

TNW



TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

INSIDE	NEWS TWO-TAP BOOKING APP Travelstart launches Flapp Page 4	REPORT TC CONFERENCE Do agents need tour ops? Page 5	FEATURE <i>Game lodges and safaris</i> Customers want attractive rates Page 6
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Another ITC model launches in SA

DORINE REINSTEIN

SOUTH African independent travel agency companies are booming, with yet another ITC model set to launch in the market. Flight Specials is the most recent consortium to join the ITC fold, launching on June 1. Earlier this month, Flight Centre announced it would be introducing its ITC brand in SA (see TNW June 10).

"The ITC segment of the retail market is growing much faster than the historical legacy membership or franchise base," says **Franz von Wielligh**, gm Flight Specials.

Franz adds that Flight Specials received numerous requests from existing ITCs to join the Flight Specials

stable but – until now – the company's business model did not align with ITCs' needs. The company has now incorporated two ITC options in its mix of membership choices.

Travel agents will be able to opt for a 'ticketing only' option, a ticketing solution at a cost of R57 (inclusive of VAT) per ticket. Alternatively, they can choose a more comprehensive ITC option that provides back-office and administrative support as well as access to more Flight Specials' preferred deals in the market. This option comes with a 60-40 commission split.

What will set Flight Specials' ITC brand apart is the fact that there will not be just one centrally located head

office or host that fulfils all the ticketing and back-office administration centrally, says Franz. Instead, every individual ITC-licensed Flight Specials member around the country will be able to fulfil a host function for the ITCs in their respective region. "This will enable the ITC to have a personalised relationship with its nearest Flight Specials IATA host. The ITC then also has the option to meet clients and work from the offices of their Flight Specials host, providing them with a retail presence if they wish."

Whether ITCs opt for a ticketing solution or a full ITC offering, the Flight Specials' member host will manage all payments as well as BSP. This will – as far as possible – limit fraudulent

activities, Franz says. "ITCs will be using their host's pseudo code, giving Flight Specials more control over payments. Payment from clients and payment to suppliers will also be done by the Flight Specials host member," he says.

Prospective ITCs will only be accepted if they have a minimum of two years' experience and will need to sign a personal surety in the event of default.

With more existing consortiums introducing ITC models in South Africa, the question arises whether the market will become saturated. "I don't think so," says Franz. "It is still a growing segment of the market and currently there is not a silver bullet ITC solution that attracts all ITCs out there." ■

eTravel ventures beyond SA's borders

DORINE REINSTEIN

ETRAVEL is expanding its business, venturing outside South Africa's borders.

The ITC specialist, which will hold a workshop in Windhoek on June 25, has already signed up one new ITC in Namibia.

Ceo, **Garth Wolff**, says the company always planned to gradually expand across the borders. "Now the timing is perfect. We have all our 'internal affairs' in perfect working order so that we can not only look after existing ITCs but also focus on the potential in cross-border locations."

The demand in Namibia has picked up, Garth says. "We plan to gradually penetrate the market there. There is no rush as our main goal is to always look after our existing ITCs first."

Garth adds that there are challenges associated with expanding into Southern Africa but that these can easily be overcome. "Proximity issues are always a challenge but the market understands that operating remotely is fine these days."

Although Garth doesn't rule out any opportunities, he says – at this stage – eTravel is not looking to expand into any other countries. ■



eTravel is taking to the road and its next stop is Namibia. It will hold a workshop in Windhoek on June 25 for agents who are considering a career as an ITC and would like to find out more about eTravel's offering. Pictured here with Garth are (from left) Tammy Hunt (operations director); and Avril-Leigh Shackleton (inland travel manager). More details on Travelinfo. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl



Top web stories



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- Round two for FlyGoAir
- TNW Pick: SAA questions Comair's agent incentives
- Bookings on SA's busiest route made easy
- Expect a drop in airfares

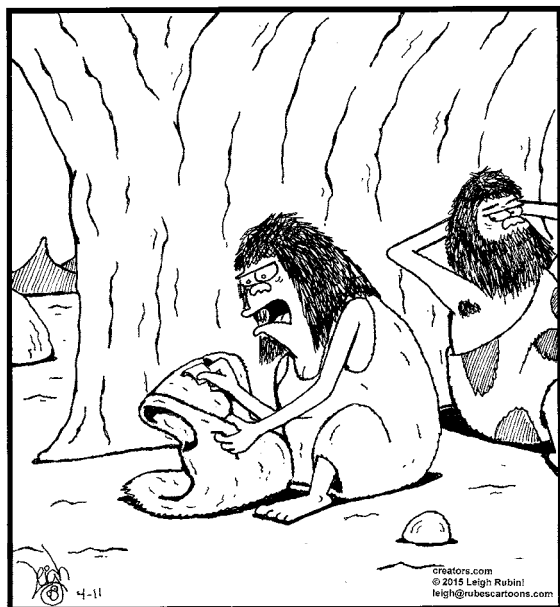
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Take a break!

Do you have corporate clients travelling on the Trans Kalahari Highway between South Africa and Namibia? Cresta Jwaneng in southern Botswana has noticed an increase in self-drive guests between Pretoria and Windhoek and Pretoria and Maun, positioning it as a “perfect stopover”. Pictured here, encouraging guests to stop-off, is Shane de Lange, gm Cresta Jwaneng.

Photo: Shannon Van Zyl



Carry-on bag allowance could get smaller

PASSENGERS could soon be faced with stricter carry-on luggage rules. New guidelines on the size of carry-on bags have been drafted by Iata.

Iata senior vp for airport, passenger, cargo and security, **Tom Windmuller**, says the perfect size for carry-on luggage has been decided between Boeing,

Airbus and Iata, something that, until now, has been an on-going problem for airlines.

Tom says Iata has communicated with 260 member airlines and has seen a favourable response so far.

The proposed rolling suitcase, measuring 55cm x 35cm x 20cm, is small enough to allow each

passenger to fit one bag in the overhead space above their seat. The bag will also eliminate confusion for different carry-on requirements between various airlines.

The bags are expected to be widely available by the end of the year and will be marked with a tag or label noting that it is 'Iata Cabin OK'. ■

To the point



The George Hotel in Ikoyi, Lagos, has opened its doors to the public. The five-star hotel, which is part of the Mantis Group, comprises 62 rooms, divided into pilot, standard, superior, and luxury rooms as well as two penthouse suites. The hotel also features two restaurants – buffet and a fine dining – a fitness centre, a gym, a cocktail bar, a pool deck, meeting rooms, an executive boardroom and a business centre.

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Bookings on SA's busiest route made easy

TRAVELSTART has launched Flapp for iOS and Android – “a two tap booking app” for flights between Johannesburg and Cape Town.

“The local airline industry is seeing a shift in power back into the hands of travellers. Flapp is a direct response to this evolution,” says spokesman, **Russell Jarvis**.

The app is secure and easy to use, and has been designed to satisfy the individual needs of a specific group of travellers who fly the Johannesburg-Cape

Town route regularly.

“Real-time fares from all airlines are the first thing visible when tapping on the Flapp app. Results can be filtered by either price or departure time and a user’s credit card details can be saved,” says Travelstart head of innovation, **Sergio Mello**. He adds that same-day bookings (up to two hours before a flight departs) are also available.

Booking patterns have shown that in the last year, 43% of passengers between Johannesburg and Cape Town

have booked their flights less than a week before departure, while more than 90% paid for their booking with a credit card.

Flapp offers a seven-day window of fares bookable for the week ahead. This lightweight design reduces app load time and data costs of the end user.

“The app is secure and makes the check-out process fast,” says Sergio.

The app is available for free download from the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. ■

Gautrain ups fares, revises timetable

THE Gautrain has increased the number of trains running at peak times and reduced the intervals between trains.

As of June 1, the number of trains has increased from five to six per peak hour and train service intervals

during peak periods have been reduced from 12 to 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, fares between Sandton and the airport have increased from R135 to R142, while Park Station to Pretoria has increased

from R64 to R68 during peak hours and R55 to R58 during off-peak hours.

The fare between Pretoria and Rhodesfield has also increased from R61 to R64 at peak time and from R55 to R58 at off-peak hours. ■

The warm heart of Africa



Malawi Tourism recently hosted a workshop at the Protea Hotel Balalaika to promote the destination it calls the Warm Heart of Africa. As a special treat, the tourism authority gave away a six-day Malawi holiday during a prize draw. Pictured here are: **Patricia Liabuba**, Malawi director of tourism, and **Salad Nthenda**, vice consul of tourism at the Malawi Consulate. Photo: Shannon van Zyl

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Budget

Travel Counsellors from around South Africa came together this month for the annual Travel Counsellors Conference, hosted at KZN's Fairmont Zimbali Resort and Spa. Dorine Reinstein reports.

Do agents need tour operators?

TRAVEL agents need to rely less on tour operators to sell packages and become more adept at servicing clients directly to stay competitive.

This was the word at the Travel Counsellors annual conference, held at the Fairmont Zimbali Resort and Spa from June 5-7.

Travel Counsellors' own dedicated tour operating system, Phenix, was growing from strength to strength and more TCs were taking it upon themselves to design and package holidays for their clients, the consortium's leaders said.

Kirsten Hughes, Travel Counsellors' commercial director, says tour operators in other countries are bypassing agents and going direct. "The world has changed significantly. In the UK, for example, tour operators started

cutting the agent out eight to 10 years ago."

She adds that travel agents who design their own packages for their clients are able to significantly increase their margins. "Tour operators would historically have made 30% margin, of which they pay the travel agent 15%. By doing it themselves, TCs can make double margins."

Although Phenix originally only offered accommodation options, the system now allows travel agents to book transfers, excursions, and flights – most recently LCCs.

Group md, **Steve Byrne**, says, in an age where a lot of businesses rely heavily on overrides, Travel Counsellors wants to go in a different direction.

"Look after the customer, then

you'll make enough money."

"Travel Counsellors own their own business and are therefore truly empowered to focus on the element of the business that produces the best result, which is talking to their clients," says **Mladen Lukic**, gm of Travel Counsellors SA.

Mladen says it's difficult for agents to say that they are customer-focused but then hand over the responsibility of packaging the client's holiday to someone else. Phenix allows travel agents to really cater for clients' wishes without being bound by the offering of a tour operator or being influenced by override agreements.

Kirsten adds that Phenix gives TCs much more control over the booking. "If something goes wrong, the agent can go directly to the hotel or the DMC to ensure

the problem is fixed," she says.

This doesn't mean there isn't a place for the tour operator, Mladen said. "The future can't be on the basis of segmentation: 'I'm a tour operator, you need to use me because there is no other option'. There has to be more value. If the tour operator provides value for our TCs and our travellers, then they will maintain their relevance." If a tour operator has an exceptional, in-control programme that will add value by giving customers a much better experience, then Travel Counsellors would encourage its members to maintain the relationship with the tour operator. "But it can't be a post office process, where the only reason I'm using you is because you are an easy way for me to buy a package," he says.

Transactional travel agency models will not survive

TRAVEL consultants needed to move away from "informing" and towards "inspiring" clients, **Mladen Lukic** said at the recent Travel Counsellors conference. "You need to do more than just give information."

TCs need to change their behaviour. "People shop and learn in a whole new way compared to a few years ago. You need to adapt."

TCs need to connect to their customers, building intimacy and trust and establishing their credibility. Don't rely on email, rather phone clients or, better still,

go see them, he said.

Clients can't get from brochures what they can get from a TC, **Steve Byrne** said. "People are drowning in information but starved for wisdom." There are only two reasons travel agents lose a booking, Steve said. The first is that it's just not the right customer for you. The second is that the travel agent was not able to demonstrate wisdom.

While other agents are chasing transactions, TCs need to put the customer first and do what's right for them, he said.



From left: **Bronwyn Remke** (Mozambique Tours and Ican Holidays) and **Travel Counsellor, Jacqui Mendes**, showcase their brightest colours.

Photos: Dorine Reinstein



Travel Counsellors group md, **Steve Byrne**, and commercial director, **Kirsten Hughes**, enjoy 'One Night in Morocco', one of the evening functions at the conference.

Travel Counsellors reveals ambitious future plans

IN OCTOBER 2014, Equistone Partners Europe acquired a stake in Travel Counsellors, creating a €3bn (R42bn) fund for the consortium to grow its business.

The group plans to continue its global expansion, as the company now has the means to finance acquisitions, says **Steve Byrne**.

But first on the agenda is to recruit more agents and help existing TCs grow their business, he says. "On average this year, globally, TCs have

grown their business by 10% year-on-year."

Steve predicted the group would double in size in the next three to five years because "the customer will buy into our model". "We will attract people to come to us because we are 100% committed to the customer. Even if it's financially not in our interest, we will always sell what's best for the customer." Travel Counsellors has also invested £2m (R39m) in a global brand awareness campaign. ■

Game lodges and Safaris



The Naked Agent

Scenario: A family of six are getting ready to celebrate their Dad's 60th in style and plan to escape to the bush for a big party. They do not have a specific destination in mind but want somewhere within driving distance.

Know your product

Pentravel, Rosebank

After feeling a bit lost when I entered the office, I chose to sit with a consultant who seemed hesitant to help me at first. The consultant proceeded to ask me the usual questions around dates, double or single rooms, etc. The agent recommended that Pilanesberg would be best for game watching but could not recommend any specific game lodges, adding that the agency

was closing soon and would only be able to assist me on Monday. The agent did not make eye contact and seemed eager to get my request over and done with, giving me a card only after I asked for it. The consultant took down my details and promised to email me options to choose from, which they did the following Monday.



STA Travel, Morningside

I was assisted by a friendly agent who asked the basic questions (how many people, when etc.) but did not ask which region we would like to visit or how far we wanted to travel, nor did they recommend any particular place. The consultant assured me that they would get back to me and took my details.

They followed up with two options, which were limited to the Pilanesberg region, but the quote did not contain enticing information. Although the agent was welcoming they did not appear to know much about game lodges.



Flight Centre, Hyde Park

WINNER

Tiffany-Jade Rae was friendly and welcoming. I told her my requirements and straight away she set off by asking me loads of questions, even if we had special requests, such as a special birthday bash dinner or extra game drives. She showed me a brochure of two of the places she recommended and, drawing from first-hand experience, suggested that one particular lodge would be a perfect fit for us. Not leaving



Tiffany-Jade Rae

things there, she promised to email more options. She also promoted the Flight Centre voucher cards very well. The book of vouchers includes activity and restaurant options in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. She said each guest would get one to use at golf courses, restaurants and spas. Not only was Tiffany-Jade helpful, she was also funny, cracking jokes throughout the consultation.



Tiffany-Jade's top tips

1. Travellers are normally looking for something specific from a game lodge experience and, with such a wide range of options on our doorsteps, it is important to ask for details, such as what occasion it is and do they have a preferred location.
2. Add value wherever possible. Introduce the client to properties that include free game drives or are on a half-board basis or offer a private dinner in a boma for a special occasion. Explain the rate difference between a standard and a deluxe room, or a higher rated property. Give them the choice to upgrade and embellish their bush break to their liking.
3. Knowing your product is vital. It's imperative to be able to link the client to the right property that will make their breakaway to the bush exactly what they imagined, if not more.

Take note!

The purpose of the Naked Agent in this series is to assess the experience from only a sales skills perspective and not the effectiveness of the travel agency. TNW believes that sales skills are increasingly important to travel agents and, in many cases, improvement in selling skills is the easiest way to increase the prosperity of the agency and its consultants. The Naked Agent is designed to raise awareness of the opportunity and build awareness of the need.



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This is one of Africa's biggest soccer derbies and ranks amongst the best derbies in the world. It is one of the must-do things in GeePee. The experience starts way before match day with rival fans (almost the entire country divided in half) exchanging words and punting their teams.

It is broadcast to over 6 million viewers across SA, Africa and the Middle East, serving as a true advertisement for destination Gauteng, confirming our standing as Africa's leading events, sporting and entertainment capital. Soccer fans may use the derby as an 'experience GeePee' and 'explore Soweto' weekend, mixing

soccer with a visit to some of the country's top historic and heritage sites. They dine and wine in Africa's biggest township, and the brave take a bungee jump from the famous twin towers e'Kasi.

The derby sees soccer fans using some of the many backpacking and budget accommodation facilities in the region – so a simple soccer match contributes to the economy of Soweto. Gauteng Tourism, working with our various product owners, promotes affordable Soweto Derby accommodation and experience packages. Soweto Hotel, Lebo's Backpackers, Mama Lolo BnB, the Reef Hotel and Gold Reef City are some of the places to stay and enjoy a remarkable Soweto experience with a focus on township experience, sports and lifestyle.



Catching a bite before the soccer match at the Neighbourgoods Market in Braamfontein

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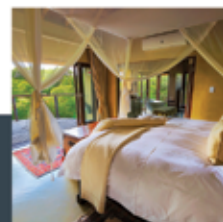
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GAME LODGE COLLECTION

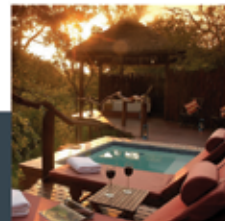
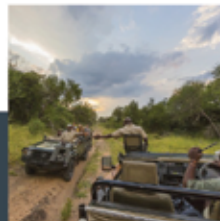


5 Star Lodges

	Suites	Beds
Thornybush Game Lodge	20	40
Waterside Lodge	20	40
Shumbalala Game Lodge	4	8
Simbambili Sabi Sand	8	16
The River Lodge	4	8

4 Star Lodges

	Rooms	Beds
Monwana Lodge	4	8
Chapungu Tented Bush Camp	8	16
Serondella Lodge	4	8
Waterbuck Lodge	4	8
n'Kaya Lodge	4	8
Jackalberry Lodge	7	16
n'Kelenga S/C Bush Camp	4	8



Game lodges and Safaris



Cost remains a key consideration for holidaymakers considering a bush holiday. Max Marx reports.

Customers want attractive rates

THE Kruger National Park remains the top safari destination for South Africans, with game lodges in the Pilanesberg, the Waterberg and Madikwe also well frequented by Gauteng residents, who enjoy their proximity to Johannesburg, attractive rates and malaria-free status, which is important for families with children.

Cost-conscious South Africans frequent four-star lodges rather than five-star options, says **Marcha Lourens**, leisure consultant at Reynolds Travel Centre. They also prefer fully inclusive packages, which offer better value.

Attractive rates are the primary reason Gautengers enjoy visiting Bakubung and Kwa Maritane in the Pilanesberg Game Reserve, says **Mary Goslin**, co-owner of Sure Penzance Travel in Alberton. The Big Five game viewing and proximity to Johannesburg are further pluses. Mary says many private game lodges are priced out of reach of most South Africans, and that the different rate structures offered to overseas visitors are often difficult to explain to customers.

In the Eastern Cape, Kwantu Private Game Reserve and Amakhala Game Reserve are good options for cost-

conscious South Africans, says **Marius Breytenbach**, Club Travel Algoa Bay's branch manager. "These lodges offer all-inclusive packages, good rates, great weekend specials and a 'wow' experience." For a five-star experience he recommends Pumba Private Game Reserve & Spa and Shamwari Game Reserve.

Another popular Eastern Cape option is Premier Hotels & Resorts' Mpongo Private Game Reserve, which offers good value and a wide range of fun activities, team building and conferencing.

Combo tours to Zambia's Victoria Falls and Botswana's Chobe National Park are in demand, says **Allan Wolman**, owner of XL Rosebank Travel. The agency also sends people to lodges in Botswana's Okavango Delta, Kenya and Tanzania.

The problem with booking lodges in Africa, says Marcha, is that rates are quoted in US dollars, impacting the rand amount due to the rate of exchange. "As a result, South Africans often opt to stay in hotels rather than lodges in places like Zambia."

The absence of exchange rate benefits means that South African

visitors to Thornybush are generally more price sensitive than their overseas counterparts, says **Nic Griffin**, ce of the Thornybush Luxury Game Lodge Collection. "Most South Africans travel to our lodges by car, although there are several daily flights offered to Hoedspruit and Skukuza from Cape Town and Johannesburg."

The most popular way for South Africans to have a wildlife experience is a self-drive, self-catering holiday in the Kruger, where night drives and walking safaris can be enjoyed, says Marcha.

The market for private game reserves is growing, particularly in Limpopo, says **Rina Cilliers**, Legend Hospitality Group's gm: Sales, Marketing and Reservations. "Guests to these reserves appreciate the intimacy and better game-viewing opportunities they provide." An emerging trend, she says, sees guests opting for direct online bookings, specifically through mobile devices, and they tend to shop around for the best possible prices. "They are also making use of operators specialising in last-minute deals, such as mtbeds." And booking lead times, she says, are much shorter for South Africans than overseas guests.

Book it!

- Premier Hotels & Resorts is offering a fully inclusive, full board package at Mpongo Private Game Reserve for R4 530 for two people per night, with an additional 20% discount for pensioners. It includes two activities and return airport transfers and is valid for travel until September 30.
- Cresta Mowana Safari Resort & Spa in Botswana is offering a three-night package from US\$360pps (R4 405) or single supplement US\$450 (R5 506), valid from December 1, 2015 to January 15, 2016 for SA residents only. The package includes three nights' accommodation, three breakfasts, one signature massage, a boat cruise and game drive. Bed levies and park entry fees are excluded.
- Legend Hospitality Group is offering South Africans a winter special at its lodges in the Entabeni Safari Conservancy, valid until August 31. Guests can spend the night at Lakeside Lodge or Ravineside Lodge for R1 095pppn sharing, at Hanglip Mountain Lodge or Kingfisher Lodge for R1 695pppns, and at Wildside Safari Camp for R945pppns.



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How to upsell!

KEEPING abreast of safari trends can help agents looking to upsell a safari holiday. For instance, combination holidays, where visitors can enjoy different game experiences, are becoming very popular, says Thornybush's **Nic Griffin**.

An example is a stay at Simbambili in the Sabi Sand where leopard sightings are abundant, combined with a stay at one of Thornybush's 11 lodges.

Combine a bush and beach experience, says Legend's **Rina Cilliers**. "Agents can also upsell by offering a tour of a cultural village, or booking a traditional African dinner for them."

Agents should also consider packaging game lodges with events and other activities happening near the game lodge, suggests **Henk Bredenoord**, Premier Hotels & Resorts business development manager.

XL Rosebank Travel's **Allan Wolman** points out that agents can upsell

Botswana over the Kruger National Park.

"It takes as long to fly to Maun and go to the Okavango Delta as it does to fly to Kruger. And the private concessions in Botswana are mostly tented camps; all unfenced and very luxurious."

"Give clients options," says **Marcha Lourens** of Reynolds Travel Centre. "If they ask for four-star, add in a five-star too and point out the value of the five-star lodge."

Agents should highlight special features available, like getting up later for game drives, or going on late-night drives when something has been spotted, says **Mary Goslin** of Sure Penzance Travel.

"Where guests are staying in Pilanesberg lodges, agents can upsell a night or two in Sun City, or if they're in the Kruger, sell them a night or two on the Panorama Route."

More selling tips

- Profile your clients correctly. Find out their budget and what they want out of the experience.
- Know the various packages available so that you can recommend the best experience at the best price.
- Go on educational trips so you can sell with first-hand knowledge.
- Check whether lodges allow children – some lodges have no-child policies.
- Book a game lodge through an operator. They're familiar with the properties and pay commission.
- When requesting a quote, specify whether it's a South African resident or visitor from abroad as rates may differ.

Lodge Link set to boost safari travel

AIRLINK'S Lodge Link System is now available for sale via GDS, online, travel agents and tour operators' computerised reservation systems.

The network, which was launched in conjunction with Airlink's franchise partner, SAA, boosts existing connections to Skukuza and Nelspruit/Kruger Mpumalanga (KMIA) airports by creating a network between airstrips at Arathusa, Londolozi, Sabi Sabi, Singita and Ulusaba.

The new system makes it possible to create multi-carrier, multi-sector itineraries, providing greater choice for planning a safari holiday. Lodge Link System supplements the routes already offered by Airlink, which concentrate on key leisure destinations, flying travellers from Cape Town to KMIA and Skukuza; Durban to KMIA; Johannesburg to Skukuza, KMIA, Maun, Kasane and Vilanculos; KMIA to Livingstone and Nelspruit to Vilanculos. The added flexibility makes it possible for travellers to book flights from London to Ulusaba, for instance.

The Lodge Link System is being

phased in, having been planned with an eye to market demand. The first phase sees services between the following destinations being launched on July 1: Londolozi and Skukuza, Sabi Sabi and KMIA, and Skukuza and Nelspruit, with onward connections to Livingstone and Vilanculos.

The next phase, which will be active after August 1, focuses on services between Ulusaba and Skukuza and also KMIA. Ulusaba has been identified as a key hub in the area, as the airstrip provides connectivity to a number of lodges, including the Game, Cliff and Safari Lodges in Ulusaba, &Beyond's Exeter River and Leadwood lodges, Inyati, Leopard Hills, Savanna and Dulini.

The final phase, set to become active from September, will see services to Arasutha and Singita commencing. Again, these are key regional nodes; Arasutha, in particular, is of strategic importance as it provides access to Chitwa Chitwa, Cheetah Plains, Elephant Plains, Simbambili, Nkorho and Djuma Vuyatela.

Thornybush upgrades



Thornybush spent R1,7m on soft upgrades to furniture on the main deck, dining area and reception at Thornybush Game Lodge during the 2014/15 financial year. A further R2,6m will be spent this year, renewing the decking at Main Lodge, retiling all suite bathrooms and refurbishing en-suite bathrooms at Chapungu Luxury Tented Camp (pictured), and installing pool heaters in Simbambili suites. An additional suite will be built at Jackalberry Lodge. Photo: Thornybush

Gauteng is rich in safari experiences

GAUTENG presents a wealth of wildlife experiences.

For those who wish to safari Big Five style, the Dinokeng Game Reserve is the place to go. The reserve recently introduced an 80km self-drive route, with plans to extend it to 110km. Self-drivers can access the reserve via a dedicated entrance gate. Entrance is R220 per vehicle, plus a conservation fee of R30 per adult and R20 per child. The route is safe for any kind of vehicle, with areas only accessible by 4x4 clearly marked. A variety of lodges and restaurants offer activities such as bush picnics, guided bush walks, bass fishing, hot-air balloon rides, sunset cruises, and wine tastings.

Visitors can also combine guided game drives with township tours.

The Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve in the Cradle of Humankind has more than 30 animal species, while the Lion Park in Honeydew is home to more than 85 lions, including rare White lions, cheetah, wild dog and hyena. Visitors can interact with lions at both destinations.

Plains game can be viewed at the Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve and at Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve south of Johannesburg. Birding enthusiasts, meanwhile, should head for the Marievale Bird Sanctuary near Nigel or the Abe Bailey Nature Reserve near Carltonville.

New developments at Legend

IN MAY, Legend Lodges, Hotels & Resorts rebranded as the Legend Hospitality Group. As part of the rebrand, the group will welcome new products under the Legend banner.

One such property is the Phofu Eco Safari Lodge in Botswana's Central Kalahari Game Park. The lodge provides luxury tented accommodation for 18 guests.

News flash

Mpongo Private Game Reserve is extending its restaurant to accommodate 120 diners, up from 60. The extra space can be used as a separate function/meeting room. Guests can also use the new Nyala Bush Experience Lapa (100 delegates) or Edu-Centre for conferences.

Did you know?

SAA Voyager and The Thornybush Collection have joined forces to offer exclusive prices to Voyager Lifetime Platinum and Platinum card members for five- and four-star lodges in the Collection. Partnered by SA Express, rates include flights to Hoedspruit from JNB and CPT, with a 20-minute transfer to the Thornybush Private Nature Reserve. Voyager has also negotiated that the first night of a three-night stay at any of the participating lodges will be complimentary to Lifetime Platinum and Platinum members, their spouse/partners and up to two others sharing a suite. For the duration of the trip, guests of Voyager premium members will be charged at the same rate as the premium members. Valid until July 7 and from December 1-20. ■

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North vs South

Despite the Cape throwing a howling gale at the 40 golfers participating in the third annual 'North versus South' golf event, by the time the tournament ended the following day the weather smiled and showed the Cape at its best. Prize-giving went into the early hours on a roof-top bar in the middle of a city. In the end, the result was not as important as the spirit of camaraderie that was a credit to both golf clubs. Pictured (from left) are: **Robert Jasper** (Tsogo Sun); and **Marco Cristifoli** (Harvey World Travel); **Terry Munro** (Beachcomber Tours); **Bronwyn Brigden** (Western Cape); **Vito Polo** (Beachcomber Tours); and **Jose Cruz** (Bidvest Travel). Photo: Dave Marsh

Starwood announces Sheraton 2020

STARWOOD Hotels and Resorts will launch a new premier tier, Sheraton Grand, along with more than 150 new Sheraton hotels worldwide by 2020. It forms part of the group's 10-point plan – Sheraton 2020 – which seeks to put Sheraton Hotels and Resorts back into the global spotlight.

Over 100 premier Sheraton Grand hotels will be introduced, with Starwood focusing on global gateways to lure high-value travellers and create a worldwide network. Under the Sheraton 2020 plan, the group will encourage more owners to renovate properties to achieve new Sheraton Grand status. **Dave Marr**, global brand leader for Sheraton, says work on Sheraton 2020 is well under way, with initiatives scheduled to roll out this month and a new brand positioning and global advertising campaign to launch in September.

&Beyond launches mobile camping in Botswana

&BEYOND has launched six new mobile camping safaris in Botswana. They are differentiated by length, regions visited and the type of accommodation and are currently available to book, with all six expeditions running from February 2016. The six- to eight-night all-inclusive safaris include the Chobe National Park, Savute, Okavango Delta and Nxai Pans National Park. The expeditions depart on set dates and can be booked for small groups, individual travellers and photography enthusiasts. Children under 12 are not allowed. The safaris include fully serviced mobile camping facilities, each hosted by a private guide. A minimum of two and a maximum of six guests are allowed per departure. Accommodation is in spacious dome tents with ensuite bathrooms, separate toilets and hot bucket showers. There is no electricity in the camps but cellphones, cameras and other electronic devices can be charged on the safari vehicle.



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Pictured at the launch event of Durban's Watercrest Sunshine store are (from left): **Natasha Hazell**, shop manager of Musgrave; **Sean Hough**, Pentravel ceo; **Jasmine Monk**, shop manager of Watercrest; and **Vicky Steinhardt**, land product manager. Photo: Dorine Reinstein

Pentravel opens new 'Sunshine' stores

DORINE REINSTEIN

PENTRAVEL opened its first 'Sunshine' store in Durban's Watercrest Mall last month, followed by a second store in Pretoria's Woodlands Mall. The new retail concept is designed to enhance one-on-one consultations with customers.

"The inspiration behind our new stores is simple: to elevate our customers' experience. This means giving them our undivided attention, understanding their interests, such as cruising, skiing, and then advising on holidays that match what they're looking for," says **Sean Hough**, ceo of Pentravel.

Given that a quarter of Pentravel's sales are walk-ins, Sean says its retail stores are central to its continued strong growth,

which – despite prevailing industry challenges and tough economic trading conditions – has increased by 734% since the recession in 2009, up from a R2,7 million loss in 2009 to R20 million profit PBIT in 2014, he says. Sean attributes the success to the Pentravel consultants. "Without a doubt our success as a business is based on our people. At a time when we experienced losses we could have cut staff and stopped investing in travel and staff incentives but we didn't. In fact we went on a recruitment drive to look for people whom we considered outstanding. The ability to find outstanding people is the ultimate throttle on our ability to grow as a business and often we feel we are more of a recruitment business than

a travel business."

Customers walking into the new, ultra-modern stores can browse one of the various tablets at the iPad station for inspiration for their next holiday before chatting to a travel consultant, who are all now also equipped with 'interactive' desks that allow both the client and the travel consultant to see the screens. The colour palette has also changed; previously bright green and grey, the new look is fresh with white and plywood being added to the aesthetics.

Pentravel has had a phenomenal response from consumers in Durban to the first shop, Sean says. "It's really made the impact we were hoping for. Even the malls have thanked us for raising the bar in customer experience." ■

Zimbabwe flyafrika to launch three new routes

ZIMBABWE flyafrika will add three new routes from Harare – Lusaka, Lubumbashi and Bulawayo.

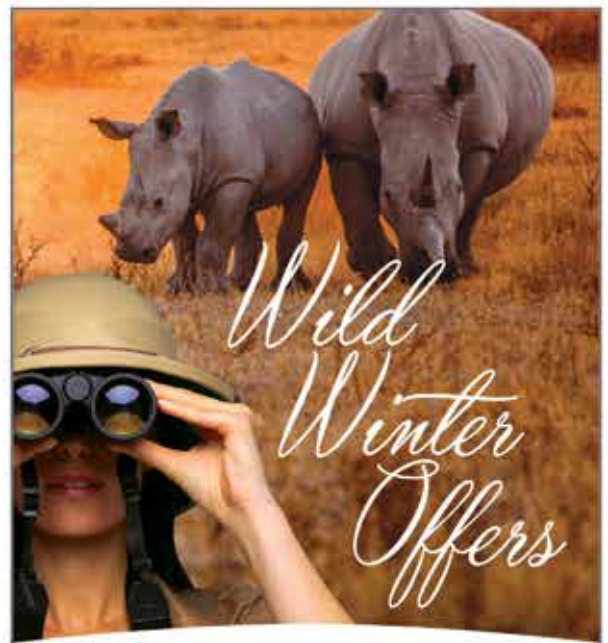
Flights between Harare and Bulawayo and Harare and Lusaka commence on July 27, while flights between Harare and Lubumbashi will commence on September 14. All three routes are now on sale.

The Lusaka and Bulawayo flights will operate six times a week, while the Lubumbashi service will operate daily. All flights are operated by Boeing 737 aircraft.

"Our new network allows travellers departing from Johannesburg to connect over Harare to Lubumbashi with a convenient 30-minute stop and fares

that are 50% less than other airlines," the airline said in a statement.

Zimbabwe flyafrika currently operates twice-daily flights between Harare and Johannesburg, daily flights between Bulawayo and Johannesburg and thrice-weekly flights between Victoria Falls and Johannesburg. ■



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Sun City Cabanas from R 2185 pps

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For more information call your ASATA Travel Agent or a Dream Maker on +27 11-217 5555 or email: dreams@scdreams.com

Dreams



TERMS & CONDITIONS: Valid SA passport holders only. Valid for travel between 1 Jun and 30 Aug 2015. Min 3 nights required. Not valid for groups. Not valid for travel over weekends, public holidays and peak periods. All subject to hotel occupancy levels and availability. Accommodation rates are based on luxury room rates at the Palace, Cascades, Main Hotel and on Standard Lake facing rooms at the Cabanas. All services are subject to availability. Standard terms and conditions apply. E&OE.

Seabourn reveals signature lounge

SEABOURN has revealed The Club lounge on the 600-guest *Seabourn Encore*, which is scheduled to enter service in December 2016. The lounge will feature custom-crafted cocktails, fine wines, live music and a casino. Facilities also include a pool lounge area and two whirlpool spas. All suites have a private veranda.

Carnival Vista to set sail in May 2016

CARNIVAL'S newest ship, the *Carnival Vista*, will introduce new outdoor attractions and indoor spaces specifically with families in mind, says **Christine Duffy**, Carnival's president. Outdoor activities include SkyRide, a suspended cycling experience, and WaterWorks, the largest aqua park in the fleet. Entertainment options include an IMAX theatre and a Comedy Club hosted by George Lopez. For the kids, there's the Dr. Seuss Bookville and other play areas. The Family Harbor has 96 specially designed 'family ergonomic' accommodations, including extra-large family suites for five guests and featuring two bathrooms. Here guests receive benefits including 24/7 card-key access to the Family Harbor Lounge and free meals for kids under 12. *Carnival Vista* is scheduled to enter service in Europe from May 1, 2016, then reposition to New York for a series of voyages in November, followed by a year-round Caribbean service departing from Miami later that month.

Sail the Seven Seas



Regent Seven Seas Cruises hosted a breakfast last month at the Fairlawns Boutique Hotel in Sandton, to showcase the all-new *Seven Seas Explorer* – "the most luxurious ship ever built" – to agents. Pictured here, at the event, are (from left): **Roland Müller**, Flight Centre SA marketing manager, niche brands; **Ralph De Klijin**, Regent's sales manager: Europe and Southern Africa; **Janine Pretorius**, Regent's general sales agent; and **Terry Annandale**, travel consultant at Lara Travel. Photo: Darise Foster.



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Book automated RTW fares on Sabre

SABRE has partnered with Star Alliance to offer automated round the world (RTW) and circle trip (CT) airfares through the Sabre GDS.

The new automated booking technology will help travel agents reduce the cost of selling RTW and CT products.

The new technology provides a complete fare price to the agent for the passenger's entire journey. Previously, when booking multi-destination RTW itineraries for travellers, agents had to manually construct the fare after calculating the

mileage and checking the fare conditions of a passenger's journey. Agencies will also benefit from reduced agency debit memo costs sent by airlines when there is a discrepancy between the fare sold to the customer by the agency and the airline's published price.

"Together with Star Alliance we can now offer a simpler way of booking and pricing RTW fares," says Sabre senior vp of EMEA, **Harald Eisenaecher**. "We are pleased to be working with Sabre to open a further distribution channel through which

our RTW and CT fares can be easily booked and automatically priced. Leveraging technology to simplify and accelerate complex processes is a key benefit that an alliance can provide. In this case, we now enable even more travel agents in even more markets to quickly and easily respond to customer wishes for round the world travel, which often can involve highly individualised and complicated routings," says Star Alliance vp of commercial and business development, **Horst Findeisen**. ■

Nikita Tavlet selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Air Seychelles.** Return economy fare ex-JNB to Paris via Seychelles from R7 456 (includes airport taxes). Special is valid for sales until June 26 and for travel until November 30.
- **Kenya Airways.** London promotion – fares ex-JNB are from R7 236 (including taxes). Offer is available for travel until December 1. Offer is available online.
- **Holiday Tours.** Five-night packages are from R4 380pp sharing. Rate includes return airport-hotel transfers, five nights' accommodation at Harrah's Las Vegas, full-day bus tour to the Grand Canyon South Rim and IMAX tickets. Offer is valid from August 1-31.
- **Thompsons Holidays.** Seven nights at the four-star Avani Seychelles Barbarons Resort and Spa from R19 022pp sharing. Package includes return flights ex-Johannesburg to Mahé on Air Seychelles, return airport-hotel transfers, accommodation including breakfast daily, free WiFi, yoga lessons and snorkelling. Offer is valid from September 1-30.
- **Edusport Travel.** F1 Italian Grand Prix – land-only packages are from R7 295pp sharing. Offer includes three nights' accommodation in a Milan hotel, daily breakfast, three-day general admission event tickets. Offer available September 4-7.



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

Obituary

TRAVEL industry icon, **Matie Geldenhuys**, died on June 9 after an illness. He was 72 years old.

Matie, who held a BCom Honours Degree from the University of Stellenbosch, started his career in the banking sector. He joined Indo Travel in 1978, and founded Maties Travel with his wife, Benny, in 1981.

He was known as someone who treated all staff with respect, paying no attention to hierarchies. Matie was passionate about travel and would inspire and sponsor his staff to explore the world, says **Arno van der Merwe**, gm of Maties Travel. "We are all just travellers of this world," Matie said frequently.

He was a people's person with a big heart. "He was strong, humorous and brought an explosion of positive energy to the lives of others," says Arno.

"Matie was a legend in the travel industry. Although we were in competition with one another, he was my colleague and a person that always earned the respect of the people around him," says ex-owner of Indo Jet Travel, **Jannie Gildenhuys**, who remained a firm friend after meeting on a rugby tour in 1974.

Jan Jenkins, md of Umvuselelo adds: "He was a true character, gentleman and professional. The industry is a sadder place without him." "Heartbreaking. I called Matie a friend, mentor and boss," says **Ronel Blom**, who worked with Matie for 26 years and says he taught her everything she knows.

Appointments

■ **Delta Air Lines** has promoted **Nathaniel Pieper** to senior vp of Europe, Middle East and Africa, effective August. Nathaniel has 18 years' industry experience. In his new position he will maximise long-term growth opportunities for Delta's



joint venture agreement with Air France KLM and Alitalia as well as the partnership with Virgin Atlantic Airways.

■ **Jacques Heath** has been appointed new gm of Tsogo Sun's Southern Sun Hyde Park.



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GLOBAL CLIENT MANAGER – JHB North

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WHOLESALE TRAVEL CONSULTANT – JHB North

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SENIOR CONSULTANT – JHB North

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TNW7392

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Emirates has signed a codeshare partnership with France's SNCF TGV Air Rail Lines, enabling passengers to book trips to SNCF's 19 destinations on an Emirates ticket. Customers can book via Emirates' website and benefit from the convenience of holding a single ticket. First- and business-class passengers will automatically be booked in first class on TGV trains. Destinations that will be more easily accessible from the Emirates-TGV Air service include Aix en Provence, Champagne-Ardenne, Marseilles Saint-Charles and Strasbourg, among others. All routes leave from Paris-Charles de Gaulle. "Emirates already flies more than 1,2m passengers to and from France every year. With TGV Air, we're connecting French regions to our global network and facilitating inbound and outbound traffic," says **Thierry Antinori**, Emirates executive vp and cco.

Letter to the Editor



Agents, you're losing out on millions

Cruises International exhibited at the Eid Shopping Festival, held from June 4-7 at the Northgate Dome in Johannesburg. We were there to create awareness of our cruise holidays available in Dubai and the Arabian Gulf, led by Royal Caribbean.

There were only a handful of other tourism entities exhibiting and only one retail travel store.

I was surprised by the sheer number of people and the high level of activity taking place at most stands. I was also pleasantly surprised by the amount of people who were aware of Royal Caribbean and had repeatedly sailed on our ships. A great number had already booked their next cruise or were in the process of doing so.

What deeply disappointed me, though, was to find out that the vast majority of those

who held reservations, or were planning to make one, were using the Internet! Some people even asked us if Royal Caribbean had just started operating in South Africa!

Surely these consumers know of travel agents? Why has no agent approached them? The lost commissions on the cruise sales alone must be in the millions of rands!

This particular audience is so well defined, culturally and geographically. Why have agents, who are located and live among them, failed to capture such an active and vibrant market? Is it perhaps because most members of our industry lack the drive, enthusiasm and ambition to run a successful and ever-growing business? Is it a lack of sales skills?

Together with most other suppliers in our industry, we spend endless time and

money to encourage, motivate, train and financially support our retail partners to increase sales and capture a larger share of a growing market.

We all complain about sales 'lost' to the Internet but are we actually doing anything to show the market that using a locally based travel professional is a much better option? Or have we just given up?

I have witnessed the same pattern of apathy, mediocrity and failure too many times. People blame anything and everyone for their shortcomings but they never take charge of their lives and their businesses. They never get out there, take on the challenge and capture the opportunities which, as this experience proves once more, obviously and abundantly exist.

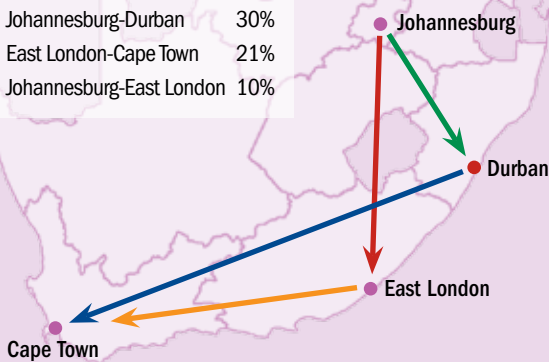
George Argyropoulos
 Ceo, Cruises International ■

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Let's have Durban flights!

Which route do you think FlySafair should include in its service offering?

- Durban-Cape Town 39%
- Johannesburg-Durban 30%
- East London-Cape Town 21%
- Johannesburg-East London 10%



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'Minister team' to address concerns over new regulations

AN INTER-ministerial task team, led by Home Affairs minister, **Malusi Gigaba**, will be established to look at matters pertaining to the implementation of the immigration regulations, with a view to striking a balance between SA's economic development and its security.

The new legislation, which came into effect on June 1, requires families travelling to and from SA with children aged under 18 to produce unabridged birth certificates.

"The team is expected to discuss and engage with the concerns with the aim of

finding ways to address the unintended consequences brought about by the implementation of these regulations," said acting Cabinet spokesperson, **Phumla Williams**.

Asata and Satsa say, while they are encouraged that consultation will finally take place, they remain disappointed that the review is limited to issues around implementation and not an amendment to or an abolishment of the regulations. The inbound industry has been particularly hard hit, with a

32% drop in air tickets sold to SA alone.

"We will, regardless, work within the review process and provide data and information on the confusing manner in which these regulations have been implemented to date," said **David Frost**, ceo Satsa.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Migration will continue to relook at all the aspects relating to migrants who are in the country. "This work will assist in providing synergy between migration and our laws," said Phumla. ■

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