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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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Sanity prevails!

It's been a long, hard road for the tourism and travel industries since the new immigration regulations were announced in June last year, and although concessions made by the Inter-Ministerial Committee are a massive win for South Africa, the struggle is not yet over. Dorine Reinstein reports.

THE recommendations made last week by the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to amend tourism-killing immigration requirements are a huge win for South Africa. Numerous concessions were made by the Department of Home Affairs that will be rolled out over coming months. The biggest win is the recommendation that biometric visa applications be made on arrival in South Africa as well as amendments to the requirement for Unabridged Birth Certificates for travelling minors.

Cabinet confirmed that SA passport holders would "within three months to a year" be able to travel without a UBC as it is looking at issuing new passports for minors that will contain parents' details.

The concessions come after the long battle by industry associations – Asata, SATSA, Barsa, Aasa and TBCSA.

Mmatšatsi Ramawela, ceo of the Tourism Business Council of SA, told TNW that the lines of communication with the DHA were now fully open for further engagement and collaboration with the travel industry. She said in the next three months, the DHA would also extend the validity of the parental consent affidavit from three to six months and would allow school principals to issue letters confirming permission for children to travel on school tours.

Although the travel trade has welcomed the announcement of the

concessions as a step in the right direction, agents say they will adopt a wait-and-see approach as they are concerned about the timeous implementation of the concessions.

"The new passports will be a positive development if Home Affairs has the capacity to implement it," says **Keith Gow**, md of Gateway Travel and Tours. He says the timeous issuing of UBCs by DHA has been a major problem over the last year and he fears the issuing of new passports will be the same.

John Ridler, spokesperson for Thompsons Holidays, says long delays in obtaining the UBC have put the brakes on spontaneous travel for families. He adds that applying for new passports may be a costly and time-wasting exercise for parents.

"We will need to wait and see what new passports for minors entail to assess whether it is a permanent, workable solution. However, it is a step in the right direction," adds **Sharmila Ragunanan**, Flight Centre marketing manager.

A uniform application within DHA and the airports will be needed, as in the past miscommunications have left everyone confused, warns **Chantelle Browne**, senior product manager at kulula holidays. "We have found that travellers have problems at the immigration stations due to staff not being fully educated on what is and isn't acceptable."

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A zest for Zanzibar

The new year is around the corner and Checkout Tours is offering alluring packages to Zanzibar for South African travellers, including R12 740pps at the four-star Uroa Bay; R13 095pps at the three-star Ngalawa Beach Village; R13 935pps at the four-star Paradise Beach Resort and R16 620pps at the four-star Villa Kiva Boutique Hotel. Packages include seven nights' accommodation, return flights, airport taxes and transfers and are valid for travel between January 16 and March 30. Pictured here, enjoying the spice market, is **Giles Clinton**, director of Checkout Tours. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Letter to the Editor



'Silence on lata guarantee is perplexing'

THE travel trade is strangely silent on the issue of lata financial guarantees.

At the recent lata passenger agency conference, I understand that there were changes to the criteria, which include that every agent will have to put up a guarantee.

There will be no credit given for agents of long standing. For example, my company has had an lata accreditation for 42 years and has not defaulted once during that period. I expect to be handled differently to new agents.

This will seriously affect small agencies such as mine. At the moment I have a zero guarantee. I can imagine this will mean many agencies will hand back their lata appointments and buy tickets from head offices. I suppose if you are Bidvest, it's simple to get a guarantee from the bank.

I find it absolutely unbelievable that the agency contingent of the APJC has agreed that these changes have gone to PAConf for ratification.

To page 2



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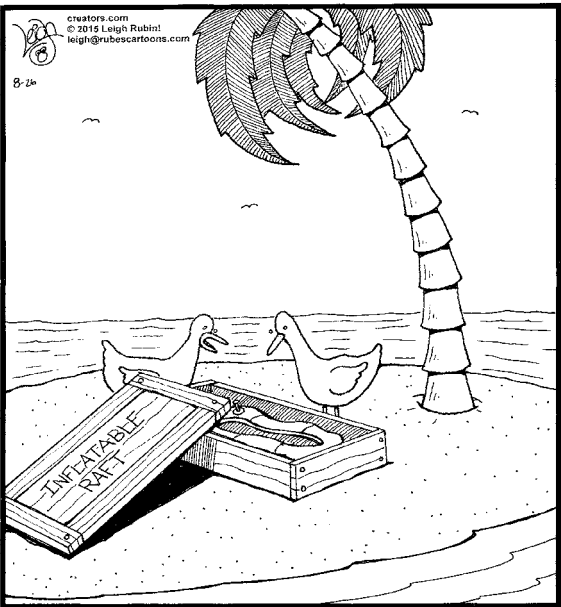
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“On one hand, we’re physically incapable of blowing it up. On the other hand, who cares?”

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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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New bird touches down in SA



Lufthansa’s stretched Boeing 747-8 touched down in South Africa for the first time on October 25, when flight LH572 from Frankfurt arrived at OR Tambo in Johannesburg. The jumbo jet will serve Johannesburg route with non-stop daily flights. “By introducing the new aircraft to our South African route we are reinforcing the significant role the country plays in our intercontinental network,” says Andre Schulz, Lufthansa’s gm for South Africa. In total, the airline has ordered 19 of the stretched Boeing 747s. The aircraft features Lufthansa’s new premium, business and first-class cabins. A first in Africa – Lufthansa’s new stretched B747-8 was welcomed with a water salute at OR Tambo International on October 25. Photo: Lufthansa

Asata Awards – nominate your peers!

NOMINATIONS are now open for the 2015 Asata Diners Club Awards, which aim to recognise those individuals who have contributed to the professional image of the travel industry.

The awards will include eight categories, and a significant change, however, is the way in which the Key Accounts Executive Award,

the face and brand of a travel agency or TMC, will be promoted. This year Diners Club is giving corporate clients the opportunity to be included in this process. Asata member TMCs will submit each nomination with details of one corporate client to validate and endorse the particular motivation. For the corporate client this will be a quick process using a

satisfaction rating.

The forms are scored by the judges and all information is anonymous so it is important for agents to motivate their answers properly and with detail.

The conditions of entry can be found on the Asata Diners Club Awards website.

Nominations close on November 20. Winners will be announced on March 3. ■

Silence on lata guarantee

From page 1
We hear very little about defaults in this market yet it appears that carriers are not prepared to take any risk

in doing business. I have to take risk from my clients; it’s a normal business practice in all industries.
The silence is perplexing.

I can only see dark days ahead.

David Pegg
Md, Sure Viva Travels

lata responds

At the time of going to print, lata confirmed that the Passenger Agency Conference (PACConf) had endorsed the proposed changes submitted by the APJC for BSP-ZA to the Local Financial Criteria (LFC), effective February 1. A spokesperson for lata

explained that formal communication from the conference would enable the communication of the exact details and implementation guidelines for the new financial criteria.
The association confirmed that once the formal PACConf process had been

completed, lata, as the APJC secretariat, would communicate to BSP participants within the next fortnight. The communication would include the new LFC, a step-by-step guideline detailing the next steps and answers to frequently asked questions. ■





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World Leisure Holidays broadens horizons

NATASHA SCHMIDT

WORLD Leisure Holidays has embarked on a “rippling” expansion strategy, introducing new properties and destinations to its portfolio, with Abu Dhabi the newest addition.

“We have recently introduced new hotels to our Mauritius, Seychelles, Maldives, Zanzibar and Réunion portfolio.”

“For many years our focus was on our exclusive Sun portfolio. We are cautiously expanding from this product range to more hotels in Mauritius, then further into the Indian Ocean Island products,” says **Johann Strydom**, md of WLH. “We have recently introduced new hotels to our Mauritius, Seychelles, Maldives,

Zanzibar and Réunion portfolio.”

The operator has now set its sights on growing its presence in the Middle East. “We are growing Dubai, adding more properties in the three- to five-star category,” says Johann. The operator plans to increase its properties in the city to approximately 15 hotels.

“It made sense to then expand into neighbouring Abu Dhabi, particularly with its ease of access and the growing interest in the destination,” he adds. WLH also plans to feature 15 properties in its Abu Dhabi portfolio, which will be launched in the next few months.

“Our approach has been cautious. We’ve been extremely discerning when it comes to the properties we’ve brought on board to ensure we maintain our high-quality standards,” Johann said. ■



Refreshing Réunion

Réunion Island was in the spotlight earlier this month at a special event held at The Living Room in the Maboneng Precinct, hosted by Réunion Island Tourism and Air Austral. With Réunion so much more than just an island getaway and now easily accessible for South Africans, attendees were educated about what makes it a great destination for adventurers, romantics and cultural explorers. Pictured here, at the event, are (from left): **Mariette du Toit-Helmbold** (Destinate Media), **Hélène Bezuidenhout** (Atout France) and **Lenel Vining** (Air Austral). Photo: Darise Foster

To the point



Budget Southern Africa has added the VW Move Up three-door, four-seat vehicle to the Budget Rent a Car Group A category, a group that includes small and entry-level vehicles. The VW Move Up is powered by a one-litre cylinder, quad-valve petrol engine with general fuel consumption listed as 4,7 litres/100km and a 35-litre tank capacity. The vehicles are available at all Budget Rent a Car Cape Town branches and will be followed by a national roll-out this month.

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Which LCC will be the casualty?

HILKA BIRNS

THE current price shoot-out in the domestic airline market is likely to leave at least one of the country's low-cost carriers mortally wounded, predicts **Erik Venter**, ceo of Comair.

A stagnant economy, plummeting tourism numbers due to restrictive visa regulations and overcapacity of airline seats thanks to the entrance of FlySafair and Skywise, have seen domestic ticket prices plummet as kulula and Mango up the competitive stakes.

"Losses at the moment are spectacular," says Erik. "The domestic market is not growing. Nobody can afford to lose passengers. The economy is so stagnant that it's a fight for every passenger. I suspect that someone will go. Comair is running at a loss at the moment but we can carry on forever because we own our aircraft, but it is ruining our profits." He says Comair plans to sit tight until the economy improves and diversify its business.

Mango ceo, **Nico Bezuidenhout**, says the market is overtraded, marked by a 13% capacity growth versus 8-9% passenger growth on its domestic routes. "The average cost of a ticket today is cheaper than in 2000." He

says Mango is refining its business, innovating and consolidating.

FlySafair ceo, **Elmar Conradie**, says Mango and kulula have dropped their inclusive fares to unsustainable levels to compete with FlySafair's "unbundled" fares, which exclude baggage. "The problem is that we are all competing for the same passengers. Nevertheless, we've had tremendous passenger growth of 12% on our routes and our focus is to consolidate that." FlySafair in December adds three B737-800s to its fleet of five B737-400s. It has installed thinner seats that don't recline and are lighter, which lowers fuel and maintenance costs.

Skywise joint ceo, **Johan Borstlap**, says the carrier can sustain the current airline bun fight for a while because it has strong shareholders, but plans to get out of the domestic market and into the regional market as soon as it can. "Our bottom-line is thin. We are just breaking even. Our entry was met by a 25% drop in fares and everybody felt it. It will stabilise and we expect a good season coming up, but Africa is our opportunity. We are looking at flights to Zambia, the DRC and Angola." Skywise raised eyebrows in late October when its aircraft were temporarily grounded because it failed to honour outstanding payments to Acsa and ATNS. ■



Proudly South African

Beaten but unbowed, SA travel industry supporters were at the 2015 Rugby World Cup semi-finals as guests of Jimmy Eichelgruen of Delta Air Lines. Jimmy, who was born in South Africa but lives in the UK, took the opportunity to invite some of Delta's South African rugby-loving clients to join him for the semi-finals. Enjoying themselves at the exclusive Coworth Park Dorchester were (front, from left): Jimmy with Ricky da Silva, XL Novo Mundo; and (back, left) Morné du Preez, Tourvest Travel Services; Dinesh Naidoo, Serendipity Worldwide Group; Tibor Zsadanyi, Travel with Flair; and Marco Cristofoli, Harvey World Travel. Photo: Dave Marsh

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REPORT IATA'S NEW DISTRIBUTION CAPABILITY

The debate around Iata's New Distribution Capability has been given a new dimension with the release of the 'NDC: Travel Agencies' Enabler to Success' report. Dorine Reinstein reports.

How travel agents see the NDC

TRAVEL agents don't seem to know very much about the NDC – a new, XML-based data transmission standard that enhances the capability of communications between airlines and travel agents – despite the NDC being discussed at length in travel trade publications.

Iata's research shows that more than half (53%) of the agencies that participated in the survey hadn't heard of NDC before they took the study. Key findings of the study were:

The NDC can make travel agents more competitive and productive

Agencies said they believed the NDC might help create a more even competitive landscape in relation to airline websites. This, in turn, might enable them to serve more travellers and provide better service.

Agents said they were frustrated with the various channels to book 'Branded Fares' and airline ancillary products. To serve their clients, an average travel agent would toggle between a GDS, where he/she books the flight, and an airline website to book the ancillaries. "A majority of agents in our study feel that airline websites have an advantage over GDSs in terms of content, and view the booking channel fragmentation as counterproductive," the report says.

Agents said they were hopeful that NDC-enabled processes would help provide easier access to all relevant airline fares and products and that it would allow them to search for and book the content through a single GDS screen.

"I estimate my front-line agents lose up to two hours of productivity going

to airline websites to book seats and take care of other client requests, and to enter these transactions in our mid-office system. This isn't sustainable," says a ceo of a US-based travel agency.

Agents expect to be paid for selling ancillaries

Travel agencies fully expect to be paid for NDC-enabled product sales. Survey respondents said they would prefer to be paid through airline-paid commissions. "With the NDC being piloted and on the cusp of commercial launch, it is imperative that airlines and agencies discuss and agree on frameworks for compensation for NDC-enabled transactions," the report said.

The NDC should not reinvent the wheel

Agencies participating in the study were clear that they did

not want radical overhauls to their flight searching and booking processes. Participants said they were more likely to use the GDS native display, also known as 'green screen', to book airline ancillary products than other channels. They found processes in the green screen mode more efficient than those available in the graphical user interface 'agent desktop' displays. 54% of agencies said they used the native display to book ancillaries ahead of agency desktop solutions and proprietary agency solutions.

Agencies are used to booking outside the GDS

As airlines have evolved what they sell and how they sell it, agents have adjusted. Although GDSs remain the predominant channel through which agencies book airline products, the study found that, on average, 26% of

agencies booked outside the GDS. Among the reasons for this could be the emergence of low-cost carriers, which don't provide all their content on GDSs. Also, some agencies indicated that they used non-GDS channels to find a lower fare for travellers.

Agents want transparency

Travel agents know it may take time for the NDC to be fully 'built out'. Respondents said they expected NDC providers to offer visible, tangible improvements to the booking of ancillaries, even if these capabilities were limited on "day one".

Agencies' primary concerns are the costs to support NDC implementation, employee training to use NDC-enabled processes, added booking complexity associated with using NDC-enabled processes, and ongoing product and technology support.

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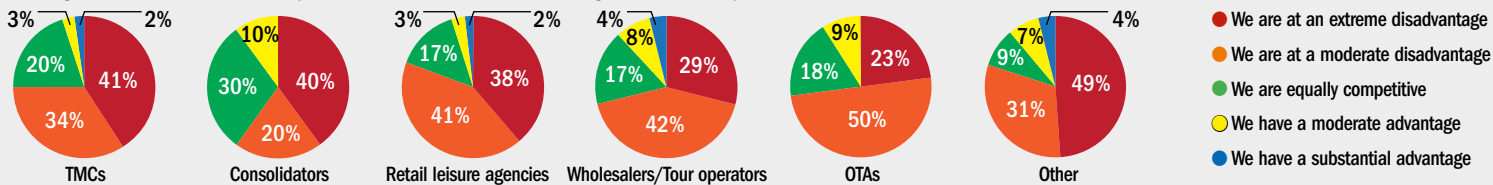
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Inability to access airline ancillary products in GDSs puts agencies at disadvantage to airline websites

How agencies perceive their ability to compete with airlines in selling airline ancillary products

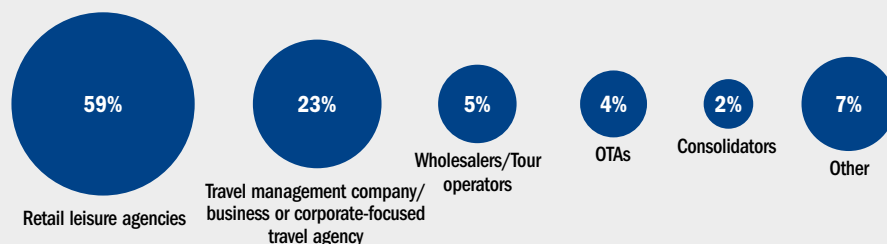


What do travellers want?

In a separate study, 'NDC: The retailing catalyst to happier passengers, happier third-parties, and happier airline partners', IATA found that the majority of passengers would be more likely to use a third-party (such as a travel

agent) that offered the better airline retail displays compared with those that did not. For third parties, this may provide a way to better distinguish themselves, increase their customer base and sell more airline product.

Of the 1 034 participating travel agencies, most were offline, leisure-focused businesses



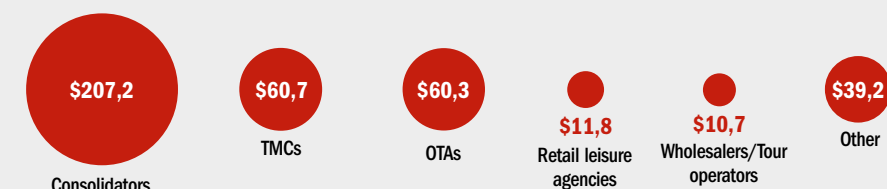
About the study...

The NDC consists of a series of XML-based schemes that will enable participating airlines to improve how third parties, including GDSs and travel agencies, search for and book flights. IATA conducted a global study in conjunction with a number of member associations of the World Travel Agents Association Alliance (WTAAA),

including Asata. The study, 'NDC: Travel Agencies' Enabler to Success', aims to offer insights into how travel agents see NDC and how they expect it to impact their business. The research included telephone interviews with 22 travel agency executives in six countries and an online study of 1 034 travel agents in seven countries. ■

The average agency sold \$30,8 million in air tickets in the 12 months preceding the survey

Annual air sales, US\$ millions



Source: WTAAA/IATA Travel Agency NDC Awareness Online Survey, Q2 2015, conducted by Atmosphere Research Group

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St Helena gets ready for tourists

HILKA BIRNS

TICKETS for the historic first commercial flight to St Helena are expected to go on sale by the end of November, as soon as final certification of the new airport has been completed, says Comair ceo, **Erik Venter**. The first flight is scheduled for mid to late February, he says.

The St Helena government and Comair are in the process of determining the final pricing structures of the service.

Comair is contracted to provide flights for an initial three years, with potential for up to two extensions of two years each. The Comair service will operate once a week under the British Airways brand with a new B737-800 to be delivered in December, Erik says. The aircraft will carry 120 passengers: 28 in business class and 92 in economy class.

It will depart on Saturdays at 08h20 from Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport and arrive at 11h30 at St Helena Airport. The return flight will depart St Helena at 12h30 and arrive in Johannesburg at 18h30. Departure and arrival times at OR Tambo have been timed to

connect with British Airways flights to and from Heathrow.

The flight time from Johannesburg to St Helena is five and a half hours and from St Helena to Johannesburg is four hours and 45 minutes, the difference caused by the prevailing winds.

Once a month, the service will carry on from St Helena to Ascension Island. This flight will take about two hours, with an overnight stay on Ascension Island. The flight will return on Sunday morning to St Helena and then to Johannesburg.

St Helena Airport has been given the IATA airport code HLE. According to the St Helena government information service, the terminal building is scheduled to be functional by November but final completion of all infrastructure is not expected until February. The official opening date of the airport is May 21, 2016.

SA construction firm, Basil Read, is building the £250m (R5bn) airport. It has subcontracted Lanseria International Airport to operate the airport for the next 10 years in terms of a £35m (R713m) contract. Lanseria ceo, **Gavin Sayce**,



St Helena tourist map. Photo: St Helena Island Tourist Office

says Lanseria's management team has been closely involved, from the design of the terminal to developing flight procedures, search and rescue manuals and emergency procedures, to training the staff and assisting with certification requirements.

Meanwhile, the development of a new four-star Mantis hotel in a heritage building in Lower Jamestown is due to begin early next year, with completion scheduled towards the end of the year, says Mantis Development md, **Craig Erasmus**. The hotel will have 32 bedrooms, a restaurant and bar.

At the moment, the island has 150 tourist beds (a small hotel, guesthouses and

self-catering, all of varying standards), of which 80 beds are serviced with en-suite facilities, says **Susan O'Bey**, Enterprise St Helena (ESH) deputy ceo for economic development.

"It is expected that passenger numbers will be somewhere around 5 000 during the first full year of air service. Assuming that 60% of these visitors will be tourists or business visitors, then around 54 people would potentially be seeking hotel accommodation on a weekly basis." To meet the shortfall, a gradual expansion of rooms is planned, including another accommodation/leisure development scheduled to open in Longwood in 2016. Susan says ESH is also

promoting uptake of a Local Accommodation Enhancement Scheme, exploring ways to increase self-catering options and targeting potential investors to develop tourist accommodation.

ESH, for the past year, has been working with local accommodation providers to implement accommodation quality standards. "To date, 20 of the 33 establishments listed with the tourist office are participating. These establishments are being assessed with a view to them implementing changes, which will ensure that they meet the minimum criteria in 2016/17. A similar programme is being rolled out to include food and beverage establishments and taxis," she says. ■



PRINCESS CRUISES SCOOPS TOP AWARDS!!

Princess Cruises, represented in South Africa by Discover the World, recently won three awards, including the top prize, **Best Cruise Line**. They also won the **Best for Food** and **Best for First-Time Cruisers** awards. "This is the second time that we've won the top honour," commented Sabrina Allcock, Director for Discover the World in South Africa.

Cruise International is the UK's top cruise magazine and the awards are voted for by more than 27 000 of the publication's readers.

They also received several other accolades recently, including:

- 1 *Travel & Leisure* magazine World's Best Awards – Princess jumped to second place in the Megaship category.
- 2 Travel Age West Awards – Princess received the award for the cruise line with the highest client satisfaction (for vessels with more than 1 100 passengers).

Discover the World represents Princess Cruises in South Africa

Telephone: 011 463 5251 and email is princess@discovertheworld.co.za

Discover the World staff, pictured from left: Anneli van den Berg – Marketing Executive
Sabrina Allcock – Director
Yvonne Skerritt – Sales Director



TNW7487

PillowTalk

A brief look at this week's hotel news

Mövenpick expands in sub-Saharan Africa

MÖVENPICK Hotels and Resorts will open three upscale hotels in Kenya, Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire between 2016 and early 2019. The expansion trail will commence with the opening of the 223-room Mövenpick Hotel and Residences Nairobi in mid-2016, followed by the 212-room Mövenpick Hotel Abidjan in early 2018, and the 250-room Mövenpick Hotel and Conference Centre Abuja in 2019.

AccorHotels bags 43 French hotels

ACCORHOTELS has purchased a portfolio of 43 hotels in France from Foncière des Régions, amounting to 4 237 rooms, for a total of €281m (R4,2bn). The deal is scheduled to be finalised in the first half of next year. The hotels were previously operated under variable leases by AccorHotels since 2005 and 2007 under the ibis budget, ibis, Novotel, Mercure, Pullman and Sofitel brands.

New BON Hotel to open in December

BON Hotel Swakopmund in Namibia will open to the public in December. The 34-room, four-star hotel, which caters for sport groups and the leisure, corporate and conference markets, is situated near the Swakopmund CBD, alongside The Dome, a multi-functional, indoor sports and conference centre that can host up to 2 000 delegates. A maximum of 130 guests can be accommodated in the hotel's Dome- and sea-facing rooms and the public areas comprise a health and wellness centre, gym, sauna and a 25m heated indoor swimming pool.

Cruising should be one of the easiest holiday options to sell, yet agents still shy away from it. Md of Cruises International, **George Argyropoulos**, shares tips on how to sell cruising and dispels some myths surrounding the industry. Carina Borralho reports.

How to bust myths about cruising

CRUISING is an easy and lucrative sell, so why don't agents do more to promote the holiday option?

A big issue is overcoming misperceptions that clients may have about cruising and marketing the holiday correctly.

Many people believe that cruising is only for 'old' or retired people. This misperception is based on outdated ideas that cruise itineraries are lengthy and that only the elite can afford it, George says. "In the past, this was in fact the case. Only people who were retired had the time to take a lengthy cruise and often had saved the money to do so."

However itineraries have been adapted to cater for couples, families and incentive groups, with various types of budgets and time constraints. "Family travel is a growing market and, to stay abreast of this trend, many cruise companies have added family-friendly facilities to their ships," says George. "It is also a popular option

for honeymooners as it is cost-effective."

Another misperception is that cruising is expensive. "Passengers can enjoy an all-inclusive cruise for less than US\$100 (R1 360) a day," says George.

It is also an uncomplicated transaction. Agents can sell an entire experience in one package, without having to get involved in the details or logistics. "Cruises International works with the agent to suggest a cruise for a particular customer. We work with agents to understand every itinerary we offer and sell the one most suited to each unique traveller," he says.

Customers may also have the perception that there is little privacy on board. However, for those who don't want to retreat to their rooms, cruise lines have designed areas where people can escape for more quiet time. For travellers who are not keen on crowds, luxury cruise lines such as Crystal Cruises or Oceana offer more space-to-guest ratio.

Cruise lines have also

become more flexible when it comes to excursions, offering overnight stays at some ports. "Some passengers choose to rent a car and drive while others walk around and explore. It is completely dependent on the preferences of the passenger," George says, adding that passengers can also opt to stay on board and enjoy half-price spa deals.

"Because of the weak rand, cruising is currently the most cost-effective holiday option for South Africans, and agents should take advantage of this."

Initial cruise sales take time and effort, George admits, but loyal customers will promote cruising to their friends and family, bringing in sales. "The word-of-mouth element in cruising is very prevalent," he says, adding that cruising becomes easier to sell over time and can guarantee agents a set

commission every month.

Another problem is that there is a lack of product knowledge in the industry. Only informed agents can sell cruising, says George. "We offer agents opportunities to attend presentations and to take part in our online workshops on Travelinfo."

Chrissa Karanastasis, brand ambassador of Cruise Corner, a cruise specialist division of XL Sandown Travel in Sandton City, is passionate about cruising and believes "any client is a cruise client". "If the agent doesn't know about cruising, he or she won't offer it. Knowledge is key to making sales." She adds that agents should take a cruise or learn about cruising before they suggest it to their clients as there is a big trust factor when selling cruising.

At the moment, one of the greatest selling points is the weak rand. "Cruising is currently the most cost-effective holiday option for South Africans, and agents should take advantage of this," says Chrissa.

So why become an expert?

The consumer who is familiar with cruising still depends heavily on booking a cruise through a travel agent, says George. Online bookings are not popular, particularly in the South African market, he adds. Customers often do their own research online but still rely heavily on the expertise and experience of a travel authority to make the booking.

Also, cruise customers aren't as concerned with price. In fact, price is fourth on the list of considerations for travellers looking to take a cruise, says George. "Travellers prioritise the following: destination, time of year, reputation of the cruise line and then price."

And then there's the value proposition that cruising offers. "Agents can have high returns on cruising, earning between 8% and 13% commission. There are also additional incentives from time to time," says George. ■

AirHeads



A snapshot of the week's airline news

Turkish ups LHR flights

TURKISH Airlines has increased its flights from Istanbul to London Heathrow from 30 to 37 a week, as of October 25. The Turkish carrier has also increased frequencies to other destinations, including Jordan, where four weekly flights are now offered instead of three, and Tel Aviv where 49 flights have increased to 56 a week from October 25.

Air Seychelles ups JNB flights

EFFECTIVE November 1, Air Seychelles' new schedule sees flight HM060 (the airline's thrice-weekly Johannesburg service) move from a 12h35 Johannesburg departure to 14h00, to arrive in Seychelles at 20h55, instead of the previous 19h30 arrival. The return flight HM061 now departs Seychelles at 09h25 to arrive in Johannesburg at 12h35. In addition to the scheduled services, Air Seychelles will introduce an additional flight each week between Johannesburg and Seychelles, which will operate every Tuesday between December 15 and January 5, 2016.

Lufthansa ups CPT service to daily

LUFTHANSA is increasing its frequencies between Cape Town and Munich from five weekly non-stop flights to a daily schedule. The seasonal service is valid during South Africa's summer season and will be operated using the A340-600. In addition, Edelweiss will connect Cape Town with Zurich non-stop twice a week during South Africa's high season, operating flights from now until mid-May 2016.

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DOMESTIC TOURISM

An unfavourable exchange rate and low domestic airfares are driving travellers from international to domestic travel. Max Marx reports.

Weak rand drives local travel

SOUTH African tour operators are reporting an upswing in domestic travel despite the double-digit second-quarter decline in domestic trips reported by South African Tourism.

SAT statistics showed a 16% decline in the number of domestic trips taken by South Africans from April to June this year compared with the same period last year, when 6,9m trips were recorded. However, 70% of the 5,8m trips in Q2 2015 were made by the VFR market, with only 9% accounting for the holiday market and 10% for the business travel market.

In 2015, Q2 bed nights declined by 9,5% to 21,1m, down from 23,3m in Q2 2014, but from April to August 2015 Acsa reports an increase in domestic passenger arrivals at all its international airports – Cape Town International Airport (8,4%), OR Tambo International Airport (10,7%) and King Shaka International Airport (4,9%).

A recent study by Travelstart SA also revealed significant increases in flight demand on the Johannesburg-Cape Town and Johannesburg-Durban

routes when comparing January to June 2015 with the same period in 2014. According to Travelstart, demand from Johannesburg-Cape Town increased by 85% during the period and by 79% from Cape Town-Johannesburg, while demand from Johannesburg-Durban increased by 49% and Durban-Johannesburg was up by 39%.

“We are seeing people switch from overseas holidays to domestic trips and, if the rand continues to slide, we foresee travel in South Africa increasing further.”

Velma Corcoran, Cape Town Tourism’s executive manager, says while domestic travel in South Africa has been declining over the past three years, this new demand for flights has been driven by new low-cost carriers entering the market, creating a heavily competitive environment that has seen airfares plummet to 2012 levels.

What’s more, according to Cape Town Tourism’s Cape Town Accommodation Performance Review and Forecast Report for April-June, 52% of those staying at formal accommodation in the Mother City were from the domestic market.

This, says Velma, is an indicator of the influx of visiting South Africans to the Mother City.

Both Thompsons Holidays and kulula holidays report an increase in domestic travel. They put this down to the weakening rand, which Thompsons notes has contributed to the trend towards shorter stays overseas and longer domestic holidays.

“The state of the rand makes international travel unaffordable to most, especially as in-destination activities and meals add substantially to travel itinerary costs. We are seeing people switch from overseas holidays to domestic trips and, if the rand continues to slide, we foresee travel in South Africa increasing further,” says **Samantha Stegmann**, kulula holidays’ travel operations manager.

Families opt for shorter, more frequent breaks

Commenting on the discrepancy between SAT’s Q2 results and the increase in domestic travel reported by tour operators, Samantha says SAT’s statistics are very broad, covering the VFR, holiday and business travel market, while tour operator statistics cover mostly the holiday market and, to a lesser extent, the business travel market. “With the excess airline seat capacity currently in the market, which has led to lower fares, more people are opting for air travel rather than travelling by car or bus. We’ve seen an increase in uptake of all our domestic flights and holiday packages.”

However, **John Ridler**, Thompsons Holidays’ pr & media manager, points out that while Thompsons Holidays has seen an increase

in local enquiries, many travellers planned and paid for their year-end overseas holidays much earlier this year. “It’s therefore unlikely that we’ll see a massive swing to domestic travel this December, but if the rand remains weak, we expect a marked upturn in demand for local holidays moving forward.”

Edwin Swan, Dream Hotels & Resorts marketing manager, says while the weak rand and the unabridged birth certificate requirements are acting as deterrents to international travel, it’s also just a lot more convenient for South African families to travel within South Africa. “The diverse range of holiday destinations and products available means there’s something to suit every interest and budget.

To page 16



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holidays

From page 14

It's also far easier than families bundling their broods on to long-haul flights, dealing with visa woes, immigration regulations and breaking the bank because our rand isn't stretching far enough."

He adds that, while going local is one of the main trends, Dream Hotels is also seeing families take shorter, more frequent breaks rather than one long holiday once a year.

"And they're looking for activities to do together, with holiday resorts that offer a range of activities capturing their interest."

Grant Sandham, Premier Hotels & Resorts group sales and marketing manager, also reports an upswing in bookings from the South African market and expects the trend to continue throughout the holiday season.

South Africans appear to be travelling closer to home even within the local context, adds Samantha. "Capetonians are exploring destinations in the Western and Eastern Cape, while Gautengers are exploring provinces

like Mpumalanga and North West."

Barba Gaogamediwe, Gauteng Tourism's senior manager: destination and corporate communications, confirms there has been an increase in the number of South Africans exploring Gauteng during the December festive season over the past three years.

"More people are staying home and travelling within Gauteng during the festive season because it's quite inexpensive with hotels running specials due to its being off-season."

What's more Samantha points out that families have the option of taking their dogs on holiday when they travel domestically. "There's a huge range of dog-friendly accommodation right up to five-star options such as The Oyster Box in Umhlanga and the 12 Apostles Hotel & Spa in Cape Town."

Hein Kaiser, Mango spokesperson, predicts continued growth in domestic travel. "There definitely seems to be renewed interest in exploring domestic destinations."

Festive-season entertainment in Gauteng

EMPERORS Palace has a great festive season line-up with entertainment for the whole family.

The *Simon and Garfunkel Story*, a tribute show, plays at Theatre of Marcellus from November 18 to December 6.

Singer Juanita du Plessis performs at Theatre of

Marcellus on December 11 and 12, followed by comedian Riaad Moosa, who performs his one-man show *Dr Moosa Prescribes* on December 13.

On December 18 and 19, American R&B group, Dru Hill, appears on the Centre Court stage.

The popular Garden of Lights fairy-light spectacle returns to the D'oreale Grande hotel's gardens from December 4-January 3.

And after 5 000 sold-out shows in Australia, *The Abba Show* plays at the Theatre of Marcellus from January 22 to February 7, 2016.

New mountain bike trail at Piekenierskloof

DREAM Hotels & Resorts recently launched a new mountain biking trail at Piekenierskloof Mountain Resort.

The new trail falls in line with the Western Cape government's strategy to grow cycling tourism in the province. In July, **Alan Winde**, Western Cape MEC of Economic Opportunities, proposed a cycling route stretching from Cape Town to Plettenberg Bay (see *TNW* July 22, 2015). He said the aim was to grow tourism to the Western Cape and attract 100 000 cyclists each year for event and leisure cycling. "We are looking for partners like Piekenierskloof to launch initiatives like this to help us achieve this target," he



Piekenierskloof Mountain Resort.

said at the launch of the Piekenierskloof mountain bike trail.

Edwin Swan says the new mountain biking trail is just one of the key tourist experiences offered in the Cederberg region. "Visitors can see rock art, the flowers during August and September, enjoy rooibos

tasting, and soft adventure like hiking and zip lining."

Active families staying at Dream Hotels' Stonehill River Lodge in Swellendam can enjoy river rafting on the Breede River while the Blue Marlin Hotel in Scottburgh on the KwaZulu Natal South Coast is the ideal base for diving at Aliwal Shoal.

Did you know?

Mango was named South Africa's fastest growing carrier at the recent World Routes conference held in Durban. Between 2010 and 2014, Mango increased capacity by 71,3%, while also leading annual growth in the low-cost sector in 2014, growing by 12,2%. Since its launch nine years ago, Mango has flown more than 14,2m passengers on an average of 1 400 flights a month. **Nico Bezuidenhout**, Mango ceo, ascribed the growth to competitive network planning and innovation, countered by prudence. "Mango has been able to respond positively to market conditions during some of the most challenging periods in aviation." Presently Mango's market share on routes it operates is 26%, says Nico. The airline will be adding additional Boeing 737-800s to its fleet over the next 18 months.

Book it!

- Emperors Palace is offering a choice of Summer Funstays packages from December 14-January 13, 2016 from R460pps including breakfast.
- Dream Hotels & Resorts is offering a fully inclusive dinner, bed, breakfast and drinks package at the Blue Marlin Hotel in Scottburgh from R995pps, valid until December 15.
- At Piekenierskloof Mountain Resort in Citrusdal, Dream Hotels is offering a three-night bed and breakfast package per couple for R2 550, which includes a ride on the zipline and a mountain bike permit for two. The package is valid from February 1-29, 2016.

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Spier Hotel in Stellenbosch offers picnics for guests looking to relax.

Top ideas for family-fun holidays

KULULA holidays offers a number of options for family-fun holidays.

- At Thandeka Game Lodge in the Waterberg, families can enjoy the bush, interact with cheetah and see white lions.
- In the Drakensberg, there's great family entertainment at Alpine Heath Resort, the Drakensberg Sun Resort, Cathedral Peak Hotel and Mont Aux Sources Hotel, with kids' programmes, hiking, golf, outdoor entertainment and sports activities.

- At the Wild Coast Sun Resort & Casino, families can enjoy the beach, water rides at the Wild Waves Water Park, water skiing, speedboat rides, tube rides, canoeing and more at Waterworld, as well as horse riding, golf and tennis.
- At the Emerald Resort & Casino in Vanderbijlpark kids can enjoy water rides at the Aquadome, see exotic animals at Animal World and interact with farmyard animals, while dad fishes, goes wall climbing and plays adventure golf and moms can relax at the spa.
- At Club Mykonos, Langebaan, families can enjoy horse trails, quad biking, mini-golf, lagoon cruises, archery, cricket, soccer, hockey, fishing trips, sunset cruises, a kids' club, games room and more.
- The Spier Hotel in Stellenbosch offers picnics, wine tasting, art, Segway tours, eagle encounters, a craft market, a spa, and a kids' club.

14 'unusual' attractions

TNW rounds up some lesser-known attractions across South Africa for agents with travellers looking for more unusual experiences.

- Go berry picking at Bon-Af Berry Farm in Parys;
- Stay on a working farm at Babylonstoren near Paarl;
- Whale watch, hike and swim in the De Hoop Nature Reserve in the Overberg;
- Stay at Shakaland in Eshowe, originally a film set for *Shaka Zulu* and now a hotel;
- Enjoy an evening of jazz and a meal at Johannesburg's The Orbit jazz club;

- Go ziplining, swinging and abseiling with Wild5Adventures at Oribi Gorge;
- In Midrand, take the kids to Bounce trampoline park for some thrilling trampoline fun and ziplining at Acrobranch in Melrose, Johannesburg;
- Go bird watching and mountain biking in Soweto;
- In Cape Town, dine at [Spacie], the city's first underground restaurant and private event space;
- The Honest Chocolate Café in The Gin Bar in Wale Street, Cape Town, is a café and party venue in one;
- Explore the home of Gandhi and visit the place where Mandela first voted on the Inanda Heritage Route in KZN;
- Lake Eland Game Reserve near Port Shepstone has the longest zipline tour in Africa featuring 14 ziplines;
- Enjoy drag racing, go-karts, super bikes and cycling at Dezzi South Coast Raceway in Port Shepstone;
- The Vorna Valley Neighbourhood Market in Midrand, which opened earlier this year, offers a farmer's market, car boot market and kids', food, home and leisure zones.

DOMESTIC TOURISM

SAT to partner agents in selling local travel

SOUTH African Tourism is engaging with Asata members to help them inspire South Africans to travel around their country and to encourage a culture of domestic travel.

This comes as SA Tourism's domestic tourism marketing strategy has been allocated a

budget of R100m this year, R105m next year and R107m the following year.

SA Tourism's current Sho't Left domestic marketing campaign will be expanded to include the idea that there is always a first time to experience something new.

Book it!

- At Piekenierskloof Mountain Resort in Citrusdal, Dream Hotels is offering a three-night bed and breakfast package per couple for R2 550, which includes a ride on the zipline and a mountain bike permit for two. The package is valid from February 1-29, 2016.
- Thompsons Holidays is offering a three-night fly-in package at the three-star Protea Hotel Sea Point from R4 323pps ex-JNB and Durban, valid from December 1, 2015 to January 15, 2016, with high-season supplements from December 20-January 5. The package includes three nights' accommodation, three days' car rental, a one-hour bike ride per adult, complimentary 15-minute head, hand or foot massage with every one-hour spa treatment booked, and a Seven Spur discount voucher.
- Kulula holidays is offering a special at Kwafubesi Tented Camp in the Mabula Private Game Reserve from R1 164ppspn - a 49% saving - valid from December 1-20 and from January 4-31, 2016. The package includes accommodation, full-board and safari activities and is valid from Sundays to Thursdays.
- Kulula holidays is also offering a two-night midweek special at Dolphin Beach Hotel in Cape Town. Guests can enjoy a two-night break from R2 945pps in a standard room with breakfast daily, return flights from Johannesburg or Lanseria and two days' car rental. The special is valid for booking until November 30 and for travel from November 1 to December 15 and January 11-28, 2016.

Newsflash

Cape Town has recently launched a number of initiatives for travellers to explore. Coffeebeans Routes has launched a Coral Music Tour, which sees travellers visit the homes of different choir trios across the city and includes dinner, a choir performance and nightcap in choir leaders' homes. It has also launched Theatre in the Backyard, where visitors experience a theatre production staged in a township backyard, followed by dinner with the actor and director. The new drive-in at Spier offers open-air classic movie nights at Spier wine farm in Stellenbosch. Meanwhile, the Big Box Board Games Café is the first café in Cape Town where you can play different board games while enjoying a drink and a meal. ■



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Retirement



After 21 years as operations director of the City Lodge Hotel Group and 43 years in the hospitality industry, **Gary Bisset** is retiring, with his last day of work on October 30. He joined the City Lodge Hotel Group in 1994 when the group acquired the Courtyard Hotel chain and since then has been involved in running hotels across the brands, including Courtyard Hotel, City Lodge Hotel, Town Lodge and Road Lodge.

Appointments

Club Travel has appointed **Lindi Chiya** as its corporate general manager for Club Travel Corporate.



Lindi has over 20 years' business experience in the sales industry, primarily in managerial sales positions within the travel sector. She was previously public sector gm at Tempest Car Hire, prior to which Lindi was national government sales manager for a year. She won the Top Performance Award at Tempest Car Hire in 2011 and 2012.

Marco Ledesma has joined Fancourt's sales and marketing team.



Based in Cape Town, he will report to **Peter Dros**, head of sales and marketing. Marco will implement a local and international sales strategy

to drive revenue and brand awareness of Fancourt and the boutique Manor House, also on the estate.

Premier Hotels & Resorts has appointed group sales and marketing manager, **Grant Sandham** (top) and brand manager, **Alan Campbell**.



Grant brings 23 years of experience in the hospitality industry. With over ten years' experience within the sales, marketing and brand management spheres, Alan has worked with some of South Africa's leading brands on numerous marketing and branding projects. As part of Premier's expansion goals, Alan will be spearheading various customer-focused campaigns.

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To the point



Govt seeks more control over SAA

Turkish Airlines officially launched its first direct flight between Istanbul and Cape Town on October 26. The airline flies daily, using an A332, configured with 228 seats in economy and 22 in business class. "Our first direct flight was booked to capacity and bookings for the other flights are following suit. We are confident that our Cape Town-Istanbul route will be a great success," says **Kenan Ince**, gm of the Turkish Airlines Cape Town branch.

SA's economic growth outlook has been downgraded to 1,4%, forcing government to reconsider how it bails out 'bankrupt' state-owned entities. **Dorine Reinstein** reports.

GOVERNMENT is contemplating the introduction of new legislation that will enable it to rein in state-owned entities (SOEs), such as SAA.

The intention is to cost the developmental mandates undertaken by companies separately from their commercial activities, with the financial implications being more clearly set out in shareholder compacts, Finance Minister, **Nhlanhla Nene**, announced during his mini-budget speech last month. This process was being piloted at a number of entities. Work had also begun to develop a uniform legislative framework to regulate SOEs, he said.

SAA postponed its AGM in early October, waiting for Treasury to sign off on a new state guarantee. However, the airline was required to first meet certain conditions set by the Finance Minister. Government guarantees to SAA currently amount to R14,4bn, of which R11,4bn

has been used. SAA is only expected to generate sustainable profits in five years' time, it was reported in the Medium Term Budget Policy Statement.

Financing SOEs that were responsible for growth-enhancing infrastructure investments was one thing, but relief for entities that should be self-sustaining or that had mismanaged their commercial activities was another issue, the Minister said in his speech. "This remains a serious risk to the medium-term fiscal outlook. Work has therefore begun on a legislative framework to regulate state-owned companies and to address their governance challenges."

A *Mail & Guardian* report speculated that Treasury's turnaround strategy for SAA would include making significant changes to its board, including the removal of chairperson, **Dudu Myeni**. In June this year, the chairperson instructed SAA to pull the

plug on an equity partnership agreement with Emirates Airline that would have seen more than R2bn injected into the cash-strapped entity. Reliable industry sources have told TNW that SAA is considering scrapping its partnership with Etihad Airways and that the airline is looking at negotiating an equity partnership with Emirates.

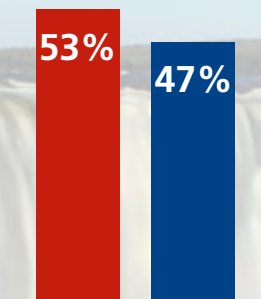
SAA spokesperson, **Tiali Tiali**, told TNW: "SAA continuously evaluates any potential partnerships within the Star Alliance to which it belongs and any other potential opportunities outside the alliance. We currently have a partnership agreement in codeshare with Emirates and we continue to explore any opportunities to enhance the partnership, as we do with any other codeshare partner. The codeshare with Etihad is still in place and if there is any need to revise it, we will do so as is the case with any other codeshare agreement in place across the globe." ■

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The DHA has vowed it will spend time training immigration officials to eliminate confusion and to remove the potential for corruption as much as possible, says **Chris Zweigenthal**, ce of Aasa. Although international travellers with minors will not need to carry a UBC in the near future, a UBC will still be "strongly advised". Immigration officials at the airport will be able to ask for

these documents "at their discretion". Airlines are waiting for further information from the DHA before implementing any changes. Once official communication from the department is received, airlines will update their websites and communicate with all relevant stakeholders, says **Carla da Silva**, Air Mauritius regional manager for Africa and Latin America.

Chris says greater clarification will emerge when the amended regulations

and the standard operating procedures are published. For example, discussions will be necessary to determine who will be responsible for repatriation if immigration officials decide to turn back travellers without birth certificates, he says. "With the initial implementation, fines were not imposed on the airlines but repatriation was the responsibility of the airline. We will need clarity on this based on the revised regulations," he says. ■

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