Domestic airfares – expect a rollercoaster ride

**Dorine Renster**

**NEWS**

EW entrants in the domestic market, a plummeting rand and rising operating costs will create an unstable environment for airfares in the coming few months, industry experts predict.

Increased competition in the market has already led to all-time low fares in the South African market, according to a recent study conducted by Travelstart. Hopping on a plane to Cape Town, Johannesburg, George and Port Elizabeth is cheaper now than it was in 2012.

However, these low fares could be detrimental to growth of the commercial aviation industry, analysts at Travelstart warn. “When you consider that most airlines need to be selling a seat for at least R900 to R1 000 one way and have a load factor of 70% to 80% on each flight that takes off just to make a marginal return, it stands to reason that the low ticket prices available at the moment will soon be a thing of the past,” says Russel Jarvis, Travelstart’s head of communications.

The first victim of the cut-throat competition in the market is Comair. The airline recently forecast an earnings decline of between 12% and 26% for the year ended June 2015. This is in sharp contrast to the previous two years, when the airline reported significant increases in revenue.

“This forecast is not surprising,” says Chris Zweigenthal, Aasa ceo, explaining that most airlines’ costs are dollar-based. As the rand continues to decline against the US dollar, airlines face tough operating conditions.

“New carriers have all come with launch fares that are not sustainable in the long-run.”

South Africa has also seen three new entrants into the domestic market – Skywise, FlySafair and Fly Blue Crane – during a time that the market is relatively flat and showing little growth, Chris says. These new carriers have all come with launch fares that are not sustainable in the long-run.

However, the competition will soon start to stabilise, he says.

Whether airfares will drop as a result of increased competition or go up in an attempt to stabilise the market is hard to predict, Chris says. “It will be a rollercoaster time. All airlines will likely keep a very close eye on what the market is doing.”

Skywise co-chairperson, J Mallik, admits that the current airfares in the market are unsustainably low and predicts they will rise soon.

“Airline operators have the right to peg air ticket prices at the lowest levels they deem fit in a bid to attract a large pool of customers, however these prices are not viable,” he says, urging the industry to be bold enough to work with sustainable pricing structures that promote real growth and development of domestic air travel.

FlySafair offers some of the lowest fares in the market, starting at around R499 for flights between Cape Town and Johannesburg, Kirby Gordon, vp of sales and distribution at FlySafair, believes these prices are sustainable if airlines can keep their aircraft full.

“With increased competition, there is more capacity in the market than ever before. If the demand doesn’t rise, there will probably be some airlines falling short.”

Failing prices have stimulated demand, Kirby says. “With the 39% decrease in fares we brought about, we’ve seen a 132% increase in demand on some routes. What remains to be seen is how much this demand will last.”

With the spotlight on the upcoming Rugby World Cup in the UK, Air France KLM is offering agents the chance to win two economy-class tickets to any destination in the region! The names of agents who issue tickets to the UK between August 1 and October 31 will be entered into a draw. To enter, agents should submit ticket information, with lata numbers, to Air France KLM before November 6.

Getting geared up for the festivities is Christian Halm, Air France KLM’s commercial director for Southern Africa. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl.

**Hello, UK!**

**GOV**

NATIONAL Treasury has launched a Central Supplier Database (CSD) to “simplify the process of doing business with government”.

The CSD would reduce the exchange of compliance documents in paper form, eliminate multiple registrations with different organs of state and ultimately reduce the cost for both business and government, the department said in a statement.

At the launch of the CSD

**Govt launches transparent supplier database**

**Dorine Renster**

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At the launch of the CSD

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September 16 2015 I No. 2367

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Local reality is lekker!

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Retail brands need to evolve

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Airline launches Lusaka-Durban flights

PROFLIGHT Zambia will start direct flights from Lusaka to Durban this month.

The latest route was part of its strategy to expand across Southern Africa, the airline said.

Flights will operate three times a week from September 16, using a 50-seat CRJ-100 aircraft. If demand proves strong, the airline will add a fourth weekly flight.

Fares start from US$210 (R2 800) one-way, excluding taxes. Children are half price.

Flights will depart Lusaka at 11h00 on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, arriving in Durban at 13h30. Return flights will depart Durban at 14h10 the same day, arriving in Lusaka at 16h40.

The Durban service would provide connections with Proflight’s services between Lusaka and Ndola, Kitwe, Solwezi and Mfuwe, the airline said.

City Lodge expansion on track

DARRESE FOSTER

THE City Lodge Hotel Group is making solid progress with its targeted African expansion strategy and expects to open five new hotels in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique and Namibia by mid-2017.

The group detailed its progress in its annual financial results, which show a revenue increase of 22.6% to R1.3bn for the year ending June 30, 2015.

“Towards standardising, automating and simplifying the fragmented supply chain management system and is seen as the precursor to eProcurement in government. Currently, there is no single consolidated comprehensive supplier database and, consequently, information related to the compliance requirements of government is duplicated during procurement processes.”

The CSD will interface with supplier information on the CSD, suppliers currently on any database of organs of state need to maintain their records through the existing supplier systems for the period September 1 to March 31, 2016.

Once suppliers have registered on the CSD, and their information has been verified, a unique supplier number and security code will be allocated to them. Suppliers will only be required to register once when they do business with government. From April 1, all organs of state will be have to use the CSD when selecting suppliers.
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Historic Port Alfred hotel reopens
ROYAL St Andrews Hotel in Port Alfred, which forms part of the Mantis Collection, reopened on September 4 after a R130 million makeover. All 10 of the original heritage rooms in the hotel have been upgraded and a new wing houses an additional 50 rooms. Equipped with all modern amenities, including free high-speed WiFi, the hotel is designed to make both business and leisure travellers feel at home. A modern 180-seat conference facility, the biggest in Port Alfred, will attract national conferences to the town with a spin-off for other accommodation establishments and restaurants. The hotel is also working with the Royal Port Alfred Golf Course to promote golfing tourism to the area.

Botswana lodge reopens after refurb
TULI Safari Lodge, between the Northern Tuli Game Reserve and the Limpopo River in Botswana, has reopened following a R130 million makeover. All 10 of the original heritage rooms in the hotel have been refurbished, although this refurbishment marks the first major refurbishment of the hotel since 2007. The work on the Cabanas, which has already started and is scheduled for completion towards the end of November, is part of an ambitious upgrade project being rolled out at the Sun City Resort. The upgrade will see Sun City’s facilities extended to offer more diverse and cosmopolitan choices as well as a revitalisation of the resort’s food and beverage offering. Some restaurants have already closed for refurbishment. The Sun City Convention Centre will also be refurbished, although this phase of the upgrade is still in the planning stages.

News

Luxury resort planned for Durban’s North Coast
DORNE RIESSEN

URBAN’S long-awaited beach resort could soon become a reality. KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Mike Mabuyakhulu, announced plans to develop a luxury beach resort during this year’s East2South investment seminar hosted at Mahé, Seychelles, last month. “We are thrilled to announce that our efforts to secure investment for the beach resort have gained traction.” The resort is expected to be built in Tinley Manor, north of Ballito, and will be modelled on the Russian-owned Savoy Resort in Ecco, Seychelles. Mike said a partnership with the Tongaat Hulett Group had been established to develop beach resorts on KZN’s north coast, using land owned by the group. A committee comprising Tourism KZN, Trade & Investment KZN and Tongaat Hulett is currently in discussions with a number of potential investors to develop the resorts.

The province has been hoping to attract investment for a resort-type hotel for years, saying the lack of air services to King Shaka International Airport is a direct result of a lack of appropriate products in the province. In 2012, TKZN ceo, Nelapho Khoza, told TNW: “Air charters are not coming to Durban because of lack of appropriate products and, more specifically, beach resorts.”

Beachcomber launches adults-only experience
BEACHCOMBER will offer an adults-only experience at the five-star Dinarobin Hotel Golf & Spa in Mauritius from November 1. ‘Crescent 6’, comprising 34 Club junior suites, will be reserved for adults (18 years and older). Built in a crescent formation, these 65-sqm suites are set either in shady tropical gardens or along the beachfront. The property will also reserve a pool as well as a section of beach and a beach bar for adults only. A specific area of L’Harmonie, Dinarobin’s main restaurant, has been designated for adults, while La Plage will serve a special adults-only dinner once a week on the ocean’s edge under the stars, at a supplement. Saveur de lies will be open exclusively to guests over 18 residing at Dinarobin and Paradis. Le Martello, the exclusive lounge of the club at Dinarobin, will be open until 23h00 for adults.

Beachcomber md, Terry Munro, says the new facilities at Dinarobin complete the niche holiday offering for South African travellers seeking a relaxing and exclusive beach break.

River Place Country Estate joins aha portfolio
RIVER Place Country Estate, a holiday, wedding and conferencing venue in Hennops River Valley, Centurion, has joined the management and marketing portfolio of aha Hotels & Lodges.

Guests and delegates can select from a range of versatile venues for business conferences, product launches, weddings, anniversaries or for an intimate lunch.

River Place comprises the Mountain View Conference Centre, the River View Venue, a 50-seater rock amphitheatre and two Italian riverside restaurants, al Fiume and il Patio Gourmet Pizzeria. Md of aha, Neil Bald, said: “Having a property with such a strong, versatile conferencing and event focus in the Gauteng region adds immense value to our footprint. We look forward to contributing to the property’s further success as the experts in hospitality management and marketing as it joins our portfolio of properties in South Africa and Southern Africa, including Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia.”

Sun City hotel undergoes major refurb
DARIESE FOSTER

SUN City’s three-star Cabanas hotel is undergoing a major refurbishment that includes an upgrade of the guest rooms, reception area and restaurant. It marks the first major refurbishment of the hotel since 2007. The work on the Cabanas, which has already started and is scheduled for completion towards the end of November, is part of an ambitious upgrade project being rolled out at the Sun City Resort. The upgrade will see Sun City’s facilities extended to offer more diverse and cosmopolitan choices as well as a revitalisation of the resort’s food and beverage offering. Some restaurants have already closed for refurbishment. The Sun City Convention Centre will also be refurbished, although this phase of the upgrade is still in the planning stages.

“There are contingency plans around the conferencing services that Sun City will offer during this time,” says Sun City marketing manager, Andrew Irumba. “Conferencing will be accommodated as per the clients’ directive with the ad hoc conferencing facilities across the resort. Sun City will actively work towards ensuring conference organisers are informed of any developments on this front,” he said.
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‘Sandton won’t be shut down’

DARISE FOSTER

THE initial proposal to shut down several roads in the Sandton Central Business District for a month in October during the Eco-Mobility Festival 2015 has been dismissed, following consultation with parties in the region.

Speaking to TNW to provide clarity on the city’s attempt to turn Sandton into a car-free zone for the duration of the festival, City of Johannesburg’s executive director of transportation, Lisa Setfo, said it was originally proposed that Maude Street (between Rivonia and Fifth), West Street (between Rivonia and Fredman), Alice Lane and Gwen Lane be closed off to private vehicles; however this was dismissed in favour of a plan that will allow at least some access to private vehicles.

“We conducted an extensive process of public consultation to understand the freight, delivery and construction requirements. “After all that input, this is the final plan that we’ve come up with,” she said.

There will be only one street in Sandton – West Street (between Maude Street and Fredman Drive) – that will be closed to private vehicles in October. 100m of West Street turning on to West Street. Cars will be prohibited from entering Maude Street (between West and Fifth) and Alice Lane from West Street. They will have to drive down to Rivonia Road and enter via Fifth Street, Rivonia, Fifth and Fredman will form a transport loop surrounding the Eco-Mobility precinct. Within this loop, one lane will be designated for public transport and the other will be available to private cars.

“We have tried to make it very easy to walk, use public transport or cycle in Sandton, and difficult – but not impossible – to use private cars,” Lisa said.

To manage access into the precinct, JMPD officers will be located at entry points on Alice Lane, Maude Street as well as the corners of Rivonia and West, West and Maude, Maude and Gwen and West and Fredman.

The transport loop will remain a permanent feature once the festival is completed. “It will take another six or seven months to construct the loop permanently and then there will be only one lane for private cars on those roads,” Lisa said.

Several park-and-ride facilities will be introduced to facilitate travellers commuting to Sandton from other parts of Johannesburg.

These include the Brightwater Commons, Montecasino, Waterfall, Nicolway, Randburg Square and Morningside Glen.

The city is also investigating the feasibility of a dedicated public transport lane in the morning and evening peak hours from Brightwater Commons and Montecasino.

To the point

Asilia Africa’s newest property, The Highlands, will open in Ngorongoro, Tanzania, on March 1, 2016. The Highlands comprises seven luxury tented suites, each with a king-size bed, bay windows and a wood-burning stove. The main area has been designed around a camp fire experience. Guests can explore the highlands that surround the camp, with the possibility of meeting the Maasai people and seeing leopard, buffalo and elephant. The Ngorongoro Crater is home to the highest density of lions in Africa.
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‘There’s an urgent need for industry standards’

There is an urgent need for industry standards in the business events industry to speed up the process of professionalising the sector, whether it is through a system of accreditation or registration. Liesl Venter reports.

Industry standardisation was a hot topic at the annual Southern African Association for the Conference Industry conference that took place in Cape Town in August, with stakeholders and role-players agreeing it was imperative to have a recognition system in place that requires proven competency of members while at the same time ensuring a strict code of conduct and ethics.

“A professional conference organiser is not a lady with a bakkie, 17 chairs and a marquee,” said Gilli Martini of Phambili African Events. “We are not party planners. We contribute over 3% of the GDP of this country. Business tourism is a massive income stream and we are fundamental role-players in that.”

She said the events industry in the country had seen a meteoric rise in the past twenty years and had proved itself capable of hosting world-class events. “We should be extremely proud of what we have achieved in such a short time but we also have to continue focusing on what we can still achieve.”

Nina Freysen-Pretorius, chairman of the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA), said: “There has to be some form of accreditation for membership – a standard of practice, ethics and credibility to adhere to. As ICCA, we are quite strict about who becomes a member, taking into account how they operate and what they do. This is essential because we have to maintain the level of professionalism in our sector.”

The same is required for South Africa. “There needs to be a database of some sort that is kept up to date and guarantees that a PCO is in good standing,” she said.

Delegates attending the conference agreed, saying such a database or record established through an accreditation system could even include a framework of costs and fees. “In other words, a sort of guideline for clients wanting to hire a professional conference organiser that gives them a range of what is available in our industry from the bottom to the top,” said one delegate.

Nina said it was extremely important to take into account the importance of collaboration and relationships in the sector throughout such a process. “By fostering partnerships that optimise our strengths and grow the global pool of knowledge and expertise we will make excellence an industry standard,” she said.

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As we celebrate tourism month this September, TNW looks at the growth of domestic travel in South Africa and samples just some of what our vibrant home has to offer.

Expect to see more locals exploring SA

As MUCH as R100 million has been invested in growing the domestic tourism sector in the country, Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom said at the launch of Tourism Month in Limpopo. The Minister added that it was important for all South Africans to become ambassadors for their country.

“With this investment, we are committed to ensuring that the wonders we boast of, and the unique heritage we have been endowed with, are shared by more and more South Africans,” he said.

In 2014, tourism accounted for close to 10% of all employed people in South Africa. Domestic trips increased by 11% in 2014 to reach 28 million. The revenue generated by Domestic Tourism alone in 2014 was R26.8bn. Derek said, for the country to reach the target of 18 million domestic tourists by 2020 as set out in the National Tourism Sector Strategy, it would have to work hard to make tourism more affordable and more accessible to all South Africans.

“We are therefore very keen to work with the trade to make travel a reality for millions of South Africans. All members of the trade are encouraged to upload their value-for-money deals on to the Sho’t Left website and to provide a variety of packages and options to suit all budgets.”

Limpopo proves why ‘local is lekker’

Karolien van Rooy

Amarula Lapa

Limpopo is home to one of South Africa’s favourite beverages – Amarula. Visit the Amarula Lapa to learn about the origins of the drink and sample it in a variety of ways. Nearby is the Amarula processing plant where the marula fruit is brought during the harvesting season. The Lapa itself is open all year round for visitors and is a great stop-over on the way to the Kruger National Park, just 12km south west of Phalaborwa.

Extreme 19th hole. Photo: Legend Golf Safari

Legend’s extreme 19th

Legend Golf and Safari Resort offers the world’s only extreme 19th golf hole, shaped like the map of Africa. The hole is only accessible by helicopter and golfers tee off 400m up on Hanglip Mountain. The resort’s golf course has captured the attention of golfing superstars as well as celebrities. Legend Golf and Safari Resort offers conference facilities, safaris and accommodation, including vacation homes, a spa and botanical gardens.

Polokwane Game Reserve

The Polokwane Game Reserve is just a 10-minute drive from the city centre and boasts unspoiled bushveld that is home to 52 species of game. The state-owned reserve preserves the Pietersburg Plateau False Grassland with over 100 types of grasses, flower and tree species. It is also home to rare animals such as the White rhino and Sable antelope, easy to spot in the 250-hectare park. The park has picnic and caravan site facilities, as well as self-catering chalets. Mountain biking, hiking and horse trails are other activities on offer.

Royal Kraal of Modjadji

The Modjadji rain queen comes from the special village of Modjadji just north of Tzaneen. Moshakge Nerwick Molokwane, secretary to the Balobedu Royal Council, takes visitors on a tour of the kraal, explaining the story of Queen Modjadji in a traditional tribal setting.

Mapungubwe National Park

This region saw the rise of the first indigenous kingdom in Southern Africa from AD900 to 1300. Special areas of interest include the Lost City on Mapungubwe Hill, where an ancient Iron Age community once traded with the East. There is also an abundance of wildlife, including elephant, lion and leopard.

The Big Baobab

The Sunland Baobab tree – one of the widest and oldest species of its kind in the world – is located in Limpopo. Estimated to be around 6 000 years old, the tree has a massive trunk that measures 47m in circumference. A tiny, fully equipped bar is located inside the tree. Day-trip fees of R20 per person are required, but children under three visit free. The Sunland Baobab Jungalows offers travellers accommodation for a longer stay in the area. Nearby activities include Modjadjiiskloof Cycad Forest, Magoebaskloof and the Modjadji forests.

Magoebaskloof Canopy Tour

The Magoebaskloof Canopy Tour is a unique and adventurous way of exploring the Groot Letaba River while swinging between 13 different platforms. The trained guides are while swinging between 13 different platforms. The trained guides are

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Come on over to Kwazulu-Natal in September, as we embark on this mesmerising experience to offer you and those who join you.

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What better time to kick off your journey of Re-discovery than Tourism Month? Here's a list of events that'll remind you why you #GottaLuvKZN.

06 Sept
06-11 Sept
08 Sept
08-11 Sept
12 Sept
12-13 Sept
13 Sept
16 Sept
17-20 Sept
24 Sept
25-26 Sept
26 Sept
27 Sept

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Tourism Month

Maropeng – captivating and close to home

The Maropeng Conference Centre recently upgraded its Hominid House. Darise Foster takes a closer look at what the area has to offer.

AS THE official visitor centre for the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site, Maropeng has become a popular venue for travellers seeking a cultural, just-out-of-Johannesburg experience. Maropeng is a unique destination that allows visitors to embark on the journey that human beings have taken, at the same time replacing the hustle and bustle of Johannesburg with wide open spaces and breath-taking views, says Lindsay Marshall, marketing and communications manager and acting gm of Maropeng. “It’s the opportunity to experience the only World Heritage Site in Gauteng.”

“It’s the opportunity to experience the only World Heritage Site in Gauteng.”

Lindsay says Maropeng is the perfect breakaway, with opportunities to experience the Maropeng exhibition or do a tour through the Sterkfontein Cave just 10 mins away. “We always hear people say: ‘I can’t believe I am in Gauteng, so close to home, yet look at this environment,’ and you realise what a special place it is when people are captivated,” she adds.

Just an hour’s drive from Pretoria and Johannesburg, the Maropeng Conference Centre offers guests some of the best views in Gauteng along with a four-star service at the Maropeng Hotel.

The property offers a niche conference set-up for conference organisers, with a dedicated events team to assist with all conference, team-building or strategy sessions for groups of up to 500 delegates.

Nonnie Kubecka, head of Gauteng Conventions & Events Bureau at the Gauteng Tourism Authority says: “The secluded and serene environment in the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site provides a unique atmosphere that facilitates concentrated attention and the effective sharing of knowledge. This environment ignites creativity and innovation.”

Hominid House at Maropeng has been recently upgraded to provide six additional private rooms and the volleyball court and braai areas have had a facelift.

According to Nonnie, other future developments include picnic sites, the experience laboratory and a virtual lab that will have a web-cam platform designed and supported by National Geographic. “This will facilitate communication between scientists and children within the country,” she says.

“It is then hoped to expand this platform to international audiences and participants in other countries and it is hoped that China, which has its own extraordinary palaeoanthropological and palaeontological research, will be one of the first participating countries to be linked in to this platform.”

“Not only is Maropeng celebrating its 10th birthday this year but September is also Heritage Month, so we are the ideal getaway for this time of year and there are some fantastic promotions coming up,” says Lindsay.

“Our fossils are cast in stone but our events are not and we are trying to create experiences that people will take away with them for a long time.”

Newsflash

In celebration of 30 years since the founding of the Midlands Meander Association, the association is launching the Midlands Meander Mobile App. The app will encompass all information about the Midlands in a user-friendly app called ’Guide on the Go’. There is real-time navigation using Google Maps, a page for each of the 150 establishments with contact details, descriptions and photos. Users can also easily search for whatever their needs may be. The app is launching on Android on October 1 and iOS soon after just in time for the December holiday season.

GTA Townships Tourism. Photo: Gauteng Tourism

How to sell township tourism

Carina Borralho

THE Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA) has embarked on an extensive project to improve and develop the product offering and marketing of leading townships in the province. To assist with this, the GTA recently visited several key townships in the province to liaise with tour operators, guides and other tourism providers.

“With the possible exception of parts of Soweto, most townships in Gauteng have been historically neglected in terms of tourism development, planning and marketing. We believe that it is vital to change this permanently,” says GTA head of communications, Barba Gangamedhe. “So far, the response from tourism providers has been positive, so we are confident that this project will produce tangible results and continuous improvement.”

Poor marketing

He adds that poor marketing leads to minimal visitation, which produces minimal profits and results in poor product development. Barba points out that there is no incentive to market products that are poorly developed. “We have to break this cycle by supporting these products and marketing them appropriately.”

Barba told TNW: “Each township has a different offering and agents should use these offerings to satisfy the unique tastes of tourists.” He adds that although each township has a unique appeal, they all still form part of an African and South African experience.

Focus on new experiences

GTA finds that township tourism is popular with both local and international tourists, however locals don’t necessarily feel like tourists when they visit townships, while international travellers are more inclined to find township tourism unique. “When targeting local tourists, agents should focus on the new experiences being offered. These are unexpected experiences such as bird watching, which would not be commonly associated with townships,” says Barba.

Agents should highlight how townships are a great setting for interacting with locals.

Barba encourages agents to dismiss misconceptions surrounding townships. “Townships house our uniquely diverse country and form part of a broader mix. By incorporating new features and highlighting the existing ones, we are offering tourists a holistic experience,” says Barba.

Townships are safe

He says a common misconception is that townships are not safe. “Townships are safe, especially in the frequently visited areas. Popular areas in townships, such as Vilakazi Street in Soweto are very safe, and tourists are accompanied by an educated tour guide,” he says.

To further promote development in townships, residents in townships are being employed as tour guides. “They know their township and can show tourists interesting and unique places that people would otherwise not know of,” says Barba. He adds that not only are the people living in the townships meant to benefit from township tourism but the tourism sector as a whole should benefit.

Neglected Alexandra

Barba says Alexandra is a good example of a neglected destination with tremendous potential and promise. He adds, however, that locals and foreigners are hesitant to visit Alex because they have a perception that it is dangerous. “Once we show how wrong that perception is, visitation and support from local tourists will increase.”

In contrast to Alex, Mamelodi is a very relaxed, friendly and easygoing township, and the residents are known for welcoming visitors.

For Soweto, agents should promote Lebo’s Soweto Backpackers and cycling tours, which offer a safe and environmentally friendly way of exploring the iconic township.

Further, there is another group called Boni4Kasi, which offers a rougher ride in Soweto for mountain biking fanatics. Another attraction in Soweto is the bungee jump between the Orlando cooling tours. “The GTA township project has discovered incredible potential in our province,” says Barba. “We are on the verge of bringing the world to townships, and taking townships to the top.”

Maropeng Visitor Centre at the Cradle of Humankind.
This is the home of Soweto Gold, the first township craft beer in South Africa, which was founded by Ndumiso Madiala. He worked as brewmaster at SABMiller for nine years before branching out to launch his own brand. The Soweto Gold range includes a signature lager as well as fruit-based beers and an apple cider.

On a tour of the micro-brewery you can see and sample the ingredients that go into the brews, followed by a beer tasting on the terrace. This is accompanied by dishes from the ‘gourmet township grill’ menu. Choices include the ‘hottest chicks’ chicken wings flash-fried with peri peri and sweet chilli relish, and Apple Ale basted pork ribs.

Ubuntu Kraal Kasi Beer Garden

The brewery located at the Ubuntu Kraal, has been decorated in retro-township style with antique equipment and vintage photos of South Africa’s cultural heroes lining the walls. Service is friendly and the staff have an impressive knowledge of the brewing process, making this beer garden one of Gauteng’s must-visit attractions.

Hennops Hiking Trail

The Hennops Hiking Trail is one of the most beautiful and well-maintained hiking trails in Gauteng offering two circular hiking routes – the relatively easy 6km Zebra Route (approximately 2 hours) and the more challenging 11.3km Krokodilberg Route (4-5 hours). Both routes leave from the Hadeda Camp where there are picnic and braai areas and basic hiking accommodation for those wishing to stay overnight. Both trails begin by crossing the Hennops River either by a suspension bridge or an old-fashioned ‘cablecar’ which works by a pulley system. On the longer Krokodilberg Route you will pass by a large cave, reached by a rope ladder, before beginning the steep climb across the hills to various viewpoints from where you can see the Magaliesberg mountains. Indigenous flora and fauna include zebra, blesbok, kudu and giant tree-like aloes.

It is recommended that hikers leave as early as possible on these largely shadeless routes to avoid the heat of the midday sun and that hikers bring sufficient supplies of water and food with them.

Market on Main Pretoria

A sister market to Johannesburg’s famous Market on Main in Maboneng, this pioneering market takes place every Saturday in the 012 Central building, a restored historic warehouse in downtown Pretoria. The market is spearheading an urban revolution in the Pretoria city centre, inviting young and fashionable Pretorians to come to town to enjoy great gourmet food and drinks in an easy-going and friendly atmosphere, while also catering to young families with a well-stocked kid’s play area. There’s a great selection of food stalls selling delicious lunches such as gourmet burgers and wraps, peri-peri prawns, tacos and traditional fish and chips, plus a host of homemade cakes, brownies and cookies and a bar selling craft beers and cocktails. Various fashion stalls sell vintage clothing, jewellery and accessories and unique items made by local designers. Pop-up art exhibitions and live performances by local bands are a regular feature.

A large, sunny courtyard and plenty of tables and benches provide plenty of space to sit and soak up the lively atmosphere.

For more information on what’s happening in Gauteng, what to do and where to go, visit www.gauteng.net, download our Gauteng Travel Guide APP on Google Play and App Store, follow us on Facebook ilovegauteng, on Twitter @visitgauteng with #GPLifestyle #GeePeeShotLeft
SOUTH Africa’s retail travel landscape is in a constant state of change as a result of the rapidly declining value of the rand, political uncertainty and other external factors, “In a challenging economy we have to do what we can to stay focused and bring the best value to the table,” says Monica Horn, product manager for the Harvey World Travel Franchise Support Team.

According to Monica, the exchange rate and social and political issues within South Africa, have created a climate of uncertainty. This has had a serious impact on the travel industry. “All these factors are massive challenges, which – with the present leadership – don’t seem that easy to overcome,” she says, adding that retail travel agents will have to work harder to add value and keep customers loyal.

Andrew Stark, md of the Flight Centre Travel Group, says companies that embrace new ways of doing business, will remain relevant to their customers and stay in business. “Those that don’t will fall by the wayside just like Blockbuster or most music stores,” he says.

According to Andrew, today’s retail shopping experience is a blended experience comprising both online and offline, giving customers choice. “Diversifying of brands will also appeal to customers in 10 years. We are doing a full circle again where customers are looking for niche offerings and advisers who can offer in-depth knowledge and expertise,” he says.

Whereas the political uncertainty, the rise of technology and the crippling rate of exchange have all had an effect on the market, the truth is that nothing has shaken the retail industry as much as SA’s decision to review its override commission agreements.

Jo Fraser, franchise director for Club Travel, says the main driver for most consortiums at the moment is the growth targets set by the airlines to earn override income. “We see the largest groups losing significant corporate accounts, and then venturing into the ITC arena, where they have never played before, to enable them to keep their numbers up.”

Consortium models must shift

In the US there has been a shift over the past year away from large aggregating consortiums towards smaller host agencies that offer personalised attention to member agents who specialise in lucrative niche markets, such as luxury, all-inclusive resorts and destination weddings. Mladen predicts we could see the same change in South Africa.

“Consortiums now need to galvanise around a different call to action. Up to now it was: I’ll join a consortium because then I’ll get a better deal from suppliers. Now the thinking has to be: I’m going to join a consortium because I like to specialise in a certain area.”

Franz agrees and says there has been a clear shift in the way consortiums are being run. They have started moving away from simply a bulk-buying entity to position themselves as entities that offer a more holistic benefit approach. These benefits include additional revenue streams for members that are not necessarily based on supplier agreements.

A shift away from consortiums altogether is also possible, warns Mladen. He says there has already been a shift away, with a number of large companies exiting their consortium over the past year. “The main reason for this was that, on their own, these companies were able to shape their strategy much better. The problem with most consortiums is that there is no common management process and no common vision. There is very little commonality other than that we all gather from time to time to giddy up the large overrides.”
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Retail travel brands

Strategies for success

Despite numerous challenges, a number of retail brands in the South African market have developed very successful strategies. A few consortiums reveal their secrets to success.

Putting people first

Our people are what make us successful, says Sean Hough. He says Pentravel consultants need to have travelled internationally and have a degree or a diploma but, more importantly, they need to subscribe to Pentravel values. “We think culture is more important than strategy and it’s the task of every person at Pentravel to help grow our culture and make it stronger and stronger.”

This strategy has paid off, according to Sean, Pentravel has a 91% customer satisfaction rating on HelloPeter. “This is backed up by our own NPS (net promoter score) which is also over 90% and our repeat and referral percentage which is over 60%,” he says.

This year, Pentravel launched a new tag line: ‘delivering sunshine since 1983’. “We say that it is not necessarily our purpose to handle travel arrangements but rather believe it’s our purpose to make people happy, and this starts with our own people first. In other words, we aim for Pentravel to be a place where people want to work and where customers love doing business.”

Diversity of brands

Success breeds success, according to Andrew Stark. He explains that one of the secrets to Flight Centre’s success is the diversity of retail brands the company is offering. “Flight Centre Retail has been working on its five retail brands, namely Flight Centre, Cruiseabout, Student Flights, Flight Centre Business Travel and Flight Centre Associates, for a number of years now.”

Andrew adds that continuous hard work on customer retention, customer acquisition and unique product is starting to pay dividends. “We think culture is more important than strategy and it’s the task of every person at Pentravel to help grow our culture and make it stronger and stronger.”

Owner-managed stores

All Harvey World Travel stores are owner-managed, so customers get to ‘work with the boss’, says Monica Horn. She says this often means that consultants work diligently to ensure consumer satisfaction, which results in repeat business. “We find that the HWT business comprises a diverse mix of SMMEs and corporates. Agencies often acquire new business with a leisure spin-off, largely through referrals from existing corporates.”
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ITC models – a definition is needed

AS THE popularity of ITCs has increased over the years, different ITC models have started emerging. Although these different models are often tarred with the same brush, it is important to make a distinction.

Independent ticketing agents

“What we loosely call agents is important to make a distinction. Although these different models are often tarred with the same brush, it is important to make a distinction. Independent ticketing models are often tarred with the same brush, it is important to make a distinction.

Independent ticketing consultants

Independent ticketing consultants work a lot more closely with the host company. The host company will request a commission split and money from the consumer will go directly into the back office of the host company. In return, the host company offers back office support and assistance.

Tammy Hunt, eTravel operations director, says the benefit of being an ITC is that it provides financial protection to the consumer as well as the supplier. It also prevents the ITC from having to become an admin or finance person when their expertise lies in sales and customer service.

The traditional ITC has been in the game for a number of years and has built a good healthy client base, adds Andrew Stark.

Rise of the ITCs

The ITC segment of the travel industry has seen phenomenal growth over the past few years, both internationally and in South Africa.

“The ITC model is the largest growth area in the travel industry worldwide,” says Jo Fraser. She reveals that the number of Iata licences has dropped significantly because corporate agencies often choose to surrender their licences and outsource their airline ticketing to the larger consolidators.

Chantal Gouws, area leader for Flight Centre Associates, says a lot of people are trying to get a better work-life balance, which can be achieved by becoming an ITC.

Retail travel consultants usually reach a stage when they want flexibility and the opportunity to still do what they love, while maintaining the relationships they have built over the years. I think this is the perfect solution.”

According to Franz Von Wielligh, the most obvious benefit for an ITC is that they don’t have the cost involved in setting up a lata ticketing office. “Secondly, most travel consultants are phenomenal at selling travel but may fall short with all the admin and back-office functions related to this. ITCs can then focus on making money instead of spending 60% of their time figuring out the admin side of things.”

Clients are also tempted to turn towards independent agents, as they tend to give clients more personalised attention, says Dinesh Naidoo, group operations director for Serendipity Worldwide Group. It is, after all, their own business.

Mladen Lukic says the need for more personalised service is not exclusive to the travel industry. “The 21st century is based on one-on-one relationships. Long gone are the days of outsourcing and insourcing.”

Warming up

Members of the Serendipity team prepare for their annual conference taking place this month. The group got together to shoot a promotional video in support of the Springboks for the 2015 Rugby World Cup. Photo: SWG

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“The 21st century is based on one-on-one relationships. Long gone are the days of outsourcing and insourcing.” Mladen Lukic and insourcing – that’s 20th century thinking. The entire sales process in the current connected economy requires one-on-one relationships.” According to Mladen, ITCs are perfectly positioned to fulfil the need for more personalised relationships.

“The ITC handles the management as well as the fulfilment element of the travel requirement. It’s impossible for any chain or electronic vendor to create a similar relationship to the one the ITC has with its client.”

Chantal says the ITC model will undoubtedly continue to grow at a rapid pace. She warns that host companies need to make sure they reference check all ITC candidates, as well as do credit checks, as there are risks of fraud and people not adhering to financial minimum standards.

“We all know there have been quite a few fraud cases recently. However, we believe that by having certain systems in place, we are looking after our clients who trade with us.”
How to choose your host company

WHEN it comes to selecting a host agency, prospective ITCs will need to consider a large number of factors besides commission split. “It’s just not about ticketing and commission share,” warns Mladen Lukic. He says very often prospective ITCs don’t have a clear idea of what they would like to achieve with their business but it’s important for ITCs to find a host company that will support its members with business development and training. “In order for any individual to have a successful thriving business, they have to bring something new to the market. Simply exiting an employment situation and starting your own business by doing exactly what you did as an employee yesterday is the shortest route to insolvency,” Mladen maintains. However, Tammy Hunt argues that the commission split is important, as one of the main reasons for becoming an ITC involves taking the risk of losing a set salary to earn extra money. She warns, however, that it is equally important to understand what benefits consultants get for the commission retained by the host company and truly understanding the cost involved of doing it yourself. “Most consultants do not want to be bogged down with tedious administration and follow-ups of referral commissions.”

Know your consortium

Prospective ITCs need to keep their eyes open, agrees Jo Fraser. “Many ITCs are literally conned into giving away 30% to 40% of every cent they earn. Only when they start operating do they realise that they are not getting value for money. If they want to leave, they are then locked into barely legal long-term contracts and threats.” The company a travel consultant selects should be a well-known reputable company, comments Chantal Gouws. “ITCS want their clients to follow them and they want them to know their business is looked after and protected by a global brand with significant buying power. Prospective ITCs need to make sure their host company has access to preferred partners so that their clients are protected not only by themselves but by their suppliers as well.”

According to Chantal, it’s imperative to have a back-end support team. “There are times where clients are stuck at the airport in the middle of the night. ITCs then need a team that is there to assist them, and at FCA we make sure we have that,” she says.

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BUILDING solid relationships with suppliers can be the differentiating factor that makes travel agents stand out from the crowd in the eyes of their customers. Suppliers can keep consultants up to date on new products and could even provide upgrades and other amenities for the consultant’s clients. Unfortunately, building strong relationships takes a lot of time and time is a valuable commodity for most travel agents.

1 Mutual respect
A relationship is not going to succeed if there is a disconnect in values, which is why it is important to find the right fit, says Tammy Hunt. “At eTravel, relationships are the backbone of our strategic triangle encompassing our staff, the ITCs and suppliers – none is more important than the other!”

“Mutual respect between both parties is so important,” agrees Cathie Bester, national sales manager for World Leisure Holidays. “When agents phone the call centre they need to remember it is a real person who is sitting at the other end of the phone. They are there to assist agents in getting the best possible deal for them and for their client.” Also the supplier should show he values the travel agent, adds Cathie.

“Relationships with the trade are very important to WLH, not only for our sales team but also for all aspects of our business, from our staff in the call centre who take booking requests to our finance department who pay commissions.”

2 Turn to your supplier for advice
“Agents should try whenever possible to listen to what the sales representative has to say when they come to see them,” says Cathie. She says very often the sales rep will be able to assist consultants with answering the simplest query, or they might give the consultant some valuable information about products or specials that the consultant might not be aware of.

3 Help the supplier with detailed information
Spokesperson for Thompsons Holidays, John Ridler, says agents rely on suppliers to furnish them with suitable quotes, excellent prices and reliable, prompt and friendly service while conducting the transaction. The next important step for the supplier is to give the client top service when they arrive at their destination.

To ensure that everything runs smoothly, John says travel agents can help the supplier by sharing as much information about the client as possible. Are they away on business or leisure? What is their age? Are there children? What is the level of sophistication of the clients? Are they active and sporty? Are they interested in day trips and excursions? Would they prefer an adults-only hotel? And other valuable information such as their dietary requirements and any special requests. This will help the supplier to tailor the itinerary to the client’s needs and preferences.

Asata recently put together a Member Advisory Forum (MAF) to discuss the measures that need to be taken in order to deliver a definition and framework for the ITC model in the South African market. The MAF will look into defining the models that are currently termed ITC but do not meet the true ITC business model. The forum will also review the roles and responsibilities across the entire value chain of business models operated by Asata to support and encourage a strong business practice and ethic that protects the travelling consumer and delivers a professional offering.

Pentravel believes its purpose is to make people happy. The group aims to be a place where people want to work and where customers love doing business. Pictured here are some of the company’s valued agents, who travelled to Vietnam with China Experience in May this year. The group are seen here with their bicycles and wearing their Vietnamese conical hats. Photo: Pentravel
4 Make use of technology
As the ITC market is growing exponentially with travel agents working from literally anywhere, it is becoming increasingly difficult for suppliers to make regular sales calls. Technology often offers the best solution in this case. Jo says that is exactly why Club Travel is now offering interactive webinars, supplier-sponsored get-togethers and educational sessions. Technology is becoming increasingly important when building relationships with suppliers, agrees Dinesh Naidoo. That is why SWG is launching an app that will facilitate the communication between the agent and the supplier.

“Technology is becoming increasingly important when building relationships with suppliers.”

Dinesh Naidoo

5 Organise and attend educational sessions
To maintain a good relationship with suppliers, Flight Centre Associates organises supplier breakfasts for ITCs during which suppliers get the opportunity to showcase their product and get to know the consultants as well, says Chantal Gouws. “We also offer educational sessions for our consultants to build relationships and learn about the product at the same time.”

6 Use preferred suppliers
It might seem obvious that travel agents would turn to preferred suppliers when in need but sometimes agents tend to overlook the very vendors that their consortiums have painstakingly chosen. Tammy says eTravel has a very strong relationship with its preferred partners and is very much involved in the relationships between ITCs and suppliers. Jo Fraser says ITCs in particular are becoming increasingly aware of the value of preferred suppliers. She says Club Travel has seen an increase in ITCs looking to access supplier products that will not only benefit them but also the consortium in consolidating spend and negotiating volume discounts and overrides.

7 Choose suppliers that offer something unique
However, Mladen Lukic warns that preferred agreements are not enough in the current climate. He says travel agents should rather look for suppliers that understand the role of the supply chain instead of suppliers that discount themselves to beat the competition. “What can suppliers do to enable travel counsellors to provide a better experience to their clients? This can be anything from access to specific products or access to specific expertise,” he says.

8 Keep lines of communication open
It is of the utmost importance to keep the lines of communication with the supplier open to ensure a healthy relationship. Tammy points out that, for example, attendance at supplier training functions is very often a challenge. This means that the travel agent needs to find other ways of communicating and ensuring relationships remain open. “Hence the involvement at management level here at eTravel is critical in this relationship process,” she says.
Retail travel brands

Educationals give agents the opportunity to build relationships and learn about product at the same time. Seen here, six top-selling South African agents recently went on a 10-day trip through Toronto, Niagara Falls and Boston, including a three-day music festival in Montreal, after they won the Contiki Rock Around the World incentive. Pictured in sunny Boston, Massachusetts (from left): Lisha Tromp (Pentravel Cresta); Rebecca Scott (STA Travel Menlyn); Christopher Palath (STA Travel Durban); Nicola Hards (Contiki); Taryn Myburgh (STA Travel Stellenbosch); Christie von Maltitz (STA Travel Cape Town); and Lerissa van Biljon (STA Travel Menlyn).

The supplier who won’t go direct

MOST suppliers in the South African market have adopted a dual approach and tend to deal with both the trade and clients directly. However, Beachcomber Tours has always adopted a policy of not taking bookings direct and not acting as the travel agent’s competition but rather their partner. “This has earned us lots of appreciation and respect,” says sales and marketing manager, Joanne Visagie. “This applies to the travel agents and ITCs equally.”

According to Joanne, the key to building a healthy and successful relationship with travel agents in South Africa includes offering a great service with excellent products. “Travel agents are under huge pressure so when they can trust and rely on our good service to help them be productive and have happy clients it is a total win-win relationship. Happy clients are repeat clients.”

Joanne adds that the policy of working solely with the trade has worked well so far, and Beachcomber has no plans to change this.

Retail agencies versus ITCs – how do they compare?

TAKING the leap to go it on your own as an ITC can be a daunting decision. TNW speaks to industry players to assess what the pros and cons are of being a travel retail employee as opposed to being an independent travel consultant. “The financial freedom and flexibility that comes with being an ITC cannot be experienced as a salaried employee in a traditional agency,” says Tammy Hunt.

According to Tammy, the only con of becoming an ITC is that, should you lose a big client and your risk is not spread across a number of clients, your business can then sink within a very short space of time. She recommends that ITCs take on many small to medium-size clients rather than relying on one big client.

A potential ITC must also evaluate each customer’s support and try to determine how secure and sustainable the business is, agrees Monica Horn. She says it would be risky to become an ITC with just one big corporate in mind, because that corporate can put its business out to tender. “How secure is the business they have and for how long? Staying with a retail travel agency, especially linked to the BidTravel Group, adds peace of mind, especially in these challenging financial times,” she maintains.

Andrew Stark notes that it is also important for prospective ITCs to do their homework. “Belonging to a reputable travel chain should be the only option available, as those who don’t belong to one risk bringing our industry into disrepute when ADMs or financial constraints hit as customers are then left stranded.

“An ITC should consider the benefits that come with major travel chains, including systems, full accountability, marketing and sales, support and responsible financial measures.”
On your marks, get set, go!

Wondering why you’ve seen Bidvest Car Rental team members dashing around in comfy running shoes lately? The car-rental company recently launched a campaign where staff ditched those heels for more practical running shoes so they’re ‘good-to-go’ and ready to serve their customers, where ‘every minute counts’. Pictured here, on the move, are (from left): Sinothile Zwane, Jabali Moyo, Amanda Rose, Coralie Badenhorst, and Hemosh Naidoo.

Photo: Bidvest Car Rental

Club Travel recently hosted travel experts in Mauritius. As well as daring trapeze experiences and archery, the trip included visits to Club Med’s La Plantation d’Albion and La Pointe aux Canonniers properties, boat trips and other activities on the island. Pictured here (from left): Lézanne Van Niekerk (Club Travel Algoa Bay); Alysha Buckle (Achievement Awards); Teresa De Gouveia (Viagem Travel); Walter Laloux (FlightSite); Deborah Magrath (Club Travel); Cara Fowler (True Blue Travel); Zubaydah Hendricks (Prospur Travel); Carla Nichols (Club Travel Leisure); Shona Mackellar (Seajay Travel); and Club Med representative, Michele Foster.

Appointments

World Leisure

Holidays has appointed Lauren Blaine as sales manager, effective September 1. Lauren’s portfolio will include taking care of the travel trade in east, south and central Johannesburg as well as Limpopo.

Wessel Benson has been appointed general manager of the Royal St Andrews Hotel in Port Alfred. Wessel was previously the operations manager at Sun International for 21 years. He holds a national diploma in hotel, motel and restaurant management from the Hotel School Witwatersrand.

Sianna Book has joined Pentravel’s marketing department as its new co-ordinator. Sianna studied tourism and travel services management at Boston Business College. She recently managed the Pentravel Galleria Branch in Natal.

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Infusion Consulting


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QUICK READ FOR BUSIEST PEOPLE

Wednesday September 16 2015 » 23
THE World Health Organisation declared Liberia free of Ebola on September 3, after the country experienced 42 transmission-free days.
The last two Ebola patients in Liberia were discharged after testing negative for the virus for a second time on July 23. Approximately 800 samples were tested for Ebola in the week of August 30, as surveillance in the country continues.
A country is considered free of Ebola when 42 days – double the 21-day incubation period of the virus – has elapsed since the last patient in isolation became laboratory negative for Ebola, says WHO.

South Africans are hesitant to travel to Europe and are abandoning plans to use public transport. This is the second time the carrier has been stopped from flying as a result of legal complications with a competitor airline.

Air Namibia filed an urgent application to stop flyafrica Namibia from introducing flights between Windhoek and Johannesburg less than a week after it began services, CEO of flyafrica Adrian Hamilton-Manns told TNW. The High Court ruled on September 4 that the airline’s required licences to transport passengers were not in order. “The ruling states we are entitled to fly to Windhoek but only from Lanseria. We cannot operate from OR Tambo,” said Adrian.
Fyafrica Namibia is currently waiting for the summary of judgement from the High Court. “We will fly to Namibia. We will bring low fares to an overcharged segment. Our commitment is absolute,” the airline said in a statement.

Meanwhile, passengers have been re-accommodated on British Airways and SAA.

Domestic airfares
From page 1
be seen is just how much that demand will increase and if it will rise enough to make the supply sustainable.”
Airline analyst, Joachim Vermooten, argues that the additional capacity created by the new entrants in the market is relatively small compared with the increase in seat capacity by the combination of SAA and Mango, with the addition of at least 10 narrow-body aircraft since the exit of Time. “This increase is substantially in excess of market demand and restricts the opportunities for new entrants and existing private sector airlines,” he says.

African airline ceases operations
KORONGO Airlines, national airline of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has ceased flights after only three years of operations.
The airline’s Boeing 737 was severely damaged due to a problem on the runway in Mbuji-Mayi. “Operating conditions in the region remain extremely difficult for an airline, partly because of poor infrastructure in smaller airports. Given these circumstances, the decision was taken to cease the activities of the airline,” the airline said in a statement.
The company has unfortunately not been able to reach profitability due to a lack of critical mass operations based on a fleet of only one aircraft, which doesn’t offer sufficient possibilities to amortise the fixed costs of an airline operation respecting all international safety standards.”

Founded by Airbel Airways and to continue the opportunities for new market demand and restricts substantial in excess of the fixed costs of an airline operation respecting all international safety standards.”

Founded by Airbel (Brussels Airlines and George Forrest) and some smaller private Congolese shareholders, Korongo Airlines began operations in 2012, with flights between Kinshasa and Lubumbashi; Lubumbashi and Johannesburg; and Lubumbashi, Mbuji-Mayi and Kinshasa.

Korongo Airlines remains open to putting its commitment is absolute,” the airline said.

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