

TNW

TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY



TNW7296SD

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Here comes the NDC...

DORINE REINSTEIN

TPCONNECTS – an agnostic travel booking software platform – is officially the first aggregator to fully implement the NDC standard in the SA market.

The platform, which aims to make the process of selling ancillary products more efficient, has been integrated with all major GDSs, hotel aggregators and car and transfer suppliers. It aggregates this content on one screen and presents it in such a way that travel agents will be in a better position to compare bookings and offer better value to customers, says **Kristine Fernandez**, TPCconnects director of business development. “For a TMC, this cuts the time it takes to complete the booking process by up to almost 50%.”

Kristine explains that TPCconnects enables airlines to distribute the same differentiated content as

found on their websites – such as seats, preferred meals, duty-free products and chauffeur services. “In 2014, air travellers spent an estimated US\$28,5bn (R384bn) on ancillary options,” she says.

TPConnects is currently in the final stages of signing up four large South African travel agencies, says Kristine. “South Africa is an important market for TPCconnects because of the vast amount of corporate travel that happens in and out of SA. A number of agencies have shown interest and we are in talks with most of them.”

The introduction of TPCconnects in the market comes at a time when travel agents are looking for more information on the opportunities associated with the NDC. This is according to the study ‘NDC: Travel Agencies’ Enabler to Success’ released by IATA in conjunction with the World Travel Agents Associations

Alliance.

Among the findings revealed in the report is travel agents’ use of multiple channels to book flights and the need to respond to airlines’ evolving product strategies. “Our study shows that the majority of agents feel airline websites have an advantage over GDSs in terms of content,” says **Otto De Vries**, ceo of Asata.

The study shows that, on average, 76% of travel agencies book airline ancillary products and services, mostly through airline websites. Participants expressed their concern that moving back and forth between screen displays led to less productivity. The majority of agents who participated in the study believe NDC can help them be more competitive and customer-focused in this regard.

However, agents also feel that NDC providers have not

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Tantalising Thailand!

Kulula holidays is offering Thailand packages, starting from R12 906pps. The package includes two nights in Bangkok and five nights in Phuket. A second package gives travellers ten nights in Krabi, Khao Sok National Park and Phuket from R17 528pps. Both deals include economy-class return flights, approximate airport taxes, return hotel transfers and daily breakfast. The offers are valid for travel between November 1 and December 9. Taking in the scenery is Kulula holidays’ new senior product manager for the international market, **Chantelle Browne**. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Latin American carrier to launch Jo’burg route

TAM, part of LATAM Airlines group, plans to launch flights between São Paulo, Brazil, and Johannesburg, pending approval from regulatory authorities.

“This represents an important milestone for the

group. Currently, there are no other Latin American airlines that connect Latin America to Africa,” said **Enrique Cueto**, ceo of LATAM. SAA currently operates 11 weekly flights to São Paulo from

Johannesburg and has a codeshare with LATAM.

“The codeshare will remain in place until April 2016, as LATAM has joined a competing network alliance – **oneworld**,” says SAA spokesperson, **Tlali Tlali**.

The new service forms part of LATAM’s plans to introduce six new international routes in the last quarter of 2015 between Latin America and North America, the Caribbean, Europe and

Africa. Some of these new routes include LAN Peru’s (also part of LATAM) first-ever non-stop flight between Washington DC and Lima. LAN Peru will operate four weekly flights, starting in the second half of 2016. ■

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AVIS Van Rental

Norwegian mulls SA routes

DORINE REINSTEIN

EUROPEAN budget carrier Norwegian is looking into launching flights from Copenhagen to Cape Town and Durban as well as flights from London Gatwick to Cape Town.

This was confirmed to TNW by spokesperson for the airline, **Stuart Buss**, who said it was too early to announce any dates or

specific details with regard to the routes.

He said the airline had plans for continued growth from the UK and had applied for a UK Air Operator's Certificate (AOC). Norwegian also has a range of new aircraft on order, with a B787-9 Dreamliner scheduled to be delivered next year and two more scheduled to enter service in 2017.

"A UK AOC would allow access to bilateral traffic rights to a range of new routes, including South Africa and Asia, however this process is ongoing."

Founded in 1993, Norwegian is the third-largest LCC in Europe and operates over 400 routes to more than 130 destinations in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Thailand, the Caribbean and the US. ■

Here comes the NDC...

From page 1

yet provided an acceptable level of detail regarding how they intend to bring NDC to market. A South African travel agency owner was quoted as saying: "We keep asking our GDS and airline reps for specifics about NDC, and all we get are blank stares and 'I don't know's'."

The aggregator role in an NDC environment is the role that is performed by the GDS in today's environment, explains **Perry Flint**, IATA head of corporate communications for the Americas. They aggregate fares and schedules from multiple airlines and present them to the travel agent.

"NDC contemplates a similar role, which could be fulfilled by today's GDS – or by a new

entrant into the market."

However, Kristine is quick to point out that TPConnects does not bypass the GDS but rather connects all players, integrating suppliers into a central platform. "We are an IT provider, not a content provider. We're only connecting all the different systems and presenting them as one." Commission structures travel agents have in place with their current GDS will continue uninterrupted, says Kristine.

However, she adds that TPConnects also plans to work with airlines directly. "We are currently working with an airline in the Middle East that is likely to become the first 'holistic' customer," she says. This modular approach helps airlines

to retail travel products, deliver rich content and bundle offers. "If an airline is offering ancillary revenue through a GDS such as Amadeus or Sabre, our system will automatically pick it up. If there is no ancillary revenue offered by the airline, then the airline has the choice to sign up for TPConnects' merchandising option to offer certain ancillaries."

TPConnects is a Dubai-based technology and distribution company, which was founded in 2014. The company is currently active in the UAE, India, Sri Lanka, the UK, Germany and the US and provides travel agents in these countries with cloud-based travel booking software. ■

Helen Johnston selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Air Mauritius.** Special promotion ex-JNB to Mauritius for R2 100 return. Fare is valid for travel until November 25 and again from January 15 to March 15. There is no minimum stay and the maximum stay is one month. Fare excludes taxes.
- **Faircity Hotels & Apartments.** Weekend special rates at the Falstaff Hotel in Sandton are R1 099 per room per night. Price is based on two people sharing a double room. Offer is valid until December 31.
- **Travel Vision.** Seven-night Cairo and Nile cruise packages from R9 625pp sharing. Rate includes all private transfers, meet and assist at airport and stations, two nights in Cairo at a four-star hotel with breakfast and a private half-day Pyramids and Sphinx tour, two nights on a sleeper train (Cairo-Aswan/Luxor-Cairo) with breakfast and dinner, three nights on board a five-star Nile cruise with breakfast, lunch and dinner, guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees. Valid for travel until December 15.
- **RwandAir.** Fly to Lagos from R4 729,72 including approximate taxes. Fares are based on flights ex-JNB. Sales and ticketing until November 30. Travel until December 31.



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MEMBER SINCE 1998

Founding Editors: John H Marsh (1914-1996)	Leona Marsh (1923-2003)
EDITORIAL Group Editor: Natasha Schmidt Features Editor: Debbie Badham Contributors: Tessa Reed Max Marx Carina Borralho Photographer: Shannon Van Zyl Production Editor: Ann Braun	natashas@nowmedia.co.za Hilka Birns Dorine Reinstein Darise Foster
PUBLISHER Kate Nathan	katen@nowmedia.co.za
GROUP PUBLISHER David Marsh	davem@nowmedia.co.za
ADVERTISING Sales: Advertising Co-ordinator: Anthea Lucas	katen@nowmedia.co.za antheal@nowmedia.co.za
PRODUCTION Design Head: Dirk Voormeeld	
SUBSCRIPTIONS Circulation	tvsub@nowmedia.co.za



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SHINES AT LOCAL AWARDS

The KwaZulu-Natal South Coast is gaining recognition around the world for its vast natural offering, for resources and its warm welcome for visitors.

With spectacular views of the ocean, sunrise, dolphins and whales, Seaverge Chalets in Port Edward have been nominated by Lux Hotel and Spa Awards as the Best Sea Retreat in South Africa for 2015.



Seaverge Cottage

Wild 5, which is based in Oribi Gorge, offers many activities including the highest gorge jump in the world. It was selected as the national winner in the recent Lilizela Awards in the Action and Adventure category.

Umthunzi Hotel and Conference Centre in Umtentweni is a 2014 Lilizela Award winner and a finalist in 2015. The property recently walked away with the Platinum Diners Club Wine List Award.

The KZN South Coast has been awarded seven Blue Flags this season, which is the highest number of permanently named Blue Flag Beaches in Africa. The seven beaches are Marina Beach, Trafalgar, Lucien, Southport, Umzumbe, Ramsgate and Hibberdene, and run across just 120km stretch of the 3200km South African coastline.



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Top honours

Top names in travel congregated at Emoyeni Estate in Johannesburg on October 8 for the Lufthansa and SWISS Top Agents Awards for 2014. Guests were entertained against the spectacular backdrop of the city skyline until the highlight of the evening when the winners were announced. Some of the big winners for the night included BidTravel (Top Travel Management Company); HRG Rennies Travel (Top Chain Nationwide); and Flight Centre (Top Consolidator). Accepting the accolade on behalf of BidTravel is md, Allan Lunz, with Lufthansa's Andre Schulz (left) and Evelyn Kidder Ralphs (right). Photo: Debbie Badham

SAA expands African network

DARISE FOSTER

SAA will strengthen its West African network, launching a second flight to Nigeria in January. The airline is also considering a direct flight to Kilimanjaro, Tanzania.

Starting January 26, the airline will offer thrice-weekly flights to Abuja. Flights are now open for sale.

"Nigeria is one of the fastest growing air travel markets in sub-Saharan Africa. Introducing Abuja as a second entry point in Nigeria will add more travel options, especially for the business community," says **Sylvain Bosc**, SAA chief commercial officer.

The addition of Abuja to

SAA's network follows closely on the introduction of the Accra, Ghana, to Washington Dulles, US route in August. "The introduction of the Accra to Washington route has seen a steady growth and has performed in line with expectations. This has provided SAA with the confidence to invest further and enhance its footprint in West Africa," Sylvain said.

SAA is also considering expanding flights to East Africa. **Hassan Hirji**, SAA's sales and marketing manager in Dar es Salaam, told media on a recent trip to Tanzania that the airline was considering launching a direct flight from South Africa to Kilimanjaro.

Speaking exclusively to *TNW* the following day, SAA regional manager for East Africa and the Middle East, **Austin Nyawara**, said the Kilimanjaro route had been "in the works for a while". He said SAA was looking at the viability of launching the route. "We have to factor in that we would be flying to two points in the same country. So we will have to play around with the idea and plan it in such a way that we can still make it profitable," he said.

SAA subsidiary, Mango, also said it was considering launching services to Kilimanjaro (see *TNW* September 30), following the success of its Zanzibar flights. ■

Angolan visas – take note

THE Angolan embassy has confirmed to *TNW* that its visa application process remains the same, whereby applicants need to physically visit the embassy to apply for a visa.

This follows advisories by some visa centres that Angolan visas had to be applied for and paid for

online, and a form submitted with assisting documents to one of the embassies in either Johannesburg or Pretoria. Thereafter, the applicant would be called in to take fingerprints on collection.

MDS VisaPak national business manager, **Carla Douglas**, says she received

the information that applicants needed to apply online for a visa from one of MDS's representatives. However, on inspection, it appears that the website operates independently from the embassy and serves as a visa facilitation service rather than an official visa application site. ■

First Car Rental joins Sabre

FIRST Car Rental has signed a new multi-year full-content global distribution agreement with Sabre.

Agents can now also

view special equipment fees and applicable travel agency commissions during the shopping process.

"South Africa is an important growth market

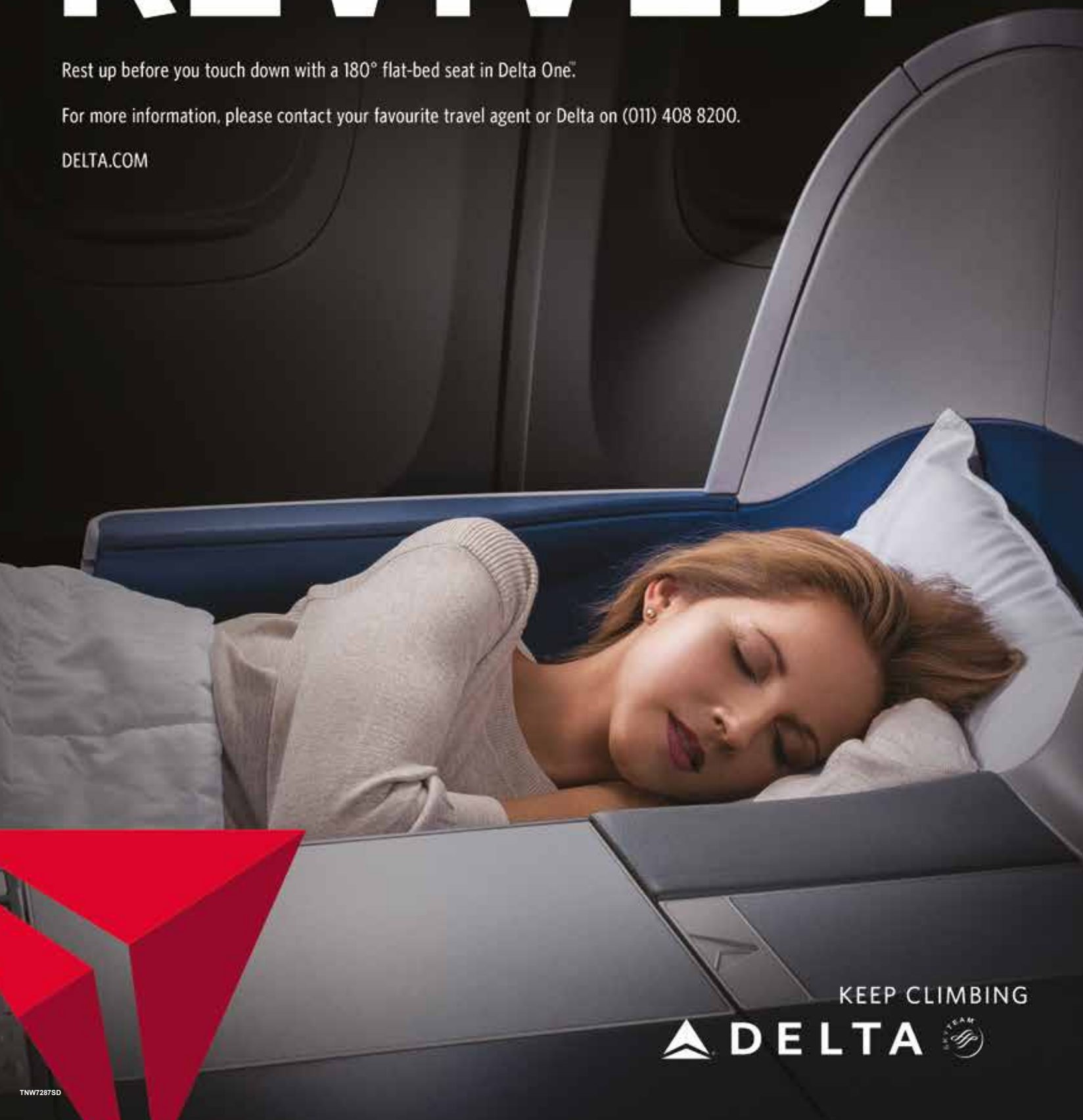
for Sabre and we are pleased to now offer First Car Rental to our growing agency base," says country director of Sabre South Africa, **Richard Addey**. ■

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Discovering new products

Discover the World recently hosted a workshop for agents at Tintswalo at Waterfall, Johannesburg, highlighting products such as Expedia's Travel Agent Affiliate Programme – an online booking platform geared toward travel agents, which allows them to earn commission when booking through Expedia's website. Pictured here (from left) is the DTW team: Yvonne Skerritt, Sabrina Allcock, and Anneli van den Berg. Photo: Carina Borralho

Riverside Sun Hotel reopens after refurb

THE Riverside Sun Hotel has opened for business after undergoing an extensive refurbishment. It is situated on the banks of the Vaal River, approximately 45 minutes from Johannesburg. The hotel refurbished 169 rooms, refreshed its conference facilities and added a brand-new private function venue – The White Cellar – which can accommodate up to 40 delegates and hosts exclusive wine-tasting dinners. The Liquid Lounge Boat can accommodate up to 120 guests cocktail style or provide a more intimate setting for private dinners while cruising along the Vaal River.

Wildside Safari Camp damaged by bush fire

A BUSH fire broke out at Entabeni Safari Conservancy in the Waterberg region of Limpopo after the veld had been struck by lightning on October 8. Wildside Safari Camp was severely damaged by the flames and about 2 500 hectares of the 22 000-hectare conservancy burned down.

The reception, lounge, bar area and nine of the 20 thatched canvas rooms were destroyed by the fire. The restaurant, office, curio shop and other 11 rooms have not been damaged. The camp will be closed for the rest of the month and will reopen towards the end of November. Guests booked over this period will be upgraded to one of the other Entabeni lodges.

PE Hotel Group joins Somewhere South

SOMEWHERE South Hospitality Solutions has welcomed the Port Elizabeth Hotel Group to its portfolio of four- and five-star accommodation establishments, safari lodges and other exclusive tourism services and offerings. The portfolio will include Pumba Private Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape, Hacklewood Hill Country House and Beach Hotel in Port Elizabeth and Sands Hotel in St Francis Bay.

Kulula offers new product

KULULA.COM has launched 'Stretch Zone' seating, offering passengers the option to purchase seats with more leg-room.

Stretch Zone seats offer between 7,6cm and 10cm more space than standard

seats but less room than exit-row seats. The pre-paid seats are available for R100 one way. Head of marketing, **Shaun Pozyn**, says: "In May this year, we offered customers the option to pre-purchase exit-row seats on all our domestic flights. The

success of this offering was a good indication that the Stretch Zone product would also be well received."

The airline's fleet has been reconfigured to create 21 Stretch Zone seats on its B737-800s and 18 seats on its B737-400 aircraft. ■



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SWISS now offers a dynamic way of making group bookings with the new SWISS Group Tool. This new tool allows both IATA and Non-IATA travel agencies to book their groups of between 10 and 98 passengers, online, with automated solutions for pricing, availability, bookings and contracting.

Combinations

It also offers the capability to request groups with SWISS in combination with partner airlines. For an already confirmed group booking additional passengers can be priced and booked - subject to availability and new pricing.

The tool works with real time availability, which displays fares in three categories Economy Saver, Economy, and Business. This system

also offers complete transparency with a +/-3 days date flexibility option, helping you to find the most attractive and suitable offer for your group.

Easy finalisation

Once your group has committed to their booking, you can finalise your contract with just one click, and then claim the PNR into your GDS. The steps of the fulfilment tasks (names, splitting and ticketing etc.) can still be done in your GDS, in the normal way.

Important

One profile can be created per IATA number.

Non-IATA?

Non-IATA Agents can create group bookings if they accept the ticket issuance via LX against a ticket service fee. One nominee



Advertorial

(e.g. Manager), shall complete the registration on SWISS Groups for their agency and once approved,

this nominated person ("User Administrator") can add their team members as "Users", to enable them to access

the tool. For booking with partner airlines, no immediate price, but option is created.



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The new SWISS Group Tool is another example of how SWISS is continuously improving and developing its products and services to meet both our agents' and passengers' needs.



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

REPORT ETRAVEL OPEN FORUM

It was a night for winners. South Africa beat Wales to the Rugby World Cup semi-finals and eTravel celebrated its entrepreneurs. Natasha Schmidt reports.

The year that was...

IT'S been a tough year for the travel industry – a weak rand, the Eskom crisis and government visa regulations have put a damper on business confidence. But in these difficult times, eTravel has managed to still record growth by keeping its expenses in check.

This was the word from upbeat ceo, **Garth Wolff**, at eTravel's Open Forum 2015 held at the Indaba Hotel in Johannesburg on October 17.

The company recorded a turnover of R933 million, growing 5% from 2014 and Garth forecasted that eTravel would reach the "elusive billion" in 2017. The company has 154 ITCs in its stable.

The ITC solution provider

has been busy – it has opened an ITC resource centre and revamped its eTravel and eHolidays websites. It had also upped its activity online through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, and participated in more educational, Garth said.

Looking at the year ahead, Garth predicted that it would be another tough year for travel. "SA's GDP growth for 2016 is expected to be a dismal 1,4%. The rand would fluctuate between R12,50 and R14,50 to the dollar but this would be offset by the low oil price," Garth predicted.

At least one of SA's four LCCs would fail within the

next six months, he added. "There's been a drop in demand, prices have fallen and we can expect one of the domestic carriers to exit the market before February or March."

However, on the ITC front, things are looking good. "The ITC model is gaining momentum as more large consortiums follow what we started 16 years ago," Garth said. "I believe our growth will outstrip that of the market, which has been the case since eTravel launched in 2009.

"Overall, I'm not concerned about SA's future. We have so much to celebrate, including our entrepreneurs here tonight," Garth concluded. ■



Militza Spencer of Executive Travel Management was the eTravel top ITC of the year.



eTravel pulled out all the stops, hosting a lovely evening, with delicious food and great company! From left: **Lisa Du Chenne** of the travelSHOPPE, **Magda Gorna** of Skywalk Travel, **Nicolene Stjepanovic** of Travel Matters and her husband, **Deyan Stjepanovic**.



▲ **Shaun Stober** (left) who has been promoted to financial director, with **Tammy Hunt**, operations director and **Garth Wolff**, ceo.

◀ **Theresa Szejwallo** of The Travel Corporation congratulates **Lucia Theron** of Lucia's Travel on her award as the tour operator's top supporter. Photos: Kate Nathan



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African airlines are under the whip, battling slackening demand and the evaporation of already slender profit margins. Kate Nathan reports from conference.

New regs another blow to ailing African aviation

THE fortunes of tourism and aviation are intimately linked, and the survival of the southern African airline industry is as threatened by the Department of Home Affairs' new immigration regulations as is the tourism industry.

Chris Zweigenthal, ceo of the Airlines Association of Southern Africa, told delegates at the association's annual conference, held at Fancourt in George from October 8-10, that the aviation industry in the region was in crisis.

Africa accounts for only 3% of global passenger traffic despite having 15% of the world's population and 20% of the land mass. Thirty years ago only 40% of traffic in and out of Africa was carried by foreign airlines but this has swelled

to the current 82%, and the situation is expected to deteriorate further. Airline performance on the continent has stagnated, and this has locked the African industry in a profitability band of around US\$100m (R1,3bn) per year.

Against this background of stagnation, the local aviation environment over the past year has been characterised by unprecedented levels of tension, frustration and animosity emanating from South Africa's new immigration regulations, which have led to a rift between the 'fors' (Home Affairs and security groupings) and the 'againsts' (travel, tourism and aviation), with both sides blaming each other for the negative consequences of the regulations.

The result of the conflict is that SA and its SADC partners are suffering through loss of tourism and business. "We argue over statistics, dispute the numbers and the interpretation thereof – we will continue in a downward spiral unless we are all able to put our differences aside and talk sense to each other," Chris said.

"There has never been a more timeous opportunity for improvement in our industry. But this window of opportunity will inevitably close, so urgency is required by the aviation industry, its partners, stakeholders, government, public and private to resolve inherent problems and set the stage for unprecedented growth. We need to maximise the opportunity."

What impairs African aviation growth?

AFTER many years of hard work and industry restructuring, IATA expects a global industry-wide nett profit of US\$29,3bn (R382bn) on revenues of US\$727bn (R9,5trn). Nett profit margin is expected to come in at 4%. This was the good news delivered by **Hussein Dabbas**, IATA's vp for the Middle East and Africa.

Aviation is Africa's lifeblood, transporting more than 112m

passengers each year, he says. "It supports 6,9m jobs and US\$80bn (R1trn) in GDP. It sends African goods and people out into the world, and brings in economic investment, tourism, trade and aid. Without aviation, Africa would be a more fractured and constrained continent; with aviation, it can better realise its ideals of regional integration, peace and prosperity."

Yet the high cost of doing business in Africa is a major impediment. Taxes and charges on infrastructure and fuel are much higher than the global average and must be reduced, says Hussein. He believes a strong aviation system is key to resolving many of Africa's deepest problems and there now exists an opportunity to overtake progress on other continents. ■



Judy Brown, sax-player, gets down and boogies with Mamtsatshi Ramawela, ceo of the TBCSA.



Michelle Green Thompson, MC for the conference, pictured with Aasa ceo, Chris Zweigenthal.



Old friends meet – from left: George Mothema (SAX); Carla da Silva (Air Mauritius) and Thulani Nzima (SA Tourism).



New members of Aasa, Skywise's Javed Malik (left) and Irfan Pardesi. Photos: Kate Nathan

travel counsellors



You're thinking about the biggest decision in your life, the step of moving from an agency to running your own business. But who will help you over the first few hurdles? Isn't it time to...

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"Everybody needs help to stand on their own two feet when they're launching a new business," said Travel Counsellor Natalie Matthews.

"You'll still be doing what you enjoy most... selling travel, but for the first time you'll be facing the transition from a salaried job to running your own business."

The path to that life-changing move is smoothed by a comprehensive four-day induction training programme held at the Cape Town Office.

New recruits get to learn the secrets of our award-winning, easy-to-use systems, witness the magic of the marketing that will promote their business, and see the importance of Social Media and networking in building that all-important loyal customer base.

"It's an intense few days," says Natalie. "There's an awful lot to take in, but the Business Development team provide guidance and reassurance once we've returned home."

Ian Keane, Business Development Manager says: "These experienced travel agents have left their normal environment, where they've often been under appreciated, and it's like having the blinkers taken off. There's so much freedom and opportunity! I tell them there's nothing they can't achieve with the incredible support available in every area of their business.

"And of course, if needs be, we'll help them with first bookings – double checking their quotes and even guiding them through processes via their webcam. It's incredible how confidence grows once that first enquiry turns into a booking."

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Adventure Tourism

As adventure tourism continues to grow in popularity, agents can add value by enhancing their understanding of the options suited to different types of travellers. Carina Borralho reports.

Stepping outside the comfort zone

A THRIVING niche market in South Africa, adventure tourism offers something for everyone. Whether it is a diving experience off one of South Africa's magnificent coastlines, bungee jumping off the famous Orlando Cooling Towers, or visiting other countries to seek something new, travellers are actively seeking more adventurous experiences.

Mark Brown, branch manager of Canopy Tours South Africa, says people are no longer happy to just lie on the beach all day. "South Africans want real experiences and memories to take home, and they have become more willing to step outside their comfort zones to create these." He mentions that social media, which serves as a way to show people what you have achieved personally, is another reason why adventure tourism has grown in popularity.

Swaziland Tourism account manager, **Chantal Nieuwenhuizen**, agrees that adventure tourism is certainly on the increase and says it has become very fashionable, especially among the 25- to 45-year-olds.

"With the fast-paced lifestyles we all lead, it is a good balance to include exercise and fresh air



Chantal Nieuwenhuizen

in your holiday plans, keeping fit and healthy being a key focus in the 21st century. We have seen a rise in popularity of destinations that have a range of high-adrenaline activities on offer," she says.

Adventure tourism in South Africa is not only popular with leisure seekers but is also growing in popularity as an incentive or team-building experience for corporate clients. However, because the offerings of adventure tourism are as diverse as the concept of adventure itself, it is becoming increasingly important for agents to understand who they are selling to and how to best package adventure.

Travellers don't need to be fit

There is a myth that active travel, such as walking, trekking and cycling holidays, is only for young and extremely fit people, says **Nathalie Gauthier**, World Expeditions North American manager. "Sixty-one percent of World Expeditions' travellers are aged 50-plus and moderately fit. They are people who enjoy the outdoors and don't want to just sit by the sip-and-dip pool when they are on vacation but rather discover different cultures, food and awe-inspiring scenery." She adds that active travel holidays generally comprise small groups of like-minded people and are also perfect for socialising.

World Expeditions is represented by Inspiration Travel and Tours (ITT) in South Africa, and says when it comes to trends in the global industry, adventure tourism is definitely growing in popularity, specifically for self-guided holidays.

"The self-guided formula is perfect for exploring the hidden gems of European countries with

well-researched itineraries," says Nathalie.

She says World Expeditions' local employment policy increases the interactions that travellers share with host communities and contributes to long-term sustainable tourism.

Currently, the top trekking destination for the adventure traveller, according to ITT, is Nepal. "World Expeditions has always believed that camping is the best way to explore Nepal because we know it is the only way to control our environmental and social footprint," says Nathalie.

However, World Expeditions says it cannot ignore that, while adventure travellers have an appetite for remote regions, they do appreciate comfort by night. "We decided to respond to this demand differently, by offering unique experiences to trekkers, while reinforcing our environmental and social commitment with a series of permanent campsites in the Everest and Annapurna regions."



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Wildlife safari in Uganda.

Top-selling packages in East Africa

DESTINATION Africa Tours, which specialises in adventure travel in East Africa, lists the following as top-selling adventure packages in the region:

- Mountain gorilla/ chimpanzee tracking in Rwanda or Uganda;
 - A wildlife safari in Tanzania or Kenya to see the annual wildebeest migration;
 - Hikes that summit Mount Kilimanjaro, Mt Meru, Mt Kenya and Mt Rwenzori;
 - Wildlife safaris in Uganda and Rwanda.
- "Hiking up Kilimanjaro

and tracking the mountain gorillas are specialised bucket-list items that sell themselves without us having to try and find adrenalin-junkies," says **Nikki van Veelen**, manager at Destination Africa Tours. "Because we customise most of our adventure travel packages, we are able to accommodate individuals as well as small and large groups," says Nikki. She says Destination Africa tailor-makes packages to suit adventure travellers of specific fitness levels.

Insurance – what agents need to know

TRAVEL Insurance Consultants (TIC) sales and marketing manager, **Simmy Micheli**, says a standard travel insurance policy excludes cover for hazardous, competitive or professional sport and activities other than what is provided under sports extension cover. TIC would first assess the risk and issue a sports extension policy. "The most common application for this type of cover is mountain climbing,

"There are certain activities that are excluded entirely from coverage, for example cave diving, cliff diving, parachuting or running with bulls. These terms are clearly defined in a travel insurance policy, so agents and travellers should always check these first," says Simmy.

She notes, however, that cover for leisure skiing and scuba diving is automatically provided on all travel insurance policies.

The scenic route...

AGENTS can sell add-on packages, such as canopy tours, to clients who enjoy a good thrill but also appreciate natural beauty. **Mark Brown** says one of the most authentic aspects of a canopy tour is that people are exposed to natural beauty throughout the tour. On the Tsitsikamma Canopy Tour, for example, travellers stand on a wooden platform that is wrapped around the trunk of a 600-year-old Outeniqua yellowwood tree, 16m above the forest floor, with the opportunity to spot young Forest Buzzard chicks nesting in a nearby tree.

Chantal says the Malalotja Canopy Tour, which is one of the highest in Africa at 50m high and 300m long, offers spectacular scenery and is an exhilarating experience.

Other experiences unique to Swaziland include a visit to the Mantenga Nature Reserve, white-river rafting with Swazi Trails, a visit to the Swazi Candle Factory, Sunday lunch at Foresters Arms, hiking, caving and 4x4 trails, a visit to the Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary, a visit to the Ngweni Glass factory, taking part in the Shewula Community Project and viewing the Nsangwini Rock Art. "We are readily available to supply agents with advice and ideas on how to sell packages to Swaziland," says Chantal.

For clients who are particularly interested in natural beauty when seeking an adventure holiday, agents can recommend destinations



White-water rafting. Photo: Swaziland Tourism Authority

such as Réunion Island, which offer the best of both worlds. Réunion is home to 70 outdoor leisure activities for children and adults, including 4x4 adventures, quad bike trails, canyoning, rafting, helicopter rides, scuba and snorkel dives, golf and much more. Réunion is also home to one of the world's most active volcanoes – the Piton de la Fournaise.

Hélène Bezuidenhout, regional manager at Atout France, says Réunion Island is a perfect adventure destination. "It is renowned for its hiking trails, which cover more than 900km across a range of landscapes, including a steep 3 000m summit, a volcano, cirque and deep forests."

Salazie is the most easily accessible cirque on Réunion and at times is also the greenest, with routes featuring

one of the island's waterfalls – Le Voile de la Mariée. Another favourite among hikers is the cirque of Cilaos, which is characterised by more challenging trails.

For travellers who enjoy even more of a challenge, Le Grand Raid endurance race has taken place on the island for the past 20 years and is growing in popularity, with up to 5 000 participants now competing across different races.

"Cycling has also become an important part of Réunion's adventure offering, with new cycle tour packages available," says Hélène. She says cycling is a great way to see the island but is not for the faint hearted. She recommends that agents sell cycling trips to fit travellers, for travel duration of one to two weeks, as this will give them enough time to spend a day or two at each main point on the island.

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TNW7401

Four trends shaping adventure travel

Adventure travel has seen exceptional growth over the past few years, with travellers wanting to experience a destination instead of just observing it. *TNW's* sister publication, *Tourism Update*, spoke to industry leaders to discover the latest trends.

1 Cutting out the travel agent

One of the trends that UNWTO has identified in adventure travel is that more adventure travellers are cutting out the tour operator or travel agent and booking direct.

John Addison, director of Wild Frontiers, says he has seen many people trying to book direct to 'save' money. "We've also rescued many travellers who have been ripped off by non-existent firms." He says, especially for adventure travel, it is vital to book with a reliable, knowledgeable, experienced person.

"Of course, adventurers are always keen to organise everything on their own," says **Thierry Pagnot**, owner

of Biwakwango. He says the trick is to offer something that would be difficult or near to impossible for travellers to organise on their own. He says it is also about conveying a message that a knowledgeable tour guide will bring the experience, the adventure, to a totally different level.

Hendrik Human of Earth Stompers offers this advice: "Make sure your website is there and easy to find and use but also make sure you deliver a great experience and that you are up there with the best. There is no place any more for bad service or bad products – social media is way too strong!"

2 Undiscovered destinations

Michael Edwards, md of Intrepid Travel, says most well-travelled customers are keener than ever to find that undiscovered new destination – somewhere their friends haven't been yet! "To cater for that, we have launched

3 Animal interactions are out

Animal interactions are out, according to Hendrik. "Do not walk with lions, do not ride an elephant, do not pet a cheetah. Talking to agents and clients from around the world, they respect us as



Travellers can explore remote and unusual destinations.

a range of expedition trips giving travellers the chance to explore remote and unusual destinations."

John has also seen this trend. He says people want unique adventures in places that are hard to reach and

says brag value is a big part of this. "The guy or girl who can have a picture of himself eating a snake in the middle of the Central African Republic with a band of pygmies has actually done something unique."

a company because we do not offer these questionable activities."

He says this doesn't mean that wildlife experiences are off the table. On the contrary –

clients love to learn about the animals they are seeing or the environment in which they are travelling. "People are also more sensitive to the way we operate our businesses."

4 Technology – yay and nay

Despite the fact that everyone is talking about silent holidays away from technology, **Jayne Harley**, marketing manager for Sunway Safaris, says most clients still want access to WiFi. "It doesn't matter how

much you promote freedom away from your phone, Facebook or Twitter, clients want access to WiFi."

Mark Brown says, on the one hand there has been an increase in customised tours that are well planned

and take people off the beaten track, away from the crowds and cellphone signals. On the other hand, people increasingly want to post pictures and boast about their latest adventure. ■

Explore the SEYCHELLES

Seychelles has long been a favoured destination for nature lovers, but it also has plenty of things to do for adventure seekers. From hiking to the top of Morne Seychellois to jumping into a kayak and taking to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, with so much to do, you will never have a bored moment.

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Atta chief executive to step down after 20 years

Nigel Vere Nicoll, ceo and founder member of African Travel and Tourism Association (Atta), will step down from his position, effective May 2016. Nigel has run and been a part of Atta for 20 years. It is envisaged that he will retain a senior role within the company, which will also ensure a smooth transition for his successor. Nigel wants to work on the broader side of the tourism industry and will look to form a small group and a collective tourism voice with leaders of the industry. "I will also look into



the development of cross-border tourism, which I think is the future for Africa." He also wants to encourage the younger generation to join the tourism industry.

Atta and the board of directors are looking within the tourism industry for a replacement.

The chief executive of Atta holds a respected and important role in the tourism industry and applicants for this position must have worked in the tourism trade at senior level. Applicants should email ceo@atta.travel attaching a brief CV.

Industry stalwart retires

Twelve Apostles Hotel executive director, **Horst Fehse** (right) will retire in December. Following a career in the hospitality industry that spanned over 40 years, he leaves in place a management team led by **Michael Nel**, who took over as gm when Horst was promoted to executive director in April 2014. Horst has worked in leading hotels in Hamburg, Munich,



Geneva, Namibia, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Paarl. He held managerial positions at the five-star Grande Roche Hotel; Singita in the Kruger National Park; Singita

Grumeti Reserves in the Serengeti, Tanzania; and Asara Wine Estate & Hotel in Stellenbosch before joining the Red Carnation Hotel Collection in December 2010.

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A summery Christmas!



Who needs snow when you have sandy beaches? LUX* Resorts and Hotels is offering December six-night packages in Mauritius, starting at R19 870pp at Tamassa Resort; R27 275pp at LUX* Belle Mare; and R19 635pp at LUX* Grand Gaube. The specials are valid for travel between December 1 and December 8. Pictured here (from left) are LUX* Resorts and Hotels head of sales and marketing, Alexis Bekker, and sales manager Evi Moller. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Crippling visa regs to fall?

DORINE REINSTEIN

A 'COMPROMISE' solution for the new immigration regulations is expected at the end of this month but an exact date as to when the government will address the "unintended" consequences of the new crippling immigration and visa regulations has yet to be announced.

The expectation is that the inter-ministerial committee (IMC) will propose that biometric visa applications be made on arrival in South Africa, the *Financial Mail* reported on October 20. The report also stated that the committee was expected to announce that only South African children leaving or entering the country needed to carry an unabridged birth certificate.

However, neither the Department of Home Affairs nor the Presidency could confirm or deny the information. DHA spokesperson, **Mayihlome Tshwete**, referred TNW to the Presidency for more clarity on the matter. At the time of going to print,

the Presidency had not yet responded to TNW's questions.

Meanwhile, the Tourism Business Index third-quarter results from the TBCSA show that business confidence is at a worrying low, with the second lowest results reported since 2010. This drop

"I therefore call on the deputy president to act against Malusi Gigaba's relentless insistence to destroy one of the most important job creators in South Africa."

in confidence is largely attributed to the national government's failure in responding to concerns with regard to the visa regulations, says DA Western Cape provincial spokesperson on economic opportunities, tourism and agriculture, **Beverly Schäfer**.

"We now see that the government was completely unprepared for the results of their onerous

regulations. I therefore call on the deputy president to act against **Malusi Gigaba's** relentless insistence to destroy one of the most important job creators in South Africa," she says.

Shadow Minister of Tourism, **James Vos**, told TNW: "The deputy president must immediately put an end to the cloak-and-dagger inter-ministerial team set up to 'review' the new job-killing visa regulations, and institute a substantive and wholesale review of these regulations that seeks to assess both their suitability and effect."

An inter-ministerial task team was appointed in August this year under the leadership of Deputy President, **Cyril Ramaphosa**, to deal with the new immigration regulations as a "matter of urgency".

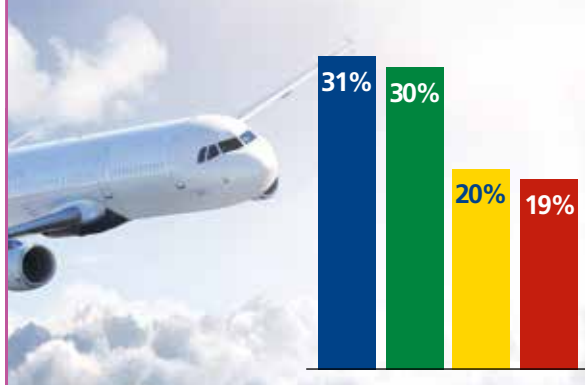
"There has been absolutely no news from the committee so far nor has the committee consulted the industry. We wait at the sidelines as paupers," says **David Frost**, ceo of Southern Africa Tourism Services Association. ■

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Another airline puts Durban on the map

DORINE REINSTEIN

ETHIOPIAN Airlines is the latest airline to announce it will launch flights to Durban, following closely on Turkish Airlines and Qatar Airways.

Ethiopian will launch a thrice-weekly service to the coastal city from December 16, operating a B737-800, which can accommodate 15 business-class passengers and 137 economy-class passengers. Flight ET 0845 will depart Addis Ababa at 08h30 on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, arriving in Durban at 13h40. Flight ET 0844 will depart Durban on the same days at 14h30, arriving in Addis Ababa at 21h40.

Dinesh Naidoo, group operations director of Serendipity Worldwide Group, expects that the connections to India will be popular, as travel agents in Durban are currently battling to find available seats for their clients.

Connections to Mumbai are "almost flawless" on the proposed new

Ethiopian Airlines route, **Dinesh** says, with a connecting time of three hours to India and just one hour and twenty minutes on the return flight. This makes the flying time considerably shorter than on Emirates flights, which are currently a popular option for travellers from Durban, he says. Also, the prices are likely to be more affordable on Ethiopian Airlines, **Dinesh** says, adding that fares for flights from Johannesburg to India are very competitive.

Abel Alemu, Ethiopian Airlines' regional manager for Southern Africa, told TNW India was an important destination for travellers from Durban. The airline currently has a daily service to Mumbai and to New Delhi from Addis Ababa, where travellers can connect to other destinations within India on any of Ethiopian's interline partners. The airline also planned to introduce a second daily flight to Mumbai from Addis Ababa as this issue of TNW was going to print.

Besides connections to India, Ethiopian Airlines will also offer Durban travellers good connections to West Africa, **Abel** says. There is a large community of West African citizens working in Durban. "We want to offer them a seamless and affordable connection home," says **Abel**.

He adds that the Middle East, the Far East and Europe are also on the agenda, with short connections to China, Riyadh, Frankfurt and London, among others.

Ethiopian Airlines used to fly to Durban but abandoned the destination in 1993. **Abel** says at that time the airline wanted to concentrate on Johannesburg as South Africa's main economic centre.

However, there is now huge demand from international business and conference travellers for flights to Durban, he says.

Budget carrier, Norwegian, has announced it is also considering flights to Durban from Copenhagen (see story on page 2). ■