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## TNW exclusive

# Airport predator axed

New immigration regulations, which have been introduced to “protect children”, open up young travellers to exploitation. Dorine Reinstein reports.

AN AIRPORT employee who was suspended for soliciting unwarranted ‘fines’ from a group of schoolgirls, who, he claimed, were not carrying the correct documentation according to South Africa’s new immigration regulations, was not a Home Affairs immigration official but a staff member of the aviation security company, Checkport.

Asata recently released a statement saying an airport official had been suspended following an incident with a group of 16-year-old girls travelling on a student exchange, who were forced to accompany the airport person to an ‘interview’ room, where he claimed they did not have the correct paperwork to travel and demanded a R500 ‘fine’ be paid before they were allowed to fly. This is despite their documents having been vetted previously by their travel agent and accepted by the airline staff upon check-in as valid.

TNW has now confirmed that it was not an airport official but a Checkport employee who was suspended and has now been dismissed.

Checkport ceo, **Basie Broekman**, told TNW the

employee had been identified thanks to a picture taken by the girls on the night of the incident. After a disciplinary hearing, the employee was dismissed and blacklisted to prevent him from working at any airport in South Africa. The R500 was taken from his salary and reimbursed to the victims. “We have a zero tolerance policy for such behaviour and will deal with these kinds of incidents quickly and severely.”

Checkport is a division of ground handling service company, Swissport, and handles check-in security and gate security. Checkport is a separate legal entity from Swissport South Africa with its own set-up and management.

**Peter Kohl**, ceo of Swissport in South Africa, told TNW: “These kinds of incidents tarnish the reputation of the airport and the country. To prey on unaccompanied minors, the weakest of the travelling public, is shameful.”

The incident has fuelled criticism of the new immigration regulations that require minors to carry unabridged birth certificates and additional documentation when travelling to and from

South Africa, raising serious concerns within the travel trade regarding the safety of minors travelling alone.

“Absolutely disgusting to prey on children. This is as bad as trafficking kids – scaring them so badly with such extortion,” was the reaction of one travel agent commenting on TNW’s sister publication eTNW. Another agent said this would be “just the beginning of the nightmare”, with worse still to come.

“It’s high time Minister Gigaba does his job,” **David Frost**, ceo of Satsa told TNW. He said it had been established that there had been a total of 23 cases of child trafficking in South Africa in the past three years. He added that child trafficking should be dealt with by the police and Interpol. The burden should not be shifted to airline personnel.

It is unfair to assign this incident to the new regulations, which have been implemented to address the genuine issue of child protection, said Home Affairs spokesperson, **Mayihlome Tshwete**. He said that, although corrupt individuals

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## Agents only!

SAA is offering travel agents special fares to Mauritius for travel before December 6. Return economy-class airfares from Johannesburg start at R4 693 per person, including taxes, and R7 793 per person departing Cape Town, including taxes. For more details, see Travelinfo. Pictured here in marvellous Mauritius: SAA regional gm for the commercial SA market, **Ray Nkwe**. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## Travellers adjust plans as rand plummets

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE rand traded recently at an all-time low – R14 to the dollar – making overseas holidays considerably more expensive for South Africans. Although people are still travelling,

experts expect the weak rand to have a significant impact on travellers’ vacation choices.

A sustained period of weakness for the rand can be expected, says political economy analyst, **Daniel Silke**.

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- A new airline is about to launch
- Russia to drop visa requirements for SA?
- Airport official suspended over UBC debacle
- TNW pick: Airport tariff cuts 'too steep'
- Meal vouchers for Emirates customers

# Etihad introduces new 'Fare Choices'

ETIHAD Airways will implement a new fare structure from September 14 to "provide more choice and clarity when booking flights". All bookings ticketed from September 14 will be split into distinct fare choices. The structure for economy class includes Economy Breaking Deals, Economy Saver, Economy Value and Economy Freedom. Business class includes Business Breaking Deals, Business Saver and Business Freedom, while in first class there will only be one fare – Freedom. "A total of eight new 'Fare Choices' will be introduced,

allowing travellers to tailor their bookings to their individual needs. The 'Fare Choices' are transparent and differ in baggage allowance, flexibility and included benefits that otherwise need to be purchased separately," says **Peter Baumgartner**, chief commercial officer of Etihad Airways. "Ultimately, this is about providing choice. When it comes to booking a flight, not everyone's needs are the same. Some guests want to travel light and on a budget, while others want to be able to make last-minute travel decisions, carry extra baggage or

earn more miles." Additionally, an adapted baggage policy will provide guests with a more standardised baggage allowance structure across the Etihad Airways partner network, while also reducing the price for excess baggage charges on most routes. The cost of excess baggage will be cut on the majority of fares. On some routes the cost of buying an additional 23kg piece of baggage will be reduced by up to 90%, with a further reduction of up to 30% if pre-purchased directly with Etihad Airways up to 24 hours before travel. ■

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**Rubes®** By Leigh Rubin

"Simply put, sir, the rule is black and white. Free peanuts are for paying customers only. Although, in your case, I'm willing to consider the possibility of a somewhat substantial gray area."

## Travellers adjust plans as rand plummets

**From page 1**  
He told *TNW* that, although South Africa was technically not in a recession, GDP growth would be at disappointingly low levels, which would see a contraction in the economy. "The impact of the rand will have serious consequences for outbound travel. Clearly, the precipitous fall will affect travel choices, with more value-driven destinations winning out over others. Should the rand not see any recovery, this could lead to some cancelling or postponing their coming December holiday visits as they wait for an improvement in the currency – and overall market sentiment."

approach when it comes to booking future holidays, says **Inge Dobiha**, md of Austria Connection. "New enquiries are still coming in as usual and it has to be seen if these will materialise in actual bookings."

clients nervous to go to Europe and the US, which could direct traffic to Mauritius. He warns, however, that we haven't yet seen the full impact of the latest weak rand trend. "This will be felt in the coming months' bookings," he says.

**"Clearly, the precipitous fall will affect travel choices, with more value-driven destinations winning out over others."**

The weakness of the rand is certainly keeping tour operators on their toes, says **Chris Van Staden**, manager of Azure Travel. The rate of exchange has an effect on everything: from flights, fuel charges and levies to hotels, transfers and clients' spending money. That is why tour operators need to be proactive, he says. "Long and loyal relationships with suppliers allow us to negotiate prices more often with win-win solutions for all parties."

If the rand continues to weaken, agents can expect an increase in package prices but not a big spike, says **Mark Buck**, md of United Europe. "Going forward, travel will be about buying at the right time for the right periods. People may have to alter their preferred holiday times to make use of the slower periods internationally."

"We are starting to note requests for shorter stays and less expensive accommodation," says **John Ridler**, spokesperson for Thompsons Holidays. Travellers are opting for 'rand-friendly' destinations such as Mauritius, Thailand, Zanzibar and, of course, locally in South Africa.

Agents can also take advantage of some operators' special offers while they last, such as Trafalgar's Rand Price Guarantee, which allows travellers to book their 2016 holiday at 2015 brochure pricing. **Theresa Szejwallo**, md of Trafalgar, warns that prices will increase in October when Trafalgar launches its 2016 season brochure. "This brochure will have been priced at the new rate of exchange. This is why we recommend that agents book their clients' 2016 holidays now." ■

There is also more demand for fully inclusive packages, with "no nasty payments required in forex on departure", says **Flora Fubbs**, The Holiday Factory's senior manager of contracting, marketing and operations. Travellers have also adopted a wait-and-see

The Mauritian rupee was recently devalued, which softens the effect of the poor rand, says **Johann Strydom**, md of World Leisure Holidays. WLH is also able to negotiate room rates in rands for its hotels: La Pirogue, Long Beach, Ambre and Sugar Beach, which means travellers to these resorts are not affected by currency fluctuations. **Terry Munro**, md of Beachcomber Tours, says the weak rand may make

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# New Airlink route makes history

DEBBIE BADHAM

**S**A AIRLINK, in a joint venture with SAA, made history on August 16 when it launched its inaugural flight between Pretoria and Cape Town.

The new route, which flies between Wonderboom National Airport and Cape Town International, will provide travellers from Pretoria through to areas such as Limpopo and even the North West with a closer and, arguably, more convenient

access point than OR Tambo.

Around 60% of travellers who use OR Tambo as their home base reside closer to Wonderboom than the Johannesburg airport, says Airlink ceo, **Rodger Foster**. In light of this, the route will target a broad spectrum of travellers, including business and leisure people. Rodger notes that two specific groups of travellers who will benefit from the route are academic professionals (Pretoria and Cape Town are both university cities) as well

as parliamentarians.

Rodger reveals that initially take-up on the route was slow, which he attributes to the trade's tendency to support what they know. "However, closer to the launch, the take-up has seen a far more positive, almost exponential, increase.

"We will have to see how things develop," says Rodger, noting that Airlink's primary objective is to first make sure the Pretoria-Cape Town route is working. However, he says the airline does recognise the

potential of including more destinations like Durban, Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth.

The Executive Mayor of Tshwane, **Kgosientso Ramokgopa**, says the route is politically significant, adding that, when delegates are required to stay for longer sessions in parliament they will be able to get home quickly from the new access point.

The city's aspiration is to expand Wonderboom's network. "We are bullish

about the prospects of this initiative," says Kgosientso.

The re-establishment of flights from Wonderboom is expected to catalyse a series of other developments in the area. "An entire new aerropolis will develop here," says Gauteng Premier, **David Makhura**. He adds that soon a bus service will connect Hatfield Station to the airport. "Ultimately, we should be connecting all our airports with the Gautrain but it may be too early to say that." ■

## The current schedule:

SA Airlink flights between Wonderboom National Airport in Pretoria and Cape Town International will operate initially twice daily but this will increase to three times daily. The airline will offer both business- and economy-class services.

Flights from Cape Town to Wonderboom									
Flight	Departing	Arriving	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
8670	06h45	09h00	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	None	None
8676	17h30	19h45	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	None	✓
Flights from Wonderboom to Cape Town									
Flight	Departing	Arriving	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
8675	06h45	09h15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	None	None
8673	17h45	20h15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	None	✓

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# KLM puts new premium product on Jo'burg route

CARINA BORRALHO

**K**LM Royal Dutch Airlines will put its new World Business Class cabin, featuring a new fully flat seat, on its Amsterdam-Johannesburg route later this year.

The new lie-flat seats' position in the cabin, as well as partition screens, ensure greater privacy for passengers. The seat is also one of the longest in the air at 207cm and features personal storage, a personal entertainment system with 43cm screen and in-seat power.

The entire Boeing 777-200 fleet is being refurbished. KLM has teamed up with Dutch designer **Hella Jongerius** to introduce a new atmosphere, furnishings and style, built around the comfort and privacy of the passenger. In addition to the new fully flat seats, the interior features new carpeting, panel decorations, curtains, lighting, blankets, cushions and upholstery.

In addition to these design features, KLM has employed Dutch designer, **Marcel Wanders**, to design 40 pieces of unique porcelain, cutlery, glassware and linen in an

environmentally friendly way. "I want travellers to feel as if they are a first-class restaurant guest every time they dine on board," he says. Business-class passengers will enjoy menus prepared by Michelin-awarded Dutch chefs. "The standard in the South African market is that passengers look at price and quality, and South Africans are willing to pay a price if the quality is supplied," says Air France KLM newly appointed gm for Southern Africa, **Domingo De Cola**. "The new features are mainly targeted at satisfying the needs of corporate travellers



KLM Royal Dutch Airlines showcased its new World Business Class cabin interior at Sandton City last month. Pictured here is newly appointed Air France KLM gm for Southern Africa, Domingo De Cola. Photo: Carina Borralho

but are available to anyone who wants to spend a little extra money on a flight

that is guaranteed to offer quality, comfort and style," he adds. ■

## Meal vouchers for Emirates customers

AS OF August 7, Emirates customers with a connecting time of four hours or more at Dubai International Airport are

entitled to meal vouchers. Meal vouchers for transfer customers will be printed automatically along with onward boarding passes

for customers who have checked in on Emirates flights. Customers holding lounge access in Dubai, customers booked with

STPC and those with staff tickets are not entitled to meal vouchers. If a customer is on standby status out of Dubai,

Emirates will not be able to print meal vouchers until the customer is loaded for the onward flight. ■

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# Smarter data systems for MSC

**M**SC Cruises has implemented a new procedure for personal data collection that aims to help its travel partners collect all necessary data timeously. The new procedure is set to streamline the ticketing process, speed up passenger embarkation and increase support efficiency in the event of an emergency.

A Personal Data Alerting System now sends out weekly email reminders to all MSC Cruises' travel partners, highlighting what personal data is outstanding. Should there be personal data outstanding within 60 days of departure, email alerts will be doubled and sent out twice weekly until all data is collected.

Cruise tickets will then automatically be issued 50 days prior to departure. The tickets will be emailed to the travel partner's master email as well as being available

in the ticket repository on MSCOnline.

In order to process travel documentation, MSC Cruises requires the following mandatory personal information for each passenger as per authority regulations:

- First name
- Last name
- Birth date
- Gender
- Nationality
- Passport or National ID Number
- Passport or National ID Number expiry date
- Passport place of issue
- Name and telephone number of emergency contact.

MSC Cruises ensures that personal data will only be shared with MSC Cruises SA (the carrier) and third party suppliers where necessary to complete travel arrangements on their behalf. ■

## New Holiday Inn Express for Krabi

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group (IHG) has signed a management agreement with U&N Hospitality Company to open a 222-room Holiday Inn Express on the Ao Nang Beach in Krabi, Thailand, in

2017. Holiday Inn Express Krabi Ao Nang Beach will be a 30-minute drive from Krabi International Airport, or a two-hour drive for those arriving from Phuket International Airport. Guests

staying at the hotel will enjoy the proximity to the beach, which is a three-minute walk away. The new hotel will also be situated near the existing Holiday Inn Resort Krabi Ao Nang Beach. ■

## Nikita Tavlet selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Cruises International.** 'Dubai Kids Sail Free' with Royal Caribbean International. Offer is combinable with 50% off the second guest. Offer is valid for selected sailings from January to March for new bookings made by September 30.
- **SA Rugby Travel.** Two-match Rugby World Cup packages are available from R18 375pp. Rate includes return economy tickets ex-JNB to London, match tickets, official SA Rugby and Rugby World Cup memorabilia, group travel insurance and ground logistics support. Package is based on SA vs Scotland and SA vs USA games. Special is valid for travel between October 1 and 8.
- **Wandering Free.** Eight-day 'Taste of Cuba' package from R14 000pp. Offer includes four nights' accommodation in hotels, three nights' accommodation in Casas, all breakfasts, two lunches, two dinners, local transport, tour activities and a tour leader. Special is valid for selected departures until December 30.
- **MSC Cruises.** Spend two nights on a Durban cruise to nowhere from R3 500. Offer includes accommodation with twice-daily service, all meals, entertainment and kids' and teens' clubs. Price is based on two people sharing an inside cabin on the *MSC Sinfonia*. Kids cruise free. Mandatory cost of R560 excluded. Travel dates are December 5-7.



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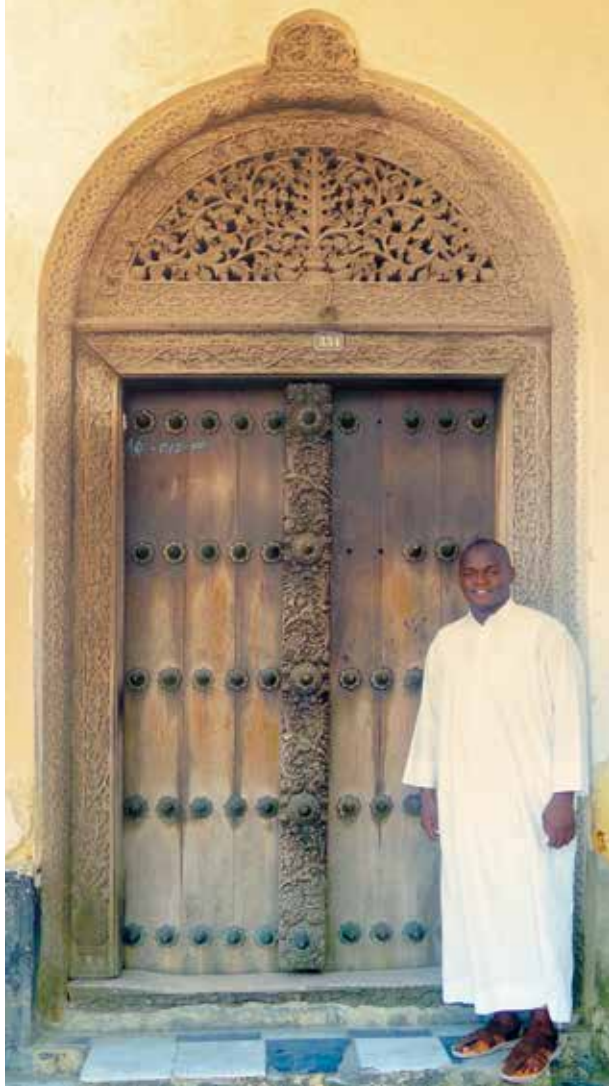
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# Zanzibar



Rashid Abdallah is an experienced guide. For tours, contact [chidyngumu@gmail.com](mailto:chidyngumu@gmail.com). Photo: Kate Nathan

## Inside Stone Town's newest offering

The first Park Hyatt in Zanzibar has officially opened its doors. *TNW's* Kate Nathan experienced the property's new offering first-hand as a guest of the hotel.

**P**ARK Hyatt Zanzibar, although the newest hotel in Stone Town, is imbued with the history of Zanzibar and Stone Town, and the spirit of the island and the town are successfully reflected in the hotel's clever and beautifully executed design attributes.

The property comprises two linked buildings, one of them the old Arab mansion, known as Mambo Msiige (meaning 'cannot be imitated' in Swahili), built around 1850 by a wealthy Omani family, with its beautiful Arabian architecture, heavily carved doors and cool, shaded courtyards.

The other, new, purpose-built building, known as the Zamani Residences, is modern, but carefully designed, carrying through many echoes and nuances of the old building, creating a seamless unity between the two.

An extra dimension is added through the location of the property. It is situated above a small public beach, next door to the fishing boat moorings and the small commercial port of Zanzibar. It is an unusual location for a five-star super-luxury hotel but one that adds a great deal to the experience and makes the visitor feel a part of the local life.

The Park Hyatt Zanzibar's 67 rooms (including 11 suites) are cool and generously proportioned, with all the features and amenities of a superior five-

star establishment, including an in-room coffee machine. Contemporary styling effortlessly blends with Swahili accents. The Ocean-front rooms embrace spectacular views, looking down on to the exceptionally clean beach and the clear, glassy, dazzling turquoise sea. Watching the fishermen preparing their hand-carved wooden dhows and the ships coming and going, interspersed with a couple of lively beach soccer games, provided this writer with hours of entertainment.

**"Stone Town embodies and preserves Swahili culture, a blend of indigenous, Arab, Persian, Indian and Portuguese influences, unique to the African East Coast."**

For those who prefer fresh water, a pool deck contains a rimflow pool with an excellent view over the beach but is separated from the beach with a glass wall.

The land-facing rooms have a charm of their own, looking out over old Stone Town, a Unesco World Heritage Site. One of the most enjoyable aspects of the hotel is that you can easily walk out and immediately find yourself among the town's labyrinthine streets and alleys

(some of them so narrow that the only vehicles they allow are handcarts, donkeys and scooters).

Guests are advised to take a guided walking tour, for purposes of navigation rather than security, as it is quite easy to get lost. Stone Town embodies and preserves Swahili culture, a blend of indigenous, Arab, Persian, Indian and Portuguese influences, unique to the African east coast. Not much has changed in the past couple of centuries, and an easy short walk from the hotel will grant tourists access to several of the famous carved Zanzibar doors, plenty of picturesque shops, a history of slavery sites, the Persian hammam, the People's Palace (the residence of the last Sultan of Zanzibar) and the House of Wonders (presently undergoing renovation) – in its time, the largest and highest building in Zanzibar and the first to install electricity plus an elevator!

In terms of its conference offering, the property has fully equipped conference facilities of varying sizes that can accommodate up to 120 delegates, all of whom could be accommodated in the hotel on a sharing basis.

An Anantara Spa at the hotel contains a hair salon plus three suites where body treatments and massages are conducted in beautiful, fragrant surroundings.

### Book it!

Several tour operators, among them AfricaStay, Thompsons, The Holiday Factory and Rove Africa have exceptional value packages in the SA market for this property. Thompsons is offering a three-night stay from R9 985pps, including flights, airline levy, return transfers, free WiFi and breakfast daily. This offer is valid until December 12. Clients in Durban and Cape Town will be required to overnight in Johannesburg en route.

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## Top activities for clients

PARK Hyatt Zanzibar prides itself on offering guests a full concierge service, catering for individual requests by guests, operators or agents. Some of the standard offerings the hotel can arrange are:

- Kite surfing;
- Scuba diving;
- Sunset dhow cruises;
- Fishing trips (the chef will prepare guests' catch for dinner);
- Day cruises around

- the island;
- Safari Blue (see under Five off-beat island activities, page 14). Popular land arrangements, other than Stone Town walking tours, are:
  - Stone Town at Dawn (photography tour);
  - Discover Zanzibar Craftsmanship;
  - Discover the Spice Island (culinary tour);
  - Authentic cultural experiences;

- Antique treasures;
- Golfing;
- The Rock Experience, an iconic restaurant perched on a rock just off Zanzibar's east coast;
- Luxury Short Safaris packages – short safaris from Zanzibar by private aircraft to the Serengeti for a short (two-night) stay, combining this with the Park Hyatt Zanzibar stay. (Preferred tour operator will arrange this.)



The Park Hyatt Zanzibar's infinity pool.



The hotel courtyard. Photos: Kate Nathan

## This hotel is a perfect choice for...

- Clients who want a luxury island holiday (combine with a few nights at a Nungwi beach resort);
- Incentive groups wanting something new and different;
- Smaller conference groups of around 100;
- Clients with an interest in the slave trade and its abolition;
- Islamic guests (hotel is halal and Stone Town contains sites of Islamic interest);
- Clients who would value the experience of staying in an exceptional luxury hotel in an antique town on the Indian Ocean.

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Photo: Kate Nathan

Zanzibar is attracting growing interest from the local MICE market. But the island still faces stiff competition from its neighbours in the Indian Ocean. Darise Foster reports.

## Conferences and events take off

THE Zanzibar archipelago has far more to offer business travellers than pristine beaches and warm tropical waters. With the island having identified the MICE sector as a top priority, investment has been on the increase, according to ceo of Grassroots Traveller, **Hafsa Mbabmo**. Her destination management company is situated in the heart of Zanzibar's historic Stone Town and has been appointed by the island's authorities to drive the promotional campaign directed at the MICE industry.

"Investors are recognising the potential of Zanzibar as

a conference and events destination and are therefore willing to invest in the island to ensure we are able to establish the necessary facilities to compete with other Indian Ocean island destinations," she says.

Hafsa adds that interest in the island as a conference destination has definitely increased. "We are seeing more enquires than ever before as well as an increase in the number of conferences taking place."

**Porsche Dumagude**, sales and marketing manager at the Emerald Collection told TNW that she had noticed a steady

flow of traffic to Zanzibar from the South African market.

"There is a continuous flow of MICE enquiries for the destination – which indicates that the market is growing," she says.

She adds that DMCs on the island are well equipped for the MICE market. "They organise site inspections and excursions in and around the island," she says. "Our properties on the island also offer fully equipped conference facilities with conference packages, functions in and around the resort, and team-building programmes."

Hotels on the island in general have been improving conference facilities extensively over the past few years with new venues opening as well. "The conference centres are all state-of-the-art and geared to host world-class conferences," says Hafsa.

According to Checkout Tours product and operations manager, **Christopher Simonsen**, most of the hotels that offer conferencing in Zanzibar are luxury properties providing tailor-made conference and meeting packages to suit all types of budgets. He recommends the Ocean Paradise hotel.

"It offers one of the largest and best conference facilities on the island, with state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment and trained in-resort staff to assist with set up and technical assistance," he explains.

**Michelle Hunter**, gm of groups, weddings and incentives at World Leisure Holidays, points out, however, that in spite of its quality conference facilities, Zanzibar faces great competition from its competitors in the Indian Ocean due to the fact that Zanzibar properties are quoted in dollars and the South African rand-US dollar exchange rate is very volatile.



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# Catching up with its counterparts

Zanzibar still has a long way to go before it matches the other islands in the region, admits **Hafsa Mbabmo**. "Granted, if one were to compare Zanzibar with other more established Indian Ocean islands, we are not as developed in terms of infrastructure and facilities, but we are fast becoming a serious contender to reckon with," she says.

"Zanzibar offers a unique experience – far more rustic and authentic than the likes of Mauritius and Seychelles but with more top-class facilities becoming available to rival their regional counterparts," agrees **Christopher Simonsen**.

He notes, however, that the island's emphasis on job creation for locals rather than hiring those from mainland Tanzania could be a pitfall as there could be a more qualified candidate for a position on the mainland.

"This leads to the standard of service being not quite on the same level as that of Mauritius," he

explains. "And while hotels are continually working on increasing service levels, the discrepancy is still noticeable at the moment."

Internet connectivity and speed is also an issue in Zanzibar, adds Christopher. "It can be very unreliable and slow. As a result, presentations that require video streaming or video conferencing could be a frustrating issue."

What's more, **Porsche Dumagude** notes that the need for malaria medication and yellow fever certificates have added to the complications of travelling to Zanzibar. "Malaria still poses a threat in a number of African countries. Zanzibar has not had a case in years but travellers like to be cautious nonetheless. Just as with yellow fever – for which the certificate is still a requirement in South Africa even though there has not been a case of the illness in years – we would like to see this issue revisited and hopefully dropped."

The new Infrastructure

Tax law presents another challenge. "The Infrastructure Tax was implemented on July 1 and states that a further US\$1 (R13) will be charged per night to all guests staying in Zanzibar – irrespective of age," she explains.

Hafsa maintains that while Zanzibar might not be considered 'top-notch' across the board, this is not necessarily a disadvantage.

"We believe that by showcasing the essence of Zanzibar, we can create a very unique destination for our business visitors."

Porsche agrees, adding that Zanzibar is not like Mauritius or Seychelles as it is a "true African experience".

"It offers a good combination of beach and relaxation with the option of adventure and exploring. The warm waters are truly inviting and sun worshippers are found in abundance – cocktail in hand, sand between the toes, enjoying some watersports and a good massage," she says.



Zanzibar offers truly authentic experiences.

## Ideal for smaller groups

AS ZANZIBAR offers a far more rural and authentic experience for the traveller, most venues on the island target the smaller, more intimate conferencing sector.

Many venues are a significant drive from the airport, however the necessary logistics are in place, **Hafsa Mbabmo** advises. What's more, the distance can also serve as an advantage. "It allows our visitors to get a real glimpse of the island and when they leave they are doing so with a better understanding of what Zanzibar is all about," she says.

Agreeing with this sentiment, **Christopher Simonsen** says: "Most of the hotels are around 40 minutes from the airport, depending on which side of the island the traveller is staying. This allows the client to experience the real Zanzibar

and take in the island's rustic beauty and charm."

"Our niche is to service small, intimate groups in a highly authentic fashion, giving them very real insight into this destination, not just the sun, sea and sand but the culture, the history and the trade," says Hafsa. She says most venues are in agreement with this strategy.

"One will find they cater for anything from one to 200 people." She believes this is a key advantage for Zanzibar. "There is nothing commercial about the island."

Zanzibar remains non-commercial with an element of adventure, agrees **Porsche Dumagude**. "This opens travellers up to exploring its authentic African history. It is a destination that continually offers more and this is seen in the number of repeat visitors."

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# Zanzibar

Photo: Serena Hotels

## Five off-beat island activities

WHILE the small island of Zanzibar is home to several historic sites that are not to be missed, there are many lesser-known attractions that travellers can enjoy. Africa Stay director, **Marian Sardu**, and kulula holidays product manager for Indian Ocean islands, **Chantelle Brown**, provide their top five recommendations for off-beat attractions in Zanzibar.

### 1. Maruhubi and Mtoni Palace Ruins

Legend has it that Mtoni was first built by Sultan Said bin Sultan between 1828 and 1834 after he made Zanzibar his throne. It was devastated by a fire in 1889 and left in ruins. With its rolling lawns, bathhouses and water lily ponds reminiscent of the affluent life enjoyed by

palace residents over a century ago, the peaceful Maruhubi and Mtoni Palace ruins are perfect for those looking for a place to escape the bustle of Stone Town for a few hours, says Chantelle.

### 2. Mangapwani Caves

For travellers interested in gaining some insight into the unspeakable living conditions of slaves in east Africa during the 1800s, Chantelle recommends making a stop at the northern town of Mangapwani.

### 3. Jozani forest tour

Zanzibar's quiet interior is home to many endemic species of fauna and flora and the red colobus monkey, and a drive offers some of the best

opportunities for wildlife viewing, says Marian.

### 4. North Coast (Nungwi) tour

According to Marian, this full-day excursion to the extreme north of the island provides travellers with the opportunity to visit the ruins of the Portuguese Barracks, a traditional fish village and a small turtle aquarium.

### 5. Safari Blue

Safari Blue is a very special product comprising a full-day excursion exploring the beautiful conservation area of Menai Bay, south-west of Zanzibar island, says Marian. Here, guests are able to stop at a sandbank in the morning to snorkel over the coral reef before enjoying a relaxing swim.



Much work has been done to ensure Zanzibar is accessible. Photo: Anton Matthee


## Easy access...

ZANZIBAR is easily accessible with direct flights from both South Africa and Dubai now available. "Both the Gulf area and Southern Africa are targeted to consider Zanzibar as a business destination. In this regard, much work has been done to ensure it is accessible and flights are in place," says **Hafsa Mbabmo**.

**Christopher Simonsen** notes that the regular Mango flight from South


Africa to Zanzibar adds to the destination's convenience. "The regular direct schedule and its three-and-a-half hour short flight time have made Zanzibar an attractive option – especially for incentive travel," he says. "There is also more flight connectivity with fastjet, SAA and Kenya Airways, but the reliability of Mango's direct flights make the carrier not only accessible but cost effective too."


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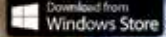
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# CHINA



What are the best routes and connections to China for SA travellers? TNW's Max Marx investigates.

## Top connections for SA travellers

**A**IR China will launch direct services between Johannesburg and Beijing on October 29, but there are several airlines in the South African market that currently offer good connections to Hong Kong and China via their hubs.

The most popular routes to mainland China from South Africa, according to operators and agents, are via Hong Kong, Singapore, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha and Mauritius. "The main things to consider when deciding on a route," says **Chien Liou**, Dragon Holidays md, are price, loyalty programme and whether the client wants to visit the airline's stopover city."

**Christine Sing**, Flight Centre Chillili Lane team leader, says

most leisure tourists fly into Beijing or Shanghai, while many business travellers make their way to Guangzhou, where a large number of trade shows, exhibitions and conventions are held. She adds that many South Africans opt to holiday in Hong Kong as they don't need visas for up to 30-day stays.

Cathay Pacific offers the most direct routing to Beijing, the shortest flying times and generally has the cheapest fares, says **Theresa Szejwallo**, md of Trafalgar.

The average travelling time from Johannesburg to Beijing is 16 hours 40 minutes, adds **Mandi Prinsloo**, travel adviser at Pentravel Gateway.

For those travelling to or

via Hong Kong, Cathay and SAA are popular options, with Cathay offering very good through fares to Beijing and Shanghai, says Chien.

Singapore Airlines is another popular option, providing seamless connections into China, says **Alet Steyn**, Wendy Wu Tours' business development manager. "The transit times in Singapore are usually a maximum of two hours and the airline is one of the best in terms of service," Christine adds.

Emirates and Etihad also offer attractive airfares and short layovers, says Chien, with Emirates a popular choice because of its seven daily flights between South Africa and Dubai.

## Flight frequencies

CATHAY Pacific along with its sister airline Dragonair operates to 22 destinations in mainland China. Together the carriers offer 10 daily flights to Beijing, 17 daily flights to Shanghai and two daily flights to Guangzhou.

Between Singapore Airlines and its regional wing SilkAir, the airlines operate to 12 destinations in China. These include seven flights a day to Hong Kong, three flights daily to Beijing, five daily to Shanghai as well as flights to Guangzhou, Chongqing, Chengdu, Shenzhen, Changsha, Kunming, Wuhan, Xiamen and Hangzhou.

On July 6, Air Mauritius added Chengdu to its China route network. The airline

now flies once a week to Beijing and Chengdu, and twice a week to Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Looking at the Gulf carriers, Qatar Airways flies daily to Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai, and three times a week to Chengdu and Chongqing. Transit times are flexible with the shortest one to Hong Kong being just 55 minutes. Emirates flies twice daily to Beijing and Shanghai and daily to Guangzhou. Etihad launched daily services to Hong Kong on June 16. The airline also flies daily to Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu.

On the home front, SAA flies daily to Hong Kong.

## Did you know?

Trafalgar offers Insider Experiences such as a Be My Guest lunch with a Hutong family in Beijing. The operator also offers local specialties like foot massages, a visit to a Tea House, Tai Chi classes, calligraphy classes, and a Chinese dumpling-making experience as part of its packages to China.

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# CHINA

## Upsell these highlights!

WHEN it comes to a country as vast and varied as China, with its must-see and do attractions and leisure activities, travel agents have a great opportunity to upsell the destination to clients.

The most popular destinations for the South African market in mainland China are Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Xi'an, Guilin and cruising the Yangtze River.

### Beijing

"A walk along the Great Wall of China is considered by many to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience," says **Alet Steyn**. The Dongcheng district includes many of Beijing's major cultural attractions such as the Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, and Tiananmen Square. It is also home to the famous hutongs (alley ways) where one can catch glimpses of traditional Beijing and is great to cycle through, says **Theresa Szejwallo**. At night, Beijing entertainment includes bars, restaurants, nightclubs, Chinese opera shows,

acrobatics and sampling traditional Chinese cuisine. Learning Tai Chi and hiking the nearby mountains are also popular past times.

### Shanghai

Cosmopolitan Shanghai blends the modern with the traditional. Must-visit places are The Bund, Shanghai's famous waterfront, renowned for its many buildings in various architectural styles; and Nanjing Road, the main shopping street with various speciality stores, malls, theatres, bars, street musicians, and hotels. A must-see is the Shanghai Acrobatics Troupe at the Shanghai Centre Theatre. At People's Park, travellers can visit the Shanghai Museum and Museum of Contemporary Art.

### Xi'an

A visit to Xi'an allows travellers to admire the army of Terracotta Warriors and Horses and learn about the emperor who built them for protection in the afterlife, says Alet. Xi'an is also to become the site



### Nanjing road, Shanghai's main shopping street.

of China's first archaeology museum, which will feature 140 000 cultural relics of Chinese history. Popular tourist activities in Xi'an are cycling the Xian City Wall, exploring the Shaanxi History Museum and visiting the Bell Tower, the Muslim Quarter, the Great Mosque and Big Wild Goose Pagoda. Trafalgar Tours, Wendy Wu Tours, and Dragon Holidays all offer itineraries that include Xi'an.

### Yangtze River

The third longest river in the world, the Yangtze, winds through remote mountains, arid plains, canyon gorges and more fertile regions. Tiger

Leaping Gorge on the Upper Yangtze in the Lijiang area is one of the deepest gorges in the world and a hiker's paradise that can be explored on the LUX\* Tea Horse Road Lijiang's 'Discovery' package, offered by LUX\* Resorts & Hotels. Local Naxi people who live a traditional lifestyle also use the hiking trails around this area.

The Three Gorges on the Yangtze's middle reaches are among the most scenic, navigable areas of the Yangtze with spectacular landscapes. "Four-day cruises along the Three Gorges Dam are immensely popular and there is a seasonal option to

cruise 2 374km along the full navigable reach of the Yangtze River between Chongqing and Shanghai – a splendid travel opportunity by any standards," says **Chien Liou**. Wendy Wu Tours and Trafalgar also offer various Yangtze River cruise options.

### Guilin

Guilin is set in one of the most beautiful parts of China amid mountains and coves. Travellers can visit the Reed Flute Cave with its stalagmites and take a Guilin city tour that includes a visit to the zoo where giant pandas can be seen. Great for walking, Guilin also has good restaurants,



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markets and nightlife.

"The striking karst landscape of the Li River between Guilin and Yangshuo has inspired artists and poets for centuries," says Alet. **Mandi Prinsloo** says the Li River cruise from Guilin to Yangshuo is a great adventure. "In Yangshuo one can cycle the countryside stopping off at tourist spots, hike up Moon Hill and cruise the Yulong River on a bamboo raft." The Impression Sanjie Liu show, staged on the Li River and featuring 600 performers portraying the life and culture of the Yangshuo people, is a must-see, she adds.

### Yunnan

Yunnan province was China's first tea producing region and is famous for Pu'er tea and the Tea Horse Road, an ancient trading route where tea was bartered for horses and medicines.

LUX\* Resorts & Hotels opened LUX\* Tea Horse Road Lijiang in September last year, says **Alexis Bekker**, LUX\* Resorts' head of sales and marketing; South Africa. The hotel offers a 'Discovery' package that provides a



### Travellers touring Beijing in tuk-tuks.

great way to explore the area. Excursions include sipping on Pu'er tea in the oldest tea house in the town; visiting the Dongba Cultural Museum for a Dongba handwriting demonstration; visiting Wenhai Lake where rare medicines and herbs flourish; trekking to the village of the Yi and Naxi people where visitors can meet a Dongba shaman; taking a horse ride to see the original Tea Horse Road caravan trails; and trekking through the Tiger Leaping Gorge.

The hotel group will open LUX\* Tea Horse Road Benzilan further north next month. The mountain retreat is surrounded by Tibetan villages on the shores of the Yangtze River. Here visitors can explore the surrounding glaciers, hike deep canyons,

pick mushrooms, and enjoy authentic local experiences with genuine Tibetan hosts. "Private audiences with resident monks in monasteries can also be arranged," says Alexis.

### Chengdu

The Giant Panda Breeding and Research Base is a must-visit destination where travellers can learn about the Giant Panda, suggest both Chien and Alet. Travellers can also visit Chengdu's centuries-old tea houses and learn about old rituals and local culture, adds Chien. On Jinli Street, east of Wuhou Memorial Temple, old-world stores sell Shu embroidery, folk handicrafts and calligraphies, while visitors can also enjoy shadow puppetry and browse the many street stalls.

## 4 top transit offers

**1 PASSENGERS** transiting through Doha, with layovers of between five and 12 hours, can do a free city tour without the need to apply for a visa. Agents can book stopover packages through Qatar Airways Holidays.

**2 Air Mauritius** offers a free stopover on non-connecting flights, which can be extended to three nights, with the airline paying for the first night. Non-connecting passengers enjoy four- or five-star accommodation (depending on travel class), return airport transfers and selected meals.

**3 Singapore Airlines'** Singapore Stopover Holiday from S\$65 (R597) includes accommodation, airport transfers, unlimited hop-on, hop-off bus rides, entry to 20 key attractions and

dining deals. There's also a basic stopover package for S\$49 (about R450). What's more, passengers travelling on Singapore Airlines from South Africa and transiting through Singapore's Changi Airport receive a Changi Dollar Voucher worth S\$40 (about R365) to spend at Changi Airport until March 31, 2016.

**4 Emirates** customers with more than a four-hour layover in Dubai are entitled to meals at Dubai International Airport. Emirates' first- and business-class lounge passengers can enjoy gourmet buffets, à la carte meals and spa, massage or beauty treatments. First-class travellers and Emirates Skywards platinum members can even sample and purchase exclusive vintage wines in a private wine cellar.

### Did you know?

The standard luggage allowance on several airlines flying into China is also attractive. Air Mauritius offers 40kg in economy class, while Singapore, Qatar, Emirates and Etihad offer 30kg baggage allowance.

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# CHINA



Cosmopolitan Shanghai blends the modern with the traditional. Photo: Pixabay

## Tips for travellers

FOR visitors to Beijing, upsell with side trips to Xi'an and Guilin, says Pentravel's **Mandi Prinsloo**. "Hospitality standards in China are much lower than we're used to in South Africa, so always try and upsell to a higher hotel category," she says. Four-star hotels are completely acceptable but three-star hotels can be 'iffy', says Dragon Holidays' **Chien Liou**. Due to the language barrier it's always advisable to sell guided tours and

sightseeing trips with a local guide and pre-book transfers and transport such as train tickets, says Mandi. Agents can also add on authentic Chinese experiences, such as cooking classes and Chinese writing classes, says Flight Centre's **Christine Sing**.

Where clients are travelling for business, suggest extending their trip for tourism activities, says Wendy Wu's **Alet Steyn**. "For example, if corporate travellers have a conference

in Shanghai, they will add on our Beijing and Xi'an seven-day, short-stay package or make use of our three-day 'Hong Kong Glimpses' stopover package on their return." Agents can also suggest combining tours to China, Tibet and Mongolia.

While Chinese festivals are spectacular, Chien says travellers should avoid them, as many Chinese locals attend these and public transport is extremely challenging.

## Diarise these dates!

- China International Travel Mart: November 13-15 (Yunnan)
- Guangzhou International Travel Fair: February 25-27, 2016.
- Beijing International Tourism Expo: June 24-26, 2016.
- World Travel Fair: May 12-15, 2016 (Shanghai)

## Visa update

All ordinary passport holders wishing to visit mainland China can apply for visas at the Chinese Visa Application Service Centre (CVASC) in the Sandton City Office Tower in Johannesburg. Applicants can no longer apply directly at the Chinese Embassy or Consulate. The single-entry fee for visas has increased from R400 to R800 per person.

## LUX\* to launch new resort

LUX\* Resorts and Hotels will officially open the boutique hotel LUX\* Lijiang on February 8, 2016 (Chinese New Year).

At the foot of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, the hotel invites guests to experience the region by exploring nature trails

by foot, on bicycles or horseback and learn about tea ceremonies inspired by the tales of the Tea Horse Road. Dedicated LUX\* tour guides can also arrange a private audience with genuine Dongba shamans, China's forgotten priests. "China's economic

progress, continued stability and the growing ease of travel have made the continent increasingly attractive to trend-setting travellers who are looking for unspoiled destinations, rich in genuine experiences," says **Paul Jones**, ceo of LUX\* Resorts and Hotels.

## News flash!

Wendy Wu Tours has made a number of changes to its China tour itineraries for 2015. Zhujiujiao, a picturesque town and home to the Fangsheng Bridge, has been added as a day trip from Shanghai. Clients will now stay for two consecutive nights in Yangshuo and one night in Guilin to ensure a more leisurely paced stay instead of the previous one night Guilin, one night Yangshuo and one night back in Guilin. ■

Births, deaths, marriages, promotions – we want to know! Please fax or e-mail TNW's Debbie Badham, at [debbieb@nowmedia.co.za](mailto:debbieb@nowmedia.co.za) or (011) 327 4094.

## Appointments

■ Pentravel has appointed **Jolene Campbell** as a Gauteng regional manager, with effect September 1. Jolene has an honours degree in marketing and tourism from the University of Pretoria. Pentravel has also appointed **Nicola Bradford** as the third regional manager for Gauteng as of October 1. Nicola has a number of years' experience as a Pentravel store manager.



Natalie joined Trafalgar in 2005 as a sales representative. Within six months, she was promoted to national sales manager. In her new role, Natalie will focus on promoting group travel with Trafalgar, including educational trips, sports and cultural events.

■ Southern Sun Hyde Park Sandton has appointed **Quintin Mulwitsky** as its new deputy general manager. Quintin holds a diploma in hospitality management from the International Hotel School, and completed a management development programme in executive development from the University of Stellenbosch.



■ **Joel Stols** has been appointed deputy general manager at Tsogo Sun's Sunsquare Montecasino hotel. Joel studied hospitality management at the Central University of Technology in the Free State.



■ Protea Hotels has appointed **Jerome Forsyth-Githahu** as its new regional sales manager for the Western Cape region. Jerome joined the Protea Group three years ago as head of the Protea Hotels contact centre. He started in the hospitality industry in 1999 and worked with South African Airways for seven years.



■ **Natalie Farnell** has been appointed Trafalgar group's business development manager.



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# Airport predator axed

From page 1

obviously needed to be dealt with, this didn't mean the entire regulation needed to be scrapped. "Should we also resort to scrapping all driver's licences because there are some corrupt police officers at the side of the road bribing innocent road users?" he said.

Mayihlome said to prevent these kinds of incidents, parents should talk their children and inform them of the rules and regulations so that they are fully aware of their rights. Younger

unaccompanied children should always be escorted through the airport by airline staff, according to Mayihlome.

Some agents have started requesting 'meet and greet' services for unaccompanied minors. **Michi Messner**, Qantas regional manager for Africa, told *TNW* the airline escorted a group of schoolgirls through security after their agent had expressed concern, following news of the incident. She said, however, that this was not a standard service the airline was offering for all minor travellers. ■



Showcasing Fly Blue Crane's new offering at an information sharing session for the travel trade are **Jerome Simelane** (second from left), **Siza Mzimela** (centre) and **Theunis Potgieter** (second from right), flanked by the airline's stewardesses. Photo: Debbie Badham

# Fly Blue Crane spreads its wings

DEBBIE BADHAM

**F**LY Blue Crane officially launched flights on September 1, operating to "underserved" routes in South Africa from Johannesburg.

The airline, which is headed up by ex-SAA executives **Siza Mzimela**, **Theunis Potgieter** and **Jerome Simelane**, first announced plans to launch flights in May last year.

It aims to provide a high frequency "hybrid" service geared to the business market. "We're not an LCC or a full-service carrier," says chief operating officer, Theunis Potgieter, "we are a

hybrid airline that will offer quality products but at a more competitive price."

Gm of Commerical, Jerome Simelane, highlights Fly Blue Crane's commitment to the trade, saying the airline will offer upfront commission structures. It will also offer an agency portal that enables agents to complete tasks such as filing private fares and managing refund processes and commission reports. A dedicated travel desk for agents has also been put in place.

Initially, three domestic routes will be on offer. Based in Johannesburg, the airline

will fly to Bloemfontein, Kimberley and Nelspruit. Plans are to expand quickly, adding new domestic routes as well as focusing on regional routes, says Theunis.

Flights will be operated by two 50-seater ERJ145s. The Bloemfontein route will operate return flights five times daily on weekdays, twice on Saturdays and three times on Sundays. Kimberley will be serviced three times daily on weekdays, once on Saturday and twice on Sunday. The Nelspruit route will operate return flights twice daily on weekdays and once on Saturdays and Sundays. ■

*pulse poll*  
brought to you by eTNW and TRAVELINFO

### Could Zanzibar be the new Mauritius?

- Mauritius is more popular with both leisure and corporate travellers
- Both destinations are equally popular with South African travellers
- More and more South Africans are booking to Zanzibar
- Mauritius is more popular but mostly with corporate travellers

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TNW7136

# Lufthansa faces challenges in collecting GDS surcharge

DORINE REINSTEIN

**LUFTHANSA** is facing some procedural challenges to collect its controversial €16 (R242) Distribution Cost Charge (DCC), which came into effect on September 1. This has delayed implementation of the charge in some countries, including Brazil, China, Hong Kong, Iran, Yemen, Libya and New Zealand.

Lufthansa had originally planned to use the OB fee field to collect the DCC but not all

GDS companies are currently able to display this field. The airline has decided to rather collect the levy by charging it as a carrier-imposed YR/YQ fee for tickets issued from September 1 – but this has also not been without difficulty. Countries such as Brazil refuse to allow airlines to collect fees this way, saying it is legally questionable as the YR box is only for government-imposed fees.

A spokesperson for Lufthansa

told *TNW* that introducing a fee such as the new DCC required some legal admission. "The procedure is different from country to country and is, in some countries, still in progress."

In SA, the DCC will still be collected from September 1 and will be charged on all tickets regardless of fare type. There will be no discounts on DCC amounts for children's tickets. For infant tickets, no DCC will be charged. ■

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