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# DHA delays changes to UBC regs

DARISE FOSTER

THE Department of Home Affairs will pilot rather than roll out the printing of parents' details in children's passports in November.

Last week the DHA told *TNW* the new system would be effective October 31. (See *TNW* July 27).

However, Home Affairs spokesperson, **Mayihlome Tshwete**, says the concession to the immigration regulations, which were introduced on June 1 last year, would be piloted "at the end of November 2016 to monitor its functionality and stability, but the roll-out may only begin in the first quarter of 2017".

In the meantime, research on other countries that have this concept has been completed, says Mayihlome. "Software development suitable for South African needs and for the National Population

Register is in process and testing will begin as ongoing developments occur."

Once changes are implemented, parents will need to apply for a new passport for their children if they want their details printed in the child's passport, he says. Alternatively, children could travel with their current passports, as long as they present an unabridged birth certificate at the time of boarding, in addition to the necessary documentation if the child is travelling alone or with one parent.

The turnaround time for processing of the passport application will remain within 13 days, Mayihlome says.

"If travellers experience any problems at the time of boarding, Immigration Services has a Command Centre that is available to airlines and immigration officials for any challenges at ports of entry." ■

## EK brings A380 to JNB

EMIRATES will replace the Boeing 777 on one of its four daily flights between Dubai and Johannesburg, with an Airbus A380-800, effective February 1, 2017.

The change will up the airline's weekly capacity from 10 024 to 12 236 on the route.

The 358-seat Boeing 777 has eight seats in first class, 42 in business class and 308 in economy. The A380 will up the total number of seats to 516, with 14 private suites for first-class passengers, 76 mini pods in business class

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## The dames of Durban

Durban-based travel agents and suppliers filled the Protea Hotel Edward on Thursday, July 21 for the annual *TNW* Durban Thirsty's. Pictured here enjoying the evening are (from left): **Kim Groot**, **Keshini Rooplal** and **Gaby Ferguson** from CWT; and Flight Centre's **Tracey Douglas**, **Nirasha Mughoo** and (front) **Kim Pillay**. Photo: Darise Foster

# Amadeus ends access to Timatic

DEBBIE BADHAM

AMADEUS is decommissioning access to lata Timatic but the solution is still in demand by many agents. Initially planned for the end of March, it is now scheduled to happen on October 31.

**Jannine Adams**, senior manager marketing and communications of Amadeus Southern Africa, says the agreement with lata for access to this information on the Amadeus platform has come to the end of its term. "Agents can still access the information via the public

lata site," she says.

However, **Angela McLoskey**, md of Sure Dynamic Travel, says the lata travel centre cannot compare with the service provided by Timatic, and says inputting information into the site is a laborious process and the answer the system gives at the end is vague.

Agents' first choice for visa information is Timatic, says **Judith Eichhorst** of Valley View Travel, saying it reflects all countries' passports and visa requirements. "We go to Travelinfo (TI) for South African passport information and

visa requirements."

TI is most helpful for RSA passport holders while Timatic is very good for foreign passport holders, checking transit without visa (TWOV) and other information needed for countries not listed in TI, says **Tamara Rabinowitz**, ITC for Sure Giltedge Travel.

**Chris Cromhout**, owner of Ditshaba Travel, says, however, that agents should be cautious about relying on solutions like Timatic. "There are around 190 countries in the world. Each country has its visa requirements for the

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and 426 seats in economy class.

First- and business-class passengers will have access to the upper-deck lounge. There will be on-board showers for first-class passengers and the business-class mini pods will have lie-flat beds.

The airline will introduce the A380 on the first of the daily departures from Johannesburg to Dubai. Flight EK762 will depart Johannesburg at 13h25 and arrive in Dubai at 23h45. Return flight EK761 will depart Dubai at 04h40 to arrive in Johannesburg at 10h55. ■

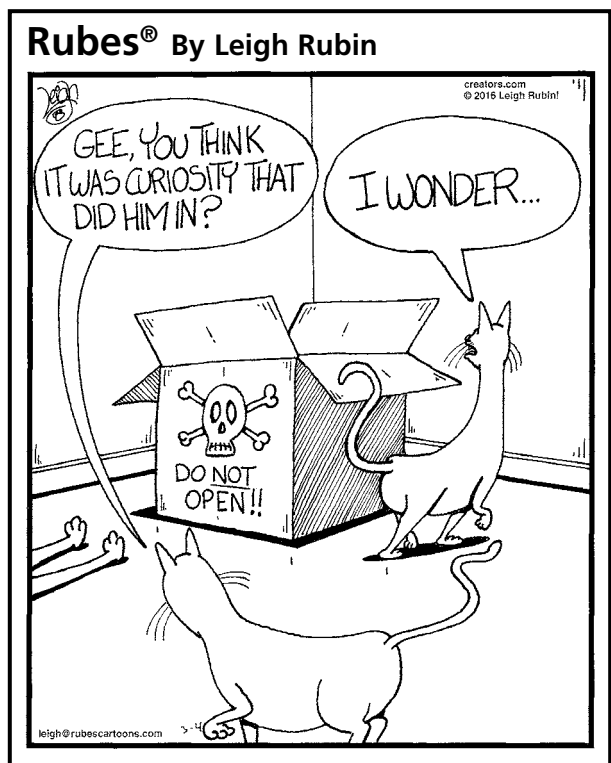


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## Flight Centre takes on Africa

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

**F**LIGHT Centre Travel Group SA is moving full steam ahead with its expansion plans into Africa by opening up a store in Windhoek on October 1.

“When I took over as md last year it was part of our five-year plan to open more stores in Africa. By 2020, we plan to move into Botswana and Kenya,” md of Flight Centre Travel Group South Africa, **Andrew Stark** told TNW.

The group will open a hybrid store with a focus on selling 60% business travel and 40% leisure.

“We are attaching a full-time business development

manager to the store so we can grow the business even further,” says Andrew, “I don’t see us having just one store in Namibia.”

He says after 22 years in South Africa, the only natural way to scale the business was to move beyond SA borders. “Our first prospect was Mauritius, especially since the country offers great tax benefits. But after digging further, we decided to enter Africa via Namibia. There is healthier competition there, which means there is a healthier market.”

The company expects the growth to increase its buying power; enhance existing supplier relationships and

build connections with DMCs in the destination, which will benefit it when selling Namibia out of South Africa. “We don’t expect it to be easy to clean up the market, but our entrance into Namibia will sharpen the pencil of some of the competition,” Andrew says.

The travel group is also keen to acquire a few smaller South African travel agencies. “We want to increase our level of expertise. Agencies with a good corporate book and great reputation should contact me,” he says.

“It’s in our company’s DNA to grow. If we aren’t opening up in every shopping centre like we did in the past – we will find other ways to expand.” ■

## Cheaper fares to Mthatha?

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

FARE prices are expected to drop on the Johannesburg-Mthatha route following Fly Blue Crane’s announcement that it would launch flights from October 1.

The airline intends to sell fares at R799 one-way. Currently, Airlink’s one-way fares start at R2 200.

**Rodger Foster**, ceo of Airlink, the only airline that currently operates the route, said the airline would have to do what it needed to in order to remain competitive. “We won’t necessarily be the ones to lead a price war but we are in the free market situation and if we must compete on fares we will.”

“The Embraer 145 aircraft we operate will have better economic performance on the Johannesburg to Mthatha route compared with the aircraft currently being flown on the route. This will enable us to deliver a premium service

at affordable rates,” **Cilliers Jordaen**, planning specialist of Fly Blue Crane told TNW.

Rodger said routes such as JNB-UTT were very difficult to compete on because they were “thin routes” with very little market elasticity. “The market won’t necessarily grow just because you drop the fare; in such a situation all you’re doing is making it cheaper for the market to fly.”

In 2010, Comair launched flights between Johannesburg and Nelspruit said Rodger. “They came with a much bigger aircraft and they dropped fares by 50% but demand only increased by 5%.”

Besides tapping into the current business market flying the route, Cilliers says Fly Blue Crane will stimulate an untapped leisure market with the introduction of cheaper fares. “There are a large number of passengers from Mthatha who opt to drive to East London and then fly

from there to Johannesburg because there are more affordable fares available from East London.”

Mthatha Airport is a category 4 airport and is expected to be upgraded to a category 5, says Cilliers, making it possible for Fly Blue Crane to operate larger aircraft. Airlink currently uses a 37-seat ERJ 135 on the route.

“The airport was a category 5,” says Rodger. “At the time, Airlink operated large-gauge aircraft until the airport became incompetent at category 5. When it was downgraded to category 4, we were forced to operate a smaller aircraft. If the airport upgrades to category 5, we’ll go back to the size of aircraft we were using before.”

Fly Blue Crane expects the JNB-UTT schedule to be available 40 days before operations commence on the route and tickets are expected to go on sale at the same time. ■

## Amadeus ends access to Timatic

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citizens of every other country. This would make the number of combinations 190 to the power of 189. That’s trillions.” Chris says local systems like TI or those companies that provide visa services are much better equipped with up-to-date information. “I believe one can use products like Timatic but never base your advice for a client on that system only.”

The visa application is one of the most important aspects of the booking, warns **Linda van der Pol**, divisional executive of Travelinfo. “If this is not done timeously and accurately, the entire booking will be a disaster.”

Linda says some agencies prefer to use visa companies while others don’t want to get involved in the visa process at all. “Travelinfo’s aim is to make it easy for agents to

reference the most up-to-date information possible. Naturally, we are at the mercy of embassies or consulates. Nothing goes up on Travelinfo without their verification.”

She adds that TI’s visa section averages nearly 50 000 page views per month.

Meanwhile, Jannine says Amadeus is evaluating an alternative solution to Timatic. ■



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The green Mango!

Mango operated its first biofuel flight from Johannesburg to Cape Town on July 15. The flight was the first of its kind in Africa. Pictured here are flight attendants, Lerato Khanye (left) and Digracia Letsie, with Mango spokesperson Hein Kaiser. Photo: Leigh Hermon

## IATA goes paperless

IATA has updated its Agency Management Solution (AMS) to an online process.

The AMS allows agents to apply for accreditation online and also enables existing agents to update their information through an online interactive form.

The new IT system allows members to submit New Head Office, Branch, Online Branch, Branch Abroad, Specific Sales Activity code

and Voluntary Relinquishment forms online. The registration can be accessed on the IATA Customer Portal at [www.iata.org/cs](http://www.iata.org/cs).

The portal is a single-entry point with IATA and the login credentials created will be subsequently used to access several systems and services.

The new system allows all required documentation and data to be transmitted directly to the IATA Agency

Management department, reducing the required hard copies and associated overheads.

Pre-populated fields capture all the specific requirements for applicants in the given country, including validations for addresses, VAT or phone numbers, and customer contact information will now be retained, so agents will no longer need to add it for each issue. ■

## SA car rental hit with new Namibian tax

THE South African car-hire industry has been caught unawares by the imposition of a carbon emissions tax by Namibia on SA-registered vehicles bonded for rental in that country.

The tax came into force on July 11 and is levied at border crossings. It affects renters of all vehicle types, including motorhomes.

**Rebone Motsatsi**, executive commercial for Avis Budget Southern Africa, told *TNW*: "We have taken up the matter with the Car Rental Association of Namibia and are awaiting feedback." He added that the

tax would have an impact on the cost of doing business.

**Tim Bouwers**, md of Bobo Motorhomes, said there had been no prior consultation. "This tax is raised on all rental vehicles that are bonded by the rental company at the South Africa/Namibia border every time it is used in Namibia for hire," he said. "This could mean that the same vehicle can be charged this carbon tax a few times a year if it's taken out of Namibia to be used in SA, for example, and then returned to Namibia."

The level of tax is dependent

on the carbon emission level of the model. It is understood that vehicles stand to be impounded if the tax is not paid.

Which party will bear the cost of the tax is in question, as is the implication for rental rates and for Namibia, which is a significant self-drive destination.

Namibian rental companies purchasing Namibian vehicles are unlikely to suffer, as the tax is included in the purchase price of a new vehicle.

"South African companies are punished for doing a good job there," said Tim. ■

## Air Seychelles, Etihad sign new codeshare

AIR Seychelles and Etihad Airways have signed a new codeshare agreement.

Air Seychelles' HM code will be added on six Etihad routes – flights between Abu Dhabi and Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco and Washington DC.

Bookings for the new codeshare flights are open and travel is valid from August 1. Passengers will be issued a single ticket for the journey with either Etihad's EY code or Air Seychelles' HM code. Frequent flier miles are available to customers on each flight.

US-bound passengers can be processed at Abu Dhabi Airport before departure at the US Customs and Border Protection facility in Terminal 3. Once the passengers land in the US they are treated as domestic travellers and continue on to their final destination. ■

## RMS St Helena – retirement postponed

HILKA BIRNS

THE *RMS St Helena* will continue to serve its South Atlantic island namesake until July 1 next year to allow for the resolution of operational snags currently bedevilling the commencement of commercial flights to St Helena.

As the world's last working Royal Mail ship, the vessel has been the island's only link to the world for the past 26 years. It was due to retire this month, following completion of an international airport on the island. However, commercial flights had to be postponed due to wind problems identified during implementation flights by Comair, which has been contracted to provide a weekly scheduled service from Johannesburg using a new B737-800.

Having been given a year's grace, more people will now be able to experience the *RMS St Helena*, says St Helena Tourism marketing manager, **Chanelle Marais**. She says tour operators report healthy demand and berths

are expected to fill up fast. Expanding the service will also assist during the upcoming summer season when the island's population swells by 25% as many 'Saints' working abroad return home for the holidays.

Last month, the *RMS St Helena* conducted a farewell cruise to London and was expected back at St Helena on July 23.

Meanwhile, international experts are investigating how to mitigate the wind problems at the airport. St Helena Government airport project director, **Janet Lawrence**, says Comair's B737-800 experienced wind-shear and tail winds on a northern approach, while landing from a southern approach would necessitate weight restrictions (fewer passengers), making it commercially unfeasible. She says alternative aircraft types – the Embraer E190, B737-700 or A319 – are now being considered in discussions with Comair and other airlines. Meanwhile, the airport is open for charters and medical evacuations. ■

## Travelport partners with Groupize

TRAVELPORT has entered into a partnership with Groupize to provide TMCs with a new self-service booking platform for small groups and meetings.

"Automating small group bookings has been a top request from the travel agency community," said **Tracie Carillo**, Travelport's global head of hospitality sales.

Groupize gives TMCs and corporations more control over their bookings for small groups and meetings, and users can source, book,

track and manage groups of under 25 rooms or fewer than 50 participants.

By working with the Travelport Travel Commerce Platform, Groupize's cloud-based, mobile solution gives TMCs easy access to a portal of hotels, negotiated rates, competing bids, approval tracking, a communication engine and online bookings with PNRs. Users can also opt for custom branding as an agency solution or self-service booking tool for corporations. ■

## Jamaica requires yellow fever certificate

PASSENGERS who have travelled through yellow fever-affected areas are now required to present a vaccination certificate on arrival in Jamaica.

Visitors arriving from or who have transited for more than 12 hours through affected areas, must be vaccinated. Those travelling directly

or indirectly from Angola, no matter the transit time, must present a yellow fever certificate.

The vaccination is valid for life and is required for all passengers over the age of one year. Travellers must be vaccinated at least 10 days before their trip for the vaccine to take effect. ■



# Cheap rates drive agents online

DEBBIE BADHAM

TRAVEL agents are bypassing tour operators and heading online to source cheaper hotel bookings.

"I do 80% of my bookings online now," says **Stuart Goodall**, owner of Travel 15. He says there is sometimes thousands of rands' difference between a hotel price given by an SA operator and the price that can be accessed using an online search engine. "Let's say the operator is offering the booking for R12 000 and you can access it online for R7 000, you can offer it to the clients for R9 000 and still earn a R2 000 service fee."

"I've switched a lot of business away from the GDS and tour operators to Expedia," agrees **David Pegg**, md of Sure Viva Travels, adding that Expedia pays agents commission but also allows them to

accumulate points that they can then use to discount their customers' rates.

"I certainly always book what's best for my clients and this often requires booking directly online for hotels," says Travel Counsellor, **Debbie Beckett**. "Every hotel I book is cheaper directly with the hotel than on agent booking tools and not just by 10% but by over 30% in most cases. It seems that the out-of-country operator gets 10% commission, the local operator gets 10% commission and then we get 10% commission. The price knock-on effect for the client is huge."

She says for more experienced consultants, who know what they want and can package it all together themselves, the operator has become redundant.

Md of Club Travel, **Wally Gaynor**, says it still has a lot of business with local operators when it

comes to hotel bookings. "However, most of our bookings are done online with our overseas partners/aggregators." He says Club Travel often finds that local operators are making use of the same overseas partner but adding on their

**"I certainly always book what's best for my clients and this often requires booking directly online for hotels."**

own mark-up. As such, it makes sense for the agency to cut out the middleman, access the cheaper rate and add on its own service fee, making more money in the long run.

Stuart says one of the reasons many consultants are going online is stiff competition. "Agents are trying to compete with one another to find the cheapest deal." He says

it's not only online search engines but hotel websites as well. "Some hotel websites even guarantee that you can find their best rate online."

## Do relationships rule?

Stuart thinks the trend is problematic for operators, and says the argument in the past has always been that it is preferable to deal with an operator because they are there to assist when things go wrong.

"However, search engines like Expedia and Booking.com have 24-hour helplines to assist in exactly these situations."

However, **John Ridler**, PR and media manager of Thompsons Holidays, argues that there are problems agents can encounter that a 24-hour helpline can't necessarily fix. "There are snags, which include misrepresentation of the location, false representation of services and false picture of the

hotel. Via the Internet, agents have little recourse if the property does not live up to its promise or if travellers have to change their itinerary at the last minute."

Stuart thinks the impact on operators will depend greatly on which destinations they package. "Operators selling the Indian Ocean islands are thriving because they are still able to negotiate great bulk rates."

The package is where the operator can still win, says Debbie. "With the lower negotiated airfares, they can come in cheaper than the Internet and everyone gets commission. However, with simply a basic hotel booking in London or New York, the Internet or online agent booking engines are the way to go. Unless operators can negotiate exclusive deals with hotel chains, I do see them losing a big chunk of agents' business." ■

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# TNW's Thirsty's



**T**HE annual Durban Thirsty's was held at the Protea Hotel Edward on July 21. Travel agents, suppliers and trade enthusiasts networked over a drink or three –

no presentations, no speeches. The next TNW Thirsty's will be held in Johannesburg on August 25. For more information, email [tnwthirstys@nowmedia.co.za](mailto:tnwthirstys@nowmedia.co.za). ■



From left: **Karen Donkin** (iGo Travel); **Lal Jayamaha** (Serendipity Tours); and **Jean Bowers** (Lufthansa) smile for the camera.



Say cheese! From left: **Zandile Mncube** (XL Travel); **Pinky Dlamini** (Da Miracle Travel); and **Inby Naidoo** (XL Travel).



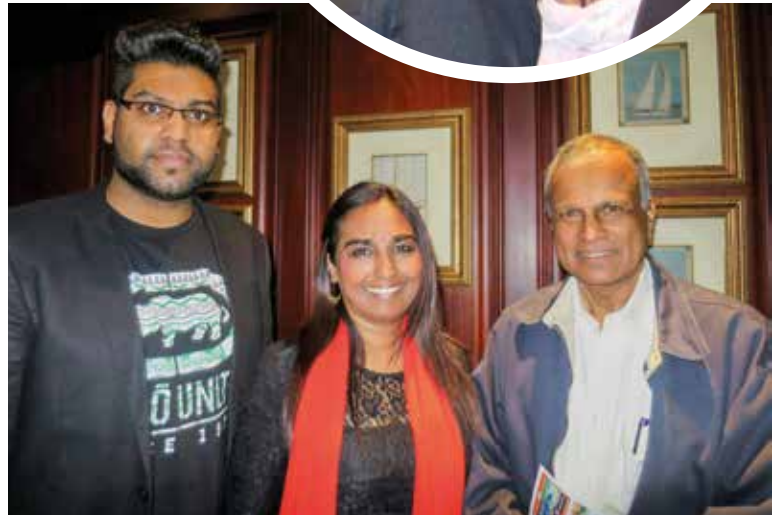
Lovely ladies (from left): **Leonie Gauche** (Bidvest Bank); **Kim-Lee Adams** (Harvey World Travel); and **Trace Patchin** (Harvey World Travel).



▲ Networking over a glass of wine are (from left) **Kylie Bergset** (iGo Travel); **Margie Manser** (Zurich Travel Insurance); and **Lydia Harper** (Pentravel).



► Protea Hotel Edward hosts, **Sheritha Kumar** (left) and **Sumayyah Sha**, smile after a successful event.



Happily chatting are (from left) **Shaylan Samsunder** and **Madhuri Sing** from Chandini Travel and Tours; with **Gary Pillay** (Africa Vision Tours).



What a laugh! (From left) **Ruth Imray** (BCD Travel); with **Erica Kennedy-Smith** and **Jill Morris** of Lee Botti. Photos: Kate Nathan and Darise Foster



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Tshwane Events Centre. Photo: Danny de Bruyne

Max Marx rounds up the major new developments on the events scene in Gauteng.

## Gauteng targets mega-events

**G**AUTENG, Africa's economic powerhouse, is gearing up to position itself as a mega-events destination.

Already the province's world-class infrastructure – from roads and telecommunications to its high-tech conference and convention centres, stadiums, exhibition halls and first-rate accommodation options – makes it an attractive destination for medium-sized meetings, incentives, conference and exhibitions (MICE) as well as for large stadium events such as sports matches and music concerts.

Now several new developments on the cards will enable Gauteng to attract mega business events and further enhance its status as South Africa's premier events destination.

The building of two new international convention centres has been confirmed – the Tshwane International Convention Centre in Centurion, which will form part of a larger development called the African Gateway Convention and Exhibition Precinct; and the Ekurhuleni International Conference Centre at Rhodesfield, which will be adjacent to a conference, hotel and dining precinct. Also under discussion is an international convention centre along the Vaal River in Sedibeng.

Dr **Ngwako Sefoko**, the Gauteng Department of Economic Development's project manager: Tourism Planning and Development, says these event infrastructure developments are in line with Gauteng Tourism's flagship project to bid for and support the hosting of mega events

in the province.

He says at present, Gauteng predominantly has the infrastructure to host medium-sized MICE events of around 5 000-6 000 delegates while the intention is to host mega events of 12 000 delegates and more within the next three to five years.

"Through the development of these new ICCs and supporting infrastructure, and the fostering of strategic partnerships with relevant tourism stakeholders in the value chain such as hotels, we will have the capacity to host these major events."

**“Several new developments on the cards will enable Gauteng to attract mega business events to the province and further enhance its status as South Africa's premier events destination.”**

Ngwako adds that the multifunctional nature of the new meetings and events infrastructure will enable Gauteng to host more than one mega event at a time – a key differentiator from SA's other provinces – and will also enable it to accommodate events from other provinces and African destinations like Kenya, when they are over-capacitated.

### Watch this space

The Johannesburg Expo Centre (JEC) recently announced the launch of Studio Joburg, a fully fledged film studio, media and entertainment hub that will be based at its premises. While it is still in the planning

stages, the idea is to create a one-stop top-class film production facility.

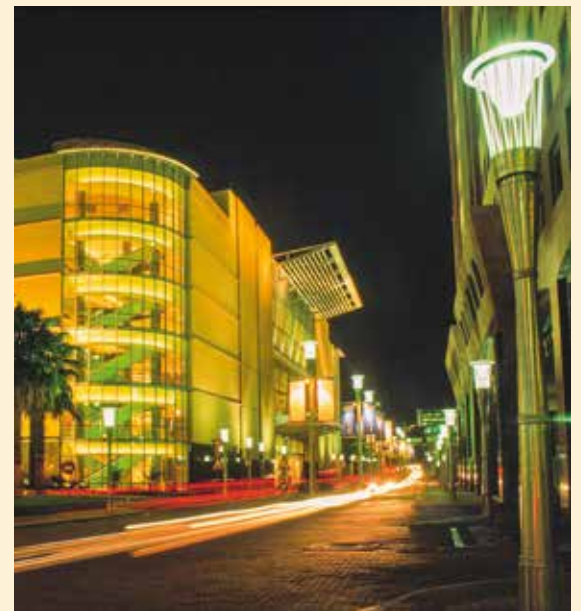
According to **Eddie Mbalu**, md of Studio Joburg, the long-term plan is to create a multi-purpose venue complete with film studios and backlot with a 'World in One' set-up; where outdoor scenes from popular film destinations such as New York, London and Paris can be shot. It is envisaged that the facility will also have a film school, five-star hotel, restaurants and other entertainment offerings that locals and visitors to Gauteng can enjoy, with guided tours of the film studios and film sets on offer.

The plan is to see how best to maximise the space at JEC, which will continue as a conference, exhibition and events venue as well as become a film production hub.

JEC offers 50 000sqm of indoor space with various halls, 100 000sqm of outdoor space and a multi-purpose arena accommodating 20 000 people. The largest hall can host 9 400 delegates cinema-style.

A new conference venue is also opening at The Lakes Hotel and Conference Centre in Benoni, just 10km from OR Tambo International Airport. The new venue will cater for 4 000 delegates cinema-style and 3 000 delegates schoolroom-style, and brings to 16 the number of conference venues offered at The Lakes.

In Tshwane, the four-star CSIR International Convention Centre recently refurbished its restrooms and will soon upgrade its foyer areas. It offers 11 meeting rooms, three auditoriums, the largest catering for 450 delegates, and an exhibition hall that can host 1 000 delegates.



Sandton Convention Centre. Photo: Walter Knirr

## Other large event venues in Gauteng:

- Five-star Sandton Convention Centre with 22 000sqm of convention, exhibition and special events space. Largest venue: 4 500 delegates cinema-style.
- Four-star Birchwood Hotel & OR Tambo Conference Centre offers 665 bedrooms and 60 meeting rooms. Largest venue: 3 000 delegates cinema-style.
- Four-star Emperors Palace Convention Centre has 21 meeting rooms. Largest venue: 3 000 delegates cinema-style.
- Three-star Tshwane Events Centre has 85 000sqm indoor and outdoor exhibition space, 11 exhibition halls, an arena for 25 000 people and 10 meeting venues. Largest venue: 500 delegates cinema-style.
- Four-star Emerald Resort & Casino has meeting rooms and an Events and Exhibition Centre: Largest venue: 4 500 delegates cinema-style.
- TicketPro Dome – an 11 000sqm arena for 19 000 concert goers, banqueting for 5 000 and cinema-style seating for 13 000 delegates.
- Five-star Gallagher Convention Centre, Midrand has 27 000sqm of exhibition space, with 19 multi-purpose venues. Largest venue: 7 000 delegates cinema-style.
- The 94 000-seater FNB Stadium for concerts and sports events also has 10 meeting rooms, the largest of which caters for 500 delegates, banqueting for 2 000 guests and exhibitions with 300 stands. ■





# Zimbabwe

Victoria Falls has always been a 'bucket list' destination for South African travellers, but now they are ready to venture into Zimbabwe's off-the-beaten-track destinations. Sue van Winsen reports.

## Travellers are looking beyond Vic Falls

**P**OLITICAL and economic instability has taken its toll on Zimbabwe's tourism industry over the past decade, with many South Africans only stopping over in the country for a whirlwind tour of the Falls before setting off to other SADC destinations to get their bush and adventure fix.

But a growing number of Zimbabwe businesses say that, while numbers of South Africans travelling into the country may not be growing dramatically, there is a growing trend to explore further afield, especially when it comes to special-interest travel.

**Beks Ndlovu**, ceo of African Bush Camps, which runs luxury safari camps in both Hwange and Mana Pools National Parks, says South African travellers are definitely starting to show more interest in destinations beyond Victoria Falls, particularly as air access throughout the country has started to improve.

While the new Vic Falls Airport has the potential to serve as an international gateway to the rest of Zimbabwe, various airlines have also launched flights into other airports.

In May this year, Air Zimbabwe added an extra frequency to its Johannesburg-Bulawayo route (now serviced four times a week) and added a midday flight on its Johannesburg-Harare route. At the time, Air Zimbabwe public relations manager, **Shingai Taruvinga**, said the airline had introduced the flights to improve tourism out of SA.



**Glenn Stutchbury**

Additionally, fastjet Zimbabwe has announced plans to launch a daily direct route from OR Tambo International in Johannesburg to Harare on February 1, with plans to add an additional daily flight further down the line.

**Glenn Stutchbury**, ceo of Cresta Hotels, says with Victoria Falls as the hub and more airlines codesharing to access the airport, he believes airlift to the rest of Zimbabwe is just getting better and better. "We have already seen an increase in local transfers to the closer destinations like Hwange and also more light aircraft players offering access into Mana Pools and Kariba."

### Special-interest travel

Beks says that the type of South African travellers that do explore further afield tend to be adventurous, independent travellers who are more

likely to hoist a trailer and a rooftop tent on to their 4x4 and explore, rather than buy a pre-packaged tour. If an agent specialises and positions themselves as a Zimbabwe expert, there is opportunity to tap into this market, but it's important to be mindful that these types of travellers don't fall into the 'mass market' category and, generally speaking, are therefore not a big contributor in terms of revenue," says Beks.

Glenn agrees, and says South Africans are not scared of distances so self-drive is a common choice. "This means that destinations such as Matopos and Hwange come into play."

One of the areas South Africans are particularly keen to travel to, particularly those with a keen interest in fishing, is the Zambezi Valley, from Chirundu on the Zambian border all the way across to the Mozambican border. According to Beks, this area offers perhaps the best tiger fishing in the world.

Another popular option with South African self-drive travellers is the Eastern Highlands, says Beks. This area is particularly well known for its birdlife.

### Currency concerns

However, Beks points out that many potential travellers are deterred and decide to stay away due to the country's US dollar pricing. "The difficulty is that South Africans have easy access to incredible outdoor destinations on their doorstep

that cost far less," says Beks. While the rand continues to slowly strengthen against the dollar in 2016, there are still far more affordable options where the exchange rate doesn't blow the budget.

"The South African market, which contributes significantly to Zimbabwe tourist arrivals, has suffered from the depreciation of the South African rand, making Zimbabwe an expensive destination," agrees **Herbert Nkala**, chairman of African Sun Limited. In light of this, the group had to introduce major cost-cutting measures and change its business model to return to profitability.

### Significant challenges

Another challenge is negative perceptions around border access. The recent unrest and demonstrations that took place at Beitbridge border post in July have not helped alleviate these concerns, says Beks. "However, the industry has put pressure on government to come up with more tourist-friendly border controls and we've had some success in this regard, with a tourism desk now set up at Beitbridge."

Glenn says road blocks have also been a problem of late, but says the industry is also constantly engaging the authorities in this regard. "The cash shortage has also been a contributor to a slowdown, but many suppliers, including garages, now use point of sale devices, so plastic money is welcome across the country."

He does recommend that travellers first make sure that the systems and lines are operational before relying on their credit cards.

The general sentiment is definitely that destinations beyond Vic Falls are on the upswing, despite recent reports of growing civil unrest and protest action. "The political situation means that many South Africans, especially those that may have holidayed in Zimbabwe many years ago, think of Zimbabwe as quite 'raw', but they are pleasantly surprised when they return and find that it's still the same beautiful place that they remember," Beks adds.

## Book it!

African Sun Hotels is offering a series of 'Heroes Specials' at various properties. At the Caribbea Bay Resort in Kariba, guests can stay for US\$100 (R1 430) for a single or \$120 (R1 715) for a double room, including breakfast. Kids under 12 stay free and pay 50% for breakfast and activities. The rate includes a game drive or cruise. Valid until August 31 for a minimum stay of two nights. Additionally, African Sun Hotels is offering a free sundowner cruise on Lake Kariba for every confirmed conference booked.

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## Three off-the-beaten-track options



Houseboats offer good game-viewing opportunities. Photo: flickr

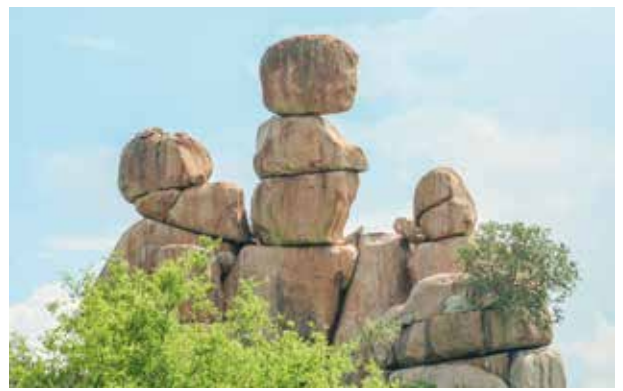
### 1. Kariba

As the world's largest manmade lake by volume, the sheer scale of Kariba is staggering. Measuring 223km in length and 40km at its widest, it expands endlessly across the horizon. The lake is known for its tiger fishing, but is also filled with Nile crocodile and hippo and attracts various waterbirds like Fish eagles. Matusadona National Park is situated along Kariba's shores, which means that those travelling by houseboat are often treated to the sight of elephant wandering along

the waterline. Kariba was one of the areas worst hit by Zimbabwe's tourism decline, but stakeholders are taking steps to encourage a revival in interest, such as joint marketing plans and improving the accommodation and amenities on offer. African Bush Camps' **Beks Ndlovu** says Kariba is an exciting and affordable incentive destination, with many large houseboats big enough to accommodate bigger groups and willing to negotiate discounted rates for South African clientele.

### 2. Matopos

Situated about an hour's drive from Bulawayo, Matobo National Park, also known as the Matopos Hills, is a Unesco World Heritage Site and is known for its unique geological formations. The smooth granite kopjes were formed over two billion years ago and its name, translated from Ndebele, means 'bald heads'. The 100km park is Zimbabwe's oldest and includes a high density of White rhino – in fact, the world's densest population



The iconic balancing rocks in the Matopos Hills.

of the species. It is also popular with birders due to its large population of Black eagles, which nest between the kopjes – again the highest concentration in the world. Activities on offer in the park include rhino tracking, tours to view the San rock

art found in the Matopos Hills, nature walks and visits to historic sites, including Cecil John Rhodes' grave, known as 'View of the World'. Accommodation includes a range of campsites, as well as a high-end lodge, Camp Amalinda.

### 3. Eastern Highlands

Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands are situated along the country's border with Mozambique. This mountain range is a 'bucket list' destination for birders in particular, with the potential to sight special species such as the Trumpeter hornbill, Knyrna and Purple-crested turaco, Crested guinea fowl

and Crowned eagle. The habitat includes a wide stretch of rainforest that is full of butterflies, and rarities such as the Blue monkey, Samango Sykes' monkey, African Little-collared fruit bat and Marshall's pygmy chameleon. Activities include hiking to view the Chimanimani Bridal Falls,

the second-highest waterfall in Africa, nature walks and game drives in Nyanga National Park and visits to the Vumba Botanical Gardens and the nearby town of Mutare, for cultural tours and shopping. There are several lodges, resorts and hotels situated throughout the region. ■

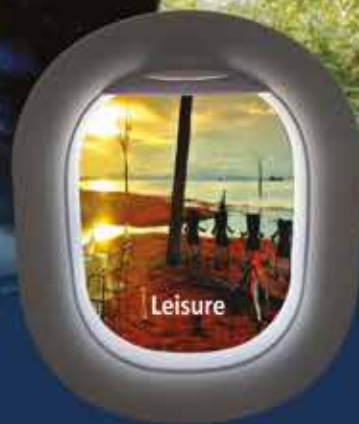
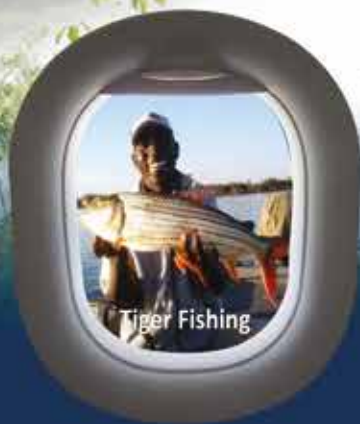


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# South America

LATAM's extensive Latin American network makes 115 destinations more convenient for South Africans. Michelle Colman reports.

## New flight puts destination in the spotlight

**S**OUTH America is expected to re-emerge as a destination of choice for South Africans, when the second air service between Johannesburg and São Paulo in Brazil gets under way on October 3.

LATAM Airlines, represented locally by Border Air, will join SAA on the Johannesburg-São Paulo route. Initially it will operate three weekly return flights between the two cities, using a Boeing 767 with 191 seats in economy class and 30 in Premium Business. The airline expects to carry 50 000 passengers a year between the two destinations.

In its first month of operation, flight JJ8163 will depart OR Tambo on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 23h10 to reach São Paulo at 04h45 the next day. Return flight JJ8162 will depart São Paulo at 23h55 on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays to land in Johannesburg at 14h10.

From November, flight JJ8163 will operate on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays, leaving Johannesburg at 22h10 arriving in São Paulo at 04h45. Return flight JJ8162 will depart São Paulo on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 23h55, arriving in Johannesburg at 14h10. Ticket



**Theresa Szejwallo**

sales have been open since early May. For the travel trade, LATAM is running an online training course ([latamtraining.co.za](http://latamtraining.co.za)) and consultants who complete it will be entered into a draw for a seat on the inaugural flight.

SAA expects that the new service will stimulate air travel demand for South America, but says only time will tell as to whether the market will be able to support both airlines at the same time. For the time being, the national carrier proposes no changes to its South American schedule.

SAA spokesperson, **Tlali Tlali**, says: "The introduction of LATAM services between São Paulo and Johannesburg

will, without a doubt, have an impact on SAA's current performance and measures have been put in place to mitigate any potential erosion of earnings on the route."

**Theresa Szejwallo**, md of Trafalgar, believes South America will prove a serious contender in the future travel choices of South Africans. "We're very excited about LATAM's new direct flight into South America as we know it will open the door to travel in South America like never before."

She points out that interest will be spurred by the fact that many South American countries offer visa-free entry for South African passport holders, and are relatively affordable.

With the rand more or less on par with the Argentinian peso, and with R1 worth 4,58 Brazilian real, the region is more attractive from a foreign exchange point of view than North America or Europe.

"Travel agencies are key partners in the South African market and we value working with the trade, who play a critical role in packaging Latin America for travellers," says **Martin Modarelli**, commercial director UK, Nordic Countries and Africa for LATAM Airlines.

## Tips from the travel guru

IN HER office at Travel Vision, reservations manager, **Venice Barris**, is known as the South American encyclopaedia. TNW asked her for some tips on selling travel in the region.

- Clients should book the very popular Inca Trail early to avoid the disappointment of lack of space. An alternative is the Lares Trek, a two- to three-day hike in Cusco, Peru, starting from the village of Lares and ending at Machu Picchu. There are many traditional weavers and farmers in the Lares Valley. It's a shorter route than the Inca Trail, but the altitude is higher.
- When visiting the Amazon, suggest an overnight stay in Manaus beforehand, as the trips start early in the morning.
- Similarly if you have clients doing the Andean crossing (lake crossing) from Bariloche

in Argentina to Puerto Montt/Puerto Varas in Chile, or vice versa, have them stay a night afterwards at either point, as the crossing arrives in both cities late and flights would have already left for the day.

- When visiting the Galapagos, advise clients to bear in mind that this is an eco trip, more about nature than luxury.
- Warn clients that Rio de Janeiro hotels are not right on the beaches (such as Copacabana, Ipanema and Leblon). They will have to cross the road to access the beaches.

Venice's colleague, sales and marketing manager, **Annemarie Lexow**, advises that connecting times from a number of South American destinations for flights returning to Johannesburg from São Paulo can be tight and many necessitate an extra night in São Paulo.

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Machu Picchu, Peru

## Top attractions to recommend to your clients

TO SUPPORT travel professionals and share insights about South America, LATAM has conducted research into the perceptions and behaviours of South African business and leisure travellers.

A survey of South African leisure travellers undertaken by the airline in May found that 85% of respondents were interested in visiting Brazil; 78% wanted to travel to Argentina; 54% to Peru

and 42% to Chile.

Gauging special interests, 85% expressed a desire to view scenic wonders; 75% wanted to spend time in cities like Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires; 62% were attracted to ancient ruins; the Amazon appealed to 60%; 47% wanted to experience Latin culture; and 46% wanted a tropical beach holiday.

TNW rounds up the main attractions of five popular South American countries.



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### Vibrant Brazil

• LATAM's departure and landing point, São Paulo, is Brazil's most populous region. The city is a business destination for SA executives and hosts many business fairs over the course of a year. Outside the office, it is known for its bars and restaurants, museums and theatres. It has large Japanese, Italian and Arab populations which add their own cultural flavours to the melting pot.

• Rio de Janeiro is famed for 80km of beaches, including Ipanema and Copacabana; the 38m-high statue of Christ the Redeemer atop Mount Corcovado; the Sugarloaf Mountain, and its sprawl of shanty towns, or favelas, which now welcome tourists on walking tours. Its flamboyant five-day annual carnival, 40 days ahead of Easter, is a highlight of the travel year. Next year it begins on February 24.

• The Amazon rainforest covers a large portion of north-western Brazil, but also extends into Colombia, Peru and other countries. For many travellers, convenient entry points are the Brazilian riverside towns of Manaus or Belém. Trips into the forest can vary from a half day to a few nights' stay in a forest lodge, or a five-day boat trip. They usually involve walks, village visits and wildlife spotting.

### Culturally rich Argentina

• Buenos Aires is another business hub and, with its favourable exchange rate, has become something of a shopping destination for South Africans. City landmarks, such as the Casa Rosado and Plaza de Mayo, have a colonial architectural heritage. Tourists love to visit the colourful LaBoca working-

class neighbourhood with its street art and the football stadium, La Bombonera. After dark, tango shows are a must.

• The Iguazu Falls on the border of Argentina and Brazil are spectacular, cascading in layers from 82m at their height. The falls should be seen from both

the Argentinian and Brazilian sides as the views are quite different, but equally impressive.

• In southern Argentina on the Chilean border is Patagonia, with a diverse landscape that includes a section of the Andes, desert, steppes, grasslands and two coasts – the Pacific and Atlantic.

### Adventures in Peru

• The four-day Inca Trail, from Cusco to Machu Picchu, is the highlight of Peru and a multi-country South American trip. Participants walk six to nine hours each day on the trail, which is dotted with ancient monuments and Inca sites. It reaches an altitude

of over 4 000m and altitude sickness affects many visitors, so time to acclimatise and a level of fitness are recommended.

• The 15th century Machu Picchu fascinates travellers with the sophisticated construction of its buildings along

astronomical lines, and the many unanswered questions about their use. Cusco, once the capital of the Inca empire, is also packed with archaeological interest. Best months to do the trail are from April to October. It is closed in February.

### Hidden explorations in Ecuador

One destination that should be on travellers' lists is the Galapagos, says Trafalgar's **Theresa Szejwallo**. "We have a fantastic Hidden Journey guided holiday in Secrets of Ecuador. This nine-day trip can be extended to include a five-day Galapagos Islands cruise, which is simply spectacular.

"In Ecuador guests will enjoy all the great Trafalgar insider experiences such as the Be My Guest lunch at the Hacienda La Compania, a beautiful home and rose plantation. Guests will also be treated to a wonderful Cultural Insight into the ancient weaving process used in the making of

panama hats. On the optional cruise to the Galapagos, our guests get up close and personal with a wonderful array of wildlife made famous by Charles Darwin, such as the Blue-footed boobies, the Galapagos penguin, Green sea turtles, Spotted eagle rays and iguanas."

### Wild and wonderful Chile

• Some distance from mainland Chile and halfway to Tahiti, the stone heads of Easter Island are the country's most recognisable tourist attraction. The 887 sculptures, called

moai, were created by the Rapanui, centuries ago. • Sculptures of the natural kind are on view in the Atacama desert, where rock formations and sand dunes are to be admired,

particularly in the Valle de Luna, not far from the town of San Pedro de Atacama. The desert is the filming location of many sci-fi films where a setting in space is required. ■



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

## Travelport appoints new MD for Africa

TRAVELPORT has appointed new md for Africa, **Douglas Jewson**.

He has 20 years' experience in Africa's telecommunications and electronics sector and has held leadership roles for multinationals operating in the region, including Sony, Research in Motion and Nokia. As md, Douglas will be responsible for promoting and maintaining the company's standards in airline merchandising, hotel



**Douglas Jewson**

content distribution, B2B payments and mobile travel commerce to customers across the region.

"Douglas is a seasoned, customer-focused leader with a track record of driving business growth and effective people management in Africa's dynamic business environment," says **Rabih Saab**, Travelport's president and md for Europe, Middle East, Africa and South Asia.

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## Island style



World Leisure Holidays recently hosted an educational to Mauritius for some of its top consultants. Pictured here, (back from left): **Angela Coopers** (Travel Counsellors) and **Patricia De Freitas** (Journey Corp Travel). Front row (from left): **Petra Middleton** (XL Protea Travel); **Shannon Botha** (Sure Etnique Travel); **Tanya Viljoen** (World Leisure Holidays); **Izanne Meyer** (IEG Professional Travel) and **Zita Strydom** (Exotic Vacations).



## Comair turns 70!

Last month kulula holidays celebrated Comair's 70th birthday. The day was spent eating lots of cake and popping balloons. Pictured here, celebrating the special day, are (back from left), **Liesl-Mari McIlwraith** and **Nobuhle Sehlangu** and (front from left) **Maya Kassen**, **Tanujha Hargovan** and **Chanelle Mashinini**.

## Appointments

■ **Alex Schwager** has been appointed head of operations of Jenman African Safaris, overseeing all operations in Southern Africa. He was previously with MSC Cruises in various roles, including trade sales manager and revenue manager.

■ **Linda Reddy** has been appointed gm Southern Sun Montecasino. She started as a guest services attendant at the then Holiday Inn Garden Court in South Beach, and



16 years later became gm at the Garden Court Sandton City. She is a certified Hotel Administrator with a Masters diploma in Hotel Management from Cornell University and additionally holds a B.Sc. Chemistry degree. Well known for her business acumen and guest relations focus, she's also introduced specific team-building activities to motivate staff.

■ **Ulrich Kleer**, previously gm of Garden Court O.R. Tambo, has been appointed gm of Garden Court Sandton City.

## Key Account Manager

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## Yay for ice cream!

As part of LUX\* Resorts and Hotels 'Reasons to Go', the accommodation provider is offering its guests personal add-ons that include artisanal ice cream on the beach and personalised 'Messages in a Bottle' for wedding guests. Brides also get a 70% discount on their accommodation on their honeymoon package. Pictured here, frolicking in the sun, is Alexis Bekker, head of sales and marketing South Africa and Africa, LUX\* Resorts and Hotels. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

# Insurance – check the fine print!

ARE clients who buy travel insurance covered in the event of the bankruptcy or financial default of a travel supplier? The answer seems to depend on the interpretation of what constitutes a 'travel supplier'.

Recently, the collapse of Low Cost Holidays Group and Gateway2Travel showed that the 'supplier insolvency' insurance is not always as effective as the name of the policy would suggest.

eTravel's **Tammy Hunt** told TNW that eTravel dug into its own pocket to assist clients and ITCs affected by Gateway2Travel's insolvency. "We didn't even submit claims, as the policy states that it will not cover tour operator insolvencies."

Indeed, the exclusions in some policies state that travel supplier insolvency will not be covered if travel arrangements form part of a tour operator package and/or an all-inclusive package.

The fine print in Zurich's policy exclusions stipulates that insurance will not pay for the insolvency of "any travel agent, tour organiser, booking agent or consolidator

responsible for booking your travel accommodation". Also losses from fraud or negligent misrepresentation by the travel supplier are not covered.

When asked about these exclusions, **Anriëth Symon**, head of Travel at Zurich SA said it defined a 'travel supplier' as a licensed operator in SA. Licensed operators include a scheduled airline departing from South Africa, including all connecting and onward flights forming part of the insured journey; a cruise line; a rail or coach operator; a car-rental company or a hotel.

"Taking the above into consideration, we may encounter claims where the travel supplier may not meet the policy definitions 100%. We review the claim on a case-by-case basis and consider how best to apply the policy so as to ensure a fair outcome," she said.

Also Hollard Travel Insurance assesses claims on a case-by-case basis. **Uriah Jansen**, md of Oojah Travel Protection, which administers Hollard Travel Insurance, said the supplier insolvency offered by Hollard also excluded insolvency of tour operators.

"A tour operator is not the supplier but rather acts as a middleman between the supplier and end user. This is deemed an uninsurable risk."

However, Uriah said although the Supplier Insolvency Cover didn't generally include tour operators, they would assess every claim on a case-by-case basis. In the event of Gateway's demise, she said Hollard Travel Insurance did compensate clients for their losses, even though Gateway was an aggregator and therefore actually fell outside the scope of the cover.

So, does this insurance still offer a worthwhile cover for your clients? "Yes," said Uriah, adding that travellers would be covered for airline financial default or direct supplier default, such as accommodation establishments.

According to Anriëth, travellers have become more aware of and concerned about the insolvency of airlines and travel suppliers. "We are receiving more and more requests for this specific cover due to the challenges presented by the current economic climate." ■

## Impulse poll

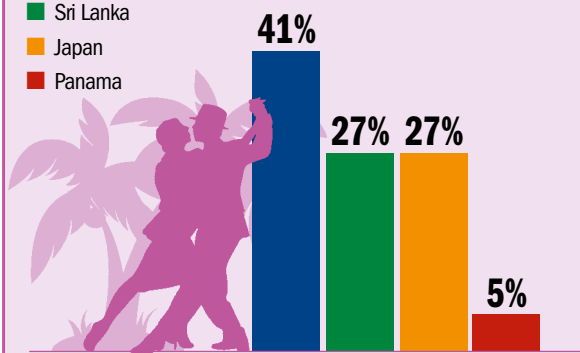
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### Hola Cuba!

Of these emerging destinations, which one has received the most interest from clients?

- Cuba
- Sri Lanka
- Japan
- Panama



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## Namibia clarifies visa issue

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

TRAVEL agents need to advise their clients that a visa is required when travelling to Namibia for work purposes.

The High Commission of Namibia in Pretoria says South Africans travelling to Namibia for the "purpose of employment or conducting a business or carrying on a profession or occupation" would still be required to apply for a work visa or

employment permit.

At the end of May, Namibia announced that it had scrapped its business and 'conference and meetings' visa requirements for SA passport holders (see TNW, June 8).

However, a traveller attending a meeting as part of 'exercising their profession' would need a work visa. "Travellers going to Namibia for employment purposes where they will be remunerated must apply

for a work visa," said the High Commission. Travellers to meetings, conferences or workshops where they will not specifically be remunerated and which are not categorised as 'work', do not require a visa.

Work visas can only be applied for through the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration and can either be done via email or through applications directly submitted at the offices in Namibia. ■

## Travel insurance now available on GDS

DARISE FOSTER

TRAVEL agents booking through Amadeus channels can now add selected travel insurance policies to a flight booking without having to go off the GDS. This follows Amadeus's partnership with Hepstar – a global travel insurance aggregator based in Cape Town.

Hepstar has integrated its products into Amadeus Insurance Hosting, allowing travel agents to book Bidvest, Regent or Hollard travel insurance while booking flights on the GDS, rather than exiting

the GDS to go to a travel insurance provider's website.

Using a credit card collection system, the GDS pulls travel insurance quotes relating to the client's passenger name record (PNR) through an automated process.

In the case of Hollard, "When the travel agent enters the client's credit card details via the Amadeus GDS, the interface communicates with the Hollard payment gateway. The payment gateway will debit the client's credit card and the money is deposited directly from the client's account into the Hollard travel premium

account," says **Uriah Jansen** md of Oojah Travel Protection, which administers Hollard Travel Insurance.

Additionally, insurance bookings processed on this platform are fully integrated into the PNR and back-office systems. Customers will also see these bookings in their itinerary.

Bookings made on this platform will also count toward agencies' booking targets, says Amadeus senior marketing manager, **Jannine Adams**. Agents will earn the normal commission on the insurance. ■