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## Rogue ITC's wings clipped

DORINE REINSTEIN

CLUB Travel has frozen the account of an ITC, pending an investigation into its relationship with Travel Quest.

Red flags were raised when tour operators contacted *TNW*, advising that their logos were being used illegally on the Travel Quest website, www.travelquest.co.za. Travel Quest is a subsidiary of Leisure Travel International (LTI) – a Club Travel ITC. Both LTI and Travel Quest are membership-based travel clubs that offer consumers who pay a start-up and membership fee the 'benefits' of 'specially negotiated prices'.

**"The company will not hesitate to take legal action to have the logo removed from Travel Quest's website."**

Tour operators – World Leisure Holidays, Thompsons Holidays, Holiday Tours and Beachcomber Tours – say they did not agree to display their logos on the Travel Quest website.

**Cathie Bester**, national sales manager of WLH, says that before *TNW* alerted her to the fact that Travel Quest was displaying the WLH logo, she had never heard of the company. She says LTI is a recognised business partner of WLH but not Travel Quest. "We will be sending communication through to Travel Quest and request that our logo be removed from their website immediately."

**John Ridler**, spokesperson of Thompsons Holidays, says he

has tried to speak to the relevant people at Travel Quest to remove the Thompsons logo but to no avail. "They get very nervous on the phone and keep transferring me to other people. Eventually the phone is disconnected," he says.

A representative of Travel Quest told *TNW* she was surprised to hear that tour operators weren't familiar with Travel Quest. She said Travel Quest was a "regular" travel agency that "just happens" to work on a membership basis. She says Travel Quest sells tour operator packages on a daily basis and often welcomes the tour operators' reps into their offices and that Travel Quest had been in contact with Thompsons two years ago, at which point Thompsons agreed to let the company use its logo.

John contests that Thompsons has never given Travel Quest the authorisation to use the logo. He says the company will not hesitate to take legal action to have the logo removed from Travel Quest's website.

**Jo Fraser**, franchise director of Club Travel, says Club is in no way associated with Travel Quest. She says Club Travel has a connection with LTI, which has been a Club Travel ITC for some years and has never been problematic. She adds that Club Travel will, however, be freezing the LTI account with immediate effect, pending an investigation into its relationship with Travel Quest.

This is not the first time Travel Quest has made headlines. In December 2011 *Noseweek*

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The Emerald Collection is offering agents a sales incentive for its Hideaway of Nungwi Resort and Spa and Dream of Zanzibar properties. Agents who confirm 25 bookings, with a minimum stay of five nights per booking at both resorts before September 30, are guaranteed a four-night stay for two people on an all-inclusive basis. For 40 bookings, agents will get a seven-night stay. Emerald's sales and marketing manager for South Africa, **Porsche Dumagude**, enjoys one of the activities at Dream of Zanzibar – deep sea fishing. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## Trade shut out of immigration regulations meeting

TESSA REED

MEMBERS of the travel and tourism trade were not invited to a panel discussion last month, where Home Affairs Minister, **Malusi Gigaba**, sought input on how best to implement SA's new immigration policy, which includes the requirement for families travelling with children to produce

an unabridged birth certificate, come June 1.

Member associations of the travel and tourism industry, including Asata, SATSA, the TBCSA, Barsa and AASA, have not been able to meet with the Minister of Home Affairs since October last year, despite the Minister's establishing a task team that was supposed to look

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The World Health Organisation has confirmed a new case of Ebola in Liberia, dashing hopes that the country could soon have been declared free of the disease. WHO requires 42 days to pass with no new cases of Ebola reported to declare a country free of transmission. Liberia had had no new cases for 20 days. To see the latest changes to Ebola-related travel advisories in Africa, view eTNW's comprehensive map and guide at [www.etnw.co.za/ebola](http://www.etnw.co.za/ebola).

# Pentravel and XL part ways

DORINE REINSTEIN

**P**ENTRAVEL will soon no longer fall under the XL Travel umbrella.

**Sean Hough**, ceo of Pentravel, says the brand has had a long and good association with XL but feels, at this stage, it needs to get closer to airline

partners. He explains that, strategically, Pentravel is a strong and growing partner for airlines and with its dedicated leisure focus, the agency offers airlines a unique distribution. "Airlines are beginning to see the value in bricks and mortar distribution as opposed to OTAs who are not really

offering the airline or tour operator anything they can't do themselves," he says.

**Rod Rutter**, coo of XL Travel, says: "The relationship between both parties continues to remain very cordial and the XL Group will continue to maintain growth on a selective basis." ■

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# Rogue ITC's wings clipped

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published an article, 'Holidays nobody wants' that relates the story of a couple who were desperate to cancel a 40-year contract with Travel Quest but were refused. The couple feared that if they cancelled the debit order, they would be blacklisted. They were quoted in the article saying they had received "absolutely no value" from joining and had been unable to redeem vouchers given to them when they signed up. There are also various complaints on [helloworld.com](http://helloworld.com) from disillusioned members about Travel Quest.

One traveller, who attended a Travel Quest presentation in Nelspruit on March 16, told TNW Travel Quest representatives had promised 'guaranteed 50% discounts' on rack rates at all times with the above-mentioned tour operators.

Membership joining fees varied, depending on the length of the contract, from R24 000 to R32 000. Considerable membership discounts were given to clients who agreed to sign up on the night of the presentation. When this traveller asked if she could take the documentation and contracts home for further scrutiny, Travel Quest refused.

"We have no such agreements in place with any of our travel agents. Even the Thompsons Holidays' staff discount doesn't amount to 50%. How could we offer this to our clients?" says John.

Cathie adds: "If we offered a 50% discount on our published rates to anyone, we would lose the support of our valued travel partners and probably go out of business."

"WLH prides itself on maintaining rate parity with

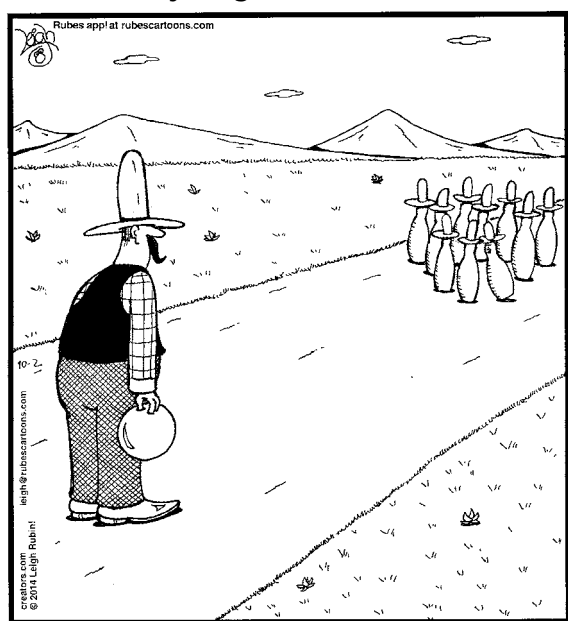
all our partners all the time."

The Travel Quest representative who spoke to TNW said no such 'guaranteed discounts' were made. She said most of the discounts offered to clients were for bed and breakfast or self-catering establishments. She referred to the Travel Quest website, where it states: "There is no guaranteed minimum or maximum discount on all properties linked or featured on our site. Discounts vary from property to property and area to area. In some cases discounts may go as high as up to 70% off the rack rates of resorts."

## Stop press

At the time of publication, the representative from Travel Quest contacted TNW to advise that the company had removed all logos from its website. ■

## Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



"Now what do we do, boss? 'The you're outnumbered 10 to 1' bluff didn't seem to faze him."

# Immigration regulations meeting

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at the new regulations with a view to balancing does not negatively impact tourism. "The TBCSA arranged one informal meeting with the DHA in October but, to date, this task team has not been formally convened by the DHA and we have not met since then," said **Chris Zweigenthal**, ceo of AASA. "We are urgently awaiting the convening of the task team with all affected stakeholders as envisaged by the Minister."

"We are disappointed that the TBCSA has been unsuccessful in securing a meeting for the industry task team with the Department of Home Affairs and that, despite the indications that a meeting would take place, a panel has been established without the tourism sector's involvement or knowledge," said **June Crawford**, ceo of Barsa. "This is despite the

comprehensive research that industry has generated on the impact that these immigration regulations will have on the sector and South Africa's economy and our continued efforts to engage with government.

"With the appointment of this panel and their alleged focus being input on how best to implement the new Immigration Act, we also see no moves on the horizon for the full review that was promised in the State of the Nation address recently," she said.

**David Frost**, SATSA ceo, said the association would be communicating directly with the deputy president regarding the panel. He said SATSA would be asking for a suspension of the regulations so that a fair and equitable review could take place.

David emphasised the view that there were better

alternatives to the regulation that included the requirement that children travel with an unabridged birth certificate.

He said he recently attended a workshop on child trafficking and exploitation hosted by the UNWTO World Tourism Network on Child Protection at ITB in Berlin. The workshop was also attended by senior representatives from Interpol. "When I mentioned what we were doing, people looked at me with shock and horror," said David.

He said it was clear from the workshop that there was a more sophisticated, multipronged international effort that went into addressing the issue of child trafficking and exploitation.

At the time of publication, the Department of Home Affairs had not released the names of the people on the panel or the organisation they represented. ■

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## Biometrics introduced at Istanbul Atatürk

THE biometric pass system has been introduced at Istanbul Atatürk Airport. The e-gate system offers passport control through fingerprint testing, easing passenger flow at the airport.

The system has been added at four passport control points, two of which are at the international terminal on the arrivals floor and the other two at the international terminal departures floor. The number of the cabinets is expected to increase to 12 at both departures and arrivals floors by the end of the year.

"The system is anticipated

to solve problems of false passport usage and long queues and also the number of passport police forces will be minimised," the airport said. It is also expected to solve problems of false passport usage and long queues.

Facial recognition will also be integrated to the system in the future.

"The system lets the passenger pass through the cabinet in 21 seconds at maximum and the time is expected to decrease to 15 seconds when the system is got used to," the airport said. ■



### Hello, Greece

The Consulate General of the Hellenic Republic met with industry stakeholders last month to discuss ways in which it could assist agents to promote and sell Greece. The primary concern for agents was the difficulties their clients faced when applying for a Schengen visa. Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic, **Maria Diamantopoulou**, said while Greece was bound by European Union regulations, the Consulate would look into suggestions for alleviating the application process, such as the possibility of making use of VFS Global's offices in Pretoria. Last year the Consulate in South Africa issued around 11 000 visas. Pictured at the event is the ambassador (centre) with the Greek Consul for Johannesburg, **Theodoros Michalopoulos** (left) and md of Cruises International, **George Argyropoulos** (right). Photo: Debbie Badham





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## Thornybush snaps up another luxury lodge

THE Thornybush Collection has just acquired the management and marketing contract for The River Lodge in the Thornybush Private Game Reserve, adjacent to the Kruger National Park, with effect from April 1.

The property is in the heart of the Timbavati/greater Kruger bushveld and accommodates a maximum of eight guests. It offers three luxury suites and a royal suite, which consists

of two suites, a private lounge and heated pool. The suites are all free standing and completely private. They include outside showers and private decks with splash pools. Additional facilities include a spacious lounge and a salt-water rim pool, overlooking the bushveld.

**Nic Griffin**, ce of The Thornybush Collection, says the group now manages 12 of the lodges within the Thornybush reserve, four of which the group owns. "We

are now the largest four- and five-star lodge operation in South Africa," says Nic.

He says the lodge is brand new, having only been open for a year. "It's an absolutely magnificent lodge."

The Thornybush collection includes Thornybush Game Lodge, Waterside (formerly Kapama Main), Shumbalalala, Simbambili, Monwana, Chapungu, Serondella, n'Kaya, n'Kelenga, Waterbuck and Jackalberry. ■

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# Flyafrica ups flights to Zim

**F**LYAFRICA.COM has introduced a second daily flight between Harare and Johannesburg.

The second daily flight will commence from March 30, with fares starting from US\$39 (R483) one way. It will depart Johannesburg at 16h00 daily, arriving in Harare at 17h35. The return flight departs Harare daily at 18h05

and arrives in Johannesburg at 19h40.

"Our low-fare business model now allows people to make a business trip between Harare and Johannesburg, return the same day, save on hotel accommodation and spend US\$78 (R965) return to do it," says Professor **Chakanyuka Karase**, ceo of Zimbabwe flyafrica. ■

# Grading council integrates with TripAdvisor

THE star grading of South African establishments will now be displayed on TripAdvisor as part of a signed Memorandum of Understanding between South African Tourism and TripAdvisor. The agreement will see the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) integrate

its content with the online platform.

Only establishments with a valid TGCSA star grading would have their grading displayed on the TripAdvisor website, the TGCSA said. The star grading can be viewed by right clicking on the stars next to the property's name. ■



Backing our boys

The Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA) aims to work with local tour operators and event organisers to package experiences for major events in the province, such as the Soweto Derby, which took place on March 7. GTA hosted media from South Africa and Botswana to join them at the iconic Kaizer Chiefs versus Orlando Pirates soccer game at the FNB Stadium in Johannesburg. The game ended in a draw but that did not stop (pictured from left) **Magic Dlomo** (Gauteng Department of Economic Development); **Tshepo Ikaneng** (SABC News); and **Jabu Moagi** (Gauteng Tourism Authority), from celebrating the game. Photo: Darise Foster

# Long-awaited Pretoria hotel opens

THE Protea Hotel Fire & Ice! Menlyn has officially opened its doors to the public, after three years of preparation and construction.

The new hotel features 178 rooms of which 10 are suites

and 40 inter-leading rooms, a restaurant, designer bar and lifestyle spaces, swimming pool and 250 underground parking bays.

The property also features a stand-alone, double-storey

conference facility adjacent to the hotel. The ground floor can accommodate up to 500 people and upstairs there are two 150-seater conference rooms and a variety of boardrooms. ■



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# Travel industry doyen remembered for his pioneering role

HILKA BIRNS

NOT many names have been as closely linked to the ups and downs of the South African travel industry as that of the Foggitt family, headed by industry doyen, **John Gledhill Foggitt**, who passed away in January, a month short of his 97th birthday.

John is credited with having pioneered much of the early outbound tours from South Africa and with being the first to have chartered ships for South African cruises from as early as 1978.

Born in Kenya on February 19, 1918, John came to South Africa when he was three

years old. Seeking adventure as a young man, he served in the navy and army during World War II, whereafter he worked as a government auditor.

In 1956 he set up an immigration scheme bringing hundreds of skilled British workers to South Africa on Trek Airways. However, as numbers grew his attempts to charter planes were frustrated by government protection of South African Airways. Using a loophole in the law, he set up the Traveller's Facilities Club (TFC) in 1957, offering tours in addition to flights.

TFC Tours chartered the first flights from South Africa to

many destinations not served by commercial services from Johannesburg at the time, including Hong Kong, Bangkok, Taipei, the Seychelles, Rio de Janeiro, Teheran and Istanbul. It arranged the first South African tours to countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Cuba and Vietnam and became the biggest travel company in South Africa with offices in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town, the Seychelles, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Taipei, Tokyo, Miami, San Francisco, Los Angeles and London.

In 1978, TFC Tours chartered its first cruise-liner, the *Victoria*, operating just four cruises and carrying a total of 2 468 passengers for the entire season.

Over the years, the company chartered many great ships, but the stories of the ill-fated *Achille Lauro* and *Oceanos* will remain uppermost in the minds of South Africans.

While preparing for a season in South Africa, the *Achille Lauro* was hijacked by Palestinian militants off Egypt in October 1985 with South African travel agents on an educational on board. It went on to operate successfully in SA waters between 1985 and 1990, carrying

thousands of passengers and playing a major role in establishing cruising as a local holiday option. MSC Cruises purchased the vessel in 1992 but in 1994 it developed an engine fire en route to SA from Europe and sank off the coast of Somalia.

On August 4, 1991, the *Oceanos* famously sank during a storm off the Transkei Wild Coast. The captain and crew abandoned ship but all 571 passengers survived thanks to the heroism of a few on-board entertainers and the biggest airborne rescue mission to date by the SA Navy.

John had sold TFC Tours in 1990 to a property development company but the sinking of the *Oceanos* resulted in TFC Tours closing down. The Foggitts then started Starlight Cruises. John officially retired but remained involved in a non-executive capacity and kept abreast of all activities right until the end.

Starlight Cruises went on to successfully open up cruising to the SA market with its popular programmes of local cruise itineraries from Durban and Cape Town. After a 16-year association, Geneva-based MSC Cruises acquired Starlight Cruises in 2010 and the local operation became



**John Gledhill Foggitt**

MSC Cruises South Africa, embarking up to 145 000 passengers in 2014. Ships that stand out because of their popularity over the years are the *Melody*, *Monterey* and, more recently, the *MSC Sinfonia*.

John's children and grandchildren continue to 'man the ship', with daughter **Daphne Osborne** ceo, son **Allan Foggitt** sales and marketing director; and grandsons **Kevin Osborne** and **Lee Foggitt** involved on the operational side. Son, **Clifford Foggitt**, has retired from the company.

*MSC Sinfonia* returns to South Africa on November 19 with 200 new cabins thanks to an extended hull and revamped with new entertainment options, shops and technological advancements. ■

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# TOUR OPERATORS



As travel agents adapt their services to meet clients' changing demands, do tour operators still have a role to play? Dorine Reinstein reports.

## 'We need tour operators' – agents

**T**HERE is still a place for the tour operator, as long as the partnership between the travel agent and the tour operator offers value for both sides, say South African travel agents.

Late last month, UK publication, *Travel Weekly*, ran an article following an interview with Travel Counsellors' chairman, **David Speakman**, who reportedly said the decision to take on more of a tour operator role was "just business" and was "the way forward" – and the future – for all agents.

According to the article, David said cutting out the tour operator to ensure the travel agent had a vibrant future and earned better margins was the way forward.

David's stance should be seen in context, says gm of Travel Counsellors South Africa, **Mladen Lukic**. He says Travel Counsellors believes there is still a place for the tour operator, as long as the partnership offers value for both parties. It is important for tour

operators to offer something that the travel agent can't, such as access to specific product or specialised product knowledge, he says.

Besides working with tour operators, ITCs under the TC umbrella can dynamically tailor-make packages for their clients, with the help of Phenix, a tool that allows agents to combine components to build unique packages, says Mladen.

Savvy agents have been doing this and bypassing traditional local tour operators for years, says **Wally Gaynor**, md of Club Travel. This doesn't mean, however, that the end of the tour operator is in sight. "There will always be niche operators that heavily invest in a product and financially commit, specialise and possibly own many elements of the package. An example of this would be Beachcomber Tours; agents cannot effectively dynamically package its product."

**Monica Horn**, product manager of Harvey World Travel, says agents



**Mladen Lukic**

increasingly tailor make packages for destinations most tour operators do not cover. "The benefit for the customer is the lower cost of the in-house packaging – a selling point that can't be ignored and which influences the agency's long-term strategic approach."

Although there is a shifting dynamic in the relationship between the TMC and the tour operator, Monica also believes this relationship will continue to be synergistic in the

local market, as tour operators are still able to negotiate excellent IT fares on certain routes that are not accessible to TMCs. The tour operator will continue to offer a number of products that a TMC just cannot match, she says.

Dynamic packaging is a difficult and time-consuming job, agrees **Rachael Penaluna**, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel. "Travel agents do not want to do this. It is not our forte and is extremely time consuming."

Rachael says agents should relieve some of their daily pressures by referring clients to a reputable tour operator that sells a good product and will take responsibility if anything goes wrong. "Tour operators know their product. They have deals with respective service providers and they can offer competitive prices."

### A win-win

"There is still a place for travel agents and tour operators to maintain

a transparent and fair relationship and feed one another business in the South African environment. It is not necessary to re-invent the wheel, even if the margins are a little more appealing," she says.

**Cathie Bester**, national sales manager of World Leisure Holidays, says the operator should add value by providing good service and product and by paying commissions to agents timeously, while the agent can add value by introducing clients to the tour operators' products.

If tour operators want to add value, they need to ensure their service delivery is impeccable and facilitates the job of the travel agent, says **Joanne Visagle**, sales and marketing manager of Beachcomber Tours. "Retailers have to sell the world so it is up to us, as their tour operator partner, to ensure that we make it as simple and enjoyable as possible when they call on us for support. We need to help our retail partners be

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productive by providing great service, quick commission remuneration and ensuring that their clients love the experience so much they will return again and again."

For the relationship between the travel consultant and the tour operator to thrive, trust and reliability are non-negotiable, says Joanne. "We do not take direct bookings. We also do not undercut our travel agent partners by giving clients a cheaper price if they book through other external parties, such as banks, insurance companies, etc."

"We enjoy a very close relationship with the retail trade. They are our client and, as such, are our primary focus. By being attentive to our clients' needs, we are able to ensure our mutual client is always happy."

**Alet Steyn**, business development manager of Wendy Wu Tours, agrees: "We prefer bookings to come through travel agents. If we get a direct client who does not have a preferred travel agent, we will refer them to one of our supporting agents in the specific area where the client resides."

# TOUR OPERATORS

## How should your tour operator service you?

### 1. Effective communication

Regular and effective communication helps build solid relationships.

**Giles Clinton**, director of both Checkout Tours and Checkout Travel, believes optimum communication is achieved by regular sales visits, during which the sales representatives discuss new opportunities and the latest product updates.

"Our agents are our lifeblood and we do what we need to in order to service them efficiently," says

**Erica Barrett**, gm of Sun International Dreams. "Our sales team is in constant contact with our retail partners, which we believe



**Cathie Bester**

is key to understanding their changing needs."

**Cathie Bester** says, in addition to face-to-face calls, the operator communicates regularly with the trade via email and through advertising in the media, brochures and flyers. "We create approximately 500 personal touch points per week. This establishes unique and long-lasting relations and keeps us in the forefront of the agent's mind."

After-hours support is also important. Trafalgar recently launched its Follow the Sun service, which offers after-hours telephonic support service for travel agents who have queries or want to make bookings.

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### 2. Knowing the product

Helping agents with product knowledge will go a long way in nurturing the professional relationship, says **Theresa Szejwallo**, md of Trafalgar. "Trafalgar's offering has developed over the past three years and we encourage all agents to utilise the training we put into the market. An agent who may feel they 'know' Trafalgar because they've been selling us for years might not have had the benefit of an update through a recent training session, attending our annual launches or receiving our monthly newsletters. We want



**Theresa Szejwallo**

these agents to come to our training." First-hand experience

is still the best way for a travel agent to successfully sell a product, says **John Ridler**, spokesperson of Cullinan Outbound Tourism. He says although the Thompsons Holidays sales team does a great job at running regular in-house training sessions and sales cycles for specific destinations, educational trips are still first prize. "Educational trips to popular destinations give agents first-hand knowledge. Thompsons also offers special rates for agents who wish to visit a favourite destination on holiday."



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Terms and Conditions: Prices are land only, based on quad occupancy, subject to availability and include a 5% Early Payment Discount, Young Traveller Discount and Quad Room Discount. Save up to R30 380 is based on a family of four (two adults and two children ages 5-15) travelling on Trafalgar's Gladiators, Gondolas and Gold advertised here. Early Payment Discount is a limited offer and is subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time. Not all discounts and offers are combinable. See Trafalgar's brochure or talk to your Area Sales Manager for full details. Other conditions apply. E&OE

TNW6961SD



### 3. Quick turnaround times

In an increasingly demanding and competitive world, agents rely on tour operators not only for extensive product knowledge but in the quickest turnaround time.

John says agents have always set high standards for service delivery. Any failure in this area will drive them to a competitor.

**Joanne Visagie** says it is not so much travel agents who have become more demanding but their clients.

“We strive to ensure our turnaround time is incredible and do our utmost to ensure that even the most demanding of clients are impressed by their travel consultant’s quick, knowledgeable

response, thanks to the support we have provided.”

“The traditional 24-hour turnaround time is now considered outdated,” agrees Erica. She says clients have direct access to information via the Internet and they expect their travel professional to give them an immediate response or they feel they can get the answers themselves.

Cathie adds that very often clients will have done their own research on a particular destination and give the agent a very specific brief on their requirements. “We prefer this because it is important to us to deliver good holidays to people.”

Technology goes a

long way in helping tour operators to ensure a quick turnaround time on quotes and demands.

Dreams can advise its agents of specials and changes and update information in minutes, Erica says.

Trafalgar’s online booking, invoicing and payment system provides real-time availability. Agents receive an additional 1% commission when booking online.

Checkout Tours offers an online booking platform that agents can use for quotes and to make live reservations.

WLH recently created the IBE facility for agents. Cathie explains: “Once the verification process is finalised, travel agents



“Agents rely on tour operators not only for extensive product knowledge but in the quickest turnaround time.”

John Ridler

can then request quotes at all our Mauritian properties, with various meal plan options, flights, transfers and even excursions. In fact, they can go as far as booking online and issuing all documentation themselves if required.”

For more complex routings and destinations, clients value a well-crafted package that shows the consultant’s knowledge – even if it takes more time, says Giles.

**Alet Steyn** agrees. “We have all our group tour rates and itineraries ready to send or to quote but for private itineraries we need to work through our local office and there are time differences that have to be kept in mind.”

### 4. When things go wrong

When things go wrong, the tour operator needs to step up to the plate. Giles says it is imperative that the tour operator’s service includes resolving disputes. “We are flexible and always willing to assist. We always see what we can do, regardless of the source of the dispute, to solve it and make sure the agents are kept up to speed at all times.”

Theresa adds: “It helps to have a state-of-the-art telephone system where every call is recorded and where disputes can

be quickly resolved by having access to the full conversation, especially when the dispute is of a ‘he said, she said’ nature.”

WLH keeps record of all communication, both verbal and written, that is linked to a quotation or booking. This way, if disputes are raised, WLH is able to retrieve telephone calls and correspondence pertaining to the dispute and ensure that the matter is resolved timeously. “It is imperative that disputes are settled as quickly as possible,” says Cathie.

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# TOUR OPERATORS

## Train that brain!

### Training on demand

Beachcomber organises on-going training at the offices of consortium partners as well as at their conferences and workshops. **Joanne Visagie** says: "We'll train wherever and whenever it suits our retail partners and are there to up-skill them at every opportunity."

Dreams is continuously doing in-store training for its agents. The tour operator also makes use of online workshops, such as TI Workshops.

### Fam trips

Checkout Tours organises familiarisation trips during the year to educate agents



**Joanne Visagie**

on the product and the destination. **Giles Clinton** says: "There is no better form of marketing then

actually seeing the place for yourself!"

WLH also holds regular educational opportunities. "Our educationals are structured in such a way that the travel agent has the opportunity to experience and enjoy our resorts and not to spend the day doing one hotel site inspection after another," says **Cathie Bester**.

### Roadshows

Wendy Wu is participating in the yearly Eastern Cape roadshow from March 31 to April 2. For those in other parts of the country, Wendy Wu will be hosting some short morning/afternoon



**Alet Steyn**

informal training sessions around Gauteng and Cape Town in the upcoming months. **Alet Steyn** says

sales representatives will be available for anyone who's interested in product training sessions.

### Webinars

**Theresa Szejwallo** personally conducts webinars for the trade on major launches, such as Trafalgar's autumn, winter and spring offering. Trafalgar also hosts in-house webinars through various consortiums.

### Trade shows

Thompsons participates in all the main trade shows for travel agents. The tour operator also held Mauritius, UK and Ireland workshops in the last six months.

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## Book it!

- Beachcomber Tours is offering a five-night special at the five-star Sainte Anne Resort & Spa in the Seychelles. A 50% discount is offered on early-bird bookings, with packages priced from R23 370. The rate includes return Air Seychelles flights from Johannesburg, return transfers, daily breakfast and dinner (with complimentary lunch for honeymooners) and land and water sports. Taxes of R3 030 are excluded. Honeymoon rates are also on offer, with accommodation starting at R20 160, including a 60% discount. The offer is available from May 1-31 and July 1-31.
- Island Light Holidays is offering clients staying at Lux\* Belle Mare & Villas, Lux\* Le Morne, Lux\* Grand Gaube, Tamassa and Merville Beach – Grand Baie a free excursion to Ile Des Deux Cocos, including a delicious lunch buffet. Meanwhile, guests at Lux\* Maldives can book a Dhoni sunset cruise, free of charge. ■

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## Appointments

■ Development Promotions has appointed two new staff members – **Gayle Bannantyne** (pictured) is the sales executive for DP in Cape Town and **Elisna Van Zyl** was appointed G Adventure sales executive in Johannesburg.



■ The Capital Hotel Group has appointed four new general managers to its flagship hotels. Former Bushmanskloof, Cederberg gm, **Nelson Rodrigues**, is now the new gm of The Capital Moloko in Sandton, after being a part of the opening team at The Westcliff Hotel. **Adrian Willmers**, the new gm of The Capital 20 West, has extensive hospitality experience. New gm of The Capital Villa and The Capital Esprit, **Julian Joubert**, comes with vast experience from opening and managing the Holiday Inn Express in Pretoria-Sunnypark. **Christine Liebenberg** (pictured here) is the new gm for The Capital Empire. She has more than 20 years' experience in the industry.



■ Hilton Durban has appointed **Ashley Smit** as front office manager. He was previously assistant front office manager at The Michelangelo in Sandton. He worked for a year as front office supervisor at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans in the US and prior to that he was with Champagne Sports Resort and the Makaranga Garden Lodge in KwaZulu Natal.



■ InterContinental Hotel Group has appointed **Sandie Macfie** as new director of hotel performance support for Africa. Based in Johannesburg, Sandie will lead the operations and performances of IHG's 17 franchised hotels across six countries in Africa, and joins the group with 30 years of extensive experience across the hospitality, finance and technology industries. Most recently, she was the group director of revenue at Tsogo Sun Hotels and chairperson of the South African Hospitality Technology Forum.



## Mauritius hosts Holiday Tours' VIP guests

Holiday Tours recently whisked off its top supporters to the Southern Cross hotels in Mauritius for five nights of VIP treatment. A fun and relaxed escapism saw travel professionals speedboat on the Trou d'Eau Douce, visit the Preskil Beach Resort, drive by the Ile Aux Cerfs and visit a little-known beautiful waterfall down a river. They even went to Bluebay Marine Park for some snorkelling! Here, **Ludovic Brousse de Gersigny**, sales and marketing executive of Southern Cross Hotels Group and **Elizabeth Geater**, manager of Ultimate Travel enjoy their speedboat transfer.

### Business Development Sales Executive

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- Take note that only applications that meet requirements will be evaluated. Air Mauritius reserves the right to reject profiles that do not meet the minimum level of requirements.

Applicants must have South African citizenship

TNW7335

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## Pick of the week

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**Senior Travel Consultant - Randburg**  
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**Team Leader - Sandton**  
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**Business Development Manager**  
*Flight Centre Travel Group*  
Minimum 3 years travel sales experience. Travel industry experience essential. Strong business acumen with ability to work towards targets and goals. Email: lauren.grobbelaar@flightcentre.co.za

**Training Facilitator - Rivonia**  
*Tourvest Travel Services*  
Flair for public speaking and a passion for sharing and teaching! Responsibilities: staff training/technical/soft skills/learnership/projects/training & development. Compliance with CATHSSETA and NQF legislations. Email: Nomsa.mathebula@travel.co.za

**Intermediate Travel Consultant - Lyndhurst**  
*Wendy's Travel Personnel*  
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**Tender Writer - Johannesburg Rosebank**  
*Club Travel*  
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**Senior Consultant - Rosebank**  
*Priority Travel*  
Attend to enquiries at the leisure desk. Only consultants with superior client service skills and a demonstrated ability to sell will be considered. Email: info@prioritytravel.co.za

**HR Manager - Milnerton, CPT**  
*Quantex Recruitment Group*  
A dynamic leader with 5+ years' experience in either tourism, hospitality, or service industry required by international inbound tour operator. Email: lee@quantex.co.za

**Inbound Tour Consultant - JHB North**  
*Professional Career Services*  
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TNW7340

These adverts were selected from the vacancy section of [www.travelinfo.co.za](http://www.travelinfo.co.za) For more details contact [jobs@travelinfo.co.za](mailto:jobs@travelinfo.co.za)



To the point



The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is no longer advising against all but essential travel to Sofala province in Mozambique. Acacia Africa has reinstated all its Mozambique tours after the FCO removed the advisory covering Sofala province. Earlier this month, Bhejane Adventures also reintroduced its Mozambique 'Big Game to Coral Reefs' tour after a two-year break.

# Air China delays arrival in SA

DORINE REINSTEIN

AIR China will not begin direct services to South Africa in May as was previously announced.

Acsa spokesperson, **Unathi Batyashe-Fillis**, told TNW: "We can confirm that the airline has been earmarked

to commence operations in August. Whether or not that is going to happen as planned would need to be confirmed by the airline."

The airline has obtained slots for three flights a week at OR Tambo International.

The reason for the delay of the launch remains unclear.

SAA will cut its Beijing route from April. The airline announced in February the route would be serviced by Air China as part of a codeshare agreement (see TNW February 11).

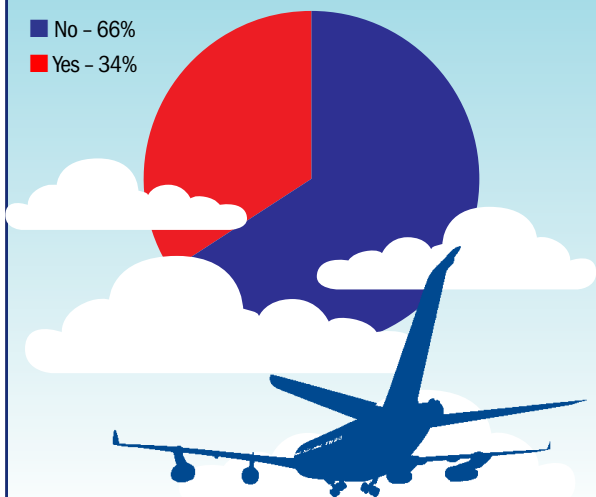
Air China could not be reached for comment at the time of going to print. ■



## What decrease?

Airfares have decreased by as much as 39% on some domestic routes this year, says a Travelstart survey. Have you noticed a decrease?

- No – 66%
- Yes – 34%



# Sun Int to take over Peermont

SUN International plans to acquire 100% of the Peermont Group, in line with its strategy to grow its gaming portfolio.

The acquisition of Emperors Palace provided SI with an opportunity to increase gaming revenue from Gauteng, the provincial jurisdiction with the highest gambling spend in SA, the group said in a statement. Emperors Palace is one of the largest casinos in SA with an attractive financial and operating profile. It has an EBITDAM margin of greater than 41%, which is

well above the SI average.

This diversification has the effect of reducing SI's reliance on its GrandWest property in the W Cape, which represents 27% of the group's EBITDA, the group said.

"Peermont has a number of complementary attributes that will enhance our group," said Sun International ceo, **Graeme Stephens**.

"These include the fact that Peermont has established and well-maintained assets and infrastructure, particularly Emperors Palace, which also has extensive

hotel and conference facilities."

Also, the two groups have reached an agreement to settle Peermont's objection to SI's Menlyn Maine project in Tshwane. Peermont raised objections to SI's proposed relocation of its Morula licence from the site in Mabopane to Menlyn. In terms of a settlement agreement between the parties, this objection has now been withdrawn.

The acquisition is still subject to regulatory approvals, which may take from nine to 12 months. ■

# MSC cancels all calls to Tunisia

IN THE wake of the terror attack at the Bardo National Museum in Tunis on March 18, MSC Cruises has suspended all remaining Tunisian calls in its 2015 summer programme.

Itineraries affected are:

- *MSC Splendida* will call at Valletta, Malta
- *MSC Fantasia* will call at Palma de Mallorca, Mallorca
- *MSC Preziosa* will call at Cagliari, Sardinia
- *MSC Divina* will call at Valletta a day earlier and head directly to Corfu, Greece.

The devastating attack

will have far-reaching and profoundly damaging effects on democratic Tunisia and its faltering economy. Tunisia can little afford to be considered a no-go zone at this time but, regrettably, that is how tourists will now see it, says MSC Cruises executive chairman, **Pierfrancesco Vago**.

Tunis had long featured on MSC Cruises' itineraries and the city's cultural offerings had proved very popular with visitors, the cruise line said. "The events that took place this week preclude the possibility of MSC Cruises

calling in Tunisia for the foreseeable future. Tunis is a key destination for MSC Cruises and we hope to be able to restore it to itineraries in due course. But until we receive reassurances that the security situation has returned to normal, we have to take our guests to alternative Mediterranean destinations," Pierfrancesco said.

There were 78 South Africans on *MSC Splendida* at the time of the attack. One passenger was injured and taken to a local hospital where she received treatment. ■

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