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## Delays cause SATC exodus

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE privatisation of SATC, which was earmarked for the end of 2014, has encountered delays and obstacles, leading to the exit of a number of franchisees who have joined competing consortiums. Franchisee numbers have almost halved, declining from 86 in 2008 to 48 today.

SATC ceo, **Bulelwa Koyana**, says the reason for the resignation of members in the past year has been the delay in finalising the divestment process. However, she is confident that there is a bright future for SATC. "We continue to recruit members and we have been successful over this period."

"It is very sad," says a previous SATC franchisee. "SAA should have followed

the same strategy as Lufthansa with regard to its divestment of Lufthansa City Centre and handed over the consortium to the franchisees to run. Lufthansa City Centre started with 100 members; today the consortium is 650 members strong worldwide."

SAA had not responded to TNW's questions about the reasons behind the delays for the sale at time of going to print. However, in the SAA Group's integrated financial report, which was published at the beginning of the year, SAA said the divestment of SATC continued to take foremost priority. "To ensure the long-term viability of the business, it is critical that the divestment process be completed as soon as possible," the report said.

SAA admitted in the report that there had been a great deal of uncertainty arising

from the divestment process, with a risk of further franchisee loss. "Competitors have apparently been making approaches to some franchisees with the intention of persuading them to join their consortiums. SATC head office has continued to monitor the situation closely and has been implementing a retention plan."

The dual role of SAA as both a supplier to and a shareholder in SATC presented a conflict because SAA is unable to invest further in SATC without alienating other retail groups who are responsible for 96% of the airline's SA retail revenue. "As a shareholder, SAA is conflicted as it needs to comply with the Competition Act. The consequence

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Hello, China!

Air Mauritius has officially launched flights to Chengdu, China. It's the fourth destination in China served by the airline, which already flies to Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing. Flights depart Mauritius every Monday at 17h45 and arrive in Chengdu at 08h00 the next day. Flights depart Chengdu on Tuesdays at 23h30 and arrive in Mauritius at 05h35 the next day. **Carla Da Silva**, Air Mauritius regional manager for Africa and Latin America, explores the new destination. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl.

## JetStar Tours' doors are still open

DORINE REINSTEIN

JETSTAR Tours has not closed its doors and is still operational.

In the article 'Tour op businesses see double-digit growth', TNW incorrectly reported that JetStar Tours closed its

doors earlier this year (TNW July 29).

When TNW tried to verify whether the tour operator had closed down, it found that the company's website was marked as 'coming soon' and the listed phone number wasn't connected. Also the

lata numbers attributed to Al Kajee (Pty) Ltd under which JetStar Tours is trading were no longer valid.

However, JetStar Tours explained to TNW this week that the company was in the process of re-launching its website to

include an online booking tool and other new features. The new site will be running within two months, said **Shameema Desai** of JetStar.

She said that although the number on the website was not operational, the tour operator

could be reached at a temporary number, 087 285 5391. Shameema further explained that the company was now ticketing through another travel agency.

TNW apologises for the error. ■



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# Agent association takes action against LH

DORINE REINSTEIN  
AND NATASHA SCHMIDT

ECTAA (European Community Travel Agents Association) has filed a formal complaint against the Lufthansa Group with the EU Commission, claiming that the group's plan to introduce a GDS surcharge on September 1 is a violation of the GDS Code of Conduct and is discriminatory. The association is also investigating the legalities in terms of European competition rules.

Lufthansa has proposed that travel agents bypass the hefty DCC by booking on the LH Group Agent Platform. ECTAA says the agent platform qualifies as a computer reservation system, which makes Lufthansa a 'parent carrier' and therefore the airline will need to comply with the Code of Conduct governing parent carriers or reservation systems. This means the airline can't discriminate against another distribution channel.

The GDS code of conduct, stipulated in EU Regulation No. 80/2009, states:

- A parent carrier shall neither directly nor indirectly discriminate in favour of its own CRS by linking the use of any specific CRS by a subscriber with the receipt of any commission or other incentive or disincentive for the sale of its transport products.
- A parent carrier shall neither directly nor indirectly discriminate in favour of its own CRS by requiring the use of any specific CRS by a subscriber for sale or issue of tickets for any transport products provided either

directly or indirectly by itself.

In South Africa, Asata was in the process of taking legal advice on the matter before determining the best way forward, **Otto de Vries**, ceo of Asata told *TNW*.

The Lufthansa Group says it is operating entirely within the law. "The introduction of the DCC is fully compliant with all legal requirements and has of course been checked carefully in advance of the announcement."

**"Asata is in the process of taking legal advice on the matter before determining the best way forward."**

### A step back

Not only could the promotion of the platform be illegal, ECTAA says, it also constitutes a "considerable step backwards to the currently highly automated booking and ticketing processes through the GDS".

**Ewa Grabiak Zach**, legal adviser for ECTAA, told *TNW* the Lufthansa agent platform would hinder travel agents' access to the PNR. "In the current system, the PNR is hosted by the GDS and in case of rebooking, refunds or cancellations, the travel agent has direct access to the passenger's PNR. If the booking will be processed via the LH agent platform, the PNR will be directly created and hosted by Lufthansa. Travel agents will not be able to make any modifications. The only solution will be to contact the Lufthansa call centre. It is obvious that such a system will be

cost-inefficient."

Price comparison will also be a problem on the Lufthansa platform. Ewa says there will be no objective references to compare the prices displayed on the platform and the content displayed in the other channels.

Lastly, Ewa says the GDS offers a number of functionalities, interconnected with the back office systems of agencies, which allow travel agents to efficiently process invoices, issue tickets, report sales to the BSP system, prepare account statements, etc. All those functionalities are not included in the LH agent platform, resulting in added costs for the travel agent.

Meanwhile, the Lufthansa Group is sticking to its guns, saying it is in talks with retail agency partners on how best to implement the agency platform into their businesses.

"Distribution costs have increased. With the introduction of the surcharge, we strive for a clearer cost differentiation that should be achieved between the various distribution channels. The travel agencies will stay an important distribution partner for us and our common customers. In order to better correspond to the customer needs in relation with the distribution channels we have to find modern, efficient and more cost-efficient ways of distribution together with our partners. We are therefore in close contact with travel agencies to discuss how we can implement this," SWISS vp of Sales and Marketing International, **Peter Pullem**, said in recent interview when visiting South Africa. ■

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## Airbnb eyes SA expansion

DARISE FOSTER

SHARING economy platform, Airbnb, plans to establish a local presence in South Africa as it looks to build on the "rapid growth" that has seen the country become its largest market on the African continent.

This was revealed by newly appointed gm for the Middle East and Africa, **Nicola D'Elia**, who spoke to *TNW* on

the sidelines of a recent visit to Johannesburg.

"We will have local representation such as a regional marketing manager based in South Africa working closely with the Airbnb community and brand ambassadors," Nicola said.

The team will focus on forging relationships with the local government as well as tourism bodies to propel the reach of the product,

he said. "I think we are in a unique position to help boost tourism, both outbound and inbound, and this shows in the results." To date, Airbnb has enjoyed over 160% outbound travel from South Africa and over 230% inbound.

Ceo, **Brian Chesky**, added that the African market was growing faster than the US, almost doubling every year.

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## MSC launches new loyalty programme

CARINA BORRALHO

MSC Cruises has launched a new loyalty programme, MSC Voyagers Club.

Points are earned according to the cabin category booked: inside, outside, balcony and suite. Points are also earned on international departures according to the on-board experience that guests opt for when sailing on the

*Bella, Fantastica, Aurea* or Yacht Club. Prepaid on-board services and expenses will earn additional points.

Points can be redeemed for discounts or upgrades on future bookings. Other privileges include dedicated events, milestone rewards and exclusive on-board offers.

"Our new loyalty programme focuses on rewarding passengers during the pre-booking stage as well as

during their trip on board. This will offer passengers a more holistic reward programme," says marketing manager of MSC cruises SA, **David Randall**.

Current or prospective MSC customers can sign up for the loyalty programme on MSC's website. Personalised cruise cards will be made available to MSC Voyagers Club members at the beginning of each sailing. ■

## Help Asata demystify travel myths

ASATA has launched a new consumer educational campaign 'Demystifying Travel', giving members access to a full range of artwork that can be used online and in print.

The campaign aims to 'demystify' myths and misperceptions consumers have about the complex world of travel. For example, one

advertisement debunks the myth that travellers can find cheaper hotel rates online.

Other topics explored in the toolkit include misconceptions around airline fuel surcharges, ticket prices, bill-backs and compliance issues, to name a few.

"Asata believes that it is important to empower consumers by educating them

about travel," says ceo **Otto de Vries**.

Asata has invited members to submit any additional topics that need to be demystified.

To download the new Demystifying Travel toolkit, agents can visit the Asata website and log in to the member section. Collateral can be found under the resources section. ■

### Peermont completes sale of KZN property

PEERMONT Hotels Casinos and Resorts has completed the sale of the four-star PeerMont Mondazur Hotel and Spa at San Lameer in KwaZulu Natal to the Cape Town-based Fairtree Hospitality Real Estate Private Equity Fund. The hotel is being rebranded as the San Lameer Resort Hotel & Spa to align with the San Lameer Golf Estate. The new owners and management team took over operations at Mondazur from July 1. All telephone numbers for the property remain the same, including the main contact number.

### &Beyond enters South America

&BEYOND, a luxury tour and accommodation brand, launched its services in South America with the opening of its first official office in Santiago, Chile, on July 15. South America is the third continent in which &Beyond operates. The operator will kick off its touring services in Chile and by August 15 will have operational coverage in neighbouring Argentina. By mid-2016, &Beyond South America will further expand to include services in Peru and Ecuador.

### New ownership for Le Franschoek

JOHANNESBURG-based Dream Hotels & Resorts has acquired the four-star Le Franschoek in the Franschoek Wine Valley. Le Franschoek has 63 rooms and villas, a spa, two restaurants and conference and meeting facilities. A new menu was introduced in the Dish Restaurant and outdoor Le Verger Restaurant in July and the Swiss farm-style high tea will be reintroduced. It joins the portfolio of properties that include Cape Town's Peninsula All-Suite Hotel, Mjejane Bush Camp in Mpumalanga and The Blue Marlin on the KwaZulu Natal South Coast.



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**A snapshot of the week's airline news**



**Lord and the ladies**

Michael Flatley's *Lord of the Dance, Dangerous Games* is now showing at the Montecasino Teatro. Tourism Ireland invited trade partners to enjoy the thrilling Irish musical and dance production and to the 'Meet the Cast' after party. Pictured here with two of the beautiful cast members are **Liam MacGabhann** (Irish Ambassador) and **Jane Davidson** (Development Promotions). Photo: Natasha Schmidt

**Turkish launches flights to Atlanta**

TURKISH Airlines will launch daily non-stop services between Istanbul Atatürk Airport and Atlanta's Hartsfield Jackson International Airport on May 16, 2016. It will be the carrier's second flight into the south-eastern US. The airline will launch a daily non-stop service to Miami in late October this year using a Boeing 777-300ER. Turkish Airlines has also added flights to Graz, its third destination in Austria after Vienna and Salzburg. Roundtrip flights between Istanbul and Graz operate four times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Flight TK1461 departs Istanbul at 13h30 and arrives in Graz at 14h45. Flight TK1462 departs Graz at 15h40 and arrives in Istanbul at 18h45.

**KLM launches Apple Watch app**

KLM has introduced its first app for the Apple Watch, giving travellers access to important flight information, including the remaining time before departure, the boarding pass and possible changes related to flight information. When the time comes to check in for the flight, Apple Watch users only need to tap once on the screen. The passenger can then save the boarding pass in passbook for use when boarding the aircraft. At any given point during the flight, the app shows the remaining flight time.

Besides flight information and flight-related services, the app also offers special functionality for KLM's Flying Blue members.

**EgyptAir resumes flights to Manchester**

EGYPTAIR has resumed flights from Cairo to Manchester. Flights operate five times a week on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. A Boeing 737-800 is used on the route, with 24 seats in the business-class cabin.

**Fly the Dreamliner to Zurich**

ETIHAD Airways has introduced its new Boeing 787 Dreamliner on the Abu Dhabi-Zurich route. It offers the airline's First Suites, Business Studios and Economy Smart seats. Each suite has a large Poltrona Frau upholstered seat and ottoman, a personal wardrobe and a chilled mini-bar. The Business Studios offer 20% more personal space than the airline's current business-class seats, and feature a fully flat bed and a personal 46cm touch-screen TV with noise-cancelling headsets. There is also more space and greater comfort in economy class.

**Ethiopian suspends Goma flights**

ETHIOPIAN Airlines has suspended flights to Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following claims by DRC regulator, Régie des Voies Aériennes de la République Démocratique du Congo, that the airport was not fit to handle flights. Ethiopian could not confirm the particulars surrounding the suspension but confirms that the airline is looking for the most viable means forward. Goma's only runway was severely damaged by the eruption of the nearby Mount Nyiragongo in 2002, when the lava flow covered a 1 200m section.

**Cathay adds Hiroshima to network**

STARTING August 16, Cathay Pacific Airways' sister airline, Dragonair, will operate flights between Hong Kong and Hiroshima twice a week. Dragonair will be the only carrier offering a non-stop service between Hong Kong and Hiroshima, adding to its existing destinations in Japan, which include Tokyo (Haneda), Fukuoka and Okinawa. The Hong Kong-Hiroshima flights will operate on Thursdays and Sundays. Cathay Pacific flies from Johannesburg to Hong Kong seven days a week. Flight CX748 departs Johannesburg daily at 12h35 and arrives in Hong Kong at 07h05 + 1. Flight KA350 departs Hong Kong on Thursdays and Sundays at 13h10 and arrives in Hiroshima at 17h45. Flight KA351 departs Hiroshima on the same days at 19h00 and arrives in Hong Kong at 21h45.

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The construction of the exhibition centre is at an advanced stage and is due for completion in August 2015. The exhibition being curated will examine the story of the struggle against apartheid, specifically related to the historical event that took place in KwaZulu-Natal, the people involved, and the footsteps of Mandela walking through this turbulent landscape.

The original plaque, along with the newly developed Nelson Mandela Capture Site, makes for a fascinating attraction, giving any visitor a unique cultural experience to remember.

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Educationals to the Americas offer invaluable assistance to agents. However, the rising costs for organising these trips present a challenge. Carina Borralho reports.

# Fam trips – few and far between

**T**HERE'S no denying that one of the most valuable ways for agents to enhance their knowledge of a destination is by visiting it. First-hand experience of places and packages allows them to relay valuable information to prospective clients. However, despite their value, these trips present considerable challenges and opportunities for agents have decreased over the years.

Trafalgar md, **Theresa Szejwallo**, says a big challenge is choosing the right people. She says while airlines usually want to send big sellers or seniors, Trafalgar prefers to send people with potential and likes to consider everyone who shows passion and commitment to their work.

However Theresa says Trafalgar still wants to know that they don't plan to leave their company any time soon. "The valuable knowledge they gain on an educational would then be wasted," she says.

Thompsons Holidays' media and public relations officer, **John Ridler**, agrees.

"It's an expensive exercise. Agents move around a lot these days and, therefore, proper research has to be done so that the people you send on educationals will be

around to implement their knowledge," he says. As a result of the planning involved and the dollar-rand exchange rate, Theresa says Trafalgar has not hosted a North American educational for a few years. "Europe tends to be more popular, offering cheaper airfares and a smaller land area to cover." Fewer educationals are held

**"Airline participation in educationals is hugely dependent on the availability of seats."**

in America compared with Europe, agrees John. He says, as a result of rising costs, educationals to North America seem to be becoming less frequent in general.

"Airline participation in educationals is hugely dependent on the availability of seats. This, paired with America being one the busiest destinations all year round, presents challenges to organising educationals to the continent."

In light of this, Thompsons has adapted by bringing more agent educationals to SA in recent years. "For a popular American product such as

Disney, we try to organise an educational in SA every year," says John. He adds that Thompsons includes expert, experienced speakers at these day events. "The Thompsons Disney educational in Durban last year was oversubscribed. The will for educationals is there, but the cost involved is high and many factors need to be considered first."

**Still a viable option**  
In spite of the existing challenges, Theresa believes the Americas are still a viable option for educationals because of the vast offering. "We are seeing more interest in the Americas." She reveals that Trafalgar boasts a 57% repeat rate on educational packages worldwide.

Meanwhile, Trafalgar has noticed that many travel agents are embarking on educationals during their personal holidays (with large agent discounts), usually with a partner, friend or family member.

"This allows agents to be 'normal' paying passengers, meaning they see things how they really are," says Theresa, who adds that providing agents with "the real experience" means they can sell the real experience.

## Top spots up north

**NORTH** America is about six times bigger than South Africa, making it difficult for travellers to decide on specific destinations, meaning they need to rely on the expertise of their travel agent.

"Agents can recommend fully inclusive US Trafalgar packages to customers with confidence because the most important places have been highlighted and included," says **Theresa Szejwallo**. She adds that South Africans are looking for value and hassle-free experiences, which Trafalgar offers. "We provide a product that is hassle-free for both the agent and the client."

Some of the most popular destinations in North America for South Africans are New York, Orlando, Washington DC, Arizona, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and San Francisco.

With its rich history and diversity, New Orleans in Louisiana is a great option for South Africans. Visitors can learn about a culturally diverse part of America, taste unique cuisine and experience live entertainment and music at almost every corner. Known for its round-the-clock night life, New Orleans hosts some of the best live entertainment in the US. Agents should

promote the famous southern food, as well as Bourbon Street for pubs and restaurants," says **John Ridler**, adding that Mardi Gras is a popular festival for tourists, which could assist agents in selling more packages.

Thompsons is offering a 'Flavours of New Orleans' two-night stay, which includes two nights' accommodation at the downtown Holiday Inn New Orleans for R3 190.

Las Vegas is also a popular choice, with approximately 41m visitors last year. The average stay in downtown Vegas costs about R1 688 a night.

Thompsons is offering a four-night stay at the three-star Circus Circus Hotel in Las Vegas. The package includes return transfers, accommodation and a Grand Canyon South Rim bus tour for R2 892pps.

Theresa and John agree that South Africans are drawn to destinations that offer natural beauty, making the Grand Canyon in Arizona a good option. An estimated five million people visit it every year.

As destinations go, California also ranks highly with South Africans because of its famous beaches and celebrity appeal. San Francisco, Silicon Valley and the

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KEEP CLIMBING





**From page 8**

Yosemite National Park are popular stops in California.

The 'Big Apple' is another hot spot for SA tourists. Boasting sky-rise buildings, Times Square and Central Park, New York is a bustling hub for travellers seeking to experience the American dream.

Despite its appeal and overwhelming popularity, New York comes with one of the highest price tags for South Africans visiting the US.

"New York boasts a list of great gastronomic experiences for South African foodies," says John. He highlights unique New York experiences on offer, such as the 911 memorial, Brooklyn Bridge and the Chrysler Building.

Thompsons is offering a four-night stay at the four-star Excelsior Hotel in New York that includes accommodation, return transfers, All Loops Double Decker Tour and the Statue of Liberty for R12 686pps.

## On the Equator!



**Theresa Szejwallo (back far left) joined agents on an exciting exploration of South America. The group are pictured here on the Equator. Photo: Trafalgar**

## Popular down south

SOUTH America is a fairly new destination for South Africans, compared with Europe, for example.

However, **Theresa Szejwallo** says the continent has grown in popularity over the past few years because of its unique offering. The most popular places for South Africans are Brazil, Peru, and Argentina.

"Often agents shy away from selling South American trips because the internal and domestic flight sectors are expensive and difficult to book," says Theresa. Because of this, agents should investigate affordable, value-for-money package options to sell to their clients.

Trafalgar has negotiated good fares, which form part of their packages. "In all our offerings the basic rule of thumb is that the travel agent just needs to get their client to our pick-up point on

day one. Thereafter, we take care of the entire holiday, with all the arrangements, until we drop them off on their very last day."

Peru, in particular, has fallen under the spotlight. Natural wonders such as Machu Picchu host around one million visitors a year, making it Peru's most-visited location.

Other popular attractions are the Amazon rainforest, the Andes and the lively city of Cusco.

Trafalgar has four guided holidays to Peru, ranging from eight to 12 days, with all internal flights included and an optional extension to the Galapagos Islands. The 'Highlights of Peru' is priced from R30 600pp twin share and includes a lunch at the estate of **Dr Diez Canseco**, where guests will experience a home-cooked Peruvian meal with him. Guests will also visit a local chicheria,



### Machu Picchu, Peru.

where they will learn how Peruvian corn beer is made, as well as visiting Andean weavers.

Argentina is another favourite in South America. Agents should note that the Argentinian peso is about one to one with the South African rand, so travellers can expect to get value for their money. Points of interest include the Iguazu Falls and the colourful capital city, Buenos Aires.

the tomb of Eva Peron in the Recoleta Cemetery in their packages.

Brazil is the biggest country in South America. Famous landmarks in the massive country include the Christ the Redeemer statue, Copacabana Beach, as well as the annual Carnival. According to the World Bank, around 5,8 million people visited last year.

Thompsons is offering a Buzios and Rio de Janeiro six-night stay, which includes breakfast daily, for R8 550pps.

## News flash

Delta Air Lines has recently introduced a bag guarantee on domestic US flights. "If passengers from Johannesburg who connect via Atlanta do not receive their bag on the carousel at their final destination within 20 minutes, they are eligible to receive 2 500 bonus SkyMiles," says Delta manager of corporate communications, **Aimee Greaves**.

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## Gauteng Infrastructure Investment Conference closes on a high note

**G**auteng Premier's call for strong partnerships and collaboration between government and the private sector was well received during the inaugural Gauteng Infrastructure Investment Conference.

The aim of the two day conference was to promote mutually beneficial and transformative partnerships between government and the private sector which will contribute in transforming Gauteng into a globally competitive City Region and a preferred destination for investment and tourism.

A range of issues were discussed during the conference, which included finding innovative solutions for the delivery of strategic infrastructure in the

Gauteng City Region.

The conference committed to bridge the gap in infrastructure planning and development between government and the private sector.

"The Gauteng Infrastructure Investment Conference is a partnership in action between government and the private sector and a programmatic commitment to work together to make Gauteng a globally competitive City Region and a preferred destination for investment and tourism," said Premier Makhura.

The private sector showed an interest in investing in bankable strategic infrastructure projects that were presented during the conference.

"We came here to sell

our vision for Gauteng, so that you can understand the inspiring vision and programme we have adopted as a country and province to build a society of our dreams.

"We also came here to solicit your views on our infrastructure plans, and enlist your partnership and support in making them a reality and I trust that we have done so with this conference", said Premier Makhura.

The next Infrastructure Investment Conference will take place on 27- 28 July 2016, where the provincial government has committed to report on progress on the number of infrastructure projects that would have been initiated since this inaugural conference, concluded Premier Makhura.



Director General Ms Phindile Baleni MEC Lebogang Maile and Mr Sithole Mshudulu



Some delegates that were in attendance

## Infrastructure development is the lifeblood of economic and social transformation

The Gauteng Infrastructure Investment Conference kicked off on a high note as business practitioners, researchers, academics and other key role players met to discuss prevailing infrastructure investment opportunities.

Day one of the conference saw delegates share insights on innovative trends and radical practices on infrastructure development whilst identifying investment opportunities in infrastructure development in the province.

Speakers in the opening session included Minister in the Presidency, Jeff Radebe, Gauteng Premier

David Makhura and the CEO of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, Nicky Newton-King.

"Gauteng has the potential not only to maintain its position as the economic engine of South Africa but it has the ability to expand its economic and social contribution beyond our borders. This requires constant and targeted investment by both public and private sectors, especially in physical infrastructure," said Minister Radebe.

He also commended the Gauteng Provincial Government for taking the objectives as outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) to heart by putting in

place an ambitious infrastructure plan.

Premier David Makhura appealed to representatives from the private sector in attendance to invest in public infrastructure projects as infrastructure can put the brakes on an economy or it can accelerate it.

"All over the world, governments, businesses and citizens are placing more emphasis on infrastructure development in order to address the wellbeing of rural populations and meet the growing demands of rapidly expanding urban populations in the context of diminishing natural resources and

sluggish economic growth.

The CEO of Johannesburg Stock Exchange, Nicky Newton-King also reiterated the Premier's plea for private sector investment.

"Businesses must heed the call and get involved in finding ways to respond to the province's TMR programme," she said.

Makhura added that

government was working towards improving the capacity of the state to deliver on infrastructure projects on time and within budget.

"This conference will also offer us an opportunity to fix that part of our infrastructure that is not working to our expectations and appreciate the one which is world-class," concluded Makhura.

For media enquiries contact Thabo Masebe on 082 410 8087 or [Thabo.masebe@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:Thabo.masebe@gauteng.gov.za)  
For media releases, speeches and news visit the Gauteng Provincial Government's portal at [www.gautengonline.gov.za](http://www.gautengonline.gov.za);  
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<http://gauteng-provincial.blogspot.com>

# Zimbabwe



Photo: Wild Horizons

With the development of its new airport, Zimbabwe is expected to welcome 1,8 million more arrivals a year. Dorine Reinstein reports.

## New hub to boost arrivals

**Z**IMBABWE is set to become a flourishing tourism hub in Africa, having invested in several important tourism developments over the past few months. In particular, the new Victoria Falls International Airport is expected to enhance the country's attractiveness as a tourism destination.

**Francis Ngwenya**, president of the Zimbabwe Council for Tourism, told *TNW* that the country had suffered extended periods of depressed tourist arrivals and ongoing economic difficulties. However, recent investments in tourism had positioned the country as a competitive destination.

"The entire sector has been highly active in promoting Zimbabwe as a destination," Francis says. "This promotion has been primarily aimed at leisure travellers but also at business travellers. Most recently, we have seen a major growth in promotion of Zimbabwe as a meetings, incentive travel, conferences and events destination."

The launch of a regional visa for visitors to the SADC region; the opening up of transfrontier national parks; and a greater willingness within the SADC to co-operate for tourism promotion and development, are also major milestones, notes Francis. "Within Zimbabwe, there have been moves to incentivise operators

to upgrade their product and undertake significant additional promotional activity, regionally and internationally," he adds.

However, the most important development in Zimbabwe has been the expansion project at Victoria Falls International Airport. "The current multimillion-dollar exercise will position the airport as one of the most modern and useful in Africa. It will be able to accommodate arrivals of long-haul, wide-body aircraft and will increase the number of travellers who can visit Victoria Falls and surrounding areas," comments Francis.

The opening of the airport's new terminal will result in greater seat capacity and therefore lower prices for flights and holiday packages, comments **Lindi Mthethwa**, regional manager for African Sun Hotels. "The new developments will create a good platform to position Zimbabwe as tourism hub, as the direct access will make the flying times shorter and airfares cheaper. Consequently, destination packages will be less expensive."

Zimbabwe's Tourism Minister, **Walter Mzembe**, recently projected that the new airport would culminate in 1,8 million more arrivals annually, thereby generating more than US\$5bn (about R60bn) for the country. Air Zimbabwe will now



The old and new international terminals at Victoria Falls Airport.

be able to facilitate "huge international traffic", says **Shingai Dhlwayo**, spokesperson for Air Zimbabwe.

"We are confident that the sound infrastructure that is being developed within our destination will encourage tourists to choose to land and take off with the country's very own flag carrier and enjoy the various exciting wonders of our world." She says developments at the JM Nkomo International (Bulawayo) and Victoria Falls airports are key indicators of the government's commitment to the development of aviation in the country.

Francis foresees that the expansion of the airport will ultimately enable the local travel and tourism sector to increase business and occupancies to record numbers that could exceed the numbers Zimbabwe enjoyed in the late 1990s. "In due course, it will also stimulate expansion of all amenities and

facilities," he adds.

However, **Emmanuel Fundira**, group ceo Astec Leisure Group, warns that the challenge will be to attract investment into the sector, which would improve product quality and bring in the required consistency levels for the more discerning consumer. He says the increase in traffic on its own will see an improvement in average daily rates and make it easier for operators to re-invest in the product.

According to Francis, a number of new airlines have shown interest in servicing Victoria Falls with new scheduled flights. "We look forward to more international carriers joining the current service providers and are especially excited at the prospect of long-haul air services using Victoria Falls, as either the end destination or linking it to other African destinations such as Cape Town, the Indian Ocean islands and Kilimanjaro."

## Get the VIP treatment!

THE African Sun Victoria Falls Hotel has recently introduced its 'Stables Signature Wing' offering. Clients who opt for the Stables Signature Wing will be privy to a private check-in at the Stables section of the hotel. Guests will be treated to a special

gift of Belgian chocolates, a massage voucher and a complimentary cocktail and canapes on arrival. They'll also receive free use of the mini-bar as well as afternoon tea. WIFI will be offered free of charge to guests at the Stables Signature Wing.

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# Zimbabwe

Canoeing on the Zambezi. Photo: Wild Hoizons

## Exchange rates pose a challenge

DESPITE these positive developments, travel to Zimbabwe can be challenging for South African travellers, with the crippling rate of exchange a considerable stumbling block.

Minister **Walter Mzembi** recently told Zimbabwe's parliament that the weakening rand was having an adverse impact on tourism arrivals. In the last two years, the number of people coming from South Africa to Zimbabwe has dropped. This is particularly concerning as Zimbabwe depends on South Africa for 70% of its visitors.

**Francis Ngwenya** agrees that the weakening of the rand is a major problem for the Zimbabwe travel

and tourism sector as prices in Zimbabwe are US dollar-based. "This makes Zimbabwe an expensive destination for South African travellers and we have witnessed a decline in arrivals of both leisure and business travellers in the past year, which we attribute directly to this factor."

**Zahedah Bhorat**, kulula holidays' product manager for Africa, says the rate of exchange plays a major role in selling destinations, including Zimbabwe, as it affects the package price per person. "Ideally, SADC guests should be offered a rand rate to avoid losing bookings when the rate of exchange is volatile."

For South African self-drive

travellers, Zimbabwe presents additional challenges, as the road infrastructure is not yet up to scratch. According to Francis, the country will need to invest in its air travel and the creation of new and improved road transport services to attract a greater number of South African self-drive travellers.

Indeed, he notes that the government has already started to invest in a number of projects to rehabilitate the road infrastructure in Zimbabwe. Roads between Plumtree and Bulawayo, Bulawayo and Harare, and Harare and Mutare have already been completed, and other key routes will be upgraded soon.

## For the sports fanatics...

CRESTA Lodge in Harare is positioning itself as a hub for sports teams and travellers. The hotel is conveniently located near Harare's sporting venues, business centre and airport and has recently signed agreements with some of Zimbabwe's well-known sports teams.

The most recent agreement was signed with Zimbabwe Cricket and sees Cresta Lodge hosting a range of international cricket teams. First to call was the Indian

cricket team, who were visiting Harare for a series of one-day internationals and a T20 tournament. The New Zealand cricket team have also already booked a space at the lodge.

The lodge has also welcomed the Zimbabwean and Moldovan tennis teams, who met in a Davis Cup tie in Harare. Ongoing liaison with Tennis Zimbabwe will see other international tennis stars using Cresta Lodge as their home venue in the near future.

**Glenn Stutchbury**, Cresta

ceo, says the lodge has long hosted the SuperSport outside broadcast team. "Sports teams like the modern and comfortable accommodation, the food and the other facilities and amenities, as well as the location of the lodge and the ease with which other venues in the city can be reached. In addition, the grounds of the lodge, with their extensive tree cover and lawns, offer a super place for physical fitness training and jogging," he comments.



Elephant interaction, Masuie River. Photo: Experience Zimbabwe

## 5 ultimate Vic Falls experiences

VICTORIA Falls is well known for its beautiful venues, complemented by great group packages and convenient facilities. But it also has a great deal to offer when it comes to unique experiences. **Darise Foster** asked **Robin Brown**, managing and operations director at Cansaf – a specialist DMC offering professional destination management in the Victoria Falls region – and **John Ridler**, media and public relations manager at Thompsons Holidays, for their top recommendations.

### Sunset cruising

There are few sights as breathtaking as sunset on the Zambezi River. Not surprisingly, both Robin and John agree that a two-and-a-half-hour cruise on the Zambezi, be it by sunset or during dinnertime, is a top choice for Vic Falls. Unforgettable African sunsets and numerous animal and bird-sighting opportunities combine to form a highly memorable African river experience.

### Historical tours

Travellers can join a professional tour guide on a two-hour tour of the Falls, delving into the history and geography of the region, exploring the best viewpoints and geographic sites. Alternatively, they can take a village tour to the

nearby Monde area, where they can meet with the village headman in person.

### Dine with elephants

A 20-minute drive from the Victoria Falls is the magical Elephant Wallow. Here travellers can meet Africa's gentle giants and enjoy a professionally administered elephant interaction before sitting down to lunch or dinner in a traditional lapa-style setting on the edge of the Masuie River.

### Take the plunge

Bucket-list experiences serve as the ultimate kind of adventure. Adrenaline junkies would not want to miss the opportunity to take the legendary plunge off of the Victoria Falls Bridge on the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe. They can also bridge swing above the Zambezi River or bridge slide from the gorge to the Zimbabwean side of the bridge. As visitors slide from the gorge towards the bridge they are treated to an incredible view of the Falls.

### Into the wild

Just a one-hour drive from Victoria Falls, the Chobe National Park is renowned for its amazing wildlife. "The day visit includes a game drive, a game cruise and a full lunch at one of the plush Chobe safari lodges," says Robin. ■

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## It's a hole in one!

Avis, Budget, TIC and Travelport hosted a golf day on June 4 at the Johannesburg Country Club. Ladies and gents from the travel industry spent a day putting against each other on one of the country's most beautiful courses. Pictured here (from left): 360 Degrees Travel ceo, **Ramon Geldenhuys**, Burns Cunningham Corporate Travel md, **Brad Muir**, and Zanojet Travel md, **Jacqui Reid**. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## Appointments

■ **Lukas van der Westhuizen** has been promoted to md of Faircity Hotels and Apartments. He was previously business development director for the group. Lukas was one of the founders of Faircity and has been exposed to every facet of the business. He will be tasked with growing the management and property ownership side of the business based on the three-, four- and five-star space, as well as securing the funding to enable this growth to occur.



■ Protea Hotels has appointed regional corporate sales manager for Gauteng **Jacky Maulgue**. Jacky brings with her 10 years' experience as a sales executive and regional sales manager at the Protea Hotels Group, as well as experience with Bon Hotels as director of business and sales.



■ **Gareth Venner** has been appointed group international sales manager at Protea, a promotion from his current role as regional sales manager for Gauteng. Gareth is qualified in hotel and restaurant management and has practical experience with the Hilton Group in Scotland as well as five years in hotel operations and two years with Tourvest Travel Services.



## Agents battle in Ireland

The first ever Ireland Specialists Mega Fam trip was held on June 27, with 12 top-performing agents from six markets including Australia, China, India, GCC, South Africa and New Zealand. The agents travelled to Ireland to battle against each other in daily challenges. Pictured here (from left) are agents **Lindsay Ormrod** and **Carolyn Price**; Tourism Ireland in South Africa account manager, **Sara Park**; marketing manager for Tourism Ireland in South Africa, **Louise O'Mahony**; agents **Tatyana Vanegas** and **Adriana Neil-Stephens**; and tour guide, **Min Lin Siew**.

## Promoting education



Club Travel sponsored **Monwabisi Ngeyakhe** to attend a course on social work, as part of its ongoing partnership and support of the **Waves for Change Foundation**. Monwabisi is now a registered child and youth care worker with the South African Council for Social Service Professionals.

## Pick of the week

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## SATC exodus

**From page 1**

of this obligation is that any favourable deals SAA might wish to offer via SATC cannot be offered without contravening the Act. The vertical relationship between SAA and SATC thus prevents SATC from following market trends of

affiliation and consolidation between competitors. This results in a reduced return on investment for SATC franchisees, in turn causing attrition and limiting growth for the company as franchisees migrate to more attractive consortiums," the report said. ■

## Change of leadership at Amadeus

**DORINE REINSTEIN**

**C**HANGES are afoot at Amadeus Southern Africa as **Peter Long** has stepped down as general manager for the region "for personal reasons", the technology company told TNW.

Peter started at Amadeus in 2003 as executive manager for sales and marketing after a successful career in the travel industry working for companies such as SAA, American Express Travel Services, SATC Indo Jet, Pebble Resorts and Carlson Wagonlit Travel. In 2007 he was appointed gm of Amadeus Southern Africa.

**Immanuel Banza** has taken over the reins as acting gm



**Peter Long**

Southern Africa while Amadeus completes the process of appointing Peter's successor.

Immanuel has over 30 years' experience in the travel industry. He was one of the key people who set up Amadeus in Zimbabwe and

was appointed gm of Amadeus Zimbabwe in 2002. In 2008 Immanuel moved to head up sales in Southern Africa. In 2012, he then moved to Amadeus's customer services area, heading up training, account management, the customer service centre and IT. At the beginning of this year, he took on a new challenge to manage the strategic relationship with key customers in Southern Africa.

"We wish Peter all the best for the future," Amadeus said. "It is very much business as usual. We will continue to deliver the highest level of service to our customers and partners across Southern Africa." ■

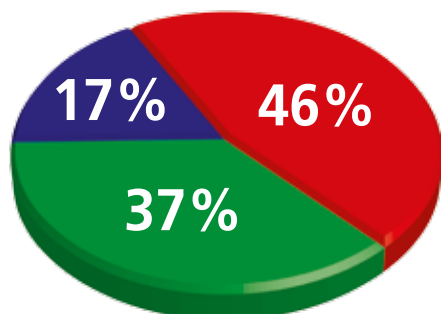


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## To the point



A new visa centre has opened in Bloemfontein for residents in the Free State who wish to obtain a Schengen visa for Germany. Intergate Visalink, in conjunction with the German Embassy and Consulates in SA, joined forces to open their fourth visa centre in the country. The Bloemfontein branch means that Free State residents will no longer need to travel to Centurion to make visa applications. The visa centre will be open from 08h00 to 12h00 daily. Applicants must visit the website or contact the call centre 086 002 245 to make an appointment.

## Airbnb eyes SA expansion

**From page 2 Corporate travel**

Brian added that while corporate travellers did not make up most of the Airbnb business, he did predict a significant growth in this space. "Corporate travel currently makes up 10% of our business and that is largely because corporate travel is quite lonely," says Brian. "Business travellers know that if they book an Airbnb, not only are they staying with people but they are getting to enjoy a local experience while working,

rather than being alone in a hotel room."

Last month, Airbnb announced plans to launch a new product suite as part of its Business Travel program, which aims to make the platform easier to use for companies. The suite of tools will provide visibility into employee travel itineraries booked through Airbnb, financial reporting data and central billing, to improve the business travel experience for travellers and travel managers.

The website includes

the Activity Tab, which helps travel managers with cataloguing current and upcoming employee trips, including trip dates, location, dates booked, trip status, number of people in each party and an interactive map. The Reporting Tab can be used to collect and manage booking reports for the entire organisation and to export data and reports, while the Employees Tab manages approved and pending employees who have been permitted to book business travel using Airbnb. ■

freedom to connect

### Wonderboom Airport (Pretoria) to Cape Town.

Airlink's new direct 'City to City' flight, in partnership with South African Airways, will provide Tshwane's business and leisure travellers with a convenient choice of flights between Wonderboom Airport and Cape Town. Commencing 16 August 2015, Airlink will offer up to 3 return flights a day between the two cities. Wonderboom Airport offers travellers a convenient walk on - walk off airport experience, affordable parking in close proximity to the terminal building, as well as restaurants and lounge facilities. Earn Voyager Miles and visit [www.flyairlink.com](http://www.flyairlink.com) or [www.flysaa.com](http://www.flysaa.com) Spread your wings, fly Airlink – Freedom of the African sky.

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