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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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Fuel surcharge up in smoke

DEBBIE BADHAM

MORE airlines are jumping on the bandwagon and refusing to refund the fuel surcharge or carrier-imposed surcharge on non-refundable tickets.

David Pegg, md of Sure Viva Travels, says this has been a noticeable recent development in the industry.

"The longer we leave things the more airlines will start doing this," comments **Tracy Teichmann**, manager of Sure Adcocks Travel.

While some airlines, such as British Airways, have held this policy for some time, David says other airlines like SAA and Arik Air have now also started refusing to refund fuel surcharges. He also points out that Lufthansa has one-way fares that are higher than some of its return fares. When the return fare is cheaper, the airline will refund neither the fare nor the taxes on the return leg of a round trip where the passenger has flown one way only.

Airlines no longer refer to the YR tax as a fuel surcharge but call it a 'carrier-imposed surcharge'.

Sean Hough, ceo of Pentravel, says it is very opportunistic that they have changed the name, and says while airlines cannot justify why the surcharge is needed, it has become an important

revenue stream for them. Spokesperson for SAA, **Tlali Tlali**, confirms that the airline amended its rules on June 1, such that carrier-imposed charges are not refundable on non-refundable tickets. For tickets with a cancellation penalty of 50%, the residual value of the base fare is refunded, plus the full unused portion of carrier-imposed fee. Tlali says many carriers that operate in the same markets as SAA have been applying this consistently as a non-refundable item.

"The surcharge has become an important revenue stream for airlines."

Helena Maxwell, Kenya Airways area manager Southern Africa, Angola and Indian Ocean Islands, says the airline's non-refundable tickets receive a refund on all other taxes except YR and the base fare. "YR is a carrier-imposed surcharge and makes up part of the passenger airfare and therefore belongs to the airline and can be refunded if the rules allow for the same."

"Unfortunately the code provided to the Industry, YR or YQ, is the code to identify the so-called fuel surcharges but in fact they are 'carrier imposed fees',"

agrees Tlali. "This often leads to clients feeling that the 'fuel' element should be refunded."

British Airways also points out that for partially used tickets not all the taxes may be refundable as some may be considered used. For example, if a UK departure has taken place before the ticket is presented for refund, any tax relating to the UK departure will have been used.

However, **Jonathan Gerber**, director of TAG, says, by refusing to refund the fuel surcharge or carrier-imposed surcharge, airlines are contradicting themselves, and points out that if the charge is not a refundable government tax, it should originally form part of the base fare. TAG says it has noticed Arik Air, Kenya Airways and Emirates also not refunding these 'carrier-imposed' charges.

There is a paradox in the way airlines handle this surcharge, agrees **Franz von Wielligh**, gm of Flight Specials. He says even though fuel surcharges should form part of the cost of operations, airlines have never wanted to include this in the base fare.

There is an ongoing discussion in the industry on the 'non-refundability' of goods and services. See a future issue of TNW for more on this topic. ■



Three cheers!

Last month, Comair marked 70 years of operations. The airline serves over 5,5m customers a year and is in the midst of a R10bn fleet upgrade. Toasting the carrier's 70 years in the trade, is Comair ceo, **Erik Venter**, who says: "Airlines aren't an easy business and the recipe for long-term success demands innovation, leadership and a commitment to service." Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Your new competitor – the bank

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

FLY-NOW, pay-later, travel financier, LeisureFin, has entered the industry in an effort to offer the middle-class traveller travel finance.

"Travel agents can send their

clients to us, or contact us on their behalf," says founder of LeisureFin, **Clarence Ford**, adding that the company offers credit at affordable rates. "Our approvals have been at rates of 17%-24%."

To page 2



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SA airfares and hotel rates to increase – report

DORINE REINSTEIN

AIRFARES and hotel rates are expected to increase for South Africans in 2017.

According to the 2017 Global Travel Price Outlook compiled by the Global Business Travel Association and Carlson Wagonlit Travel, SA airfares are expected to increase by 4,4% compared with a global increase of only 2,5%. Other African countries are expected to show decreases in airline prices, with Kenya expected to see a 5,8% drop and Nigeria a 6% decrease.

South African hotel rates are also expected to increase by 7%, whereas most other countries in the Middle East and Africa are expected to see a considerable drop in rates.

Clifford Ross, ceo of the City Lodge Hotel Group, says the rest of the world simply doesn't have the same

inflation rates as South Africa. "One needs to compare apples with apples." He adds that inflation rates are near zero in most countries, but above 6% in South Africa.

According to Clifford, South Africa will not see a surge in hotel prices in the next year. "We expect rate increases to be in line with inflation, possibly inflation minus in the current economic climate in South Africa."

"TMCs and travel buyers will need to remain on their toes."

Marcel Von Aulock, ceo of Tsogo Sun, says 7% can't be considered a surge in rates when inflation is around 6%. "The local industry is still well below long-term occupancy trends so there should be some recovery. However, it's not boom time by any means."

Clifford adds: "Prices will only 'surge' if all the stars align. Demand needs to increase significantly, no new room capacity coming into the market, inflationary considerations, good economic growth, and a positive financial outlook for the country... or the industry will still be playing rate catch-up since the 2008 halcyon years when rates in South Africa were keeping pace with the rest of the world."

Jeanne Liu, GBTA Foundation vice president for Research, says although the outlook generally shows only marginal increases or flat travel prices, the high level of global uncertainty will mean that TMCs and travel buyers will need to remain on their toes. "The key to building successful travel programmes in 2017 will be watching and reacting to an ever-changing global landscape." ■

Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



Your new competitor – the bank

From page 1

Although the company says it is a focused finance business, it also handles bookings end-to-end by working with travel suppliers, including MSC Cruises, Perfect Destinations, GS Travel Services and others. "While we can deliver packages to anywhere in the world, we also arrange more bespoke travel solutions such as church or sports tours, Indian Ocean island vacations and adventure holidays," says Clarence.

Agents not partnered with the financier, can expect that a management fee would be added to the cost of the package the client seeks to purchase.

The financier hopes partnerships with other travel agents and tour operators will bring more business to the trade, but consultants are not so sure.

"I understand why they're doing it," says md of Harvey World Travel Southern Africa, **Marco Cristofoli**. "They want

to target a market, but I wouldn't send my customers to them for the simple reason that I would lose my business – they'd have your database, essentially."

Ceo of eTravel, **Garth Wolff** says: "Travel is a perishable commodity, like food, and all that's going to happen is that people are going to buy their travel; they're going to use it and then they're not going to want to pay for it. It's just another form of debt creation for this poor indebted nation of ours."

He says those in the trade need to look after the goodwill of the traveller and that allowing travellers to create debt goes against that principle.

LeisureFin partner, **Gouwa Sheldon**, owner of GS Travels in Cape Town, says although the opportunity exists for non-partnered travel agents to lose out on business, she thinks the partnership will enable her company to reach the man on the street. "It's also about providing the client

with as many options as possible," she says.

When TNW asked Clarence what he'd say to agents concerned that LeisureFin could steal their clients, he said: "I think it's a legitimate concern, but we are not a travel agent. We can give a quick solution to a finance need that otherwise would be an arduous process. Partnered travel agents' clients remain their clients and we look to provide a service for their clients."

Travellers seeking finance with LeisureFin can log on to the company's website and then select from a range of products advertised by the financier's partners, including travel agents and suppliers.

The financier, who is an accredited merchant of Nedbank, NCR-certified and NCA-compliant, will secure a loan for the traveller, pay the supplier or travel agent directly and then work out a payment plan with the traveller ranging from 12-60 months. ■

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Sha'p Sha'p!

Local is lekker! City Lodge Hotels has 52 hotels across all SA provinces. Here is the latest news in domestic tourism.



Sha'p-sha'p: (Sharp-sharp) (a)
A South African term used to express
our good health and well being.



An artist's impression of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa.

Mother City welcomes new cultural museum

THE V&A Waterfront in Cape Town has partnered with **Jochen Zeitz** to create a new cultural institution, the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA).

The museum will focus on collecting, preserving, researching and exhibiting cutting-edge contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora.

Zeitz MOCAA will be housed in the historic Grain Silo at the V&A Waterfront, with the V&A committing over R500m to the development of the museum, which will be spread over nine floors, of which 6 000sqm will be exhibition space. There will also be a floor dedicated to education.

The new executive director and chief curator of Zeitz MOCAA will be **Mark Coetzee**, who has experience directing cultural institutions.

Jochen will commit his collection in perpetuity, underwrite the running

costs of the museum and provide a substantial acquisition budget to allow the museum to acquire new artworks over time, to remain on the edge of contemporary cultural production.

Zeitz MOCAA is set to welcome its first visitors at the end of the year. Until the extensive renovations to the Silo complex are complete, selections from the collection will be presented at Zeitz MOCAA Pavilion, a museum-quality temporary exhibition space also at the V&A Waterfront.

The inaugural exhibition, which opens at Zeitz MOCAA Pavilion on November 23, will present the work of Swazi artist, **Nandipha Mntambo**.

Zeitz MOCAA forms part of a plan for the Silo district that includes mixed-use developments of residential, commercial, leisure and hotel properties with the transformed Grain Silo as the central focus of a public plaza.

Cape St Francis acquires Port Elizabeth property

NEWINGTON Place Guesthouse in Richmond Hill in Port Elizabeth is the latest property to be owned and managed by Cape St Francis Resort.

The recently renovated Victorian house offers various accommodation options. The main house offers five bedrooms, and a self-catering family cottage and a self-contained room in the garden allow for privacy.

All rooms have views of the garden and most of the bedrooms are

equipped with flat-screen televisions. There is also a television in the lounge and dining room area. Additional facilities include a swimming pool and alfresco bar.

Newington Place is 8km from Port Elizabeth airport and within walking distance of a large variety of restaurants and retail outlets.

Facilities include secure off-street parking, a large garden and outdoor deck, WiFi and the option of breakfast.

Perfections Africa adds Mpumalanga reserve to portfolio

SARAGOSSA Game Reserve in Mpumalanga has joined the Perfections Africa portfolio.

Saragossa offers a range of accommodation that includes the Saragossa Game Lodge, Saragossa Manor House, Twin Thorns B&B, Saragossa Caravan and Tent Park and bushveld chalets.

The reserve offers activities such

as game drives, bush walks, fishing, mountain hikes, stargazing, quad biking and tree planting.

Giraffe, hippo, zebra, Blue wildebeest and eland are a few of the indigenous species that roam freely throughout the 1400-hectare reserve.

Most of the reserve's meat, fruit and vegetables are produced on the reserve.

New township tours launch in WC

MABONENG Township Arts Experience has launched new day tours in the Western Cape areas of Langa, Gugulethu and Kayamandi.

Guests are taken on a walking tour of local heritage sites, graffiti routes and art centres, and also visit home galleries – family homes that have been registered and inspected. Visitors can request to visit them and the request

is then forwarded to a shuttle service, which will transport them to the gallery. Each tour lasts four hours.

Maboneng Township Arts Experience now also offers drumming, art and dance workshops for an additional hour and has over 100 home galleries registered in three cities – Johannesburg, Cape Town and Madadeni in KwaZulu Natal. ■



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Lufthansa to fly direct to CPT year-round

LUFTHANSA will launch year-round flights between Cape Town and Frankfurt on December 2.

Flight LH577 will leave Cape Town at 18h30 on Thursdays, Saturdays and Mondays and land in Frankfurt at 05h30 the next day.

The return flight LH576 will depart Frankfurt on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays at 22h10 and arrive in

Cape Town at 11h00 the next day. Initially, the airline intended to offer the direct flights on a seasonal basis but the route has proved popular with Lufthansa's German and other European customers.

Lufthansa will use a 279-seat Airbus A340-300 on the route with 30 seats in business class, 28 in premium economy and 221 in economy. ■

Centara closes SA office

CENTARA Hotels & Resorts will close its SA sales office on August 20.

The South African market has been handed over to **Popo Hartopo**, Centara's group director of sales for Pacific Region, who has already started working with local agents.

The closure is attributed to a recent management change at Centara's head office in Bangkok.

Although SA has a strong market, it is small compared with other markets, says **Melanie Floor**, ceo and owner of Exclusive Serenity, who

has represented Centara in SA since 2013. Melanie also mentioned that Centara was reducing its sales force worldwide and South Africa was not the only place to be affected, but couldn't name the other markets facing closure at this time.

"We are very grateful and appreciate the fantastic support received from the travel trade throughout the years. With its great value proposition, we are confident that Centara will continue to thrive in the SA market," said Melanie. ■



Standing tall

Ethiopian Airlines recently took delivery of its first A350 at OR Tambo International Airport. The aircraft is the first A350 to be operated by an African airline. Pictured here are Ethiopian Airlines station manager, **Minale Kassa**, regional manager Southern Africa, **Abel Alemu**, and senior airline representative, **Rahil Karodia**. Photo: Leigh Hermon

Etihad to fly A380 to NYC

ETIHAD will upgrade its second daily flight between Abu Dhabi and New York to an A380 aircraft on June 1, 2017.

It will join the airline's existing daily A380 service, replacing the current Boeing 777-300ER aircraft.

Flight EY103 will depart Abu Dhabi at 03h35 to arrive at New York JFK at 09h35. Return flight EY102 will depart New York JFK at 15h00 to arrive in

Abu Dhabi at 12h05 the following day.

The current B777 schedule sees flight EY101 depart Abu Dhabi at 10h10 to arrive in New York at 16h30. The return flight EY100 departs New York at 22h45 to arrive in Abu Dhabi at 19h45 the following day.

The A380 will include a three-room suite, The Residence; 70 seats in business class; 415 economy smart seats and full inflight WiFi. ■

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Photo: Four Seasons Spa Westcliff

As we celebrate National Women's Day on August 9, Max Marx looks at a selection of excursions and activities women can enjoy together in Gauteng.

Great outings from Gauteng Tourism Authority

THE Gauteng Tourism Authority highlights activities in and around Gauteng for the fairer sex this August.

For a pamper session with a difference, Zaza's Guesthouse & Spa in Pimville, Soweto, offers deluxe accommodation that is the perfect place to unwind after a thrilling day of adventure.

Its luxurious spa with two treatment rooms offers a range of massage and beauty treatments, while its well-appointed accommodation comprises a deluxe suite with queen-size bed, en-suite bathroom with shower and private balcony; and two standard rooms – with queen-sized or twin beds and a shared bathroom.

To celebrate National Women's Day, owner, **Ayanda Hermanus**, is offering women two attractive packages for the month of August. The day package starts from R1 150pp and includes a half-day tour, 60-minute hot-stone massage and buffet lunch. The overnight package, from R1 650pp, includes one night's accommodation with full English breakfast, a half-

day tour, a hot-stone massage, and R300 dinner voucher for Restaurant Vilakazi on Vilakazi Street. Zaza's offers free WiFi and operates a shuttle service for guests.

Guests can choose from three half-day tours: Birding on Bicycle – an off-road mountain bike birding adventure guided by Bay of Grace Tours, that explores birding in Soweto's green spaces; a Sophiatown tour with Eyitha Tours that explores Sophiatown's rich history and heritage; and a walking or electronic bike tour of Alexandra township with operator, The Hub Presents. The tour visits Mandela's Yard, Alexandra Heritage Centre, Olive Tree Theatre, a traditional healer, and residents' homes that have been transformed into mini art galleries showcasing local artists' works.

Ultimate indulgence

Another great option for a fabulous day out with the girls is a spa party at the Four Seasons Spa Westcliff, at the Four Seasons Hotel The Westcliff. Here one can start the day with a delicious health or traditional breakfast at the

spa's Westcliff deli before enjoying a range of treatments, from soothing massages and facials to exfoliation and manicures. The spa has a 25-metre lap pool and a rooftop lounge with full bar and magnificent views, where guests can unwind and enjoy sundowners.

The spa experience can be combined with lunch at the casual dining Flames restaurant or afternoon tea at the signature View restaurant. The View is famous for its afternoon tea, with a choice of sweet and savoury delights.

Shopping tour

For the more adventurous, Past Experiences' 'I Love Shopping Tour' in Johannesburg's inner city is one that women love, says owner, **Jo Buitendach**. The walking tour visits fabric, clothing, handbag and coat shops, a traditional medicine shop as well as a Chinese supermarket. "A lot of people come on this tour to visit the fabric shops, as Ferreirasdorp and Diagonal Street are famous for traditional fabrics like Shweshwe. On the tour they learn about the history

of the fabrics and who wears what," says Jo.

The scheduled two-hour budget tours cost R160 per person, while private tours cost R900 for two, with the per person price decreasing as more people are booked on the tour. Private groups of 10 pay just R160 per person. The tour starts and ends at the new Mad Giant brewery at The Sheds at 1 Fox Street, where the group can enjoy lunch after the tour.

Explore quaint Cullinan

For those who want to get out of the city, Cullinan offers a great day out. Just 30km east of Pretoria, the main attraction in this well-preserved 19th century mining town with its Edwardian period buildings, is the Cullinan Diamond Mine, where the world-renowned Cullinan diamond was discovered. There are also quaint shops in the village, a great selection of restaurants, outdoor cafés and a lovely selection of guesthouses for those who want to stay the night.

Cullinan Tourism and History is the only operator in town that offers an underground

tour of the mine.

The Underground Mine Tour (R550pp to the public and R500pp STO rates), takes visitors down the mine to see how diamonds are extracted. The tour price includes two above-ground tours that can also be booked separately – the 90-minute Journey of a Diamond tour, and the Historical Village tour. The Journey of a Diamond tour takes visitors through the surface workings of the mine on a truck. The tour visits the mineshaft where diamond-bearing ore is hauled to the surface and then proceeds to the crushers, sort house, mine dumps and the big hole, which is four times larger than the Big Hole in Kimberley. The public rate is R150pp and the STO rate, R120pp.

On the Historical Village tour, guests learn about Cullinan's fascinating history while being transported through the village on an old railway tram pulled by a tractor. The public rate is R80 and the STO rate, R65.

Ladies looking for new places to explore, can visit the GTA's website, www.gauteng.net, to find out what's on the go. ■



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Women in travel



Why are there so few women leaders in travel and what should be done about it?
Debbie Badham reports.

Why so few women hold top positions

IT'S well known that, while the local travel industry is run by women, it's led by men. "The economic downturn of recent years has impacted the number of female entrepreneurs venturing into the travel industry," comments **Robyn Christie**, Travelport's country manager for South Africa. "As the industry struggled to keep profitability up, it stifled the buoyant growth of 'girl power' we were so proud of a few years ago."

Robyn believes things are changing, however, saying that there are many TMCs owned and managed by dynamic women who continue to develop and transform the travel industry space.

A big part of the problem is gender mainstreaming, points out **Carla Da Silva**, Air Mauritius regional manager for Africa and Latin America. "The percentage of women versus men in senior roles is still very low. This is fact." She says, in her experience women are normally promoted based on

a proven track record whereas men are promoted based on potential and contacts.

"In order to secure opportunities or be considered for an opportunity, women are required to work a little harder and prove themselves to receive the equal acknowledgement and credibility for an opportunity," agrees **Thaybz Khan**, contemporary brand manager of Cruises International.

She adds that, while women are often stereotyped as emotional beings, men are regarded as level-headed and therefore tend to fill higher positions more quickly.

"I think it's a mindset that the traditional roles such as gm and ceo must be filled by men," comments **Caron Crocker**, ITC of Club Travel.

Carla says the industry lacks a culture of mentorship, coaching and encouragement. "There is no centralised approach to coaching and mentoring women." She adds that, from her perspective men

are excellent at connecting with their male counterparts in terms of sharing ideas, asking for assistance, support, promotion and even money, whereas women with all their other responsibilities tend not to connect as often to share ideas and ask for help.

"The percentage of women versus men in senior roles is still very low. This is fact."

She says promotion of women should be included in the strategic agenda of an organisation, with an ongoing review and focused plan. "Companies need to formalise mentoring and coaching roles and relationships," agrees **Kim Botti**, director of Lee Botti and Associates. "When looking at some profiles of current male leaders in the industry, it can be seen that some of them have come from other, non-related industries,

bringing with them financial or general management skills that shareholders find appealing in order to help grow their businesses in these unpredictable and uncertain times."

Many women know how to organise a trip and market themselves, agrees **Leigh Mitchell**, ITC of Travel4Fun (a Club Travel ITC), but are not guided on business skills, how to run successful companies and how to invest their money and make it grow. "As an ITC, I'm happy with my day-to-day business running and income, but I have to broaden my views on how to make more money with bigger returns."

Women are traditionally also less inclined to promote themselves. As such, Kim says companies should create environments of progressive growth, leadership and development where women are encouraged to propel themselves forward.

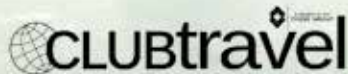
It's the everyday small things that have the potential to

hold women back, comments Robyn. She refers to some of what she has learnt from Facebook's **Sheryl Sandberg**, who says women often get interrupted more often than men and may find it difficult to confront the colleague who interrupted them.

"Likewise, we know men get credit more easily for their ideas than women. So coming to the table and saying, 'This was a great project and was based on Mary's idea,' is another way we can empower women and something I push in my team."

Fear and lack of support from fellow female colleagues is another challenge, says Thaybz. "Women can hold themselves or fellow female colleagues back because of the fear of seeing another woman become more successful than you are."

"I think the only time a woman should lower her gaze towards another woman would be to compliment her on the shoes she's wearing."

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SAA golden girl cracks major marketing award

SAA head of marketing, **Kim Thipe**, has been named one of the 15 top women in marketing in the world by the Direct Marketing News 2016 Marketing Hall of Femme.

The award is given annually, honouring the most senior female marketers in organisations of all sizes and across all industries.

Kim started her career in advertising before switching to work at executive level on big brands like FNB, M-Net and YFM. But it is her work at South African Airways that attracted the attention of the DMS team.

DMS described her as “one of the most prodigious movers of people”, responsible



Kim Thipe, described by DMS as “one of the most prodigious movers of people.”

for a multi-channelled marketing strategy at SAA that saw passenger insights contributing towards the strategy behind messaging and tactics to drive both revenue and brand performance.

The everyday balancing act

WORK-LIFE balance is an area in which many women battle. “Women need to manage a balanced lifestyle while raising children and supporting family in a demanding ‘always on’ career,” comments **Vanya Lessing**, ceo of Sure Travel.

She says, in line with this, many organisations are bringing ‘new generation’ thinking to their workplaces to support professionals. “Flexi-time is at the top of the list for most professionals.”

“Travel is not a nine-to-five job and, as such, I think trying to balance work and home life is the main challenge for women,” agrees Club Travel’s **Caron Crocker**.

While **Kim Botti** of Lee Botti and Associates says this challenge is not unique to travel, she says it is perhaps more pronounced due to the travel requirements

within the industry.

She adds that, as women may find it difficult to travel often for work, this may open doors for their male counterparts who are generally more adaptable in this regard.

Tammy Hunt, operations director for eTravel, says as a professional, mother and wife, she understands the challenges women face to balance demands. “However, ensuring you have a support structure in place will allow you to provide the confidence in your peers that you are up for the challenge and are capable of doing the job at hand.”

She says, ultimately a woman’s career is in her own hands. “If you want to make it, make it happen by proving you can deliver without the expectation of preferential treatment because you are a woman. I believe that if you are suited to the position you will be given

the opportunity, which has certainly been the case throughout my career.”

The opportunities for women are in empowering themselves, embracing their careers and taking their future into their own hands, agrees **Megan Vorster**, Peopleworks Leader for Flight Centre.

She adds that companies in the industry need to develop a belief in the empowerment of women and for it to become a part of their company culture. “Female employees have the same, if not more, to offer companies than their male counterparts.”

In order to succeed Vanya believes that women should align their aspirations, lifestyle and goals to the career that will suit them best. “A good start is to get a personality profile assessment done, identify your strengths and channel your career in the direction that best suits you.”

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Women in travel



Where do companies go wrong?

WHEN asked where companies went wrong when taking care of their female employees, 138 respondents to a survey recently conducted on *TNW's* sister publication, *eTNW*, offered a wide variety of suggestions. However, there was a general theme that ran through the frustrations experienced by women and this relates to the level of flexibility offered in the travel work space.

One respondent noted that women within the workplace were not considered differently to men. This was echoed by another agent who commented that, once women married and had children, their lives naturally had to change. "Companies aren't able to adapt to

these changes. As such, they end up losing a lot of good-quality consultants to companies that are more flexible."

Another respondent said that women who had children needed to put their children first. However, companies didn't always appreciate this and sometimes complained when employees were required to attend to a sick child.

For single mothers, this is a particular concern. One female travel professional said there was minimal empathy for mothers within the workplace. "Single moms, in particular, need time off to attend school functions, tend to sick kids and fetch kids from school,"

said one agent. "It's also hard to attend after-work functions.

"Companies forget that most women today are single parents and do not have back-up when everyday changes in the schedule occur."

In light of this, one travel professional suggested that women should be allowed to work from home when necessary to avoid having to take a lot of time off work to see to their additional responsibilities.

One agent even pointed out that many women would be prepared to work longer hours if it meant that they could have some flexi-time to be able to work around their families.

SURVEY:

What do women in travel want?

AS THE travel industry's workforce primarily consists of women, it's important for employers to understand what women in travel want.

What makes them come to work in the mornings and, when all is said and done, what makes them leave?

In a survey recently conducted by *TNW's* sister publication, *eTNW*, 138 agents shared their thoughts on some of the critical elements that can make or break a happy work environment.

According to respondents, growth opportunities are what matter to them most at work, with 67% of agents selecting this as a key factor.

A high salary (57%), good relationships with co-workers (54%) and acknowledgement (54%) were also deemed by women in the industry as important elements in a happy work environment. Opportunity to travel scored lowest, with just 48% of agents saying this was an important consideration.

What matters most at work?



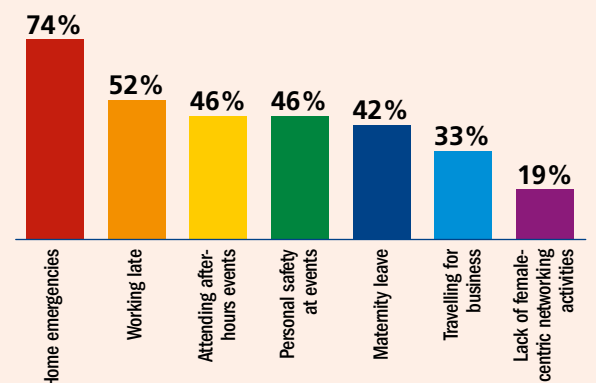
When it comes to the unique needs of women in the workplace, it seems most agents would like their employers to take greater cognisance of the responsibilities they have towards their children. Home emergencies that might require time away from work were the biggest concern for women, with 74% of respondents highlighting this as an important consideration for employers. This was followed by agents saying that those who had children found it difficult to work late (52%) and attend after-hours events (46%).

Personal safety when attending events seems to be another concern for female agents, with almost half (46%) saying they thought this was something employers needed to be aware of.

Of slightly less importance was maternity leave, which only 42% of respondents selected as a necessary consideration. Interestingly, travelling for business was not a particular concern for women with children as only 33% said this was something employers needed to be aware of.

Apparently female travel professionals are relatively unfazed by men who play golf, something that is often used by professionals within the industry as an effective networking tool. But women say they don't feel there is a lack of female-centric networking activities for them to engage in, and that the lack thereof is not a concern for them. A scant 19% of respondents highlighted this as something that employers within the travel industry should be aware of.

Women's concerns: employers take note!



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Vanessa Frankal, Vtravel:

"I joined eTravel when I was in huge debt. The recession had just hit and everyone said I was crazy to start my own business when everyone else was closing. But it was an opportunity I couldn't turn down. I'll tell you this: If you are good at what you do and you know how to run a business, you and eTravel can go to great places. Within two years I was out of debt and a few years later I bought my first property. I'm SO proud of myself and so grateful to eTravel for being the platform from which I launched myself and my business."

Gizelle Grey, G2Travel:

"Being a part of eTravel allows me to have a professional career in the comfort of my own home and, at the same time, be a full-time mom. It allows me to get my work done and also be hands-on with my kids at home. I just love the freedom and flexibility! What you put in is what you get out, so I determine my own pace/income."

Vanessa Prinsloo, Vanessa's Travel and Tours:

"Working as an ITC with eTravel has changed my life completely. I am now in control of my salary, my work time, and, most of all, my weekends are mine to spend with my family. Plus, no more peak-hour traffic!"

Margo Mantle, MLM Travel:

"Being part of the eTravel family has allowed me to become a WAHM (Work at Home Mom). This gives me the flexibility to give fantastic service to my clients while watching my children grow right in front of me. I can attend to clients' travel needs while sitting on the side-lines at my daughter's netball game! Being a WAHM allows me to control my own schedule, put in the effort I need to achieve my goals, and make money doing something I'm passionate about. All while being available to my husband and children during normal office hours."

Michelle Wright, Arabella Travel:

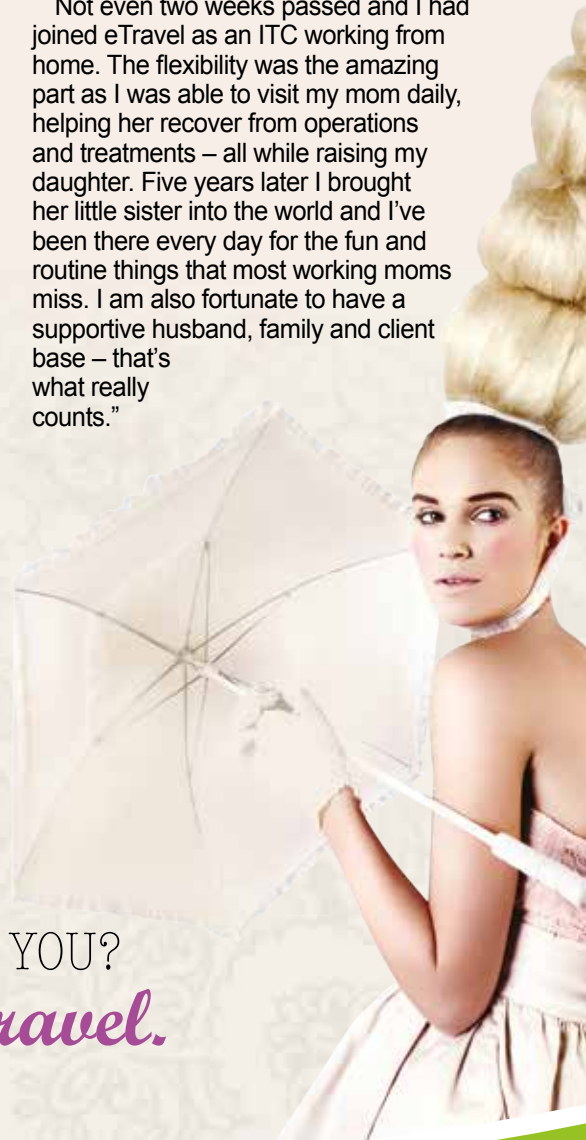
"Working through eTravel has allowed me the freedom, flexibility and support to grow as an agent, mother and wife. My company, Arabella Travel, is 15 years old this year and I've had the opportunity to be a career woman and a stay-at-home mom, which is something most people only dream about."

Reza Postma, Travel Trendz:

"In 2006 I was working for a travel company that demanded long hours with stressful targets – a role that was my top priority and I thrived. My mom looked after my infant daughter during the day. But then my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. The news shocked the entire family as she was the strong one. It was now her turn to need help and I knew I wouldn't be able to maintain my career while supporting her. So I resigned to take a sabbatical that I would return from when she was better.

Not even two weeks passed and I had joined eTravel as an ITC working from home. The flexibility was the amazing part as I was able to visit my mom daily, helping her recover from operations and treatments – all while raising my daughter. Five years later I brought her little sister into the world and I've been there every day for the fun and routine things that most working moms miss. I am also fortunate to have a supportive husband, family and client base – that's what really counts."

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Women are complex

A GREATER awareness of the emotional complexity that most women experience was also highlighted by a number of different respondents.

Women need greater consideration towards their emotional needs, commented one respondent. Another agent agreed, saying that employers often didn't have an understanding of the complex emotions women experienced and should acknowledge this more often.

Women should be allowed to be emotional in their work another agent believed. "If companies fully understood the emotional make-up of women, it would definitely bring them greater satisfaction in the workplace."

"Clear, transparent and consistent communication is probably one of the most important areas where employers get it wrong," said another female travel professional. She pointed out that this was a "no-brainer" when it came to keeping women happy and could make or break relationships.

One respondent said employers also often went wrong as there was a lack of understanding when it came

to their employees' personal needs. "We have far more responsibilities these days than men but we are not given any additional benefits in the workplace."

Women are not like men

Interestingly, one professional pointed out that, while women were expected to be as aggressive as men within the workplace, they often had a different approach to getting things done. "Companies think that women should have the same approach as men when it comes to being a go-getter," she said.

"Some companies, unfortunately, think that women should be like men – tough," agreed another respondent.

Equally, it can be perceived that a demonstration of strength in the workplace means that women are able to easily switch off their emotions. "Employers assume that 'strong' women have no emotions, presuming that we are superwomen who can handle anything without breaking down."

In fact, some female travel professionals feel

that it is harder for men to understand them and that, for this reason, it can be beneficial to have a female manager. One respondent voiced this, saying that she found working with a woman boss to be more beneficial, as female managers tended to be more understanding, particularly when it came to family responsibilities.

"I feel that women are not taken seriously or given opportunities to prove themselves," said one agent. "They are not seen as true breadwinners or given the same promotions men would receive."

Another agent pointed out that because women were not always viewed as the breadwinner of the family, they were sometimes paid smaller salaries.

Ultimately, the success of companies in keeping their female staff happy is summed up by one female travel professional: "Companies need to start looking at their staff as people and not just a source of income for the company. The moment companies put their women first they will be able to embark on the best possible relationship with their staff."

Does the workplace favour men?

THE issue of whether men are provided with greater benefits in the travel industry seems to be a murky one and female travel agents are divided in their response as to whether this is a real issue or not.

When asked whether women in travel were paid less than men in a survey recently conducted by TNW's sister publication, eTNW, the majority of respondents (51%) said no. While a close 49% of respondents said yes.

Are men paid more?



Similarly, when asked whether men in travel were promoted more easily than

women, 53% of female travel professionals said no and 47% said yes.

Are men promoted more often?



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BEATRICE Tollman, president and founder of the boutique Hotel Collection has been honoured with the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award at The Cateys 2016, in celebration of her lifelong contribution to the hotel



Beatrice Tollman

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The Cateys, which took place on July 5 at London's Grosvenor House Hotel, are the official awards of The Caterer and are widely recognised as an important event in the UK hospitality industry.

properties within the collection include The Milestone Hotel in London; The Oyster Box Hotel and Spa in Umhlanga Rocks, Durban; the Hotel d'Angleterre in Geneva and Ashford Castle in County Mayo, Ireland.



Photo: Dollarphotoclub

Where are the men in travel?

TNW put the question to female travel agents, asking for their opinions on why there are so many women in the industry but so few men.

Responses ranged from the perceptions that men have of travel to saying that women are simply better suited to travel and that men see it as a profession with few opportunities.

Women are well-suited to travel

Women possess qualities that are well-suited to the travel environment, some agents believe. "Travel takes a lot of patience, compassion and knowing how to handle different personalities.

"Although men can have all these attributes too, women are stronger when it comes to consulting."

One female consultant pointed out that women were potentially more effective when it came to admin-type responsibilities.

"We pay more attention to details and adding little extras on to travel plans."

What's more, some female travel professionals believe women are better suited because they handle stress more easily.

"Women were built for constantly being on the go. Our bodies can often handle a lot more stress than men and, because of this, we are able to face each new day with

a fresh attitude and are constantly able to handle difficult situations that arise with the panache that clients need."

Incorrect perceptions

Many travel professionals believe there are few men in the industry because travel is seen as a woman's career.

"People generally assume that travel is a woman's job, just like being a nurse or a Sunday school teacher," said one travel professional.

"Travel is seen as a pink collar job, just as women are still seen as being capable only of lower management jobs," agreed another respondent.

Few benefits in travel

Other respondents to the survey felt it was because men viewed travel as a profession that didn't offer many benefits as the reason for the dearth of men in travel.

"Salaries are low, so men tend to steer clear when starting out," said one respondent.

The pay is low, agreed another agent. "Travel is considered a 'service industry' and men don't typically like to be in service; they would rather be in charge."

One female travel professional said she thought it was likely men viewed travel as menial work with a lot of admin that required attention to detail.

Tips from the top...

TNW asked some of the top women in travel how women can reach the top of their game.

Travelport's **Robyn Christie** says: "Your ambition must excite you to the extent that it becomes infectious to those around you."

She says she has always been a proactive learner and observed her colleagues and

competitors with the goal of learning from others' mistakes and keeping well informed.

"My success was driven by those who walked before me. I'm very grateful to have been mentored by some amazing people."

Most important is to surround yourself with winners, says Air Mauritius's **Carla Da Silva**. "Adopt and establish both male and female mentors, coaches and sponsors, creating a circle of successful leaders in your arena that you can trust and turn to." She also emphasises the importance of continuous learning and development along with innovation. It's important to value and strive for excellence in all you do with absolute integrity, she adds.

Building a network of trustworthy relationships is one of the most important keys to success, says Sure Travel's **Vanya Lessing**. "I took every opportunity to learn, motivate, excel and strengthen confidence in my abilities. I am always prepared to do



"Adopt and establish both male and female mentors, coaches and sponsors, creating a circle of successful leaders in your arena that you can trust and turn to."

Carla Da Silva

more and step up to the plate boldly." Vanya says if female travel professionals have clear goals, work towards them diligently and have the ability to think on their feet in a crisis, producing results in tough times, they will be noticed. ■



"Your ambition must excite you to the extent that it becomes infectious to those around you."
Robyn Christie


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PREMIUM CLASS



Air France's La Première cabin. Photo: Air France

Despite the economic downturn travellers are still choosing comfort over affordability. Darise Foster reports.

Clients value comfort over cost

TRAVELLERS are prepared to pay more where comfort is concerned.

In a survey run on *TNW's* sister publication, *eTNW*, 61 of the 114 travel agents surveyed said more of their clients were choosing to fly first, business and premium economy class because comfort was their clients' primary concern when travelling.

Premium economy was especially popular, said respondents.

"I have seen an increase in clients booking premium economy class as they get more reward miles and they still enjoy good fares,"

one agent said.

"Travellers are enjoying the premium economy class because they want more space for comfort but do not want to pay business-class fares," another agent commented.

Travellers flying long-haul routes, particularly business travellers, also enjoyed arriving at their destination well rested and were therefore willing to pay the price, agents agreed.

Airlines have also seen more travellers opting for the higher classes.

Darrin Thomas, manager of marketing and communications for Virgin

Atlantic Airways in South Africa, told *TNW* he had seen increased uptake in both Virgin's Upper Class (business) and premium economy, and that both cabins were often full.

Singapore Airlines market development manager, **Sally George**, agrees that there has been an increase in demand in business-class travel. "There is great demand for business class, particularly over the weekend departures."

Jimmy Eichelgruen, Delta Air Lines sales director for Africa, Middle East and India, says the Delta One (business class) cabin is always in

high demand on Delta's Johannesburg route – the longest route on the airline's network.

'More bang for our buck'

On the other hand, some agents say while clients are still travelling in premium class, they feel value for money is not as evident in premium class as it was in the past.

"Value for money is not what it used to be – and in these tough economic times, airlines must remember that clients want what they pay for," says one agent.

Jimmy says it is understandable that customers want more for their money when flying premium class and paying the associated fares. "As such, Delta has invested heavily in its Delta One product to ensure our premium customers have a quality experience."

Quality experience is

achieved through Delta's collaboration with respected global brands such as Westin Heavenly Bedding by Westin Hotels and Resorts and the airline's amenity kits, which are made by TUMI and have recently begun featuring products by Kieh'l's, says Jimmy.

Air Mauritius sales and marketing manager, **Wouter Nel**, says the airline offers business-class passengers a premium experience at very competitive, all-inclusive rates. "Additionally, our last-minute business-class upgrade offering affords all passengers the luxury of an upgrade for a nominal fee on the day of departure."

Tiali Tiali, spokesperson for SAA, told *TNW* the carrier's offering was based on a cost structure that sought to strike a balance between cost and what customers wanted to pay for. The nature of SAA's service is intended to meet some of these demands, says Tiali.

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AIR France's new La Première cabin (first class) offers passengers a 'designer suite' that promises total privacy.

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The La Première seat turns into a fully flat bed over two metres long, and guests can enjoy entertainment on their own 61cm HD touch screen,

one of the largest offered on board.

When the passenger is ready to sleep, a crew member installs a mattress on the seat for further comfort and passengers are given a fluffy pillow and duvet.

Passengers in this cabin are also offered a brand-new, unisex sleep suit in high-quality cotton, as well as slippers, socks, a shoehorn and a shoe bag. Passengers can take them with them after their trip to wear at home.

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What do clients want?

TRAVELLERS flying premium class want more choice, more comfort and more ancillary services, agents agree.

Airlines say they are responding to these demands in a way that still offers value for money.

According to **Tlali Tlali**, SAA has taken note of the request by premium-class passengers to have privacy and easily accessible aisles. "Product improvement and service offering are some of the areas SAA is constantly looking at in order to enhance its premium customer experience on board," he says.

Value for money

Says **Martin Modarelli**, commercial director for the UK, Nordic Countries and Africa at LATAM Airlines: "We believe offering value for money across all cabin classes is important, and each class has a role to play in the travel experience.

"Travellers have different expectations and needs, such



"We've noticed that premium passengers prefer seamless travel experiences and whenever there are changes to the schedule that could affect their journey, they would like to be personally alerted or notified."
Tlali Tlali

as the ability to work on the move but also the opportunity to get some rest while travelling, and our focus is on meeting as many of these needs as possible," he says.

More leg-room a must

In response to a survey run by *TNW's* sister publication, *eTNW*, 34 of the 114 respondents said leg-room and flat beds were the primary demands for their clients.

A further 20 agents said their clients wanted more personal attention when flying premium class.

"We've noticed that premium passengers want personalised service, such as senior pursers introducing themselves.

"They want to be treated like a valued customer and receive that recognition. They prefer seamless travel experiences and whenever there are changes to the schedule that could affect their journey, they would like to be personally alerted or

notified," agrees **Tlali Tlali**.

In response to this, SAA addresses many of its passengers personally, with a full account of what to expect on board, he says.

Ancillary services and an extended duty-free offering that is available online and accompanied by delivery on board at their seats are also offered to the airline's premium passengers.

According to **Wouter Nel**, Air Mauritius has responded to these demands by offering business-class passengers cocoon-style lie-flat seats on its A330 and A340 aircraft, as well as personalised cabin services.

"Air Mauritius is known for its dedicated service and Mauritian hospitality, which has earned us a four-star Skytrax rating," Wouter says. "All passengers experience our personal service and Mauritian touch."

LATAM Airlines has also prioritised leg-room in its premium cabins.

"The 2-2-2 configuration in

our business class creates a feeling of space in our cabin, and allows passengers to choose between privacy or sharing with a partner," says Martin.

While fully flat-bed seats are becoming standard, **Jimmy Eichelgruen** says Delta offers direct aisle access to every person in the cabin flying between Johannesburg and Atlanta, enabling them to walk around at their leisure without disturbing their neighbour.

Dedicated service

Agents also say their clients enjoy dedicated check-in counters and priority boarding.

Virgin Atlantic has responded to this by introducing dedicated bag drops and check-in counters for premium passengers, as well as priority boarding.

"Additionally, our premium economy main meal experience has been upgraded, making it feel much more like a 'restaurant' rather

To page 20



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First Class

| Airline | Aircraft | Seat width (cm) | Seat pitch (cm) | Recline | Seats | Configuration |
|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|-------|---------------|
| Air France | A380 (JNB) | 61 | 200 | Flat bed | 9 | 1-2-1 |
| | B777-300 (JNB) | 58 | No seat in front | Flat bed | 4 | 1-1-1-1 |
| British Airways | A380 (JNB) | 57 | 229 | Flat bed | 14 | 1-2-1 |
| | B747-400 (CPT winter) | 53 | 198 | Flat bed | 14 | 1-1 and 1-2-1 |
| | B777 (CPT seasonal) | 81 | 216 | Flat bed | 14 | 1-2-1 |
| Emirates | B777-300ER (JNB & CPT) | 58 | 214 | Flat bed | 12 | 2-2-2 |
| | A380-800 (JNB) | 53 | 208 | Private suite | 14 | 1-2-1 |
| Lufthansa | B747-800 (JNB-FRA) | 79 | 208 | Flat bed | 8 | 1-2-1 |
| | A340-600 (CPT-MUC) | 78 | 213 | Flat bed | 8 | 1-2-1 |
| SWISS | A340-300 | 56 | 208 | Flat bed | 8 | 1-2-1 |

Business Class

| Airline | Aircraft | Seat width (cm) | Seat pitch (cm) | Recline | Seats | Configuration |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| Air France | A380 (JNB) | 53 | 152 | Flat bed | 80 | 2-2-2 |
| | B777-200 (CPT seasonal) | 53 | 152 | Flat bed | 35 | 2-3-2 |
| | B777-300 (JNB) | 72 | 106 | Flat bed | 38 | 1-2-1 |
| Air Mauritius | A340-300 | 66 | 152 | Flat bed | 34 | 2-2-2 |
| | A330-200 | 66 | 152 | Flat bed | 24 | 2-2-2 |
| | A319-100 | 44 | 97 | 10° | 16 | 2-2 |
| Air Namibia | A330-200 | 46 | 191 | Flat bed | 30 | 2-2-2 |
| | A319-100 | 53 | 137 | 160° | 16 | 2-2 |
| Air Seychelles | A330 | 53 | 208 | Flat bed | 18 | 2-2-2 |
| | A320 | 51 | 124 | 65° | 16 | 2-2 |
| Arik Air | A340-500 | 51 | 191 | Flat bed | 36 | 2-2-2 |
| | A330-200 | 51 | 191 | Flat bed | 30 | 2-2-2 |
| | B737-800 | 48 | 112 | Recline | 16-20 | 2-2 |
| British Airways | A380 (JNB) | 64 | 183 | Flat bed | 44-53 | Main deck 2-4-2 Upper deck 2-3-2 |
| | B747-400 (CPT winter) | 51 | 185 | Flat bed | 52-70 | Main deck 2-4-2 Upper deck 2-2 |
| | B777 (CPT seasonal) | 54 | 185 | Flat bed | 56 | 2-4-2 |
| Cathay Pacific | B777-300 | 53 | - | Flat bed | 40 | 1-2-1 |
| Delta Air Lines | B777LR | 53 | 152 | Flat bed | 37 | 1-2-1 |
| EgyptAir | A330-243 | 51 | 148 | 39cm | 24 | 2-2-2 |
| | A330-300 | 51 | 152 | Angled flat bed | 36 | 2-2-2 |
| El Al | B767 and B767ER | 51 | 152 | 165° | 24 | 2-2-2 |
| Emirates | B777-300ER (JNB, DUR, CPT) | 52 | 183 | Flat bed | 42 | 2-3-2 |
| | A380-800 (JNB) | 46 | 109 | Flat bed | 76 | 1-2-1 |
| Ethiopian Airlines | B787 | 58 | 165 | Flat bed | 24 | 2-2-2 |
| | B777 | 53 | 165 | Flat bed | 27 | 2-2-2 |
| | A350 | 63 | 155 | Flat bed | 30 | 2-2-2 |
| Etihad | A330-200 | 51 | 185 | Flat bed | 22 | 1-2-1 |
| | B787-900 (JNB) | 22 | 185 | Flat bed | 28 | 1-2-1 |

| Airline | Aircraft | Seat width (cm) | Seat pitch (cm) | Recline | Seats | Configuration |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Kenya Airways | B737-300 | 51 | 102 | 19cm | 16 | 2-2 |
| | B737-700 | 51 | 102 | 25cm | 16 | 2-2 |
| | B737-800 | 52 | 119 | 33cm | 16 | 2-2 |
| KLM | B777-200 (JNB and CPT) | 58 | 160 | Flat bed | 34 | 2-2-2 |
| | B787-900 (CPT seasonal) | 58 | 106 | Flat bed | 30 | 1-2-1 |
| LATAM | B767-900 | 51 | 188 | Flat bed | 30 | 2-2-2 |
| Lufthansa | B747-800 (JNB-FRA) | 52 | 163 | Flat bed | 80 | 2-2-2 |
| | A340-600 (CPT-MUC) | 52 | 163 | Flat bed | 56 | 2-2-2 |
| | A340-300 (CPT-FRA) | 52 | 163 | Flat bed | 30 | 2-2-2 |
| Qantas | B747-400 | 55 | 203 | Flat sky bed | 56 | Main deck 2-3-2 Upper deck 2-2 |
| Qatar Airways | B787-788 | 76 | 203 | Flat bed | 22 | 1-2-1 |
| RwandAir | B737-800NG | 50 | 130 | 18cm | 16 | 2-2 |
| | B737-700NG | 50 | 94 | 13cm | 12 | 2-2 |
| SAA | A340-600 | 63 | 183 | Flat bed | 42 | 2-2-2 |
| | A340-300E | 63 | 183 | Flat bed | 38 | 2-2-2 |
| | A330-200 | 63 | 183 | Flat bed | 36 | 2-2-2 |
| | A320 | 53 | 98 | 18cm | 24 | 2-2 |
| | B737-800 | 45 | 90 | 10cm | 32 | 2-3 |
| | A319 | 49 | 90 | 10cm | 25 | 2-3 |
| Singapore Airlines | B777-200ER (CPT via JNB) | 76 | 130 | Flat bed | 26 | 1-2-1 |
| | A350-900 (JNB) | 71 | 130 | Flat bed | 42 | 1-2-1 |
| SWISS | A340-300 | 52 | 200 | Flat bed | 47 | Angled layout 1-2-1/2-2-1 |
| Turkish Airlines | A330-300 | 56 | 198 | Flat bed | 28 | 2-2-2 |
| Virgin Atlantic | B787-900 | 56 | 212 | Flat bed | 31 | Herringbone angled layout 1-1-1 |

Premium Economy

| Airline | Aircraft | Seat width (cm) | Seat pitch (cm) | Recline | Seats | Configuration |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| Air Austral | B737-800 NG | 44 | 89 | 115° | 18 | 2-2 |
| Air France | A380 (JNB) | 48 | 97 | 123° | 38 | 2-4-2 |
| | B777-200 (CPT seasonal) | 48 | 97 | 123° | 38 | 2-4-2 |
| | B777-300 (JNB) | 48 | 97 | 123° | 28 | 2-4-2 |
| British Airways | A380 (JNB) | 47 | 97 | 20cm | 56 | 2-3-2 |
| | B747-400 (CPT winter) | 47 | 97 | 18cm | 36 | 2-4-2 |
| | B777 (CPT seasonal) | 47 | 97 | 18cm | 44 | 2-4-2 |
| Cathay Pacific | B777-300 | 49 | 97 | 20cm | 32 | 2-4-2 |
| Delta Air Lines | B777LR | 47 | 89 | 15cm | 36 | 3-3-3 |
| El Al | B767 and B767ER | 46 | 92 | 32° more than economy class | 28 | 2-3-2 |
| Lufthansa | B747-800 (JNB-FRA) | 48 | 97 | 20cm | 32 | 2-4-2 |
| | A340-300 (CPT-FRA) | 48 | 97 | 20cm | 28 | 2-3-2 |
| | A340-600 (CPT-MUC) | 48 | 97 | 20cm | 28 | 2-3-2 |
| Qantas | B747-400 | 50 | 97 | 23cm | 32-40 | 2-4-2 |
| Singapore Airlines | A350-900 (JNB) | 50 | 97 | 20cm | 24 | 2-4-2 |
| Virgin Atlantic | B787-900 | 53 | 97 | 21cm | 35 | 2-3-2 |

Disclaimer: TNW has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this table but accepts no responsibility for incorrect information supplied by the airlines. Where airlines did not respond to requests for information, details were taken from Travelinfo.

From page 16 than an 'airline'," says **Darrin Thomas** of Virgin Atlantic.

Lounge access is also important to passengers, agents agree.

Passengers departing from Mauritius will enjoy the award-winning Amedee Maingard business-class lounge, while premium passengers flying Delta can make use of the SLOW Lounge in Johannesburg before resting at the Delta Sky Club in Atlanta, which includes an outdoor Sky Deck and offers a range of amenities from free WiFi to food and beverages plus showers.

LATAM passengers have access to the airline's partner lounges, courtesy of the oneworld alliance.

"The LATAM Airlines VIP Lounge in Terminal 3 of Guarulhos International Airport is the airport's premier lounge and is brought to life with materials endemic to the region, creating the feel of the local landscape and making travellers feel at home," says Martin.

Premium economy – an easy sell

THERE is significant opportunity for agents to upsell clients from economy class to premium economy.

The trend towards some premium passengers downgrading from business class, coupled with the increase in cost-conscious travellers looking for more value, has led to an increase in travellers booking premium economy class, travel agents say.

Responding to the survey run by eTNW, one agent said both business and leisure travellers had begun moving more toward premium economy to keep up with frequent flyer rewards.

"More pax are booking premium economy because they want a premium offering without the business-class price, and this makes it an easier sell for consultants," another agent commented.

Singapore Airlines introduced premium economy on its Johannesburg route in June and, according to **Sally George**, the cabin is

expected to prove popular with travellers due to the increased demand for this product.

"There is high demand for premium economy class with some corporates changing travel policies from business class to premium economy due to cost, and we have offered competitive launch fares of 10% off the standard premium economy-class fare in order to capitalise on this," she says.

The airline's premium economy class offers passengers a dedicated cabin, 35kg baggage allowance, priority check-in, boarding and baggage handling, 110% KrisFlyer miles and a choice of three meals.

A USB port is also included in the cabin, as well as a 34cm HD touchscreen TV monitor and a calf and foot rest.

LATAM Airlines has also responded to the call by economy-class passengers for something a bit better.



Sally George

The airline offers 14 'Space +' seats in its economy cabin that offer extra leg-room, more space and ease of access.

Similarly, Delta Air Lines offers Delta Comfort+, an upsell from the main cabin, which offers more leg-room and recline.

Says Virgin Atlantic's **Darrin Thomas**: "Our premium economy cabin offers

passengers a wonder wall – a space where passengers can stretch their legs, grab a snack and interact with cabin crew. It is a great social space for travellers."

Virgin also offers premium economy passengers a dedicated cabin and crew as well as dedicated check-in and priority boarding.

While SAA does not offer premium economy at this stage, one agent said this was a shame as travellers wanted to fly this class but also wanted to earn Voyager miles and fly SAA. The airline's spokesperson, **Tlali Tlali**, told TNW SAA was not against the idea of introducing this product on its aircraft.

"The introduction of a premium economy cabin is a possibility that we cannot rule out completely," he says. "We are especially presented with an opportunity to consider this cabin on the new A330 aircraft that we will take delivery of later this year."

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virgin atlantic
premium economy



Groundspan is a new online booking tool that manages chauffeur car bookings.

Virgin introduces new service for premium guests

VIRGIN Atlantic recently launched Groundspan, a new online booking tool that makes it quicker and easier for agents to make and manage chauffeur car bookings for their clients.

Groundspan provides an online booking tool that enables:

- Instant access for all chauffeur car booking requests.

- Convenient 24/7 booking. Agents or their clients can change the time/location or cancel the booking at any time between 330 days and 12 hours prior to departure, thus providing more flexibility.
- All customers' details are passed to the chauffeur car company so they can contact the customer with

any updates or issues.

There are also two other ways in which agents can facilitate these requests – via the Virgin Atlantic Airways website through 'Manage My Booking' or 'Customer Services'.

Once the service is booked, agents receive an instant confirmation email up to 330 days in advance of the journey.

Did you know?

- Air Mauritius is offering great fares on business-class tickets. Book flights from Mauritius to Perth for R25 090pp. Business-class fares from Mauritius to Hong Kong start from R25 750pp, Mauritius to Beijing from R29 370pp and Mauritius to Delhi from R24 480pp. All fares include taxes.
- SAA has introduced a promotional fare from both Durban and Cape Town to Mauritius, effective for all sales on/before August 31. Book flights from Durban to Mauritius from R2 450pp return, excluding taxes, or from Cape Town to Mauritius for R3 070pp return, excluding taxes. Travel is valid on/before September 25, as well as on/after October 10 and on/after November 30.



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Each seat on LATAM Airlines' premium business class offers a high-resolution 37cm screen and A/V system, a collection of 110 movies, including two new releases, eight recent hits, 10 Latin movies, 10 children's movies and 70 classic movies from across the decades. Seats also offer a USB port and air-conditioning power, giving travellers the chance to work on the move. Photo: LATAM

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TNW7759SD

Top tips to deliver that 'premium touch'

PAULA Martini, owner and consultant at Travel Dynamics, shares her top tips to help agents take care of premium travellers when they are transiting.

- Minimum connecting times set by airports and allowed by airlines don't always mean they are acceptable. Many European airlines offer a one-hour connection through Frankfurt, Paris and Zurich. This is not sufficient. Agents should look for alternatives, because weather and delays can happen and clients could be left stranded or having to get another flight.
- Many airlines offer free stopover hotels, for example Air Mauritius and Ethiopian Airlines. Offer these to your client and advise them that



Paula Martini

you can either pre-book this or they can contact the local representative for assistance.

- An important thing to remember when connecting

through Ethiopia with Ethiopian Airlines is that free visas are only given to transferring passengers. If your client changes their flight and has a voluntary stop in Addis Ababa, they are responsible for their own visa

- Many airports offer arrival and departure lounges that can be booked online. It is also good to ask your client if they have an American Express or Diners Card and see if they qualify for free entry. "I have a client who was paying for lounges in London, Paris and locally. I calculated that the entry fee to one lounge in London is the equivalent to a year's membership fee with Diners. This gave her access to over 300 lounges

around the world," notes Paula.

- Remember to always check transit visa requirements, especially for the UK. Clients often see specials on British Airways, for instance, and then forget they need a transit visa unless travelling to the USA or Canada.
- When a client has a long stopover, it is always better to offer a hotel close to the airport as this alleviates any stress from traffic when returning to the airport, depending on the length of the stopover.
- There is a simple rule for connecting flights: separate tickets mean separate check-in. One ticket means one check-in when travelling to your final destination. Sometimes a separate ticket

only saves you R1 000 but then the client loses their international baggage allowance and they have to check in twice.

- "Agents, remember to advise your client of this," Paula stresses.
- If there has been a delay on a flight and the client has an onward connection issued on one ticket, it is the airline's responsibility to assist the passengers with a hotel, meal voucher or even toiletries. "Clients often call me to assist when this happens and if an agent does anything to the ticket, then the client is liable for the cost. If the client contacts a local representative it could save them a large amount of money," Paula says.

To the point



SAA's business-class passengers receive a full-size pillow, duvet, mattress, three- to five-course meals, high-end beverages such as wine, as well as extensive programming of on-demand entertainment. The airline also offers tablets for entertainment on the Mauritius and Nairobi routes



SQ sports new aircraft

Singapore Airlines' new A350 aircraft departs from Johannesburg on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays. It offers a larger business class cabin with 42 seats, an increase of 38% on the Boeing 777-200ER which still operates the Cape Town-Johannesburg-Singapore service on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Photo: Singapore Airlines

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Did you know?

KLM offers an economy comfort seat on its Johannesburg and Cape Town routes on the B777-200 and B787-900 aircraft. It is not a separate cabin but it does have more leg-room and recline than normal economy class. On both aircraft it offers a seat width of 44cm, a seat pitch of 89cm, a recline of 116 degrees, 40 seats on the B777, 48 seats on the B787 and a configuration of 3-4-3 on the B777 and 3-3-3 on the B787.

Newsflash

Delta Air Lines is completing the roll-out of WiFi across its international fleet and, by August 31, every flight operating from Africa - including Johannesburg - will have this service. ■

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Obituary

■ **Jan Watkinson**, who founded ICAN Holidays in 1996, died at the age of 67 on June 9 following a long illness. Jan was known for her knack of building long-lasting relationships, both personally and professionally. She had a passion for China and the Far East and was one of the first tour operators to take a South African group to China in the late '80s.

"You seldom spoke to somebody about Jan without hearing how they had known each other for 10, 20 or even 30 years and had worked together and ended up as respected business partners and friends. Jan understood her clients and knew how to get them to visit places they would otherwise not have considered, and constantly, and pleasantly, surprised them," says her stepson, **Andrew van Zyl**.

Born in Wellington, New Zealand, Jan started her career in travel after joining Thomas Cook Travel in Wellington. A few years later she married a South African and after moving here, immediately became involved in the travel industry.

She opened one of the first guest houses in the Western Cape and subsequently established her own travel business, Westwood Travel, in Somerset West in 1984. She arranged numerous tours to flower shows and gardens, from the tulips in The Netherlands to the Chelsea Flower Show and many garden tours in China, with the head of the Stellenbosch botanical gardens, **Wim Tijmens**. Together, Jan



Jan Watkinson

and Wim took 17 tours to China.

Jan started China Horizons in 1996 and initially specialised in trips to China. Due to the demand from repeat clients, China Horizons branched out to the rest of the Far East and started trading as Far East Tours. As the company grew, offering tours beyond Asia, South America and other destinations, it was renamed ICAN Holidays.

"Jan was well loved and admired for her enduring commitment to her work in the travel industry. She shaped my view on life, and work. I learned from her views and perspectives and her wealth of knowledge in travel. We are all united in our grief and our memories of her incredible spirit," says colleague, **Sharon Kemp**.

She is survived by her stepson, Andrew, her two brothers and their families.

Jan had been ill for some time and during this time, gradually transferred the operational management of ICAN Holidays to **Riana Lourens** and appointed Andrew as a director. Riana manages a team of agents who have long-standing relationships with Jan and with ICAN. Andrew shares Jan's love of travel and people and her belief in loyalty and personal connections.

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For the record

In 'lata goes paperless' in *TNW* August 3, the incorrect web address to register on the updated lata Agency Management Solution was published. Registration can be accessed on the lata Customer Portal at www.iata.org/cs. *TNW* apologises for the error.

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| Hub | Percentage |
|-----------------|------------|
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| Istanbul | 16% |
| Hong Kong | 6% |
| Addis Ababa | 3% |
| Nairobi | 1% |

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Keep it personal



Last month Travel Counsellors launched its first consumer app, 'my TC'. The app provides leisure and corporate customers with instant access to travel information, itineraries, travel documents and offers constant contact with the customer's Travel Counsellor if required. Pictured here, staying in touch, are (from left) Travel Counsellors, **Marianda Maritz** and **Natalie Matthews**.
Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Africa – open skies by year-end

DARISE FOSTER

THE 23 African states that signed the January 2015 Declaration of Solemn Commitment towards the establishment of a Single African Air Transport Market by 2017 are expected to enter into open skies agreements by December 31.

The African Union Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) is currently working on the implementation guidelines towards open skies, which are expected to be released by the end of this year, lata vp for Africa, **Raphael Kuuchi** told *TNW* on the sidelines of the Acsa Aviation Barometer launch. "Once the implementation guidelines have been rolled out, the declaration will become effective and airlines from these signatory states will be able to fly freely between the countries," he says.

"There'll be an immediate increase in flight activity, because airlines that were

previously denied the opportunity to increase frequencies to certain destinations will be able to do so.

"There'll also be an increase in traffic volume and in competition and, as a result, fares are expected to decrease by 25-35% between city pairs," he says.

The travel time between signatory countries will also decrease, and more people will be afforded the opportunity to travel by air, adds Raphael.

The Declaration of Solemn Commitment uses the model of the Yamoussoukro Decision to immediately allow countries that are ready and willing to open up their markets. It was signed by 11 states at the AU Summit in January 2015. Since then, an additional 12 countries have signed up, bringing the total number to 23.

Currently, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Ghana, Congo Republic,

Senegal, Togo, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Benin make up 14 of the 23 countries that have signed the Declaration of Solemn Commitment.

Raphael told *TNW* that the Yamoussoukro Decision, which was signed by 44 heads of state in 1999, was supposed to be a continental liberalisation programme, but the quest for many African governments to protect weak national airlines had largely prevented its implementation.

"The African Union realised it was going to be very difficult to have all 44 countries wake up one day and say 'all of our markets are open,' so AFCAC decided to get countries immediately willing to open their markets to sign the declaration.

At present, carriers fly between countries using bilateral agreements, wherein the carrier is given a certain amount of traffic rights or freedom rights to operate into that country. ■



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