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Flyafrica.com – the comeback kid

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

DESPITE the exit of ceo, **Adrian Hamilton-Manns**, who was instrumental in setting up and launching flyafrica.com in sub-Saharan Africa, the airline plans to resume flights.

Acting ceo and former director of fastjet, **Michael Duncan**, told *TNW* he could not comment on the reason for Adrian's resignation but added that the airline planned to resume flights as soon as February 12 between Johannesburg and Harare. "We have received our Air Operators Certificate from Zimbabwe and we are aiming to take to the skies by Friday." He added that flyafrica Namibia still wasn't operational but that the group was hard at work to get the airline flying again.

Adrian was instrumental in launching the regional LCC model in July 2014, leveraging his experience working with LCCs in Asia such as Mandala Airlines, Tigerair Indonesia, Pacific Blue and IndiGo.

Michael said Adrian's exit would not have any impact on the airline and that it would continue to use the model that he set up, adding that Adrian had done an "impeccable job" launching the LCC.

The airline's most recent problems come off the back of a history of struggles.

When the airline initially launched, its inaugural flight on July 23, 2014, was suspended following a decision by the Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe (CAAZ) to revoke the airline's South African pilots' validation to fly. Since

then, the airline saw its efforts to launch in Namibia halted by a ruling from the high court stating that the airline's required licences to transport passengers were not in order. Then in October 2015, flyafrica Zimbabwe was grounded following allegations of fraud against its Zimbabwean partner. By November 2015, flyafrica Namibia had also been grounded due to documentation that had not been delivered to the Namibian Department of Civil Aviation.

The reason why regional LCCs operating in Africa battle so much, says ceo of AASA, **Chris Zweigenthal**, is because of the issues surrounding ownership and control. "If you take examples such as flyafrica and fastjet, their models are based on a multinational holding structure. They then set up individual airlines in different African states." He explains that those African states look at where the airlines are ultimately owned and controlled when assessing with whom they are dealing. "As a result it's important that the state in question is satisfied in terms of safety and financial requirements."

Legacy carriers will go to great lengths to make it as difficult as possible for new LCCs to enter the market, says **Gavin Simpson**, ceo of Holiday Aviation. "In order to protect their market share and high-fare business models, the loss-making, government-owned, legacy carriers oppose the AOC and Foreign Operators Permit by raising every possible

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We're off to China!

Dragon Holidays is offering a special 10-day tour of China for just US\$1 600pps (R25 688), land only. It is valid until December and travellers can enjoy four nights in Beijing, two nights in Xi'an and three nights in Shanghai. The tour includes internal China flights, airport-hotel transfers, English-speaking guides, sightseeing and entrance fees as well as nine nights in central four-star hotels. Pictured here preparing for their tour of China are (from left) Dragon Holidays' **Vernon Buxton** (sales and marketing manager); and **Chein Liou** (md). Photo: Megan Fischer

UBC hype creates confusion

DORINE REINSTEIN AND DANIELLA DI GASPERO

HYPE around immigration regulation 'changes' has once again resulted in confusion in the market.

In the wake of the Department of Home Affairs' press briefing on February 5 to announce that the short-term recommended changes to the immigration regulations had been completed, various media sites reported that the UBC requirement had been scrapped. However, both outbound and inbound travellers

who travel with minors must still carry an unabridged birth certificate or risk being turned back by immigration officials.

The pilot project to capture biometric data from foreign travellers at South Africa's international airports had been completed and was now in effect, the department said. However, the DHA added that the UBC requirement for travelling minors was still being "strongly advised",

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Top web stories



- TNW pick: Controversial resolution to be scrapped?
- BA amends closing time for departures
- Flyafrica ceo exits
- Airlines can now drop checks for foreign minors
- City Lodge changes commission system

City Lodge changes agent commission system

THE City Lodge Hotel Group has changed its commission system, effective February 1. Travel agents now need to bill the group for commission and can no longer deduct 10% commission from payments made to the group on behalf of clients who have stayed at the group's hotels and/or used its

services and facilities. The new system is the only accepted means by which agents can bill their commissions while still meeting tax invoice regulations in South Africa. Under the system, travel agents will receive a commission advice from the City Lodge Hotel Group

mid-month. The commission advice will be accompanied by a request to issue a tax invoice to the group for the commission amount, which will include VAT. Once the group has received a tax invoice, it will pay the commission amounts, which are subject to normal payment terms and conditions. ■

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BA Comair – new flight closing times

ALL domestic and regional British Airways flights operated by Comair will close 45 minutes prior to departure as opposed to the previous closing time of 30 minutes, effective March 1.

The check-in close-out time has been standardised across British Airways' global route network and its franchise partners as part of the airline's deployment of a new airport solution that is being rolled

out across all airports that it serves. Travellers are advised to check their flight status prior to travelling, as the closing time of their flight may be earlier than previously published. ■

Rubes® By Leigh Rubin

"How would I 'like a little mace?' ... Sure thing, princess. Bring on your little-girlie pepper spray."

Calling Durban golfers!

TRAVEL agents and suppliers who play golf are invited to the inaugural game of the KZN chapter of the Travel Industry Golf Club at Mount Edgecombe on February 24.

Dinner and prizes are sponsored by TNW and Bidvest Travel Insurance. Playing fee is R200 plus cart fee. Chapters already exist in Johannesburg and Cape

Town where they now draw up to 140 players for the half dozen games a year. Interested in playing in the limited field for this historic game? Contact donovan@serendipitytours.co.za ■

Flyafrica.com – the comeback kid

From page 1 objection to these new LCC entrants." **Richard Bodin**, cco of fastjet, says that acquiring the licences to operate between country A and country B can often be a "long drawn-out bureaucratic and often politically influenced process", adding that it took three years

for fastjet to acquire the licence to operate between Tanzania and Kenya. "The standard LCC cookie-cutter model used in the rest of the world has to be adapted to fit the African landscape from a cultural, technological and distribution channel perspective," says Richard. For example, LCC air ticket

sales would normally be driven through website channels, however Richard says that fastjet had to "drastically adapt (its) distribution strategy to suit what's on the ground, by going through call centres and by embracing relationships with travel agents." TNW was unable to reach Adrian for comment. ■

Courtney Canham selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Mozambique Tours.** Five-night Vilanculous, Mozambique, special from R9 148pp sharing. Offer includes return flights departing Johannesburg to Vilanculous, return road transfers, five nights' accommodation at Casa Rex with breakfast daily, local taxes, wireless Internet and free transfers to activities in town. Rate excludes taxes of approximately R4 100pp sharing. Valid for travel until December 14 (excluding April and August).
- **MSC Cruises.** Rates from R4 500pp sharing on board *MSC Sinfonia*. Rate includes four nights' accommodation in an inside cabin with twice-daily service; all meals; a range of entertainment (nightly shows, live music and casino); baby, mini, young and teen clubs; outdoor spray park. Package excludes mandatory charges of approximately R955pp, insurance, port and hotel charges listed. Itinerary: Durban, Maputo and Portuguese Island. Set departure November 1.
- **TravelVision.** Russia Two-Capitals five-night package from R23 560pp sharing. Offer includes return flights departing Johannesburg including taxes, two nights in Moscow at the Holiday Inn Lesnaya, three nights in St Petersburg at the Hotel d'Angleterre, all private transfers, half-day city tours in Moscow and St Petersburg with an English-speaking guide, entrance fees to museums, day train from Moscow to St Petersburg in economy class with seat reservation. Valid for travel between April 22 and June 20.



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Gautrain expands to meet pax demand

FOLLOWING increasing passenger demand on the Gautrain, the Development Bank of Southern Africa has approved a loan of R3,5bn for the Gautrain Management Agency to purchase additional rolling stock. "Current passenger growth has been consistent in the peak periods and if the current patronage in the peak periods is not addressed, capacity will become more constrained," Gauteng MEC for Roads and Transport, Dr **Ismail Vadi** said at a media briefing outlining the business case for the

additional train car sets. Ismail said recently that the Bombela Concession Company, initially appointed to operate and maintain the Gautrain project, had invited suppliers to submit tenders for the design, manufacture, supply and maintenance of 12 new train sets. The Gautrain system currently carries 1,4m passengers a month and would require a total of 48 new rail cars over the next decade to meet the current passenger demand. ■



Picture perfect!

Long Beach Golf and Spa Resort in Mauritius was selected as the backdrop for the latest local production, *Vir Altyd*, which hit South African movie houses on February 12. With over a kilometre of unspoiled beach front, a picturesque lagoon and suites offering great views of the Indian Ocean, the property made an ideal setting for the romantic storyline. Agents familiar with the resort should keep an eye out for the famous Ile aux Cerfs Golf Club which features in the movie. Celebrating the movie's premier are World Leisure Holidays' **Cathie Bester** (national sales manager) and **Ramesh Jeenarain** (senior executive). Photo: Debbie Badham

Lagos-Sierra Leone flights resume

ARIK Air is resuming flights from Lagos to Freetown, Sierra Leone, effective February 23. In the new schedule, the flights will be routed via Accra, Ghana. The three times weekly flight will operate on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Flights will depart Lagos at 07h20 and arrive in Accra at 07h20. The flight then departs Accra at 08h05 and arrives in Freetown at 10h30. The return

flight will leave Freetown at 11h15 and arrive in Accra at 13h40. It departs Accra at 14h25 to arrive in Lagos at 16h25. The route will be operated with a Boeing 737-800 Next Generation aircraft with 20 business-class and 126 economy-class seats. Flights from Lagos to Freetown were suspended in July 2014 at the outbreak of the Ebola virus in some West African nations. ■

Fastjet delays JNB-VFA service

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

FASTJET has had to delay the launch date of its new route linking Johannesburg with Victoria Falls. This follows the recent announcement that it would launch direct services between Johannesburg and Victoria Falls and Harare. The JNB-VFA route was scheduled to launch on February 3. However, the airline has now said scheduled flights could not be confirmed until it

had engaged with tour operators to ensure that they were flying optimal frequencies. "The timings of the flights need to be customer-centric," says cco of fastjet, **Richard Bodin**. "Once flight dates and timings have been confirmed for the JNB-VFA route, fastjet will engage with other South African travel agents and tour operators to discuss industry fares for inclusive travel packages to Victoria Falls." ■

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Selling motorsport as an incentive

Johan van Veelen

Motorsport is an interesting incentive option for corporates.

On the one hand, sporting incentives are truly once-in-a-lifetime experiences that will make any employee feel rewarded. They offer unique bonding opportunities because the group stays together for the entire duration of the trip (as opposed to a destination incentive where the participants often separate and do individual things), and they allow attendees the chance to experience a new country and its culture while enjoying a major sporting event at the same time.

But on the other hand, it is important to remember that there must be some sort of connection between the incentive and the corporate itself. Most often we find automotive companies, petrol companies or motorsport sponsors are the corporates that engage with motorsport as an incentive. While we have also had cellphone or computer companies get involved in these sort of tours as well, it may not work for all participants in some cases.

Thus it may seem like a good idea at first, but there are many intricacies that must be taken into account before suggesting an incentive centred around motorsport. The composition of the group must be considered first and foremost. For instance, we have a group going to Mexico and some of the participants require Halaal food - which is non-existent in Mexico. Similarly, if the corporate is made up of more females than males, have you confirmed that all the women would enjoy this sort of trip? You as the agent would want them to make the most of their trip so you want it to be something they would all enjoy.

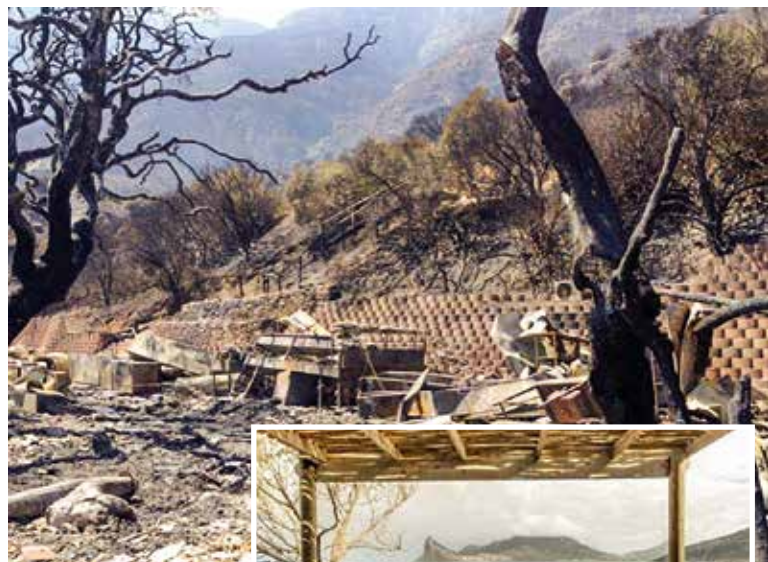
Similarly, it is important for agents to know which tier of the corporate will be attending the trip so as to better gauge what types of value-adds to suggest. If top management is hosting some of their suppliers' managing directors, they will want the A-grade of everything. A super package can be put together for this sort of trip, and it would be totally different to if middle management of sales staff were attending - where a more basic package will likely be used.

Ultimately however, we do what needs to be done to ensure that all participants enjoy their incentive trip - regardless of the tier of management. We do not use local operators but rather have staff on the ground to host the group and we engage in the experience with them. The incentives we have handled thus far have been very successful, the feedback we have received has been great and we anticipate a higher amount of interest in motorsport travel and tours to come in the year ahead.



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The rebuilt lodge (right) has risen from the ashes less than a year after the wildfire that destroyed the property.



Tintswalo Atlantic: When disaster strikes

In March last year, Tintswalo Atlantic in Cape Town burned to the ground. Just seven months later it reopened to guests, completely rebuilt and raring to go in time for the peak season. Sue van Winsen reports.

IT'S every hotelier's worst nightmare come true. In the early hours of the morning on March 2, 2015, the iconic Tintswalo Atlantic along Chapman's Peak, near Hout Bay, was caught in the path of a wild mountain fire that blazed through the Cape Peninsula.

At 01h15, the security team at the property saw the flames and immediately began emergency fire procedures.

Gm of Tintswalo Atlantic, **Ryno du Rand**, was immediately called on site and, together with assistant manager, **Tania Batista Hofer**, a decision was taken to evacuate all guests while staff stayed on the property for as long as possible. However, soon Tintswalo management made the call to evacuate all staff too, to ensure their safety.

One of the first priorities was ensuring that the guests were accommodated elsewhere. **Lisa Goosen**, ceo for Tintswalo, says, in particular, the 12 Apostles Hotel and Spa, was extremely helpful, taking in guests at short notice. The Tintswalo reservations team also began contacting all future guests, ensuring they were redirected to local properties that could accommodate them.

While everyone hoped that the damage would be limited, through offshore observation, management could ascertain that at least 60% to 80% of the property had been destroyed, including the main area, and Tintswalo Atlantic would have to be out of operation for an extended period of time.

Gaye Corbett, Tintswalo Lodges Group owner, says: "The greatest challenge initially was just getting over the shock of losing the lodge. We realised that the only time you can truly and totally lose something is if you feel you can never recreate it again. When

we had decided to go ahead, we put a deadline in place, it was easy."

The initial date set to reopen was December 1, 2015. Discussing the process of claiming from insurance, Lisa said the company they used immediately authorised an amount to start clearing the site, which enabled them to start the rebuild within just two weeks of the fire.

Tintswalo Atlantic says it was also a priority to ensure that its staff were taken care of during the rebuild, and they all remained employed and assisted in the rebuilding of the property.

"Once the site was cleared, it was a matter of convincing the original builder to come out of retirement, which he did, and the work commenced," says Lisa. Things moved very quickly from that point onwards. In fact, reconstruction progressed so quickly, that the opening date shifted forward by a month to November 1, 2015.

Refurnishing the lodge posed a more difficult challenge as the only item that was saved from the original lodge was a silver table. Most new pieces were sourced locally and, rather than trying to recreate or replicate everything as it had been before, the property aimed to rather retain the same atmosphere, while bringing in new elements.

One of the special décor elements is the reclaimed wood from the burnt milkwood trees that surrounded the property. Forrest Creations used salvaged pieces of wood to create platters, stools, side tables and a bar counter. In addition, local business, Just Trees, donated 750 trees to replace those lost during the fire and past Tintswalo Atlantic guests were invited to help plant these along the surrounding mountainside. ■



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*Image depicts Club World cabin, available on long-haul flights to London and beyond.

SAA launches second gateway into Nigeria

SAA has expanded its presence in West Africa through the launch of flights to Abuja – the airline’s second destination in Nigeria. Darise Foster attended the launch trip as a guest of SAA.

THE introduction of SAA’s flights to Abuja is expected to result in easier, seamless and increased connections into West Africa for both South Africans and Nigerians.

The airline says a second gateway in Nigeria strengthens its position in West Africa, where it plays a significant role in enabling the movement of goods and people between Southern and West Africa.

Lagos has always featured among SAA’s top three performing routes in Africa. The airline has been flying directly from Johannesburg to Lagos for 19 years and the route has become the airline’s biggest revenue earner.

As such, SAA conducted studies to identify where passengers were connecting to from Lagos and discovered that many travelled on to Abuja – indicating a demand for direct flights from Johannesburg to Abuja.

“A significant benefit of the new route is that those using Nigeria as their entry point into West Africa will not have to travel through Lagos Airport to connect on to other destinations because it is known to be quite a



SAA internal communications manager, Sarah Uys (left), and group corporate affairs officer, Marcia Mohoje, welcomed guests on the launch trip of SAA’s newest route.

nightmare,” said **Dianna Games**, ceo of African business consultancy, Africa at Work. The airport in Abuja is safe and processes are less tedious as travellers navigate through immigration, she added.

Abuja is the capital and is home to the Presidency, the national Parliament and all ministries of Government. Nigeria also has the largest economy in Africa and SA plays a critical part with the investment its business people bring to the country.

According to Africa analyst,

Adetunji Omotola, there is a lot of travel between the two nations as a result – making increased connectivity into Nigeria a major benefit.

Osuagwu Chikezie, ceo of local tour operator service CGSK Tours, said the flights would open up opportunities for those Nigerian residents living in the north of the country.

“Previously, people would have to travel to Lagos just to catch a flight to Johannesburg and the bad traffic in Lagos is well known,” he said.

“Additionally, this was obviously not ideal for the many government officials who travel to South Africa.”

Adetunji said, from SAA’s point of view, this meant the aircraft was always likely to be full of business and government passengers on both legs.

Enough frequency?

Commenting on the route frequency of three times a week, SAA spokesperson, **Tiali Tiali**, told *TNW* the days of business travellers spending only one night in a destination were long gone, especially destinations such as Abuja and Lagos, which are about six hours’ flying time from Johannesburg. “SAA is a network carrier and we serve a far bigger target market segment over and above the traffic between Nigeria and SA. We serve a much larger market segment from each destination to which we operate.”

The launch of SAA flights to a second destination in Nigeria was described as “historic” and “ground-breaking” because of the tainted history between the two nations. It is also seen as the first step toward the integration of African

countries and their people.

“At least 80% of African air traffic is carried by non-African airlines. Five years ago, that number was 70%. If we do not work together, our travellers will continue to fly non-African airlines,” said SAA board member, **John Thambi**, speaking to government officials and corporate representatives at the inauguration of SAA’s JNB-Abuja service.

“This route is a symbol of us working together to connect Africa and ensure that African air travellers are not flying non-African airlines,” John said.

“Direct flights from Johannesburg to Nigeria further signify the commitment by SAA to enhance connectivity in West Africa and into Africa as a whole,” agreed Tiali.

John added that SAA’s commitment to connect African countries through air travel was in line with the African Union’s Agenda 2063 which, among other goals, seeks to create free movement of people through the unification of African airspace as per the Yamoussoukro Decision.

“With seamless air connectivity, we can integrate Africa,” John concluded.

Plenty of things to do in leisure time

ABUJA generally attracts South African business people, who, while waiting for the return flight to Johannesburg, can explore the considerable history of the city. Local tour operator, CGSK Tours, hosts four-hour excursions around Abuja that focus on either the city, the environment or the hinterland.

“Each four-hour excursion costs the equivalent of \$50 (R809), which includes lunch for a minimum of two people,” CGSK Tours ceo, **Osuagwu Chikezie**, explained. “To include an experience of the nightlife, the cost could increase to \$65 (R1 052).”

Osuagwu said March and April were the hottest times of the year and Abuja welcomed the bulk of its visitors between

September and November. “The weather is cool and calm during that latter part of the year and people come to Abuja to finalise deals and are usually in the mood to spend more than usual as well,” he said.

An ideal trip for travellers hoping to fully experience Abuja would need to fall over a Friday so that they can experience Abuja’s nightlife and entertainment offering, Osuagwu said. “The traveller could arrive on the Wednesday morning then rest before doing a city tour that afternoon.”

“On Thursday, they could visit the hinterland and learn about the historic Zuma Rock – the entry point into Abuja and a symbol worshipped by some locals – or visit the



The Federal Capital Territory Arts and Craft Market.

Nike Centre for Art and Craft to find out how the locals design and hand-make the famous Nigerian attire,” said Osuagwu.

The city started shutting down on Fridays around

midday when many Muslim locals go to their various mosques, said Osuagwu. “This is the time for travellers to visit the malls and the markets when they are quieter and

not as crowded as usual. That evening, we will either go to a local lounge or to a nightclub before the travellers fly back to Johannesburg on the Saturday morning.”



Guests are welcomed by a traditional dance at the Nike Centre for Art and Craft.

Photos: Darise Foster

Advice for your travellers

SAA compiled the following fact file for passengers to Abuja:

- The best time to travel is during the dry season months of November to February.
- While Abuja is a slow and friendly town, it is advisable that travellers do not wander the city alone – it is always safer to be in the company of a Nigerian who knows his way around.
- It is dangerous for travellers to drag a travel case about any town in Nigeria, especially if the traveller is Caucasian or does not 'look Nigerian'.
- Travellers should keep their boarding passes on

hand. As they exit the airport officials will check if they are leaving with the correct luggage.

- South African rands are not accepted when exchanging currency. It is advised that passengers exchange their rands for US dollars while at OR Tambo International Airport, then exchange their US dollars for Nigerian naira at Abuja's Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport.
- Food in Abuja is generally spicy and will take some getting used to.
- Travellers should only drink bottled water unless they have stayed in Nigeria long

enough to have acquired some immunity to locally endemic pathogens.

- Haggle for the best prices at most craft shops. Conversation is usually conducted at higher decibels than travellers may be used to – consequently travellers should simply shout back, always with a smile.
- Finally, most Nigerians will go out of their way to assist a foreigner – a courtesy they do not necessarily extend to fellow Nigerians. Enjoy the cheerful glances in Abuja, the frequent offers of assistance and ready smile from the locals.

The flight schedule

SAA's non-stop flights between Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport and Abuja's Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport will operate three times weekly using an Airbus 330-200 aircraft.
Flight SA088 departs

Johannesburg at 23h00 on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays to arrive in Abuja at 04h10 the following day.
Return flight SA089 departs ABJ at 08h45 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays to arrive in JNB at 15h40.

Top tips

CGSK Tours' **Osuagwu Chikezie** gave *TNW* his top four tips for travellers visiting Abuja:

1. Travellers should take all necessary safety precautions.
Do not flaunt phones, cameras or other electronic devices.
2. They should also take antacids before departing South Africa,

- or bring them along, to help with the spicy Nigerian food.
3. Malaria preventative tablets should be taken before departing South Africa.
4. Travellers should dress casually but females should not show too much skin as it can offend the Muslim locals. ■

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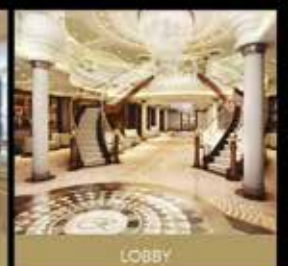
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EUROPE

Travellers heading to Europe must contend with new challenges resulting from the current global politics and economics. Carina Borralho speaks to travel professionals about what agents should be advising clients.

New hurdles for SA travellers

WHILE most tour operators agree that the general threat of terrorism is not deterring South African travellers from visiting Europe, the aftermath of the recent spate of terrorist attacks has created a number of issues for travellers to the region.

General processes, such as visa applications and transport between countries, have also become tedious for many travellers as a result of the ongoing threat of terrorism. In September, Germany opened its borders to Syrian refugees, causing chaos within Europe. At the beginning of this year, Sweden and Denmark extended their temporary border checks and increased spot passport checks at specific border posts. Many reports predict that other European countries will follow Sweden and Denmark by closing their borders.

Currently, the Schengen visa system still applies

to South African travellers who wish to travel to more than one country in Europe. However, many European countries, as well as the UK, are considering closing their borders which would mean the fall of Schengen. As a result, South African travellers may soon find themselves having to produce documentation that is specific to every country's border in Europe.

For the time being, travellers should be aware that, due to checks for illegal immigrants conducted at borders, particularly at airports and on roads (not as much on trains), there might be some delays while travelling, says Austria Connection md, **Inge Dobihal**.

"Changing visa requirements are always an issue for South African travellers, and these do put a damper on the pre-holiday experience," agrees Trafalgar md, **Theresa Szejwallo**. To curb these issues, Trafalgar says it tries to stay informed on travel

trends or hindrances, and notify travellers accordingly.

However, when it comes to the visa process specifically and the possible added complication that the fall of Schengen may present, **Ilse Heymans**, senior travel consultant at Pentravel says that South Africans have always needed to apply for visas to visit Europe anyway. "South African travellers are used to having to apply for visas, so if more paperwork is required for Europe in the future, South Africans are likely to still travel as normal."

In particular, the threat of terrorism has caused some operators to cancel itineraries in certain destinations. "In light of the most recent terrorist events in Turkey, many cruise lines have cancelled calls to Istanbul for 2016, which have been replaced by calls to Athens and the Greek islands," says **George Argyropoulos**, md of Cruises International.

What to advise clients

Guided tours are a safe option to travel to and explore Europe.

Theresa Szejwallo says Trafalgar employs local travel directors who are familiar with Europe as part of its strategy to ensure traveller safety. "Guests are never alone and we keep them informed of any incidents happening in destinations we travel to," says Theresa.

For safety reasons, agents should also advise travellers to purchase the excursions offered by the cruise line rather than sourcing these separately, warns Cruises International's **George Argyropoulos**. He points out that being on a cruise ship offers a higher level of safety on board than on land since the level of security for the organised excursions offered are scrutinised by the cruise line, the port agent and the local authorities.

George also highlights the importance of taking precautionary measures, and says that if an excursion or a destination is deemed unsafe, the excursion or the visit to that particular port will be cancelled by the cruise line.

Travellers can also follow a few easy steps to ensure that they make the most of their trip to Europe, says **Ilse Heymans** of Pentravel. "To avoid confusion and frustration, travellers

need to keep themselves informed of where they are going and where they are staying," she says, adding that although it is a good idea to be informed and to keep up to date with current news, travellers should not be preoccupied with worrying. "Worrying will take away from the enjoyment of the trip. Travellers should not obsess over terrorist events, as these can happen anywhere in the world." Ilse does however, recommend that travellers take advantage of social media to communicate with family and friends and to stay up to date with relevant travel alerts and updates in real-time.

Communication is of the utmost importance, especially where safety is a concern, agrees TravelVision sales and marketing manager, **Annemarie Lexow**, adding that it is important to find ways to always be in touch. "International roaming is expensive but agents should advise travellers to look for alternatives and always have access to the Internet." Digital news apps with information specifically about the destination are also a great way to be aware of what is happening, she says. Annemarie also recommends using Whatsapp as a platform to keep in touch with family and friends.



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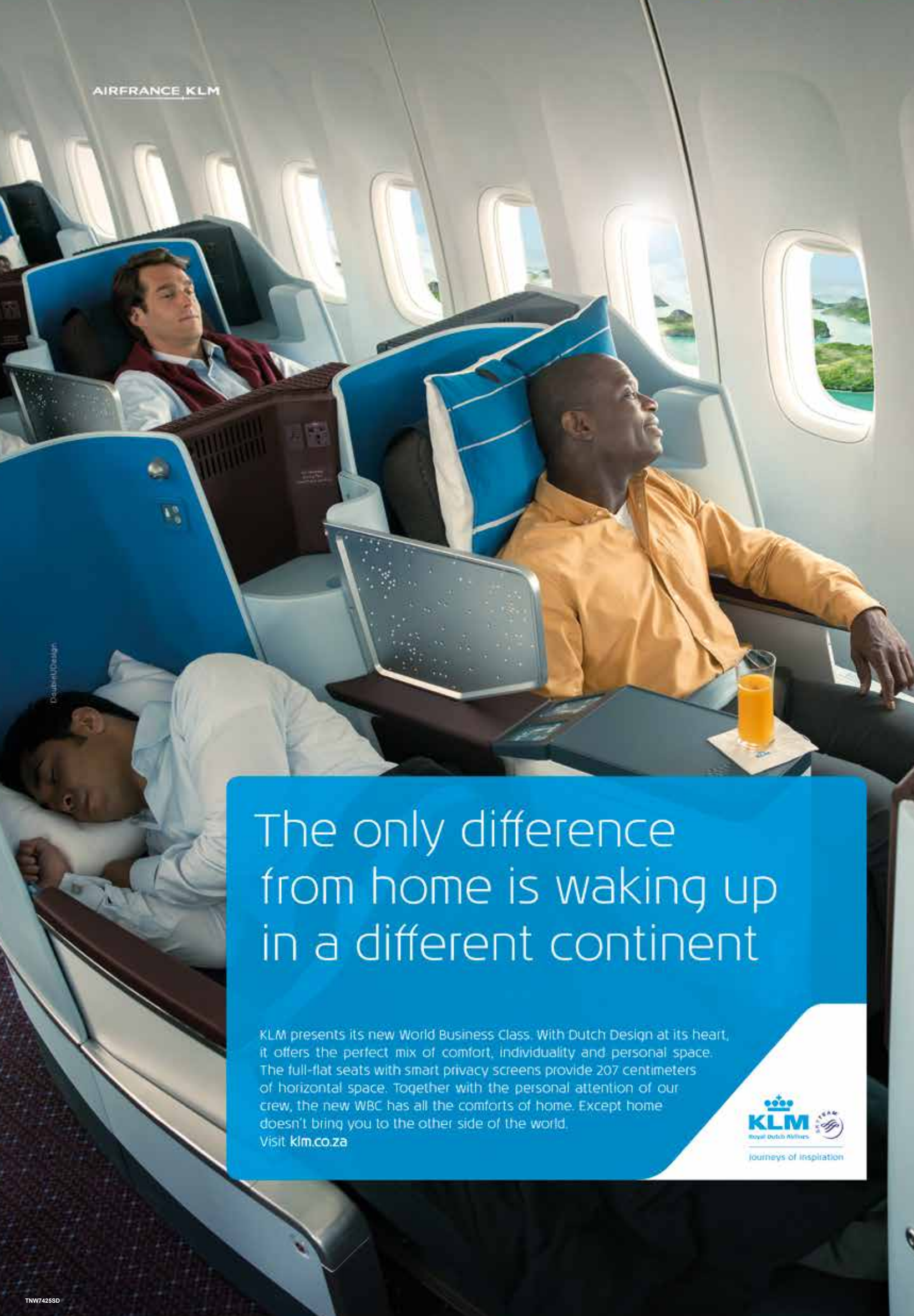
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News flash



Virgin Atlantic has added the Boeing 787 to its fleet. It will fly from London Heathrow to New York, Newark, Boston, Los Angeles, Delhi, Hong Kong and Shanghai. The airline says the Dreamliner offers customers Virgin's best ever experience of inflight service and comfort. All Virgin Atlantic flights have WiFi throughout and include Smoother Ride Technology which senses turbulence and makes small adjustments to flight systems to reduce it - thus reducing the chance of motion sickness. Photo: Virgin Atlantic

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TNW7534



The weak rand effect

WHILE recent terrorist events have caused TravelVision to see a drop in requests for Europe as travellers have shifted to alternative destinations, the weak rand has had a bigger impact on the numbers than the terrorist attacks in Paris, says **Annemarie Lexow**.

Pentravel's **Ilse Heymans** has also noticed a decline in traveller interest in Europe as a result of the rate of exchange. "South Africans are looking less at places like Europe because of the poor rand exchange rate. Of all the concerns that Europe may be presenting currently, the weakened rand is by far the issue that is most affecting South Africans," she says.

Analysts have said the rand is not likely to gain ground on a sustainable basis and is at the mercy of general emerging market risk aversion as investors worry about the impact of slowing economic growth in China. Just one month into 2016, the rand had already weakened nearly 6% against the dollar, and had been dragged down by concerns



"The weak rand has had a bigger impact on numbers than the terrorist attacks in Paris."

Annemarie Lexow

over sluggish domestic growth and a slowdown in the world's second biggest economy, China.

"Aside from domestic factors, the rand will continue to be vulnerable until markets in China calm down," according to NKC

African Economics.

The good news for South African travellers is that new routes connecting South Africa and Europe may encourage competition between carriers and lower fares for travellers. From August, Iberia will reinstate flights to South Africa. The airline will fly from Johannesburg to Madrid three times a week on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and will return on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. It will use Airbus A330-300s with 36 seats in business class and 242 in economy. Flight IB6050 departs Johannesburg at 20h15 and arrives in Madrid at 06h35. Flight IB6051 departs Madrid at 23h45 and arrives in Johannesburg at 10h10 the next day.

"This will provide South Africans with a very good proposition into Europe. Executive Club and On Business members will also be able to earn and redeem Avios rewards on both airlines - British Airways and Iberia," says **Luis Gallego**, Iberia chairman and ceo.

Europe remains an all-time favourite

DESPITE recent events in Europe, many tour operators say Europe remains a popular leisure and business destination for South Africans, with some operators seeing an increase in sales to the region.

"Europe, and in particular the Mediterranean, is our most popular destination. We experienced an increase of 15% in 2015," says Cruises International's **George Argyropoulos**.

"We noticed a marked increase in our sales and enquiries for travel, particularly to Great Britain, and noticed a 12% passenger increase in these sales," agrees



George Argyropoulos

Trafalgar's **Theresa Szejwallo**.

She says sales across

Europe superseded targets for Trafalgar, and saw 2015 end with a 7% increase in passenger numbers compared with 2014. "Our turnover was 18% higher in 2015 from 2014, and this was also due to a shift in sales between Trafalgar's traditional products to its more affordable Cost Saver ones," she says.

Meanwhile, Thompsons Holidays pr and media relations manager, **John Ridler** says the unwavering popularity of Europe is largely due to the European colonial make-up of South Africa.

"Europe will always be popular with South Africans because of the variety it offers," adds Annemarie.

Newsflash

Bath in the UK is set to receive its own version of the London Eye offering "unrivalled aerial views" across the Unesco World Heritage city. AquaEye is a revolving glass observation pod suspended between two slim, carbon-fibre masts rising to a height of 65m, just under half the size of the London Eye. Bath's version will be built on Pulteney Weir Island, just below the famous 18th century Pulteney Bridge that crosses the River Avon. The glass capsule will carry up to 25 passengers from Parade Gardens' riverside lawn and take just 20 seconds to reach its full height. The full ride will last 20 minutes. AquaEye is set to open in the spring or summer of 2017.

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Popular spots

ITALY is a top destination for South Africans according to Trafalgar. “We have a selection of 24 guided holidays to Italy to choose from. From culture, art, history, food and beautiful landscapes, Italy has captured the hearts of many South Africans,” says **Theresa Szejwallo**.

Specialising only in specific areas, primarily Austria and Eastern Europe, **Inge Dobihal** says for Austria Connection, Prague, Vienna, Budapest and Croatia are currently the most popular destinations for South African travellers.

When it comes to cruising, Cruises International’s **George Argyropoulos** says southern Europe, from Lisbon to Istanbul, is popular with South Africans. “The culture, history, food, shopping, and the warm sunny weather are the main reasons for this.” After these, the Baltic Sea and the countries surrounding it, including Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and



Inge Dobihal

Russia – St Petersburg in particular – are of interest to South African travellers.

The UK is always popular, as it offers easy access to other European countries, highlights TravelVision’s **Annemarie Lexow**, adding that public transport is easy to use in the UK. Meanwhile, Thompsons Holidays ranks France and Italy tops.

Hidden gems

While many destinations in Europe already have a place in the hearts of South African travellers, other less-obvious countries are also growing in popularity.

“Trafalgar’s Eastern European trips are gaining in popularity, and cities such as Prague, Vienna, and Budapest are sparking the interest of the young and the young at heart,” says **Theresa Szejwallo**, who adds that the diverse culture offered by the former Eastern Bloc countries paired with their affordable currencies make the region appealing for South Africans.

Austria Connection says hidden gems are Slovenia and Romania. “Slovenia is a very small country, but has diverse scenery. From the Alps and rolling hills to vineyards, this region is gaining the attention of South African travellers,” says **Inge Dobihal**.

She says the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana, is a charming and vibrant town. “Lake Bled, which is a small lake in the Julian Alps in north-western Slovenia also has places of interest to travellers.” At Lake Bled,



Prague is becoming popular with the young at heart.

there is a small island with a church, an imposing castle on a cliff, and the Julian Alps, which form the backdrop of one of the most photographed places for travellers in the area. “One of the other highlights is the Postojna Caves, which are the world’s second largest.”

Inge also notes that Romania is a historically rich country with beautiful scenery. “The most-visited area in Romania is Transylvania, where travellers can find the well-known Dracula castle, and the neo-Renaissance Pele’s Castle.” Another highlight in this region is the painted monasteries in Bucovina.

Thompson’s Holidays’ **John Ridler** says Greece is regaining popularity after the economic unrest, and Croatia is popular for cruising as the

prices are affordable.

According to Cruises International’s **George Argyropoulos**, the Dalmatian coast is gaining in popularity and more ports are being visited there. “We are also noticing similar trends along the Italian, French and Spanish Rivas.”

TravelVision’s **Annemarie Lexow** agrees that Croatia is gaining interest, adding that the Czech Republic is another one of Europe’s hidden gems.

“We find that cruise travellers are not only looking for ports like Mykonos, Santorini, and Monte Carlo, but also want to explore quainter, lesser-known and more authentic destinations where they can experience the local life and culture in its original form,” says George.

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Help your clients get more for less

WHEN it comes to making the most out of a trip to Europe, Thompsons Holidays' **John Ridler** advises agents to plan their clients' holidays around low seasons for cheaper airfares and lower accommodation costs.

"Agents should also incorporate rail tickets into their clients' itineraries. Eurail Passes are the most cost-effective way to get around in Europe, and at the same time travellers can enjoy the breath-taking scenery," says John, who highlights that travellers can save money on costly airport transfers as the train stations are all centrally located.

On the other hand, Cruises International's **George Argyropoulos** says there is no better way to sell Europe in the current economic climate than by selling cruises. "Cruising is more economical and hassle-free, while it still remains an enjoyable way to explore Europe. Clients unpack once, enjoy excellent standards of accommodation, entertainment, activities and dining on board, while the ship is doing all the travelling for them."

George says a cruise in Europe is still very affordable, and starts at about R1 500 per person per day. "There is no way

dictate their preferences. Depending on their aspirations and previous experiences, a consultant can choose an itinerary that will suit their needs," says George, adding that Cruises International covers Europe extensively.

The best way agents can acquire the experience they need to more effectively sell European destinations is to experience it themselves, says Trafalgar's **Theresa Szejwallo**.

Trafalgar is planning an agents' fam trip for 2016 for 32 travel agents, who will receive a personal invitation once they have reached 10 passenger sales, and once they have completed the eLearning training. "We are taking agents to experience the beautiful Christmas markets of Strasbourg and Freiburg between November 23 and 30, where we will cover the land and air cost of the trip." Trafalgar is also offering extensive training and webinar sessions to support the trade and to help them better sell destinations and Trafalgar guided holidays.

Annemarie Lexow of Travel Vision agrees that agents can better sell European destinations by attending workshops, as well as keeping up to date with websites such as Lonely Planet and Word Travels.



"The best way agents can acquire the experience they need to more effectively sell European destinations is to experience it themselves."
Theresa Szejwallo

travellers can find on land what a cruise offers and still come near this price. At the same time, travellers on a cruise enjoy more holiday than actual travelling."

He further highlights the earning potential for agents. "Selling a cruise is a great commission earner for consultants. When it comes to which European cruises to sell, the best thing agents can do is let clients

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Did you know?

A study compiled by Statista found that, in response to the terrorist attacks in Paris, 79% of people in Europe supported closing borders between all European countries so that all travellers must pass through border controls.

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8 top Travelinfo specials

DESPITE the weak rand, operators are still offering some great specials to Europe. Here are our pick of the top 10 specials listed on Travelinfo.



Le Mans 24-hour race

1 F1 Grand Prix Tours is running a special for motorsport fanatics hoping to visit the 2016 Le Mans 24-hour race in France. Packages include four nights' accommodation in a two-star bed and breakfast, three-day circuit transfers, economy-class return flights from Johannesburg, airport taxes, return train transfers between Paris and Le Mans and a South African on-site tour director. The offer excludes race tickets of choice although these are supplied by F1 Grand Prix Tours. The event will be held on June 18 with departures between June 13 and 15 depending on whether travellers are staying for four, five or six nights. The package costs R20 500.

2 Thompsons Holidays is offering a special promotion for travellers visiting Germany. Stay at the three-star Leonardo Hotel in Frankfurt for six nights for R22 229pps

departing Johannesburg, R22 534pps ex-Durban and R22 658pps ex-Cape Town. The offer is valid until April 13 and includes return flights to Frankfurt from Johannesburg, airline levies, return airport-hotel transfers, six nights' accommodation at the three-star Leonardo Frankfurt City, a city tour and breakfast daily.

3 Kulula holidays is offering travellers the chance to go 'island hopping' in Greece. From R14 175pps, the package includes hotel accommodation with three nights in Athens, two nights in Mykonos, two nights in Paros and two nights in Santorini. Also included are nine breakfasts, two dinners, transfers between ports and hotels and ferries between the islands. Guided tours in Athens, Mykonos, Paros and Santorini are also included and feature a trip leader. The package excludes flights as well as visa and travel insurance. The offer is valid for specific set departures from May 19-June 9.

4 Ponant Yacht Cruises and Expeditions is offering travellers the opportunity to explore Portugal and Ireland in five-star luxury. Sail *Le Boreal* from Lisbon to Dublin for seven nights and pay €2 620pps (R46 387). The offer includes all meals and on-board entertainment, and an open bar. The cruise starts on May 9.

5 Travel Vision is offering the chance to experience Italy by train. From R28 535pps, travellers can visit Rome, Florence and Venice between July 7 and August 31. The offer



Experience Italy by train

includes return airfare and taxes ex-Johannesburg, two nights each in Florence and Venice in three-star hotels, breakfast daily, all private transfers between airports, hotels and stations and second-class Eurostar tickets between cities. City sightseeing tours and excursions are also included and come complete with an English-speaking guide. City taxes apply.

6 Discover the World is offering special rates for cruises on the British cruise line, Swan Hellenic. The R60 999pps offer includes flights from Johannesburg to London and Kirkenes, Norway, on Emirates and Scandinavian Airlines and 14 nights on board the *Minerva*. Travellers sail from London to Kirkenes and visit Bergen, Flan, Maloy, Geiranger, Kristiansund, Svolvaie, Tromso, Hammerfest and Honningsvaag. Also included are talks by expert guest speakers, short excursions to the value of £650 (R15 086), all meals, entertainment, taxes and gratuities. The offer is valid for June 10 departure.

7 Club Med is running a special for Italy. The offer includes seven nights in Cervinia on an all-inclusive basis for R25 400pp departing Johannesburg when travelling before April 1. The offer includes airfares, taxes, transfers, seven nights' accommodation, full board – breakfast, lunch and dinner including wine, beer and soft drinks – open bar day and light snacking, a six-day ski pass and five days' ski lessons for kids under the age of 17. Unique Club Med entertainment and comprehensive insurance cover are also included.



Vienna's Easter market

8 Austria Connection is running a family special to Vienna's Easter Markets. From March 21 to April 6, the cost is €625 (R11 124) per family (two adults and two children) for three nights in a family room with breakfast daily in a three-star hotel, a 72-hour Vienna Card, entrance to the zoo, one lunch as well as entrance to Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum.

Did you know?

Qatar Airways has expanded its services across Eastern Europe. Flights from Doha to Zagreb and Doha to Budapest increase to 10 flights a week from the current daily service from April 3 and July 3 respectively, while the Doha-Baku service increases from daily to 11 flights a week from March 27. The airline is also launching new direct flights from Doha to Belgrade from March 16.

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AF rolls out Tiger Web

AIR France has rolled out its group booking tool, Tiger Web, throughout South Africa and has also launched an incentive for all new bookings made on the new portal.

With the tool, agents can request groups online, obtain price and availability information and make a booking subject to availability or forward it to the Air France Group Desk. It also allows agents to insert names, APIS remarks and deposit details to secure the group. The tool will also allow travel agents to manage their own group files.

Agents can access Tiger Web via Air France's dedicated agent tool agentconnect.biz/za. Agents who are not registered will need to do so, then send an e-mail to mail.groups.zaafkl@airfrance.fr to be granted access.

All bookings made on Tiger Web will be put into into a lucky draw and the consultant who made the most bookings will win vouchers to the value of R1 000. The incentive will end on March 31.

At the end of the incentive period, the consultant who made the most bookings on Tiger Web will win two economy-class tickets on Air France (taxes and surcharges are included in the prize). ■

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4 tips when applying for a Schengen visa

EUROPE was the most visited region in 2015 with 609 million arrivals – at least 29 million more than 2014, according to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The Schengen visa, which allows for easy access into 26 of Europe's 51 countries, continues to prove a popular option for travellers looking to explore the region – and, in some cases, is their only option.

Sure Maritime Travel business manager, **Rachael Penaluna**, gave *TNW* her

top four recommendations for agents to advise their clients when applying for a Schengen visa.

- 1 If the traveller is called for a follow-up interview, do not panic because it is usually to clear something up.
- 2 Make sure you know how the Schengen system works and which countries a Schengen visa covers. For instance, you may enter Romania although it is not part of the Schengen area

with a Schengen visa but you cannot enter any Schengen state with a Romanian visa.

- 3 Remember that some embassies have a dress code. Make sure the applicant looks presentable when going for the interview.
- 4 Where the embassy only requires an itinerary and not a ticket, do not issue your ticket before the visa is granted as it could prove costly if the visa is denied.

An ideal way to explore

EUROPE has over 5 000km of navigable waterways and many of the major capital cities in Europe are on the banks of these rivers. Consequently, travellers could cruise through Europe on the river system and pass by all of these major cities along the way, says Gateway Travel and Tours md, **Keith Gow**.

"A traveller could literally jump on a boat in Budapest and cruise on through to Amsterdam," Keith says. Travellers who choose this option also escape Europe's congested traffic and will not suffer from seasickness, he adds. "Also, Avalon Waterways' cruises only take

160 passengers – which saves the traveller from being overwhelmed by thousands of passengers on bigger cruise ships." There are also no queues in river cruising, adds Keith.

The luxury river cruise line offers customers a fleet that is as modern as possible, Keith says. "They launch about 10 ships every year, keep them for four years then trade them off so they always offer a state-of-the-art product.

"Ultimately, the benefit of river cruising is that travellers who want a good overview of Europe can float by the major cities from the comfort of their luxury cabins."



Warsaw is becoming popular as a tourist destination.

Book it!

Avalon Waterways is offering a two-for-one limited-time special. For travellers booking selected 2016 Avalon Waterways European river cruise departures, two passengers can cruise and only pay for one. These include cruises from Amsterdam to Budapest, from Paris to Cote d'Azur, from Prague to Budapest or from Brussels to Amsterdam. Agents can also earn 20% commission with Avalon Waterways.

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Spotlight on Poland

VISITS to more unusual destinations like Poland are becoming more popular as businesses seek out new markets, says Sure Maritime Travel business manager, **Rachael Penaluna**. *TNW* provides some valuable tips from TravellInfo on the Polish capital of Warsaw.

When to visit

The best time to visit Poland is between May and October. The peak tourist time (between July and August) can be crowded and more expensive so the best off-season times are between May and June or between September and October. The skiing season is from December to March. Summer (June to August) is warm. Winter (November to March) is cold and dark.

Navigating the airport

- The international airport is Warsaw Frederic Chopin Airport.
- Travellers should only use taxi services recommended by the airport.
- There is one hotel within

the grounds of the airport.

- Airport facilities include a bank, bureaux de change and ATMs, and there is also a post office in the departures hall. A number of travel agencies are also represented and car hire desks are spread throughout the international terminal.
- Wireless Internet access is available within the airport.

In the city

- All the major international hotel chains are found in the city.
- A taxi costs approximately PLN50 (R203) from the airport to town.
- Advise travellers not to take pictures of military sites or border crossings.
- Advise travellers to exercise standard safety measures against street crime, especially in busy areas and transport services.
- Travellers should drive with headlights on during the day as well. Drink driving laws are strict and there are fines for jaywalking. ■

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

Obituary

■ **Dawie Pretorius**, team leader at South African Airways Group sales, died on Tuesday January 26. Dawie was well known in the travel trade for dealing specifically in the sports side of groups – sport tours and the national rugby and cricket teams. Straight from military service he



Dawie Pretorius

joined SAA in Braamfontein and had 31 years of service with the airline. Sport was Dawie's passion and he will be sorely missed by his family, friends, colleagues and co-workers. He is survived by his wife, Linda – who is also in the travel industry – son Dwayne and daughter Dominique.



A new crew at the helm

The Travel Corporation recently announced **Lieria Boshoff** (right) and **Gail Gilbert** (left) as the team who will steer Uniworld Boutique River Cruises into the future. Lieria joins Uniworld as the brand manager and previously worked at *Africa Business News*, the parent company of *CNBC Africa* and *Forbes Africa*. Gail, meanwhile, is no stranger to the travel fraternity. Many will have worked with Gail during her time at *Development Promotions* where she worked for the *Tourism Ireland* board. Gail has been appointed to the role of marketing manager for Uniworld.



New partner for TrustYou

Technology supplier, TrustYou has partnered with *PLP Tourism* and its md, **Thembi Kunene**, to represent TrustYou across Africa. TrustYou's online reputation management products and review data are used worldwide in the travel and hospitality industry. The newest addition to its portfolio is *TrustYou Stars*, an advanced guest satisfaction survey tool that allows hotels to gain more reviews and enhance their content on Google. Thembi takes over from **Gary Lotter**, who served as ceo since 2014 and has left to pursue an entrepreneurial venture on his own. Thembi is pictured here with TrustYou ceo, **Benjamin Jost**.

Appointments

■ **Go2Africa** has appointed new md, **Nicolette Poulos**. Nicky brings a wealth of business management skills to the role after 16 years in banking, insurance and wealth management, including 11 years as a trusted adviser on business strategy, customer experience and service excellence.



■ **Catia Viegas** has been appointed the new gm at *Tsogo Sun's 54* on Bath. Catia has moved from *Garden Court Morningside* where was the gm. Prior to that, she was the deputy gm of the *Southern Sun Montecasino*. She is also a former restaurateur and previously owned a *Mugg and Bean* franchise.



■ **Gregory Gautier** has been appointed the new executive chef at *Southern Sun Hyde Park*, having previously worked at the *OR Tambo InterContinental*.



■ **Deborah Pillay** has been appointed gm of sales at *Tsogo Sun*. Deborah has a wealth of experience in operations and revenue management and has a proven track record in building good relationships with clients. She is now responsible for strategy and overall revenue growth in the corporate segment and also for heading up a specialist team led by **Tracy Montano** focusing on significantly growing *Tsogo's* government and commercial business.



■ **Barend Olivier**, currently deputy gm at *Southern Sun Pretoria*, will take over the role of gm at *Garden Court Kimberley* with effect from March 1. Barend studied *Hospitality Management* at the *Central University of Technology* in *Bloemfontein* and started his career at the *Hilton Durban*. He then joined the *Tsogo Sun Group* at *Umlhanga Sands* from where he moved to the *Sabi River Sun*, *Southern Sun Bloemfontein* and eventually *Southern Sun Pretoria*.



Pick of the week

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Creative Operations Manager – S/Suburbs, Cape Town
Quantex Recruitment Group
Prior events, travel, tourism experience + travel & tourism qualification required. Good understanding of corporate identities & branding rules essential. Email: lee@quantex.co.za

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Equity Connections cc
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Marketing Co-ordinator – Corporate Brands
Flight Centre Travel Group
The marketing coordinator must have a passion for marketing, excellent organisational skills, creativity and experience in the B2B environment. Email: leigh.bootha@flightcentre.co.za

Business Development/ Key Accounts Executive – Johannesburg North
Professional Career Services
Experience in the events/ conferencing industry. Good understanding of venues, corporate clients. Cold calling, good sales track record. Email: jeancv@pcs-sa.co.za

Events & Incentives Consultant – Cape Town
Quantex Recruitment Group
5+ years corporate travel (MICE) experience + excellent Southern Africa knowledge essential. 100% fluency in French required. Email: bridget@quantex.co.za

Intermediate Consultant – Durban
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These adverts were selected from the vacancy section of www.travelinfo.co.za
For more details contact jobs@travelinfo.co.za

UBC hype creates confusion

From page 1

and that entry into the country would be at the discretion of immigration officials.

It is concerning that the requirement is left to the discretion of immigration officials, says **Rachael Penaluna**, business manager for Sure Maritime Travel. She points out this wording could open up the possibility for corruption and bribery at the airport. "International agents and airlines are already confused and misinformed about the current process. I think this new announcement will muddy the water even further."

Russel Jarvis, head of communications at Travelstart, agrees: "There has been much talk about what concessions are being discussed and little about what travellers are supposed to do in the present."

Meanwhile, airlines are not taking any risks and still checking for this

documentation.

British Airways says: "We have not received any notifications from the Department of Home Affairs regarding changes to the documentation required when travelling with children under 18."

Likewise, **Jane Hu**, sales manager of Air China's Johannesburg office, told TNW the airline was still requesting a UBC from passengers travelling with a minor to South Africa. She says Air China has been informed to request the necessary travel documentation by DHA and has yet to hear of any changes.

In terms of changes for outbound travellers, the DHA said it would introduce a "next phase" of changes to regulations, which it hopes to introduce by October 31. During this phase, parents' details will be printed in their children's passports so that they do not have to carry birth certificates. ■



Austria Connection is offering special discounts on cruises in Croatia. For departure dates on May 7 and 14; June 4, 11 and 18, July 16, and August 3 and 13, travellers can receive a discount of US\$300pp (R4 800) for Kompas luxury cruises in Croatia. The offer is valid for bookings until the end of February. Pictured here are Austria Connection owners, Peter and Inge Dobihal. Photo: Jani Rust

Incentive agreements – trade waits for SAA

DEBBIE BADHAM

WHILE the April 1 deadline for the renegotiation of incentive agreements with SAA looms, the travel trade wait patiently to hear who will be engaging with them from the airline.

The high turnover rate of senior SAA staff has left the lines of communication unclear; in particular the suspension of **Sylvain Bosc** and resignation of **Ray Nkwe**, who were key individuals on the commercial side of the airline's operations.

"From a negotiating perspective, it is still unclear who we speak to," says **Marco Cristofoli**, gm of Harvey World Travel Southern Africa.

But agents say they aren't concerned as it's "business as usual" with SAA.

"When it comes to the commercial side of

operations, every week there is a new person to speak to," says **Franz von Wielligh**, gm of Flight Specials.

"eTravel's stance is that we're not going to panic – someone will contact us," agrees eTravel Group founder and ceo, **Garth Wolff**. "We're confident that SAA realises the importance of the trade."

"The fact that SAA hasn't sent out the incentive agreements yet doesn't concern us as normally these agreements are only actually signed off in Q3," says Travelstart supply and product manager, **Candice May**. She says that, so far, Travelstart has had very clear communication from SAA in terms of who the agency should be speaking to. "Changes at SAA have had no impact on our day-to-day operations."

Club Travel has met with its key account manager

at SAA, says md, **Wally Gaynor**, and the group is expecting its proposed agreement in the next few weeks.

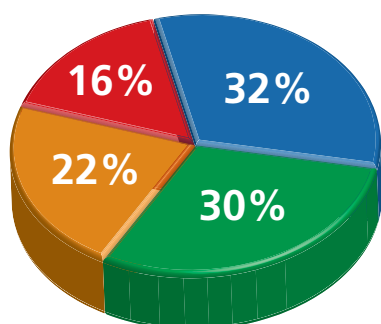
SAA did not give TNW the names of key individuals who will be engaging with the trade regarding incentive negotiations, however SAA spokesperson, **Tiali Tiali**, said senior management at SAA was "very functional" and continued to manage the business effectively. "The entire sales team is organised in such a way that their main focus is on the travel trade and, as such, the lines of communication are very simple, straightforward and easily accessible. Through their assigned channel managers and their respective key account managers, the travel trade have direct access to the key management team at SAA who are always available to them." ■



Face-to-face meetings declining

What is the primary way your corporate clients are reducing their travel spend?

- They opt for fewer face-to-face meetings
- They send fewer travellers
- They book accommodation such as guesthouses and B&Bs
- Their travellers have shorter stays



For all trade enquiries please call British Airways 010 344 0127

BRITISH AIRWAYS

Angola introduces multiple-entry visa

DAIRISE FOSTER

ANGOLA has introduced a multiple-entry visa that is valid for three months.

Previously, travellers were only able to apply for a single-entry visa, which was valid for only 30 days. The multiple-entry visa is far more cost-effective for travellers, says HRG Rennies Travel national

executive client services manager, **Jose Cruz**, as it costs the same – R750 – as the standard visa.

Some business travellers visit Angola as often as three times a month, he says. "Before this visa was introduced, they would've essentially had to apply for a visa 12 times a year."

Travellers with a multiple-entry visa are only allowed

to stay in the country for 30 days at a time. The visas take about seven working days to be issued and the phrase 'multiple-entry visa' must be included in the letter of invitation from the receiving company in Angola, advises Top Chela Traders, a visa application service in Cape Town that specialises in Angolan visas. ■