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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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Misfiled fares unfair – agents

DEBBIE BADHAM

A RECENTLY misfiled fare on the GDS from Jet Airways, which resulted in significant frustration for both agents and travellers, has highlighted agents' inability to hold airlines accountable, leaving them at the mercy of unwarranted ADMs and irate clients.

"The airline said it was unable to honour the fare."

On December 24 Jet Airways advertised a return fare on the GDS between Johannesburg and Mumbai via the Seychelles for R2 057, says **Ridhwaan Mayet**, ceo of Falcon Travel Consultants.

Trusting that the availability and pricing advertised on the GDS would be guaranteed, Ridhwaan asked his marketing team to advertise the deal on Christmas Eve. "Ticket numbers were issued and payments went off," he says.

Yumna Kharodia, md of Sweet Life Travel, says her agency also issued 35 tickets that same day. However, the airline started cancelling ticketed bookings the next day, after it realised there had been an error with the fare in the system, says Yumna. "The airline said it was unable to honour the fare."

At first, Jet Airways would only offer a full refund, Yumna says, but about a week after receiving

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We're off to Scotland!

Virgin Atlantic has extended its codeshare agreement with regional European carrier, Flybe, on flights to Scotland. Passengers from Johannesburg can connect to Edinburgh or Aberdeen via London Heathrow. Flights are now on sale for travel from March 26. Pictured are (from left) sales executives **Zamokuhle Sikakane** and **Nicola Hards** with account manager, **Eugene Cronje**. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Rainbow comes to SA skies

LEIGH HERMON

ZIMBABWEAN carrier, Rainbow Airlines, plans to enter SA skies with flights from Harare to Johannesburg and Cape Town. The JNB-HRE service will launch in the last week of February and the thrice-weekly CPT-HRE service in the following months.

Ed Berry, ceo of Rainbow Airlines, says it will start with three flights a week to Johannesburg and aims to increase the service to twice-daily, excluding Saturdays. The flights will initially operate on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, departing

Harare at 08h00 and arriving in Johannesburg at 09h40. The return flight will depart Johannesburg at 19h00 and arrive in Harare at 20h40.

The airline also launched a weekly flight between Harare and Victoria Falls on January 25. On Saturdays, flight RA308 departs Harare at 09h00 and arrives at Victoria Falls at 10h00. Return flight RA317 departs Victoria Falls at 17h00 and arrives in Harare at 18h00.

Initially, Rainbow was expected to commence the Johannesburg flights on January 25 but an industry

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SARS inquisition on the cards

DEBBIE BADHAM

SARS has turned its attention to the travel industry, bringing with it the threat of serious consequences for travel agencies.

The revenue service is looking into aspects of VAT treatment by travel agencies, says **Colin Mitchley**, financial director of BidTravel. He says SARS is questioning the way the industry has interpreted the VAT Act since it was first implemented. The implication is that the trade may have been underpaying VAT, which would have financial consequences

for all agencies across the industry.

At least four agencies have been contacted by SARS so far and the line of questioning seems to be similar for all four. Colin says it is still hoped that travel agents will avoid coming under scrutiny as it would be news to everyone in the industry that there was any fault with the current treatment of VAT.

At the time of publishing, SARS was unable to respond to questions from *TNW* about what exactly it was investigating. Meanwhile, Asata says it takes the matter very seriously and is looking into it. ■

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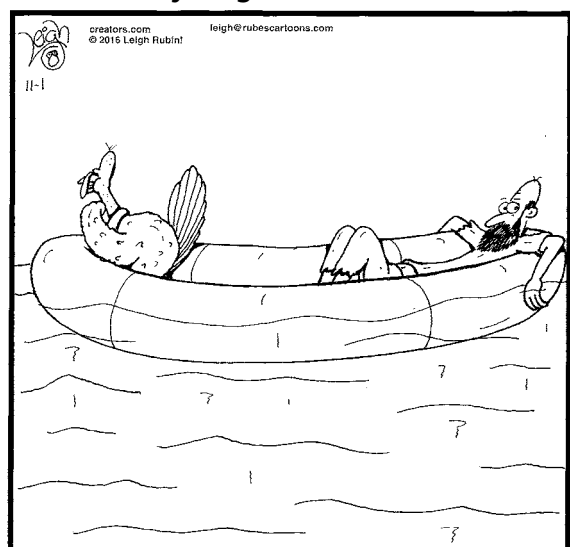
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"I'll be candid with you, Alan. I find it difficult to engage in any meaningful conversation when you're constantly dressing me with your eyes."

Agents still in the dark on Abuja airport closure

LEIGH HERMON

AIRLINES have failed to provide agents with a contingency plan for flights to Abuja's Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport during the planned closure for maintenance, from March 8-April 18.

Jeanette Jordaan, corporate travel team leader of Reynolds Travel Centre, says she read about the closure on Travelinfo and says the airlines have not given agents definite answers about what is going on.

"This Abuja story is a disaster for me," says **Tracy Teichmann**, manager of Sure Adcocks Travel.

Agents can still book flights to Abuja during the

maintenance period but say they are avoiding doing so as they are afraid of putting their clients at risk.

Tracy says her clients have built their travel around SAA's Abuja flight schedule. Usually, her clients land in Abuja in the early morning and arrive at their final destination by 10h00, which allows them to complete a half day's work on the day they arrive.

Whereas, she says, a flight to Lagos arrives late at night and clients would then have to stay overnight, making the trip more costly, creating work delays and preventing them from getting home sooner.

Adebanji Ola, pr and communications manager in Nigeria of Arik Air, says

the airline will only release its contingency plans in the next few days. "We are still working out the details."

SAA's spokesperson, **Tlali Tlali** told TNW that it had not received any official communication from the relevant authority. "Once a Notam (Notice to Airmen) has been issued with sufficient details on the airport closure, SAA will make known its plans."

According to **Matthew Lawrence Pwajok**, gm safety management systems of the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency, two Notams have been issued. The first notified airlines of the closure and the second informed the airlines that Kaduna Airport would accept affected airlines. ■

Gina Richter selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Andgo.com.** Vietnam price slash from R16 990pp sharing. Offer includes return flights Johannesburg-Hanoi, approximate taxes, return transfers, internal flights, eight nights' accommodation, one night's cruise in Halong Bay, selected tours and meals. Itinerary: Hanoi-Hoi An-Ho Chi Min City. Valid for selected dates between May and September.
- **Mozambique Tourism.** Honeymoon special from R11 500pp sharing. Rate includes return flights departing Johannesburg to Inhambane, government taxes, five nights' accommodation Blue Footprint Eco Lodge with dinner and breakfast daily, champagne on arrival and one private dinner. Valid until December 16.
- **Flame of Africa.** Two-night Victoria Falls offer from R6 595pp sharing. Package is inclusive of return Victoria Falls Airport transfers, two nights' accommodation A'Zambezi River Lodge with breakfast daily, one Amalonga dinner, one sunset cruise, one guided tour of the Falls and one game drive and bush dinner. Valid for travel until May 31.
- **AfricaStay.** Seychelles special from R12 995pp sharing. Offer includes return flights from Johannesburg, approximate taxes and seven nights' accommodation with breakfast daily. Valid for travel between May 2 and June 23.



TNW TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

Founding Editors:
John H Marsh (1914-1996) Leona Marsh (1923-2003)

EDITORIAL
Editor: Taryn Nightingale tarynn@nowmedia.co.za
Deputy Editor: Debbie Badham debbieb@nowmedia.co.za
Features Editor: Sue van Winsen suev@nowmedia.co.za
Publisher: Anton Marsh antonm@nowmedia.co.za
Deputy Publisher: Natasha Schmidt natashas@nowmedia.co.za
Journalists:
Dorine Reinstein Leigh Hermon
Hilka Birns Max Marx
Michelle Colman
Photographer: Shannon Van Zyl
Production Editor: Ann Braun

GROUP PUBLISHER
David Marsh davem@nowmedia.co.za

SALES
Sales Director: Kate Nathan katen@nowmedia.co.za
Ad Co-ordinator: Anthea Lucas antheal@nowmedia.co.za

PRODUCTION
Design Head: Dirk Voorneveld

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Circulation: tvsubs@nowmedia.co.za

www.etnw.co.za
Phone: (011) 327-4062
Fax: (011) 327-4094
E-mail: tnw@nowmedia.co.za
Web: www.nowmedia.co.za
Address: Now Media Centre, 32 Fricker Road, Illovo Boulevard, Illovo, Johannesburg, PO Box 55251, Northlands, 2116, South Africa.

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Rainbow comes to SA skies

From page 1
insider told TNW that as the airline had not paid guarantees to OR Tambo International Airport, the flights could not launch. But Ed says the guarantees have been paid and the airline has not yet finalised its slot times, which he hopes to have confirmed this week.

He says the airline is in possession of a

valid Foreign Operator Permit, which needs to be amended as it intends to use a different aircraft on the Johannesburg-Harare service than the one initially planned.

The route will be operated by a Bombardier CRJ100 with 50 seats, which the airline is leasing from CemAir.

In 2015, the Department of Transport said it had

accepted Rainbow Airlines' application for designation to fly to South Africa, but that the airline had not applied for a Foreign Operator Permit (see TNW August 19, 2015).

Flights are currently only available for booking through Rainbow's website, but Ed says the airline intends to add its inventory to the GDS in the future. ■

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New golf course to open in Mauritius

MONT Choisy Le Golf's 18-hole course will open in Mauritius in November.

The 6 245-metre, par-72 championship course will be the first golf course to open in the north of the island.

Beachcomber has signed a preferred partner deal with

Mont Choisy Le Golf and the course will be associated with the Canonnier and Trou aux Biches Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa, both of which are nearby.

Through the partnership, guests will receive benefits such as a personalised welcome, the possibility of

booking the best tee time slots in advance at preferential rates as well as a dedicated shuttle service from the Canonnier and Trou aux Biches resorts.

At the club house, guests have access to individual lockers where they can store their golf equipment throughout their stay. ■



The QM2 docks in Cape Town

At the end of January, Cunard's *Queen Mary 2* spent two days docked at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town before departing for Port Elizabeth. This was the first stop on a world cruise following a £100m (R1,7bn) remastering that involved an upgrade of the Queens and Princess Grill suites and an extensive enhancement of its restaurants. Pictured here from White Star Cruises and Travel, the official representative of Cunard in South Africa, are: **Shaun McCarthy**, gm; **Carol McCarthy**, the founder of the company; **Sandy McCarthy**, operations manager and **Kevin Oprey**, Captain of the *Queen Mary 2*. Photo: Sue van Winsen

A brief look at this week's hotel news

Big brand enters Nigeria

RENAISSANCE Hotels has opened the Renaissance Lagos Ikeja Hotel in Nigeria, the group's first property in sub-Saharan Africa. The hotel is in Lagos's city centre and 5km from Murtala Muhammed International Airport. There are 155 guest rooms and 17 loft suites, all equipped with first-class facilities, spacious seating areas and large LED TVs with 70-plus channels. For business travellers, there are eight meeting rooms that can be adapted to cater for a six-person board meeting or a banquet-style event with up to 280 guests. Facilities include an outdoor pool overlooking the city and a 24-hour gym. The hotel is close to attractions such as the National Railway Corporation Museum, Africa Shrine and Kalakuta Museum.

Radisson RED enters Miami

CARLSON Rezidor Hotel Group plans to open a Radisson RED hotel at Miami International Airport in 2018. The construction of the 155-room hotel will begin this year and will include a pool, fitness centre and multi-purpose event studios. Guests will also be able to use the Radisson RED app, which includes features such as keyless entry to rooms, room service, and a check-in and check-out service. Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group intends to build 60 more Radisson RED hotels worldwide by 2020.

Europe to introduce new controls for train travel

DORINE REINSTEIN

EUROPE will soon introduce new passenger regulations for train travel that could result in longer travelling times and the inability to purchase last-minute tickets.

Last week, during the EU Council of Ministers for Home Affairs in Malta, authorities from The Netherlands, Belgium, France and the UK, agreed to start passenger identity checks on all international trains. The controls will be implemented during the coming months and will include checking that the name on the passport corresponds with the one on the train ticket.

The four countries also want to introduce passenger lists to see whether wanted criminals or terrorists are booked on the trains. Whether it will still be possible to buy last-minute tickets remains to be seen. A firm plan is expected to be communicated in March.

The new measures are a direct extension of the EU PNR directive for airlines, which was agreed on in 2016 and will see airlines sharing passengers' details on all flights to and from Europe from April 2018.

Rachael Penaluna, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel, says her agency has warned clients that it is best to purchase tickets through the agency beforehand. "Corporate travellers will soon have to

be more organised when they travel, which is not easy."

It is unlikely that leisure travellers will be affected by the new regulations, as most packages containing rail sectors are booked and purchased prior to passengers leaving SA, says **Megan D'Arcy**, product manager of kulula holidays.

Theresa Szejwallo, md of Trafalgar, says the company is working closely with the local authorities to discuss the practical implementation of this system. "With the plans we expect to have in place, we are not anticipating our guided holidays to be impacted."

Transport operators in Europe have spoken out against the new requirement. **Eva Böckle**, head of Communications of CER – the Voice of European Railways, says: "The flexibility of travelling by train will be significantly reduced and the ticket sales – currently offered by numerous European railway companies – will be restricted to channels complying with the new regulation. Train stations are not equipped for any kind of check-in, so complicated arrangements will have to be implemented. The railway staff will need to check the identity of passengers – not only those embarking but also disembarking – at each stop on the journey. That will inevitably lead to a prolonged travelling time." ■

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Blue Train doubles Hoedspruit-Kruger frequency

THE Blue Train will double its Hoedspruit-Kruger departures this year.

The train will make four round trips to Hoedspruit,

offering guests a choice of eight 19-hour one-way journeys. The new departures will enable new 'rail safari' combination packages featuring the

wildlife reserves and private safari lodges in the Greater Kruger and Sabi Sands areas in Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

The train will depart

Pretoria at 15h00 on selected Friday afternoons, arriving in Hoedspruit at 10h00 on Saturday morning. The dates on offer are March 17, June 16, July 7

and August 11. The train will depart Hoedspruit on March 18, June 17, July 8 and August 12 at 15h00, arriving in Pretoria at 10h00 on Sunday mornings. ■



Tips from Louis the Lawyer – unfair contract terms

In each instalment in this series, Advocate Louis Nel discusses aspects of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA) that affect the relationship between travel suppliers and consumers.

SECTION 48 of the Consumer Protection Act places unreasonable or unjust contract terms under the spotlight. This includes the sales process as well as any waivers which shift liability to the consumer.

These aspects of the relationship between the consumer and travel agent or supplier may be seen as unfair, unreasonable or unjust if they are excessively one-sided or presented in a misleading way. For example, a non-refundable deposit could be seen to be one-

sided, but it is not excessive enough to be deemed unfair, provided that it is carefully explained, acknowledged with a signature by the client and meets the conditions set out in Section 17, which deals with the consumer's right to cancel advance reservation, booking or order (for example, the period of notice given and the possibility of the supplier reselling).

To ensure that you as an agent don't fall foul of this Section, it is important to also understand Section 49,

which deals with the notice required for certain terms and conditions. Basically, this Section stipulates that certain aspects of the transaction must be brought to the attention of the consumer, including the following:

- Clauses that in any way limit the liability of the supplier or any other person.
- Clauses that present the acceptance of risk or liability by the consumer (particularly a risk or liability that the consumer

could not possibly be expected to be aware of).

These aspects of the transaction must be brought to the attention of the consumer in writing as soon as a contract is entered into or payment made and in a way that will attract the attention of an 'ordinarily alert consumer'. It's important to note that this can't be done at the last minute or in a rush. The consumer must have an adequate opportunity to receive and understand the provisions of the transaction.

What to do

- Objectively assess and amend (where required) the waiver and traveller's acceptance of the traveller's obligations in your booking form and T&Cs – look especially at clauses that deal with airline provisions, passports, visas, health and liability.
- Ensure that your and the supplier's cancellation, refund and non-refundable deposit clauses are brought to the attention of the traveller at the earliest possible opportunity. ■



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Topdeck

What to do when snow's a no-show

Europe's lucrative ski season had a disastrous start with an unprecedented lack of snow. *TNW* asked industry experts to share their tips for tackling a lack of snow issue during ski season.

THIS December Switzerland saw less snow fall than it has in more than 100 years and France witnessed its worst snow cover for 20 years, says **Serge Taboulot**, head meteorologist for the northern Alps at Météo France.

Anthea Hay, managing member of Peak Adventures, says the lack of snow for the last three years during the early ski season in December has been a concern, as most SA ski clients have their longer annual break during this time.

But there are a few tips that agents can follow to ensure their clients' skiing holidays aren't severely impacted when snowfall is low.

Get a guarantee

Anthea says there are some resorts that can guarantee

snow, in France especially, due to their altitude. "Austrian resorts can rely on the nearby glaciers but the slopes and lifts can be busy due to everyone using the same villages and mountain runs over the holiday period."

Greg Taylor, gm of Pure Skiing, says agents can guarantee snow for their clients by picking a resort that offers snow-making facilities, adding that the major European ski resorts invest millions in these facilities to ensure there is snow.

Time it right

Anthea says agents should also advise travellers to go in January to get a better



Anthea Hay



Greg Taylor



Uriah Jansen

experience. "Val Thorens in France sits at a height of 2 300m but has ski lifts to 3 200m and has skiing from November to May. It can be very cold there, but skiing is guaranteed for all levels of skiers. It may be a good idea to get clients to book early as these resorts fill up quickly in comparison to the lower lying areas."

Get reimbursed

What happens if a client arrives at the ski resort and they can't ski because of lack of snow? "This is very seldom the case," says Greg. He says charges for ski passes and ski hire can be reimbursed when not used.

Some insurance companies also offer a 'winter sports

extension', which includes cover for piste closure of more than 24 consecutive hours due to lack of snow.

Uriah Jansen, md of Oojah Travel Protection, says this cover applies until March 31 (for use in the Northern hemisphere) and that travellers will be reimbursed a small cash sum for each day of skiing missed.

Uriah says travellers who have opted for a 'Cancel for any reason' benefit and cancel their trip more than 48 hours before departure from South Africa (when they are informed there is a lack of snow) will receive 50% of the non-refundable flights and accommodation. ■

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- Travel insurance
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Singapore



As well as being a doorway to South East Asia, Singapore is a stopover treat that will entice travellers to linger longer than their layover. Leigh Hermon reports.

Flying high with the A350

THIS year is full of important milestones for Singapore Airlines – the airline not only celebrates its 70th birthday but also, in March, its 25th year of flying to South Africa.

From operating a Boeing 747-300 on two weekly flights, the airline now operates a daily service to Johannesburg using an A350-900.

The aircraft was first introduced on its Johannesburg-Singapore service in June last year, with three weekly flights between the two destinations. In October, the A350 was introduced on the airline's Cape Town service via Johannesburg

on Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Sally George, market development manager of Singapore Airlines, says the carrier has been able to increase its business-class capacity by 40% with the introduction of the A350. Previously, the Boeing 777-200ER had a two-class configuration, with 26 seats in business class and 245 in economy class. She adds that demand for business class is particularly high for weekend travel on the route.

The A350 also provides travellers with a premium economy option. The aircraft has 42 business-class seats, 24 in premium economy and 187 in

economy class. "There was definitely a need in the market for something that is a little step-up from economy, because the jump between economy and business can cost four times as much," says Sally. She says people are willing to pay a bit extra for more comfort, leg-room and other benefits.

Premium economy passengers receive a baggage allowance of two pieces with a total weight of 35kg, priority check-in, and those who are members of the airline's KrisFlyer loyalty programme receive 10% more miles than the standard economy-class fares.



25 years to SA!

Singapore Airlines is celebrating 25 years of flying to South Africa. Pictured here from the airline are **Sally George** (left), and **Brenda Mitchell**, district sales manager. The airline's first flight to Johannesburg from Singapore was on March 29, 1992, a route that it operated twice weekly. The carrier now flies daily to Johannesburg and four times weekly to Cape Town (via JNB) using its new A350 aircraft. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl.

SQ celebrates ASEAN with discounted fares

THE Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. The association was established to increase economic and social growth, and cultural development between Southeast Asian countries.

The founding member states are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, with Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia joining later.

To celebrate the anniversary of the

association, Singapore Airlines is running promotional fares to nine of the 10 ASEAN countries. Economy-class fares from Johannesburg start from R7 810 and premium economy fares start from R13 460, both including taxes. This offer is valid for sale until February 14 for travel until December 7. Return business-class fares start from R26 920, including taxes. This offer is valid for sale until February 14 for travel until January 7. For more information, visit Travelinfo.

Seven must-do events in Singapore

1. Chinese New Year

The Chinese New Year took place on January 28 but the celebrations will extend long after the final countdown. Until February 25, Eu Tong Sen Street, New Bridge Road and South Bridge Road in Chinatown will be a glittering display of lanterns resembling baby chicks, roosters and hens to celebrate the arrival of the year of the rooster.

2. Fashion Steps Out

Orchard Road will become a mecca of fashion from March 28 to May 5. During the opening, the street will close to traffic as it turns into a catwalk for models displaying the upcoming trends for the Northern hemisphere's spring and summer season.

3. HSBC Women's Championship 2017

Women's golf takes to Sentosa Golf Club's New Tanjong's Course from March 2-5. The world's top female golfers will compete for a Ladies Professional Golf Association title.

4. Super Rugby 2017

From March 5 to May 5, Singapore's National Stadium will host Japan's Sunwolves as they battle it out against the Kings, Stormers and Sharks.

5. Vesak Day

On May 21, Singapore will celebrate the birth of Buddha. Buddhists wake early to visit temples around the country.

6. National Day

Singapore celebrates its independence on August 9. People dress buildings, houses and their cars in the country's red and white flags in honour of National Day. Spectators can enjoy a military parade, song and dance performances, and a fireworks show.

7. Singapore Intl Festival of Art

For just over a month, artists from around the world move in for this festival. From August 11 to September 17, visitors can enjoy street performers, take in a theatre show and enjoy live music.

Stay on the right side of the law

SINGAPORE Airlines' **Sally George** says Singapore is often called the 'Fine City', with citizens and visitors alike sometimes receiving fines for the smallest infractions. Travellers should be cautious and obey the law, as it is strictly enforced.

In June last year, Singapore added three new places to its list of smoking prohibited areas: reservoirs, and parks in public and private housing estates. A fine for smoking in a prohibited area can be as much as S\$1 000 (R9 340). Singapore's



National Environmental Agency (NEA) says smoking is prohibited within a five-metre radius of the entrance or exit of a building, as well as at bus stops.

Designated smoking areas are clearly signposted. According to the NEA's website, the Singaporean government's long-term goal is to ban smoking in all public areas to protect non-smokers from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke.

Litterbugs can face a S\$300 (R2 800) fine if caught dropping trash

anywhere but a dustbin.

Travellers are also advised to leave chewing gum at home, because bringing it into Singapore is illegal, says the UK's Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

According to Singapore Statutes Online, the penalty for contravening this regulation is a fine of S\$100 000 (R933 600) or a two-year prison sentence.

According to the FCO, vaporisers, including e-cigarettes, e-cigars, e-pipes and refills, are illegal in Singapore. It is likely that these items will be confiscated and a traveller could face a fine or imprisonment.

Keep connected

TRAVELLERS who are looking to stay connected throughout their time in Singapore can avoid the high cost of international roaming by hiring a pocket-sized mobile router from a Changi Recommends desk at Changi International Airport.

From S\$10 (R94) a day, users have unlimited access to high-speed Internet.

To make sure your client is guaranteed a device on arrival, one can be reserved online up

to three days before travel through the Changi Recommends website.

Following the reservation, a confirmation email with a reservation form will be sent within one working day. Travellers should keep a printed copy of the

reservation form to present to the collection desk along with their passport. A S\$200 (R1 870) deposit is also required upon collection. Full payment is made on return.

As well as the mobile router, the traveller will also get a SIM card, USB cable, AC socket plug and a bag.

To connect to the Internet, the mobile router and

"Hiring a pocket-sized mobile router from R94 a day, gives users unlimited access to high-speed Internet."

user's personal device need to be on. Under the WiFi settings of the personal device,

search for the router's SSID and enter the key – both can be found on the back of the router.

The user can connect up to eight devices.

To reserve a device for a client, visit www.changirecommends.com. ■

Book it!

Edusport Travel is offering a three-night Singapore Sevens package from R9 190pps. The package includes three nights' accommodation in a four-star hotel, breakfast, guaranteed official match tickets for two days as per selected ticket category and the couriering of documents to major cities in South Africa. This offer is valid from April 15-18.

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Fares are available for sale between 13 January and 14 February 2017, for travel from Johannesburg from 13 April to 8 December 2017 in Economy and Premium Economy Class. Travel valid from 1 February 2017 to 8 January 2018 in Business Class. An advance purchase of 14 and 28 days applies to Premium Economy Class and Business Class respectively. Blackout dates apply. Promotional fares available to many other destinations. For full fare conditions and to book, call Singapore Airlines Johannesburg on (011) 880 8560 or Cape Town on (021) 674 0601, contact your local travel agent or visit singaporeair.com/za

China

Favourable exchange rate

WHEN comparing travel to Japan, Europe or America, China is still affordable, says **Chien Liou**, gm of Dragon Holidays.

Alet Steyn of Wendy Wu Tours, says the rand exchange rate against the renminbi/yuan makes China a more affordable destination.

Even though hiring an English-speaking guide can add to the overall cost of the holiday, Chien says it is worth it. "The difficulty with travelling to China is the language. The country is best enjoyed by employing the services of a guide and private instead of public transportation."

Book it!

Dragon Holidays is offering the chance to explore both Imperial and modern China for seven nights from US\$1 100pps (R14 787). The package includes four nights in Beijing with visits to Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, Silk Market and the Temple of Heaven. From Beijing, travellers take a high-speed train to Shanghai, where they will spend three nights, with visits to the Pearl TV Tower, Bund and Nanjing Road. The offer includes five breakfasts, four lunches, three dinners, guide and driver, and is valid until December 31.

Did you know?

Singapore Airlines' regional carrier, SilkAir, added an eighth Chinese city to its route network with the launch of its Fuzhou service on November 21. The flight operates four times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Flight MI990 departs Singapore at 10h35 and arrives in Fuzhou at 15h05. Flight MI989 departs Fuzhou at 16h15 and arrives in Singapore at 21h00. The route is serviced by a Boeing 737-800 with 12 seats in business class and 150 in economy.

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With airlines adding more Chinese destinations to their route networks, the country is opening up for South African travellers. Leigh Hermon reports.

Improved connectivity for corporates

AIRLINES are seeing a large portion of the South African corporate market making its way to China, with more diverse route networks providing greater access to the country's key business destinations.

One of Singapore Airlines' major selling points is its connectivity, says market development manager, **Sally George**. "The business traveller wants the frequency out of here and good connections to the onward points."

She says Singapore Airlines serves the three key cities

in China – Beijing, Hong Kong and Shanghai – and another eight destinations on its regional airline, SilkAir – Changsha, Chengdu, Chongqing, Fuzhou, Kunming, Shenzhen, Wuhan and Xiamen.

Mix work and play

Although China is a major business destination, it does not mean that travellers have to only see the inside of boardrooms.

Air Mauritius has direct services to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou Chengdu and Hong Kong. The airline also has connecting flights from

Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg.

The airline is the African carrier with the most connections to China since launching its service to Guangzhou in July last year, says **Wouter Nel**, Air Mauritius's head of sales and marketing.

On the return flight, travellers can take advantage of Air Mauritius's free one-night stopover service. Connecting flights for South African travellers depart the following day, so travellers will receive a booking voucher for the four-star Holiday Inn Mauritius Mon Trésor.

Where are South Africans travelling to?

CHINA'S capital, Beijing, tops tour operators' list of popular destinations for South African leisure travellers. Other destinations include Xi'an, Shanghai, Chengdu, Yangtze River, Hong Kong and Guangzhou.

Alet Steyn, gm of Wendy Wu Tours, recommends that while in Beijing, visitors should make an early visit to the Temple of Heaven to mingle with the locals.

Thompsons Holidays offers day trips to Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven and the Summer Palace. "The tour takes in the iconic sights that no visitor should miss," says **John Ridler**, pr and media manager of Thompsons Holidays.

Xi'an lies in the heart of China and is best known for the world-famous Terracotta Warriors, says Alet.

The older part of the city is enclosed by well-preserved 14th Century walls. Travellers can explore them on foot or by bike, she says.

"Shanghai is China's great metropolis, where east and west collide on streets lined with futuristic skyscrapers and 10th Century temples," says Alet. The city is also known as 'the Paris of the East' and travellers can get a taste of the colonial architecture of the Bund before strolling down Nanjing Road – a shopper's paradise.

Marjorie Wohlmann, travel consultant of Disa Travel

and Tours, says in her experience, it is a certain kind of clientele that look to visit China.

Often these travellers have been everywhere else in the world.

"They are seasoned travellers who have seen Asia, Europe and the Americas," says Marjorie.

Each year, she books one or two packages for China and she says these clients know exactly where they want to go.

Due to the language barrier and the lack of English signs in the country, Marjorie always books clients on a packaged tour that includes everything from internal flights and ground transport to English-speaking guides. ■

Births, deaths, marriages, promotions – we want to know! Please e-mail TNW's Taryn Nightingale, at tarynn@nowmedia.co.za.

Time to give back



Air Mauritius and Travel Industry Meetings East Rand hosted a festive networking event at the end of last year at the Birchwood Hotel and OR Tambo Conference Centre. Attendees included travel agents, tour ops and other members of the industry. Guests were encouraged to bring a donation of food for the animals at the Boksburg SPCA and to buy raffle tickets for two return tickets to Mauritius, donated by the airline. The raffle raised R7 160 for the SPCA. Pictured here at the event are (from left): Lyndsey and Clair Danielsens (C and L Travel Collection); Samantha Bronkhorst (Air Mauritius); Maggie Mudd (Boksburg SPCA) and Shanaid Nicholson (Visas and Passports Unlimited).

TTC backs sustainable tourism

THE Travel Corporation has announced its Diamond Sponsorship for the UN International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017, in partnership with UNWTO. The project supports changes that contribute to sustainable development goals in the tourism sector. TTC and its non-profit foundation, TreadRight Foundation, which encourages tourism development, has supported more than 40 sustainability projects in almost as many destinations globally. "We



From left: Cordula Wohlmuther, UNWTO head of Institutional Relations and Resource Mobilization, Brett and Miranda Tollman (TTC) and Dr. Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of UNWTO.

were eager and honoured to support the UNWTO in this latest initiative because we recognise that our sector has a tremendous opportunity

and responsibility to drive sustainable development around the world," says Brett Tollman, chief executive of TTC.

Appointments

■ The national government sales manager of Protea Hotels by Marriott, **Cassilda Ntsane**, has been promoted to head up sales for Africa from February 1. Cassilda joined Protea Hotels as a management trainee in 1998. **Anton Meiring**, who started as an in-service trainee with Protea Hotels in 2002, has been appointed gm of the Protea Hotel by Marriott O.R. Tambo. Prior to joining Protea, Anton was gm of African Pride Mount Grace Hotel. The new gm of Protea Hotel by Marriott Clarens from February 1 is **Karen Battaliou**. Karen joined Protea Hotels directly after matriculating and has gained experience in several roles at Gauteng hotels.



■ **Yolandé Bouwer** of Agentivity, has been promoted to director, Africa. "Yolandé has proven herself to be a very dynamic and enthusiastic addition to the team and, given our growth in the rest of Africa, we are delighted she is on board to take on the greater responsibility this role will demand," says **Riaan van Schoor**, ceo and co-founder of Agentivity.



■ **Tracy Weeks** left The Mantis Collection on January 31, where she was marketing manager. From February, Tracy will market both Bush Lodge and Hillsnek Safari Camp on Amakhala Game Reserve, which previously formed part of the Mantis portfolio.

■ **Lorna Burke**, Air France and KLM marketing and communication co-ordinator for Southern Africa, will be retiring at the end of the month. Lorna has been with the

company since 1997, where she started in marketing and then communications in 2000. Lorna says during her retirement she plans to spend time with her family and hopes to continue to work in a part-time capacity.

■ **Amber Meyer** has joined Jenman African Safaris as head of sales and reservations of Kuoni Private Safaris.

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Misfiled fares unfair

From page 1

pushback from clients, it offered to reroute the flight via Abu Dhabi if passengers paid the difference in the fare.

"Then after more pushback the airline eventually offered to reroute the flight via Abu Dhabi at no additional cost," says Yumna. But, as she points out, by this time many travellers had already booked alternative flights with other airlines. What's more, the connecting flight via Abu Dhabi meant a longer flying time.

Jannine Adams, senior manager marketing of Amadeus Southern Africa, says although the airline may think it honoured the fare, it in fact did not give clients what they paid for. She says when it comes to guaranteed fares loaded on the GDS, the airline is expected to honour these.

It seems, however, that holding airlines accountable in situations such as this is a challenge for agents.

Jet Airways could not be reached for comment by the time of publishing. Iata says it will not get involved in situations like this.

"If parties are unable to resolve the situation and seek recourse, this would be subject to the relevant laws and regulations of the jurisdiction in which the matter has occurred," says **Perry Flint**, Iata spokesperson.

Meanwhile, Yumna says she has experienced several incidents where there's been an issue with an incorrect fare loaded by an airline that resulted in an ADM for her agency. In one instance, her agency issued a ticket using an airline's guaranteed fare on its website within the same 24 hours that the fare appeared. The agency then received an ADM for under collecting tax on the ticket. While she has queried the issue, she has yet to receive a response from the airline. ■



Sail Singapore to Hong Kong

Cruises International has opened bookings for an eight-night cruise, with a starting price of R9 563pps (excluding compulsory charges), sailing from Singapore to Hong Kong aboard Royal Caribbean International's *Voyager of the Seas*. The ship offers unique features including an ice rink and a rock-climbing wall. The cruise sets sail on June 17 with stops in Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Posing in Hong Kong, are **Thaybz Khan** (left) manager: Contemporary Brands and **Henuti Purshotam**, product manager of Cruises International. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Trump travel ban – what you need to know

DORINE REINSTEIN

US PRESIDENT **Donald Trump's** 90-day ban on travellers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen stops travellers entering the US, even with valid visas.

The measure also freezes all refugee admissions to the US for 120 days.

The executive order sparked major protests around the world and led to numerous delays at US airports. Hundreds of people were also detained or denied entry in the United States.

Here's what travel agents need to know:

Affected South Africans

Even though almost 1 000 travellers have been denied boarding, according to officials from the US Customs and Border Protection last week, no problems for South Africans have been reported so far.

The DHA said it did not know of any incidents involving South Africans. **Megan D'Arcy**, product manager of kulula holidays, says: "We have not had any reports of our passengers being affected by delays at the airports or border control."

Dual nationality

According to **Kevin McAleenan**, acting Customs and Border Protection commissioner of Department of Homeland Security, dual nationals who hold a passport from one of the seven restricted countries and a non-restricted country, will be assessed at the US border based on the passport they present, not any dual-national status. "So if you're a citizen of the UK, you present

"We have not had any reports of our passengers being affected by delays at the airports or border control."

your United Kingdom passport and the executive order does not apply to you upon arrival," he said.

Dual nationals, who hold the passport of an unrestricted country and possess a valid US visa may resume travel to the United States, a US State Department official said.

At the time of publishing, the US Embassy in Pretoria could not confirm that South Africans with dual citizenship and who are in possession of a passport from one of

the affected countries, could apply for a visa for the next 90 days or whether they would be allowed to enter the US.

Airline refunds

Airlines say they will comply with the US executive order and will deny boarding to passengers from the affected nationalities. However, most airlines say they will adjust their re-booking options and refund policies.

Delta said it would contact affected customers with flexible rebooking options, including refunds.

Etihad said, where permitted, the airline had already offered affected passengers changes or refunds. The airline has also rebooked passengers, as per its updated policy.

British Airways is offering affected customers a refund for their travel to the US, or the opportunity to rebook their flight.

In future, the Trump administration will also discuss the possibility of asking all foreigners to disclose which websites and social media sites they frequent and to share their cellphone contacts. If travellers decline to share this information, they could be denied entry into the US. ■

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