements apply on peak flights).

The package includes two nights' accommodation (room only), return economy-class flights from Johannesburg to George, and two days' car rental (Group T) on standard cover with 200km free per day.

Guests have access to 500 MB free WiFi per day and two kids stay free (accommodation only) when sharing with two adults. There is also a self-drive option at R1 455 per person

sharing for two nights (accommodation only).

In Mauritius, Holiday Tours' March Holidays Special Offer includes seven nights' accommodation (deluxe room) at the four-star Le Meridien Ile Maurice resort with breakfast and dinner daily.

On offer is a set departure on March 28 from R17 850 per adult sharing, and R7 395 per child sharing. The price includes a 30% discount on accommodation. To qualify, travel must be booked and paid for by February 28.

The package includes return flights from JNB on Air Mauritius, and return airport resort transfers. Two adults may share their room with two kids under 12 years.



Beach holidays are a firm favourite with families with young children.

Top holiday destinations

THE top multi-generational holiday destinations are those that offer a wide variety of activities and entertainment options, says **Stacey Barnett**, such as Sun International's Boardwalk Hotel, Wild Coast Sun, Sun City, Zambezi Sun and Royal Swazi Spa.

Joanne Visagie says Mauritius remains the preferred family holiday destination for South Africans due to its proximity to South Africa, fantastic air access, year-round temperate weather, safe, easy swimming in calm seas, excellent value for money and fantastic accommodation options.

Alet Steyn's top three destinations are Vietnam, Cambodia and China, as these countries offer the most family-friendly activities.

She highly recommends a Vietnam holiday, with a stopover in Hong Kong. "In northern Vietnam, there's historic Hanoi, the Hill Tribes of Sapa and beautiful Halong

Bay. Families can enjoy walks through terraced rice fields and spectacular scenery from a junk boat on Halong Bay. In southern Vietnam, there's the lively city of Saigon, the Mekong Delta, the sandy beaches of Mui Né, and Mekong or Irrawaddy river cruises."

John Ridler recommends Mauritius, Seychelles, cruising, South Africa, and game lodges that cater for young game enthusiasts. "Mauritius or a Mediterranean cruise offer kids' activities, sports, games and shopping arcades, fine dining, movies, rock climbing, surfing, discos and spectacular nightly shows."

Trafalgar's top selling Family Experiences holiday is its European Wonderland – an 11-day family road trip beginning in Rome and ending in London and includes Swiss chocolate, Italian gelato, lion fights, chariot racing and fascinating history.

Theresa Szejwallo also recommends Trafalgar's Monkeys, Jungles & Volcanoes guided holiday in Costa Rica, which offers eco-friendly adventure, culture and time out in extraordinary settings. Families visit the world's only certified organic pineapple farm, taste hearts of palm, meet locals who protect the sea turtles in the Tortuguero National Park, zip line through the jungle and visit the Arenal National Park with its steaming volcano.

For families with young children **Zahedah Bhorat** suggests malaria-free game reserves that offer villas as part of their accommodation options. For families with older children she recommends Mozambique.

Inge Dobiha recommends a family holiday in Dubrovnik or Split in Croatia, which offers nightlife, water sports, beautiful nature, historic and cultural experiences or just a relaxing holiday at the sea.

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Easter family fun

WORLD Leisure Holidays is offering good-value Easter packages to its luxury five-star Mauritius resorts. Sugar Beach and Long Beach.

Parents will find everything they dreamed of for their children at both hotels, ensuring both children and adults have a great island

stay. There are separate clubs for little ones and teenagers, with programmes, games and educational activities tailored to the child's age and interests.

Packages to Sugar Beach start from R25 720 ex-JNB and R26 880 ex-CPT, with packages to Long Beach

starting from R27 160 ex-JNB, and R28 320 ex-CPT. The packages include return flights to Mauritius, breakfast and dinner daily, all land and non-motorised water sports, entertainment, levies, taxes and surcharges. Children under 12 stay free when sharing with adults.

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TNW6877SD

Family-friendly services in the air

DELTA Air Lines offers a host of family-friendly services on board and on the ground.

Delta can arrange special assistance for families at the airport and on board, including special meals, in-flight entertainment, wheelchair access and more.

Children under two flying internationally only pay 10% of the adult fare if they don't require their own seat, while children aged two to 12 years get a 25% discount on international flights when travelling with an adult.

On board, Delta – which flies daily between Johannesburg and Atlanta – offers a range of movies, TV shows and games to keep kids occupied throughout the flight.

There are also special meals for babies, toddlers and children up to 12, which follow recommended dietary allowances and can be booked via Delta's website up to 24 hours before departure. Also bookable up to 24 hours before a flight is wheelchair assistance for passengers unable to walk through the airport.

To ensure families are seated together, seats can be pre-booked on Delta's website.

In Africa, Delta offers its Family Plus service at Dakar



Air Mauritius children's special activity packs. Photo: Air Mauritius

Yoff-Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport, where Delta agents assist families through check-in and boarding. There is a children's corner at the boarding gate area with games and TV cartoons in English and French.

As a family holiday destination, Mauritius is hard to beat. Air Mauritius takes special care of families flying to Mauritius for a holiday, both on board and on the ground.

On board, children receive special activity packs and an Air Mauritius bag, and there is loads of in-flight entertainment to keep them happy.

Child meals can be booked up to 72 hours before departure.

The airline's new Amedee

Maingard Lounge at the airport has a dedicated children's play area, available free to business-class passengers. And with the airline's Travel Smart Programme (operational during low season) up to two children under 12 fly free, paying only for airport taxes.

For elderly travellers, Air Mauritius offers meet and assist services. These services, as well as wheelchairs, can be booked when making a reservation.

Air Mauritius operates direct services from Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban to Mauritius, where passengers can enjoy a free stopover en-route to long-haul destinations such as Perth, Hong Kong, London and Paris.

Loads of fun at Premier Hotels

PREMIER Hotels & Resorts offers a host of family-friendly accommodation and facilities. Its four-star properties offer a family suite that comprises three suites (one with a dining room), ideal for multi-generational family travel.

All Premier Hotels properties offer free WiFi, enabling parents to stay in touch with family via Skype and for teenagers to stay in touch with their friends.

"With features like pools,

play areas, and access to local attractions and staff equipped to assist with planning of day trips, we're well geared to the family market," says **Terence Goosen**, Premier Hotels' group marketing manager.

Mpongo Private Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape recently launched an education centre (with petting zoo), for little ones to learn about the park's animals.]

Premier Hotel Knysna – The Moorings has just opened

a children's wonderland – offering play gyms and activities for kids including a life-sized chess set.

And Premier's latest addition – the Premier Sani Pass Hotel in the Drakensberg (due to undergo an extensive upgrade) – offers group horseback mountain rides, a golf course, swimming pools, hiking trails, bowling greens, a wellness centre and access to the national Sani Pass nature reserve.



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Elephant-back rides are one of the many family activities available in Thailand.

Family Travel

Discover the Far East

For families looking to venture further afield, the Far East has plenty on offer.

China

Wendy Wu Tours is offering a 15-day, fully inclusive Glories of China tour, ideal for families with children over the age of 12.

From R41 155pps, it visits Shanghai, Guilin, Yangshuo, Xian and Beijing. It includes return economy-class fares (and taxes) on Cathay Pacific, domestic flights in China, compulsory tipping, transport in modern air-conditioned vehicles, four-star hotel accommodation, meals, entrance fees, local guides in each city, a tour manager, daily tours as per itinerary and China visa fees for SA passport holders.

The price applies to departures to the end of November (except May and September). Tour details and booking conditions can be found in Wendy Wu Tours' 2015 Asia brochure.

Thailand

With so many beautiful islands, fantastic beaches, interesting cities and ancient cultures, a family holiday in Thailand is hard to beat.

Child-friendly destinations include Bangkok, Phuket, Ko Samui, and Chiang Mai. There are more than 80 national parks to explore, amazing food to taste, fantastic shopping, water parks and aquariums.

Things to do in Phuket with kids:

- Enjoy Kata, Karon and Patong beaches.
- Snorkel in the Andaman Sea.
- Play mini-golf at Dino Park Mini Golf with its Flintstones theme.
- Phuket Fantasea offers cultural attractions, pyrotechnics and great shopping.
- Splash Jungle, Thailand's largest water park beside Centara Grand West Sands Resort & Villas.

- Witness coral reefs and ocean creatures up close from the tunnel tank at Underwater World Pattaya, the largest ocean aquarium in Asia with more than 4 000 marine animals.

- Near Phuket and Krabi, Koh Sok National Park offers the Elephant Hills elephant sanctuary, jungle trekking and cave exploring.

Things to do in Bangkok with kids:

- The Siam Museum, Major Bowl in the Central World Shopping Mall, Siam Ocean World, and the Krungsri Imax Theatre offer great edutainment.
- Siam Park is Bangkok's biggest water park.
- Tour Bangkok's backwater canals on a long tail boat.

Japan

Japan is Trafalgar's newest destination for families.

On the Samurai Discovery Tour, travellers will learn to make sushi with a private chef; enjoy an 'Okonomiyaki' dinner of grilled savoury pancakes; explore the Imperial Palace, Meiji Shrine, and Mount Fuji; take a thrilling ride on the JR Super Express bullet train; try their hand at calligraphy, and activate their inner ninja on the active movie set at Toei Kyoto Studio Park.

The Samurai Discovery Tour is priced at R37 825 and includes six nights' hotel accommodation with breakfast daily, three lunches, three dinners, transport, transfers and sightseeing. There's a 5% early-payment discount available until February 28, as well as possibilities of further discounts for young, frequent and, second trip travellers and quad room sharers. Departures take place in March, July, September, October and December. ■

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Obituary

Unexpected death of local airline icon shocks industry

HILKA BIRNS

THE travel industry is shocked and saddened by the sudden death of airline industry stalwart, **David James**, at his Johannesburg home on Sunday morning, aged 62.

At the time of publication the cause of death was pending the result of a post mortem. His funeral took place on Friday, February 20 at the Bryanston Catholic Church in Sloane Street, Johannesburg.

David's long career included senior executive positions with British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, SAA and Eritrean Airlines and many years of consulting to African airlines, where he specialised in turnaround management, organisational change and airline start-ups

"He had a wonderful sense of humour and a generous heart. He was very caring about other people and loved his sports, mainly cricket and rugby, and music, golf and the bush. His unexpected death has come as a great shock to his wife, Trish, and his many friends," said family friend, **Lindy Nauta**.

"In his words – and he did have a way with words – he was a 'top bloke'," said **Lilian Boyle**, retired executive director of Bidvest. "He had a wonderful sense of humour, richly coloured by his half-Irish genes, was a great story-teller, a genial and generous host and always good company. He was well respected in the aviation world and his likeable nature made him an excellent networker. We had such fun – on the golf course, in the African bushveldt and just sitting around a jar or two of Scotland's finest. I have lost a very dear friend and my heart goes out to Trish. He was taken too soon."

Jim Weighell, operations

director of GBTA Southern Africa, said: "He was a very clever man and inherently understood the airline business. He never took himself too seriously. I will miss him as a friend and the industry has lost a local icon."

"We will remember David very fondly for his charismatic personality and immense kindness and his substantial contribution to the SA travel industry," said BA commercial manager, **Sue Botes**.

"He was well loved and respected by his colleagues during his time at Virgin Atlantic," said sales and marketing manager, **Liezl Gericke**. "Our condolences to his family and those close to him during this difficult time."

David was born and educated in London. At BA he was regional cargo manager in the Middle East and India from 1987-1989; sales manager in India from 1989-1991; gm in Spain and Portugal from 1991-1994; and gm Southern Africa



David James

from 1994-1996. He was Virgin Atlantic's gm SA from 1996-1998, before taking over as vp global sales at SAA from 1998-2000. In 2012, he briefly worked as commercial director at Eritrean Airlines.

David also consulted to the African airline industry, as partner at David James & Associates Airline Consulting for the past two years and as director at Aviation Global Solutions from 2004-2012. He was also director of client relationships at Rennie's Travel between 2000 and 2004.

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UK visas: what will change for SA visitors?

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE UK's visa system is to be overhauled to reduce processing time and red tape. The changes will see the number of visa types available to foreign business visitors and tourists reduced from 15 to four.

Isabel Potgieter, spokesperson for the British High Commission in Pretoria, says reducing the number of visitor routes on offer will simplify the process and give visitors greater flexibility over what they can do when they are in the UK. "Entry requirements are not being changed but aspects of the policy, and the rules and guidance are being simplified so people do not unwittingly

fall foul of the immigration rules. There will also be new Immigration Rules and Guidance for visitors, which are shorter, more user-friendly and easier for people to understand."

One of the main changes under the new immigration system is that corporate travellers will be able to travel for business and leisure on one single visa. "The improvements will allow a person to visit for a business meeting and a holiday without having to apply for two separate visas," says Isabel. The UK is also clarifying the business activities that visitors can undertake, adding in some new ones, she says.

The changes will be phased in from April. "From

April, anyone entering using an existing visa will also benefit from the changes; so someone who already has a valid business visit visa can use that visa from April to come for a holiday."

The rates for the new visa categories have not been published yet. Isabel says the process of setting and reviewing visa fees is a separate initiative.

The contentious transit visa will remain in place. Isabel says the Home Office will keep its transit visa regime under regular review. The UK recently simplified the requirements for the transit visa and reduced the price to £30 (R537), making the UK's transit visa cheaper than a Schengen one. ■

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TNW7067

A bumpy start for Skywise

DARISE FOSTER

BOOKINGS are now open for new South African LCC, Skywise, which launched its website – albeit with several issues – on February 11.

Agents took to eTNW to comment on the problems they were experiencing (see *Skywise ready for take-off*, February 12). Ticket bookings opened on February 11 and could be made via the Skywise website or telephonically. But less than 48 hours later, agents complained that they had

not received confirmation for bookings made and that attempts to get through to the call centre had failed.

Skywise co-chairperson, **Tabassum Qadir**, told TNW that Skywise was experiencing difficulties due to heavy traffic on the website and through the call centre but that the airline was working to resolve the issues. "You only find out what problems your system has once the website goes live," she said.

At the time of going to print, the airline's call centre

number was still not working.

The airline will launch commercial flights between Johannesburg and Cape Town on March 5. Starting prices are R490 for one-way Go-Fare tickets (passenger details cannot be changed after booking) and R1 151 for one-way Wise-Fare tickets (flexible fares) including taxes.

The airline plans to expand with flights between Johannesburg and Durban and Durban and Cape Town within the first three months of operation. ■

Dare we hope?

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be well aware of the new requirements but are struggling to obtain the right documentation from Home Affairs.

This, in turn, is impacting on customer bookings. "Some clients are unsure whether to book their June holidays as they're not sure they'll have the certificate in time to depart. Some people get it quickly, others are still waiting and they applied ages ago," says

Michelle Boshoff, Pentravel's operations manager.

"The SA public will do what they do best – last-minute panic! We have reminded our clients on a monthly basis about applying for the birth certificate. More than that, we cannot do," says **Rachael Penaluna**, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel.

"The Department of Home Affairs doesn't have its house in order," says **Monica Horn**, product manager of

Harvey World Travel. She says numerous HWT franchises have reported clients' documentation getting lost by Home Affairs and clients having to reapply. "Home Affairs hasn't been adequately set up to give clients the turnaround time needed.

The department also hasn't communicated this effectively to the general public; they have left it up to travel service providers to disseminate the information." ■

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