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# Non-refundable tix violate CPA

DEBBIE BADHAM

THE increasing number of airlines refusing to refund fuel surcharges or 'carrier-imposed' surcharges (see TNW August 10) has exposed a possible contradiction in suppliers' cancellation policies and the Consumer Protection Act.

**Carla da Silva**, Air Mauritius regional manager Southern Africa and Latin America, says the CPA makes reference to government taxes being refunded and, as such, the airline refunds all taxes, including the fuel surcharge, in order to ensure compliance.

Ceo of Asata, **Otto de Vries**, says there is no such thing as a non-refundable ticket in terms of the CPA. He says section 17 deals with consumers' rights to cancel advance reservations, bookings or orders.

The Act says a supplier that makes a commitment or accepts a reservation to supply goods or services at a later date may impose a reasonable charge for cancellation unless the consumer is unable to honour the booking because of death or hospitalisation.

"Consumers may cancel and the airline may then charge a reasonable cancellation fee," says **Trevor Hattingh**, media liaison officer and spokesperson

of the National Consumer Commission (NCC).

Advocate **Louis Nel** says, in terms of Section 17, a cancellation fee is determined to be reasonable using four guidelines – the nature of goods or services booked; the length of notice of cancellation provided by the consumer; the reasonable potential for the service provider to find an alternative consumer between the time of receiving the cancellation notice and the time of the cancelled reservation; and the general practice of the industry in question.

This practice has never been challenged, says Otto, and at the moment the travel industry is acting in a void. He explains that, because the CPA is very broad, each industry is required to prepare its own set of consumer-focused codes relevant to that sector. "The set of codes for the airline industry is still in draft form and has not yet been delivered to the consumer," says Otto, adding that, because agents sell the airline industry's product it then becomes difficult for agents to define their own codes when it comes to issues such as refunds and the like.

While resource challenges have not yet permitted Asata to take it before

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## STOP PRESS

Reliable industry sources say the new government travel policy that came into effect on July 1 is currently under review and is likely to be changed, with a new implementation date of April 2017. Sources could not confirm if the changes were applicable to all government departments or only those that have yet to implement the new policy. National Treasury was unable to give comment at the time of going to press.



## Dare to dream

Thompsons Holidays is hosting Disney workshops for agents around South Africa so they can learn more about Disney and gain skills in selling the product. Workshops will be held from 09h00-11h30 in Cape Town on September 13 at Lagoon Beach Hotel and in Durban on September 14 at the Riverside Hotel. Two sessions (the second from 14h00-16h30) will be held in Johannesburg on September 15 at Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton. Agents interested in attending the workshops should RSVP by August 25. Pictured here, exploring Disneyland, are **Deline Venter** (left) and **Jessica Kreusch** sales executives of Thompsons Holidays. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## New airline plans SA route

DORINE REINSTEIN

CONGO Airways is planning to launch a multi-weekly flight from Kinshasa to Johannesburg from November 1, ceo of the airline, **Désiré Balazire Bantu**, told TNW.

The airline will deploy an A320-200 on the route, with 10 seats in business class and 150 in economy.

The flag carrier of the Democratic Republic of the Congo started operations in October last year with eight domestic routes. Ownership

of the airline is divided between government and local and international investors. Désiré says the service to Johannesburg will mark the airline's international debut.

According to **Andries Ntjane**, deputy director: licensing and permits of the SA Department of Transport, the airline has yet to apply for a licence to operate on the route to OR Tambo. He says, however, that this is not a time-consuming process and that the airline could still obtain a licence in

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**From page 1**  
the NCC, Otto says it is only a matter of time before the association raises the issue.  
For the time being, the association has approached several airlines directly to engage with them as partners prior to going to the NCC.

TNW asked the NCC under which circumstances it would consider investigating the issue of non-refundability of tickets, fuel surcharges or carrier-imposed surcharges on 'non-refundable' tickets, but the commission was unable to respond by the time of publishing. ■



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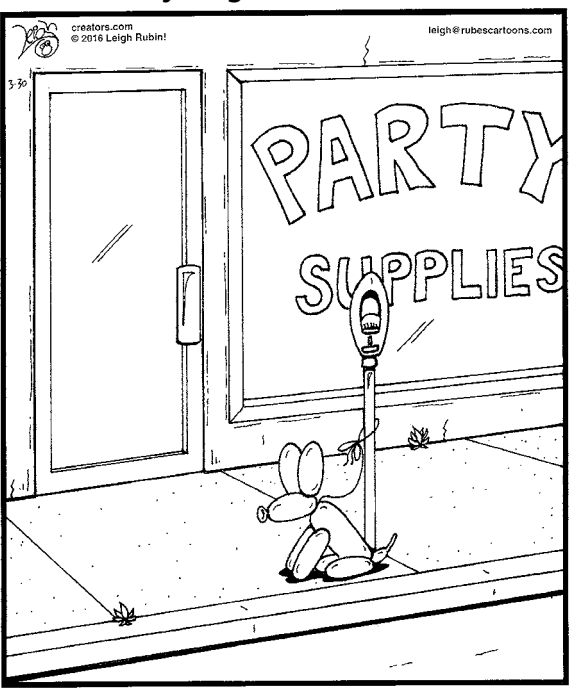


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Trade assesses cost of services

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

Asata is reviewing conducting a cost-of-services study to match the trade's current business needs.

Ceo of Asata, **Otto de Vries**, says circumstances such as the introduction of the new government travel policy and SAA's decision to restructure its override commission agreements with agents (see TNW May 27, 2015) have changed how travel agents do business.

It has been at least ten years since Asata has conducted a cost-of-services study. It would look at the actual costs of all the types of services agents offer to a specific account.

"We want to find a model that is fit for purpose," says **Vanya Lessing**, ceo of Sure Travel. "Essentially, we hope to be able to say, 'here are the different types of models that are operational – what is the best model for you?'"

Most agents work on a

model that is based on the value the agent provides to the client, says Vanya, with the current business model being a service fee model based on transaction fees and management fees.

However, a large amount of income was derived from overrides and commissions due to the value agents brought to suppliers. "In a way, the previous model, specifically in the case of government travel, the service fees were being subsidised by income earned from the supplier. With no supplier income, those service fees go up," says Vanya.

"There are still many agents who are reliant on overrides and then bastardise the market with inaccurate service fees and thus the true price of travel is not costed correctly," says **Marco Cristofoli**, md of Harvey World Travel Southern Africa. He says most Harvey World franchisees charge an appropriate service fee and that the industry needs to reduce its reliance on overrides in order to level the playing field.

"I'm amazed that the industry is still so reliant on overrides," says **Garth Wolff**, ceo of eTravel. He says that although the consortium earns income from overrides, eTravel ITCs are advised to see override agreements as "cream" and not as their main income. Garth says, with the decrease in override agreements the industry has seen, travel agents are going to be forced to make up their income in service fees and how that fee is constructed.

"I can tell you, though, that overrides aren't going to disappear," says Garth. He says airlines need a sales force to sell their product and that, regardless of what one calls the payment the trade receives from airlines to act as a sales force, airlines will quickly realise that selling through the trade will prove less expensive than employing a separate sales team. ■

New airline plans SA route

**From page 1**  
time for its planned launch in November.

For next year, Congo Airways is also looking at launching flights to Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. The airline announced its international expansion plans after it secured its Air Operators Certificate (AOC) just a few months ago.

However, despite the fact that the airline says

it will focus on innovation and excellence and that it integrates all the international safety measures, Congo Airways is currently blacklisted and banned from operating in the European Union.

For South African travel agents, the EU ban is a reason for concern. **Rachael Penaluna**, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel, says: "My concern is that all Congo and DRC airlines are under question by the EU and most are blacklisted. From a duty-of-care perspective, we would not encourage clients to travel on Congo Airways if an alternative route was available on a more reputable airline."

SAA currently operates six times a week to Kinshasa, using a Boeing 737. Rachael says her clients are likely to opt for SAA for safety reasons, even if Congo Airways were to offer more affordable fares. ■

Helen Johnston selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Southern Sun Hyde Park.** Packages from R2 220 per room per night. Offer includes one night's accommodation, breakfast and a gift card. Valid for stays until March 31, 2017.
- **Curious Traveller.** Brazil package from R13 365pp sharing. Offer includes return transfers, five nights' four-star accommodation in Rio Copacabana with a daily buffet breakfast, hotel taxes, half-day tour with English guide and one gourmet lunch at Churrascaria. Valid until December 31.
- **Legacy Hotels & Resorts (Sandton).** Indulge at the Michelangelo Hotel from R1 480pp per night sharing. From R2 370 per single room per night. Rate includes one night's accommodation in a superior room with breakfast at the Piccolo Mondo restaurant, complimentary managed WiFi, romantic turndown and a choice of spa treatment. Available Friday, Saturday and public holidays only. Valid for stays until January 31, 2017.
- **SA Rugby Travel (Durban).** SA vs. New Zealand Rugby Championship from R5 250pp sharing includes return flights from Johannesburg, two nights' accommodation with breakfast daily, Category A match ticket for October 8. Land-only package from R4 250 per person sharing, excludes flights. Set travel dates October 7-9.
- **Discoveries Worldwide.** China – Harbin Ice Festival from R11 000pp sharing. Rate includes return transfers, three nights' accommodation with breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, touring with English-speaking guides. Offer excludes flights. Valid for travel in December.





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Hello South America!

LATAM Airlines has begun its drive to generate industry in South Africa. **Martin Modarelli**, commercial director UK and Nordic countries, says when the airline launches its service between Johannesburg and São Paulo in October, it expects that initially around 15% to 25% of the flights will be filled by SA travellers. Its goal, however, is to strengthen the South African point of sale and if the numbers show positive growth, the airline will then consider increasing its three times a week service. In terms of its competitor on the route, SAA, Martin says LATAM's goal is not to draw market share away from SAA but to position itself as the go-to for destinations beyond São Paulo. Networking at LATAM's signature Latin American road show, held at Montecasino in Johannesburg, are (from left), **Poppy Paulo** (ITC for Tourvest), **Silvana Artico** (LATAM) and **Rosmery Guevara** (Trade, Tourism and Investment Office of Peru). Photo: Debbie Badham

Air Seychelles ups codeshare agreement

**A**IR Seychelles and Air Madagascar are to broaden their current codeshare agreement. Air Madagascar has added its MD flight code on four weekly Air Seychelles flights between Antananarivo and Seychelles and on four weekly Air Seychelles services between Seychelles and Abu Dhabi. The airlines hope to encourage more visitors to the Seychelles and Madagascar. The flights operate on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. "Deepening our relationship with Air Madagascar will enable us to better promote tourism in the Indian Ocean utilising our four weekly Antananarivo services," said **Roy Kinnear**, ceo of Air Seychelles. This expanded agreement will help to increase destination choices in the Indian Ocean region with the addition of one-stop connections between Madagascar and Abu Dhabi via the Seychelles. The new codeshare flights will be made available for sale and travel from September. ■

AF and KLM launch seat selection fee

AIR France and KLM will now charge a fee for selecting a seat at the time of purchase. The fee will be €20 (R298) or 5 500 Flying Blue Miles for Air France and KLM long-haul flights. For KLM medium-haul flights the charge is €5 (R75) or 2 000 Flying Blue miles. This fee doesn't apply to Air France short- and medium-haul flights yet. Flying Blue Silver, Gold and Platinum members, passengers with an Economy Flex fare ticket, passengers with reduced mobility and children travelling alone won't be charged a fee for selecting their seats. Families travelling with children under the age of 12 also won't be charged. Travellers who check in 30 hours before departure can select their seats free of charge. ■

Marriott enters Kigali

MARRIOTT International has opened the Kigali Marriott Hotel, its first hotel in Rwanda, in the central business district of the city. "We are thrilled to be opening a Marriott Hotel in Rwanda and believe the property will play a significant role in catering for the desires of business and leisure tourists alike," said **Alex Kyriakidis**, president and md, Marriott International Middle East and Africa. The 254-room hotel is a 20-minute drive from Kigali International Airport. The rooms and 25 suites are equipped with high-speed Internet and 122cm LCD TVs. The hotel has four restaurants and three bars. There's also a spa with a 450-sqm swimming pool and fitness centre. ■

Globus signs a new SA partner

PERFECT Destinations has partnered with Globus to represent its group of tour companies in South Africa. Perfect Destinations is based in Cape Town and will offer sales support to travel agents for the Globus, Cosmos, Monograms and Avalon Waterways brands. At the same time, Gateway Travel and Tours will continue to represent Globus and its brands in South Africa. **Keith Gow**, md of Gateway Travel and Tours, says South Africa is a diverse market for retail travel agents and it's not uncommon for companies to have multiple representation. ■

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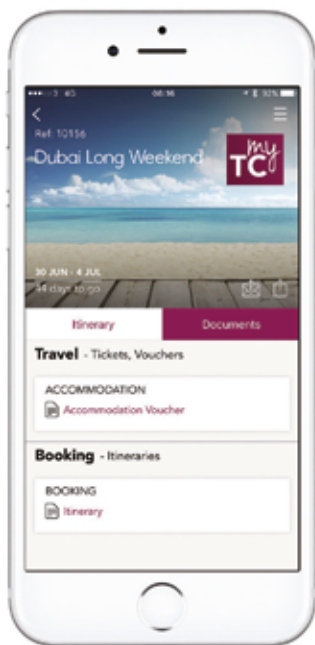


## TAP INTO CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY: TC'S IN APP FORM



In a digital age with ever-increasing targeted marketing and the so-called digital "noise" from the stream of social channels we're constantly plugged into, one of the questions that arises is how to reach customers and create engaging, personalised content. As is often reported in industry news, tech-savvy consumers are well-versed in targeted digital marketing activity (such as paid search advertising) and are instead placing their trust in online user generated content (such as blog posts) and peer reviews. If this is a digital age where online and tech expertise reign supreme though, where does it leave ITCs? At Travel Counsellors, cutting-edge technology isn't just powering ITCs forward into the digital age - it's enhancing their personal relationships with their customers. Technology might make the world go round but nothing can replace a personal relationship and that's why Travel Counsellors created a free app that is a virtual extension of their agents - with each TC available at the tap of a button. As Travel Counsellor Nicci Hayden, part of the focus group for the new app, said, "It definitely won't replace the personal relationships that I have with my clients, it will only enhance the service I provide them with, as well as remind them that I am always there for them." The combination of the intelligent use of customer data, cutting-edge technology and personal customer knowledge means that Travel Counsellors' agents are able to provide their customers with expert travel advice that's always

unique and personal. And it's this personalisation that's key to the future of the travel industry.



### CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY AND ITCs

The 'my TC' travel app, which was launched in July and is currently being used in over 70 countries worldwide, shows how cutting-edge technology can be combined with personalised content to enhance the Travel Counsellors' relationships with their customers. Free to download for Android and iPhone, 'my TC' enables customers to view their itineraries and travel documentation (even offline), to count down the number of days to their trip and to share their travel details. TC's can

personalise customers' booking information with photographs, names and trip notes for each part of the journey, and customers can share their Travel Counsellors' contact details via social media channels. In the same way that we see consumers share their travel experiences through social media posts, Travel Counsellors' customers can now share their Travel Counsellors' details and create shareable content that their peers can engage with. As Nicci commented, "With the sharing functionality, my clients can pass on my details to their friends, families and colleagues, which will encourage referrals and help me continue to grow my business!"

### INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY - AND OUR TC'S

For Travel Counsellors, investing in personal development and continued learning are key building blocks of the global franchise. With over 140 Travel Counsellors in South Africa, extensive training is given to them and developing new technology enables our Travel Counsellors to be the best they can be, supporting them in providing the high level of personal care that Travel Counsellors are known for. The dynamic in-house booking system, Phenix, powers each franchise. The IT support team is available to deal with queries whenever they appear, at any time of day or night. And the new app, 'my TC', highlights the excellent customer service the Travel Counsellors provide. With Travel Counsellors' commitment to its agents' continued learning and investment in technology, each Travel Counsellor

is able to stay ahead of the curve and use technology to power their franchise forward.

Watch the video to find out how Travel Counsellors' 'my TC' app works: <http://bit.ly/29pN6Yk>



### SELECTING A HOST COMPANY: TECHNOLOGY VS COMMISSION

The technology that powers our Travel Counsellors' franchises is provided to them free of charge. We invest heavily in technology to ensure that our Travel Counsellors stay ahead of the market and can win more business. There is an increasing amount of competition arising from the internet, and it is vital that when an agent is considering an ITC partner that they consider a partner who will give them the tools to help them win more business and ensure that their partners are developing technology that will help them compete in the industry. If your host company doesn't provide this technology to you, but instead promises you a higher commission split then consider how much time and money it will cost you to invest in this technology so that you are able to compete against online competitors. It's not only the initial costs to consider but also the maintenance and subsequent enhancements so that you can stay ahead of the game.

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# Romantic getaways

How can agents establish themselves as travel gurus on romance?  
Debbie Badham consults the experts.

## Establish yourself as an expert

**R**OMANTIC getaways are lucrative and agents can benefit by carving a niche for themselves in this area of travel.

Consumers have access to an overwhelming amount of travel information via the Internet and, as a result, have become “generalist travel agents”, says **Lesley Simpson**, spokesperson for the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). “When travellers seek help, they’re seeking a true specialist.”

In order to develop their expertise, she suggests that agents should try to sample the products they sell, taking part in FAM trips where possible, so that they are able to speak knowledgeably when advising on packages.

“Do your homework on the applicable destinations,” agrees Travel Counsellor, **Lize Roodt**, adding that agents need to understand the products they are selling, for example which resorts are for adults only.

The key is to understand

what the client is looking for by asking a range of questions that can help define the experience they seek, advises md of Trafalgar, **Theresa Szejwallo**. “For example, are the couple celebrating a milestone anniversary and looking for a bucket list-type of destination in which to commemorate their love?”

In this case, agents could suggest Trafalgar’s newest destination, Iceland. “Iceland is anything but ordinary with its glaciers, lava flows, hot springs and the gorgeous Blue Lagoon – perfect for creating new memories and reliving old ones,” says Theresa.

Similarly if the couple are looking for a trendy city escape, they can try Trafalgar’s City Explorers or if they want to escape off the beaten track in a smaller more intimate setting, Theresa recommends Trafalgar’s Hidden Journeys.

Specifically, agents must understand what their clients regard as a romantic getaway, what their budget is and if they have any

common interests they want to pursue, comments **Inge Dobihal**, co-owner of Austria Connection.

“For some it might be a romantic city. For others it is a beach holiday or a small remote place in the mountains, or in a nature reserve. Others may want to enjoy the winter scenery and a cosy fireplace. For some the most important factor is the hotel, for others it is rather the experience of the destination. Some are just looking for a relaxing stay with not much to do; others are looking for places with lots of activities, whether it is nightlife or sport.”

Inge says no ready-made package suits all, therefore everything Austria Connection does is tailor-made.

“We suggest that travel agents consult closely with tour operators to get the best advice. We can book certain hotels that have honeymoon suites, we can book lower categories of hotels and arrange a special welcome



**Joanne Visagie**

arrangement with flowers and a bottle of wine. We can also advise about special places they should visit – restaurants, bars, horse-drawn carriage rides, special spots in nature. The more we understand about the travellers, the more easily we can come up with a tailor-made package.”

Something that would also help agents establish

themselves as experts would be to dedicate a certain area of their website to romantic travel, alerting clients to their offerings and value-adds, suggests **Rina Cilliers**, gm of sales, marketing and reservations for the Legend Hospitality Group.

“They could also consider offering value-adds for romantic travellers to show their dedication to this sector, such as offering the chance to win a prize of a second honeymoon if they book their honeymoon with them.”

Important for agents, says **Joanne Visagie**, tours sales and marketing manager for Beachcomber Tours, is to familiarise themselves with the different honeymoon package inclusions as well as the available discounts, added perks, special offers and gifts. “Ask a Beachcomber consultant specifically for one ‘romantic’ aspect per property or must-do activity when they are quoting so they can make these recommendations to the groom or the couple.”

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# Make sure you get the right training

TRAINING is a must for agents who want to specialise in romantic travel, the experts agree.

With so many products and destinations available on the market, training is key and resorts need to provide as much information to the trade as possible, says **Alexis Bekker**, head of sales and marketing – South Africa and Africa for LUX\* Resorts and Hotels.

Travel Counsellor, **Lize Roodt** agrees, and says agents should identify the brands they want to know more about and then take part in training webinars that can help them.

“At LUX\* we provide training through our dedicated sales team on the road, with extensive brochure and marketing material. However, what sets us apart in training is our online training through our extranet platform, EXCHANGE, which offers a full online training section, EXPERT.

“EXPERT provides in-depth detailed training on each of our resorts with a section on romantic travel. This training is done online, in your own time, and you are always able to refer back to the site at any time for more information or a refresh,” comments Alexis.

Similarly, Trafalgar offers Wanderlust Training throughout the year and **Theresa Szejwallo** conducts on-site training sessions with many of the consortiums. “If an agent wishes to learn more about Trafalgar and how our various travel styles suit their clients, we are more than happy to arrange a webinar, on-site training, or they’re welcome to join our Wanderlust sessions,” she says.

TAT runs workshops on Travelinfo and is often



**Lize Roodt**

invited by tour operators to offer training. The authority also organises group trips to Thailand for agents to gain first-hand experience.

To help agents learn more about Seychelles as a ‘romantic’ destination, Air Seychelles and the Seychelles Tourism Board also undertake travel agent familiarisation trips, showcasing the product and destination. Other training platforms available to agents are product workshops; Travelinfo online training; agent breakfast presentations and the Seychelles annual road show held in four cities across South Africa.

World Leisure Holidays hosts an annual road show that gives agents the opportunity to meet with hotel managers face to face and learn about all the little special touches they can offer to the traveller. “We also have a very comprehensive website with information on all of our products,” says national sales manager, **Cathie Bester**. “What’s more, our fantastic team are ready and willing to assist travel agents in offering advice and information on all the destinations and products that we sell.”



*Seven Seas Explorer, the ‘most luxurious ship ever built’.* Photo: Regent Seven Seas Cruises

## Romance on the ‘Seven Seas’

REGENT Seven Seas recently unveiled its newest addition, the *Seven Seas Explorer*. Dubbed by Regent the ‘most luxurious ship ever built’, the ship is a good option for couples in search of something truly exclusive.

Regent budgeted US\$450m (R6,17bn) to build the *Seven Seas Explorer*, making it the most expensive luxury ship ever built. The ship features extravagantly designed

theatres and lounges, opulent and spacious suites and five gourmet restaurants.

At 55 254 gross registered tonnes and carrying only 750 guests, the ship has one of the highest space ratios and highest crew to guest ratios in the cruise industry.

It also features a new category of luxury suite, the nearly 418-sqm Regent Suite. The luxury liner will spend its inaugural season in Europe

before heading to Miami for a series of Caribbean voyages.

The cruise line is currently offering a special on a sailing from Monte Carlo to Athens from October 4-18.

Fares start from US\$3 590pp (R50 957). Ports of call include: La Spezia (Cinque Terre), Florence/Pisa (Livorno), Rome (Civitavecchia), Sorrento/Capri and Nauplion, Mykonos.

## Book it!

- Trafalgar offers special preview savings on a range of its best-selling Europe & Britain guided holidays that will see travellers receive 10% off 2016 prices for travel in 2017. Trafalgar guests will also receive an early payment discount of 10%. Also, with Trafalgar’s Rand Price Guarantee, no matter what the currency does, the price is guaranteed.
- Beachcomber is offering five nights in Mauritius from R13 400pps. The package is available at a selection of Beachcomber’s four- and five-star resorts and includes airfare departing Johannesburg (incl taxes), return transfers and full board. Special touches include a romantic candlelit dinner, 15-20% saving on spa treatments and a Beachcomber boutique gift. The offer is valid for travel until September 29.

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Travellers can also consider more cost-effective options in South Africa

## Romance on a budget

DESPITE the bucket-list nature of romantic travel like honeymoons or weddings, budgets remain important for travellers.

To assist travellers with a more affordable option, **Edwin Swan**, sales and marketing manager for Dream Hotels and Resorts, suggests that agents investigate alternative destinations. "Romantic isn't necessarily five-star, but a unique experience."

To this end, the Legend Hospitality Group's **Rina Cilliers** says travellers should consider more cost-effective options in South Africa such as a beach getaway in Plettenberg Bay at the Group's Whalesong Hotel & Hydro or a Limpopo safari getaway at the Entabeni Safari Conservancy or Legend Golf & Safari Resort, both of which offer

honeymoon packages and inclusions.

"People forget there are a lot of beautiful places in South Africa," says Travel Counsellor, **Lize Roodt**. She says many couples are travelling locally for romantic getaways, doing road trips around the country."

However, **Maja Gedosev**, head of Corporate Affairs for Air Seychelles, says South African honeymoons aren't necessarily cheaper than travelling to an overseas destination. "Agents need to negotiate the best rates with hotels and make sure they sell well in advance."

Agents should suggest that the couple remain as flexible as possible in terms of travel dates, advises Beachcomber's **Joanne Visagie**. "Travelling in a more affordable season can mean that package rates are

more cost-effective."

Many South African couples get married between February and April and our Autumn, Winter and Spring (AWS) itineraries run from November through to April and fit nicely in this window period, says Trafalgar's **Theresa Szejwallo**.

"It's important for agents to be aware of this as our AWS product is up to 30% cheaper than travelling in the high season."

Thailand is still regarded as one of the most popular and affordable honeymoon destinations – Phuket in particular, points out TAT's **Lesley Simpson**. "Agents should not think of Phuket as just a 'party island' as there are so many other beaches for consideration that will appeal to the more discerning traveller."

## Couples want adventure!

COUPLES are increasingly seeking unique experiences for romantic escapes.

Travel Counsellor, **Lize Roodt**, says agents should investigate destinations where people wouldn't normally think of going. "Couples could tailor-make a road trip round South Africa or head off the beaten track in Namibia. They could even include places like Vietnam with its incredible culture and beautiful beaches. Indonesia also has beautiful islands people wouldn't necessarily think of visiting."

LUX\*'s **Alexis Bekker** says the group has seen an increase in requests and bookings for Réunion, which is an ideal adventure-style island. When staying at LUX\* Saint Gilles, says Alexis, guests enjoy the best of both worlds as it's the only five-star resort on the beach.

**Hélène Bezuidenhout**, regional manager of Atout France, says there is much for the adventure traveller to enjoy in Réunion. "Whether hiking through the Unesco heritage regions that cover 42% of the island, canyoning down waterfalls, gliding along in a glass-bottom boat or having a go at stand-up paddling, there are non-stop activities to keep couples entertained. Add to that the culture and the plethora of restaurants offering local and international cuisine, and travellers are in for a treat."

Combining relaxation with adventure is a good option agrees, WLH's **Cathie Bester**. "We are now selling a Réunion and Mauritius combination package, whereby you can experience some of the exciting activities in Réunion and then end your holiday with a relaxing few days at one of the stunning Mauritian resorts."

Couples looking for something a little more off the beaten track are well-suited to Trafalgar's Hidden Journeys travel style, says **Theresa Szejwallo**. "All Hidden Journeys cater for no more than 26 guests, which makes for an intimate group setting."

She recommends the Secrets of Ireland tour, where guests enjoy a holiday that includes stays in fairytale castles such as Ballynahinch Castle in Galway. Another great option, suggests Theresa, is Secrets of Italy, on which guests get to stay in King Carlo Alberto of Savoy's beautifully restored country



"There is much for the adventure traveller to enjoy in Réunion."

**Hélène Bezuidenhout**

estate and enjoy a Be My Guest lunch with a local family on their wine estate.

Other European options perfect for a romantic getaway with a difference, says Austria Connection's **Inge Dobihi**, include Vienna, which, apart from its historical and cultural importance, is famous for its cosy wine taverns and coffee houses. "Alternatively, Salzburg is a small city with many baroque buildings and narrow cobblestone streets, surrounded by the lovely 'Sound of Music' countryside."

Inge also recommends Croatia. "Dubrovnik is a beautiful medieval town and is famous for its many picturesque bays and beaches."

When it comes to Thailand, TAT's **Lesley Simpson** recommends the less commercialised area of Khao Lak. "Another relatively new area worthwhile suggesting, especially for the more adventurous at heart, is Khao Sok National Park where guests are given the opportunity to interact with elephants – not ride them – kayak down rivers, explore gentle rapids and enjoy traditional Thai food. Couples can then retire to bed in romantic tents floating on crystal-clear blue waters and receive an early-morning wake-up to the sound of gibbons as they swing between the trees."

On the local front, Dream Hotels and Resorts' **Edwin Swan** says the group has found that destinations outside the main cities are becoming popular for shorter stays. "Northern KZN and the West Coast are becoming popular for wellness or uniquely intimate experiences."



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# Lapland offers a truly unforgettable experience!

HONEYMOON travel is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and presents agents with the challenge of suggesting an itinerary that is truly special.

**Penny Bannerman**, owner of Curious Traveller, specialises in putting together unusual, bucket-list adventures for travellers. She spoke to *TNW* about an option for agents to sell to honeymoon couples that will truly blow their minds.

Lapland, in the north of Finland, is a fairytale winter land. “When people think of ‘snow romance’ they think of ski holidays,” says Penny, “but Lapland, the Antarctic and the poles offer highly romantic adventures.”

It’s easy to see what Penny means when she describes the couple arriving to light snow at the airport and heading to have lunch at Santa’s workshop, where the young at heart could even help the elves make gifts.

“From there they could settle into their Igloo Hotel for the evening,” suggests Penny, explaining that the igloos are made of special glass that won’t mist over

and include technology that wakes guests to see the Aurora lights.

Just 15 minutes from the Igloo Hotel is the Ice Hotel, which travellers can visit for dinner. “Everything from the tables to the plates is made of ice,” comments Penny.

“The venue even has a chapel where travellers can marry if they wish to.”

The list of unusual but highly romantic activities that couples can experience is endless. Whether it’s walking through the Lappish forest at night or heading out on a snowmobile to hunt the Aurora, the magic this destination offers would be difficult to beat.

“While out on their adventure, travellers can listen to the fairytales of the forest and proceed to an open campfire where they are given hot chocolate and biscuits,” says Penny. “The more adventurous travellers could even try reindeer soup!”

Ice fishing and husky dog safaris are also on the list of unusual excursions for travellers to experience.

Reaching the destination can provide a romantic



In the Ice Hotel, even the beds are made of ice. Photo: The Ice Hotel

experience in itself. Penny says travellers generally either stop over in Helsinki to reach Lapland or alternatively they can travel to the destination overnight by train, adding the romance of train travel to the adventure.

Her recommendation for travellers wanting to experience Lapland is to spend six days to a week exploring the destination.

This will cost them roughly R31 000 per person,

excluding their flight, but including breakfast. Surprisingly, this is more or less the same that a ski package would cost.

“Iceland does offer a slightly more affordable option and while travellers are not as snowbound in Iceland, it does have the thermal geysers for couples to experience.

“They could also end up spending the evening in the beautiful geothermal spa, the Blue Lagoon.”

Not surprisingly Penny recommends Lapland or Iceland for the more adventurous traveller. She adds that agents need to book travel to this destination quite far in advance as it books up quickly.

Travellers also have a small window of opportunity to book these adventures as these activities can only really be experienced during the months of January, February and March.



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TNW7762SD



Honeymooners can island-hop on the *Pegasus* motor yacht. Photo: Variety Cruises

## Tying the knot in Réunion

JUST four hours from Johannesburg and with no visas required, Réunion is a good choice of wedding venue for South Africans.

Although they cannot legally marry in Réunion, South Africans can still enjoy a special ceremony with close family and friends, making it a great option for those on a budget, says the Réunion Tourism Board's **Hélène Bezuidenhout**. "Couples who choose to celebrate their marriage in Réunion can hire a large home for a group of friends and family or can mark their special occasion with a reception at one of the island's hotels." The tourism board can assist in finding a venue for this special holiday.

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## Island-hopping in the Seychelles

IT CAN be tricky for agents to deliver a romantic breakaway that falls within a couple's budget and time constraints. Discover the World suggests island-hopping in the Seychelles as a good solution.

Variety Cruises offer 'Sey-magique with a touch of Greek' on its exclusive motor yacht *Pegasus*, which accommodates only 42 people in 21 cabins, says **Sabrina Allcock**, director of Discover the World South Africa, which represents Variety Cruises in this market.

"They'll be welcomed aboard the *Pegasus* with a cocktail and the keys to their secluded little

honeymoon sanctuary on the sun deck. After a quick safety drill and introduction to the ship, they'll set sail for St Anne where they can swim or snorkel in pristine waters among tropical fish and the occasional green turtles," she says.

Sundowners on the deck are followed by traditional Mediterranean and local Seychellois Creole dinners as well as Greek or Segá dancing on deck. "Or simply star-gazing alone under the magnificent island skies," comments Sabrina.

Variety Cruises offers a different, secluded island paradise excursion every day, including mangrove forest walks, meeting giant

tortoises and endangered bird life, beach barbecues and snorkelling, swimming or simply soaking up the sun on the beach.

"The cruise line offers three-, four- and seven-night cruises, after which the couple may want to spend a night or two on Praslin, where they'll discover the legend of the Coco de Mer – the male and female palm trees that are said to uproot themselves at night to consummate their love by moonlight," says Sabrina.

Discover the World will package the romantic breakaway and include a bottle of bubbly in the honeymoon suite on the *Pegasus*.

## How to add that special touch

WHEN dealing with couples seeking romance, additional extras and that special touch are essential to an agent's success in sealing the deal.

Everything must be taken care of, says Travel Counsellor, **Lize Roodt**. "It's all about the little extras like making sure the hotel gives a romantic turndown." She warns agents to check that the hotel room has a double bed as this is not always a given.

Lize also points out there

are a number of suppliers who offer a wide range of value-adds.

"Special occasions are always a cause for celebration," says **Cathie Bester**. As such, World Leisure Holidays offers a variety of packages that are available at various resorts. "Our exclusive Sun Resorts properties offer fantastic honeymoon specials with great benefits, including sparkling wine in the guests' room and a romantic candlelit dinner.

The hotel also always gives an exclusive gift to the couple as a memento of their stay."

Similarly, the Beachcomber honeymoon and wedding anniversary packages include various gifts and perks that are included at no additional charge, for example savings on spa treatments and excursions as well romantic candlelit dinners.

For the honeymoon market, LUX\* offers a 70% discount on the accommodation for the bride. "Added to this is our honeymoon package. We offer a romantic dinner for two – usually on the beach, weather depending – sparkling wine and a few special gifts for the guests. If we are advised of special occasions for romantic travel, we always go the extra mile and offer a few surprises along the way. For example, the guests could find a beautiful picture frame in their room as a gift with a picture we snapped during their stay," says **Alexis Bekker**.

Dream Hotels and Resorts offers fully inclusive packages including spa treatments and other activities, wine tastings, dinner and more.

Airlines often also offer special deals for romantic travellers. Air Seychelles has honeymoon fares for couples getting married in the Seychelles or travelling to Seychelles for a honeymoon. ■

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## Sey some more...

Seychelles Tourism recently hosted its annual roadshow in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. Over 350 agents attended the workshops, where 13 exhibitors, including Air Seychelles, Beachcomber Tours, The Holiday Factory, Thompsons Holidays, World Leisure Holidays, Variety Cruises and Cruises International, showcased their products. Pictured here (from left) are Thompsons Holidays advertising co-ordinator, **Rethabile Dhladla**; trainee sales representative, **Given Mashaya**; and advertising co-ordinator, **Roxann Manning**. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## Mavericks in travel!



**Carla da Silva**, Air Mauritius regional manager: Southern Africa and Latin America, recently celebrated the successful launch of the bestselling *Expert Mavericks*, in which her journey to success is featured. The book tells stories of ordinary South Africans who have done extraordinary things and was compiled by International Laughter and Happiness Professor, **Shareen Richter**. A total of 13 'mavericks' in their respective fields share their personal stories in an effort to empower other South Africans to become mavericks in any and every sphere of life. All proceeds of book sales will go to the Smile Foundation, which aids children who suffer from treatable facial anomalies. Carla is pictured here at the launch at Melrose Arch on July 21. Photo: Debbie Badham

## Appointments

■ **Nic Vlok**, gm of operations at Mango, has been appointed acting ceo of the airline as of August 1. This follows the resignation of founding ceo, **Nico Bezuidenhout**, who joined fastjet at the end of July. Nic was Mango's acting ceo during Nico Bezuidenhout's secondment to SAA in 2014/15. The board would commence its search for a new chief executive shortly, Mango said in a statement.

■ **Michéll Fourie**, has left her post at Air Namibia as commercial services South Africa: manager sales and marketing. Michéll will be pursuing a career at Voyagers Travel in Zambia.

■ The Travel Corporation has appointed **Puleng Putu** in the position of TTC Sales Support: Gauteng. Puleng

began her career with The Travel Corporation in August 2014 as a consultant in the company's Follow The Sun department, providing support and sales to the global clients for all TTC's brands. In January 2016 Puleng was promoted to reservations consultant. The position of Sales Support is a new one for TTC and key responsibilities include regular brand product training across all TTC brands, building and maintaining client/business relationships and new business opportunities within the industry.

■ **Jackie Williams** joined the Minor Hotels regional team in Johannesburg on July 1. Jackie has joined in the capacity of regional director of sales and marketing and will be reporting directly to Sir **Richard Hawkins**, regional

director hotel operations Africa. Jackie previously worked with the Tsogo Sun Group with her most recent position at the group as director of sales: hotels, which she held until October 2015.

■ **Bomi Bukali** has been appointed the new communications co-ordinator at Tsogo Sun head office, reporting to the gm of communications for the group, **Priya Naidoo**.

■ Private Safaris in Southern Africa, DMC and subsidiary of Kuoni Global Travel Services, has appointed **Monika Iuel** as ceo, effective August 15. Monika will be based in the Cape Town office, reporting to **Rolf Schafroth**, ceo of Kuoni Global Travel Services. She will be in charge of the Namibian and South African branches of Private Safaris.

## Pick of the week

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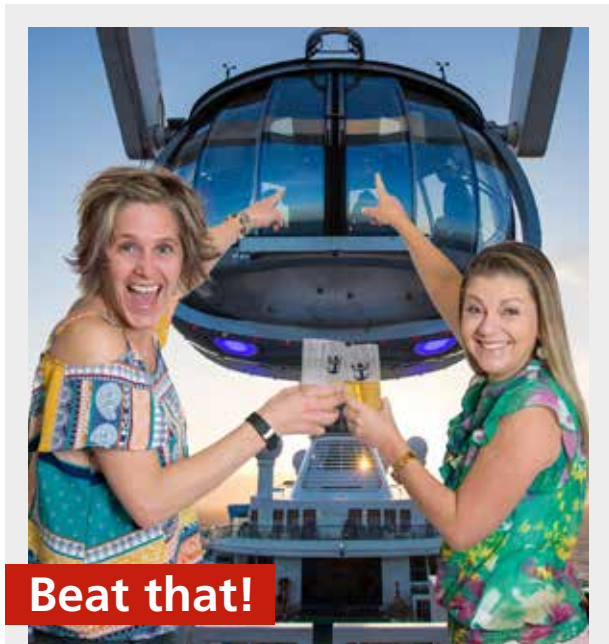
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**Client quotes quash sales**

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Beware – fraud on the rise

DEBBIE BADHAM

CREDIT card fraud is on the rise and with syndicates targeting travel companies, agents must ensure they are ready to detect irregularities. According to Kroll's Global Fraud Report for 2015/16, 84% of companies in Africa have been hit by fraud, a substantial number of which are travel companies, says **Christo Snyman**, national director of forensic services at Mazars.

There are a number of different ways that fraudsters steal credit card details. There seems to be an increase in "card not present" fraud, comments **Tshipi Alexander**, head of Nedbank corporate card sales.

"Fraud has never been more prevalent," says **Rachael Penalluna**, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel. As such, agents are stuck in a Catch 22, she says. To avoid having clients on 30-day accounts, agents need to encourage them to use credit cards.

She says her agency's policy is not to use its clients' or its own credit card details on websites, even highly reputable ones like Booking.com. Rachael describes an incident in which Sure Maritime was hit by fraud on one of its lodge cards, saying that the agency had effectively used the new card for one booking when a week later multiple transactions were processed on the card. A forensics expert traced the point at which the credit card details were compromised back to Booking.com.

In response, Booking.com says it handles credit card details and all private customer data in accordance with the highest international standards. It says it is 100% compliant with Payment Card Industry Data Security

Standard and undergoes an annual recertification via a reputable third-party industry regulator.

Rachael says in every fraud case her agency has experienced, it has not been liable. Once the transaction has been reported as fraud, the case is left with the issuing bank, which will credit the client's account with the disputed amount.

She believes that, ultimately, credit card details are not safe beyond the GDS because when bookings are made via websites, the supplier involved will need to see the card details as the same card must be produced at the time of checking in. As such, there's no telling who will see those credit card details.

**Remaining vigilant**  
Vigilance in detecting transactions that are not above board is key. Christo says if the credit card transaction takes place in an unsecure online environment, the merchant (supplier) is at risk because it must follow proper card acceptance procedures. He says if the transaction took place in a "3-D secure environment" where the cardholder has registered with the issuing bank and the merchant with its acquiring bank, then the transaction is considered secure by the bank, which will absorb the risk. However, failing this, the merchant must provide proof that the card was present at the time of transaction, evidence of which would include the card having been swiped and authenticated by signature. "If any of these things are missing it is the merchant who takes the risk," says Christo. He advises agents to contact their bank for advice on how to ensure they are protected. Rachael says agents must

monitor their clients' lodge card statements so they can detect "dodgy" transactions quickly and have them reported to the issuing bank.

Christo says agents should ask the bank in question to ensure that only travel purchases are permitted on the card. "If cards are compromised, this generally reflects through purchases at places like Edgars," he says.

When it comes to clients who use their own cards, Rachael says agents must protect themselves by asking their clients not to use their lodge cards for anything other than travel. She says agents need to educate their clients that agents cannot be held responsible for incidents of fraud where the card has been used for transactions outside travel.

Though it is not the agent or client who absorbs the risk, **Jacqui Abrahams**, travel manager of Accenture, says in cases where individual cards are used, it will fall to the traveller to change their credit card details if they are hit by fraud. "The problem for the corporate comes when travellers start saying they will no longer use individual cards because they've been burdened with the admin involved."

Ultimately, Rachael believes that virtual credit cards are the only true way to avoid credit card fraud.

Tshipi says while virtual card payment cannot eliminate fraud entirely, it can restrict the amount that is defrauded to the amount of a once-off transaction, after which the card number expires.

"Where we also see this going is by making sure that data is securely passed between the TMC and the bank," says Tshipi. From the moment that card is produced, the details go into the TMC's back office without any human intervention. ■

Yamoussoukro Decision gains altitude

DARISE FOSTER

NIGERIA has fully implemented an open-skies policy.

**Tefera Nekonnen**, director of air transport at the African Civil Aviation Commission, told TNW that Nigeria's move to open its skies was a step towards the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision, which was established in 1999 for the gradual liberalisation of scheduled

and non-scheduled intra-Africa air transport services.

Currently, carriers fly between countries using bilateral agreements, wherein the carrier is given a certain amount of traffic or freedom rights to operate into that country (see TNW August 10). Now that Nigeria has implemented the open-skies agreement, there will be no limitation on the flights a carrier can operate into the country. This follows Nigeria's

signing of the Declaration of Solemn Commitment towards the immediate implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision and the establishment of a single African air transport market by 2017, which was signed in January last year.

Tefera added that the Solemn Declaration would be fully implemented by July 31, 2017, by each of the 14 states that had signed it, and not the December 31 deadline initially reported. ■