

TNW

TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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SA Tourism’s JMAs on the chopping block

SARAH ROBERTSON

SOUTH African Tourism is reviewing its joint marketing agreements (JMAs) that promote domestic tourism and some members of the trade have expressed concerns that the tourism body plans to decrease funding.

Carlos Luis, supplier relationship manager of Flight Centre Travel Group, said Flight Centre’s marketing contract with SA Tourism had expired in April and that, while this year’s contract had not been finalised yet, the new budget would amount to only 25% of the previous year’s funding. Carlos said the redistribution of

budget would be a blow to both Flight Centre and domestic product sales as South Africa ranked as one of the group’s top three destinations in terms of sales volumes. “This year’s budget will specifically need to be allocated to client-facing events and the media campaigns that we have previously allocated to domestic product will now be reallocated to promote different destinations.”

However, both **Craig Parvess**, senior product manager, regional and domestic of kulula holidays, and **John Ridler**, pr and media manager of Thompsons Holidays, said they were unaware of a change in budget allocation. Craig said kulula holidays

had not rolled out any joint marketing campaigns with SA Tourism year to date as the tour operator had been focusing on individual campaigns with regional tourist offices, such as Cape Town Tourism. However it had just entered into a new discussion with SAT for an upcoming initiative relating to the new Do Tourism project that SAT launched earlier this year. John said Thompsons Holidays had meetings scheduled for the end of September to discuss its upcoming budgets.

Sisa Ntshona, ceo of SA Tourism, said the tourism board had not stopped signing joint marketing agreements but was in the process

of reviewing these to ensure that their partners were correctly aligned to assist them in achieving their 5-in-5 strategic goal of adding five million more tourist arrivals in the next five years. As they aim to source one million of those from domestic travellers, Sisa said JMAs were the best way to reach their consumers. “However, not all JMAs involve money; some are barter deals. Part of our review includes exploring different ways of doing business in order for us to get the best performance and yield the most impact and results. We will sign JMAs with partners that will help us achieve this.” ■

Will SA trade use bitcoin?

SERENDIPITY Worldwide Group will be looking at piloting bitcoin as a payment option for its customers in the near future.

Dinesh Naidoo, group operations director of SWG, says he started investigating crypto currency payment options when he was faced with the costs of becoming PCI DSS compliant.

Werner van Rooyen, spokesperson

for Luno, a bitcoin company headquartered in Singapore with operations in South Africa, says the financial burden of PCI DSS compliance on travel agents will be lessened with bitcoin payments.

Werner says, when making a credit card transaction travellers need to submit a lot of personal, sensitive information. “With bitcoin

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Incoming SAA ceo is tough

DAVE MARSH

HE KNOWS nothing about the airline business, but the appointment of the chief officer of Vodacom Business is being increasingly welcomed, as the trade learns more about him.

Vuyani Jarana got his MBA from

Stellenbosch University in 2000, and since then he has had extensive board and operational experience in the telecoms sector both in South Africa and other parts of Africa.

A Vodacom inside source told TNW that if someone could make a

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Turkish delight!

This month marks 10 years of Turkish Airlines flying to South Africa. The airline started with a service to Johannesburg and then introduced flights to Cape Town too. In its 10 years, the airline has carried 1,5 million passengers to SA. Pictured here are (from left): **Shamima Wadiwala**, operations; **Faziela Saheb**, corporate manager; **Aslihan Safak**, marketing; and **Halen Ghambala**, sales and traffic agent. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl



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Fees for priority UK visa service 'exorbitant' – agents

CANDICE MAY

CLIENTS are paying fees of up to R16 690 for priority service to get their UK visas issued on time as the standard processing time of 15 to 20 working days for these visas is not being met.

Daniela Ossato, owner of CTT Travel, had a client pay R16 690 for the visa to be issued within 24 hours, while **Angela Sheasby**, travel consultant of Carlson Wagonlit Travel, had a client pay R6 500 for a visa to be issued within five to seven working days.

Marco Tomasicchio, director of XL International Tours,

says the urgency for visas stems from clients wanting to travel to the UK for a summer holiday or to attend one of

“As it is revenue generation, I suppose the High Commission does not see anything wrong with charging these costs and preying on travellers’ desperation.”

the many trade fares that take place at this time of the year. However, he feels that the British High Commission

is being totally unreasonable with the fees for priority service. “That said, because it is revenue generation, I suppose the High Commission does not see anything wrong with charging these costs and preying on travellers’ desperation,” he says.

Daniela feels that while it is important to have the option of being able to pay for an emergency visa, this service should not come with such an exorbitant price tag. Angela suggests that the fees can – and should – encourage travellers to plan their travel better, although she points out travel isn’t always predictable and urgent trips do crop up. ■

Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



Comair’s bet on non-airline business pays off

COMAIR’S annual financial results show a 54% increase in profits to R297m and a 28% increase in cash generated by its operations, with income generated by its non-airline brands constituting 20% of its earnings.

Ceo, **Erik Venter**, says the weak economy and narrow profit margins in the airline industry have favoured the pursuit of growth from Comair’s non-airline businesses. This approach has been rewarded with strong performances

by the travel businesses, including kulula holidays, the Comair Training Centre, the Slow lounges and the Food Directions catering operation. TNW understands that SAA has six times the staff count of Comair, while its fleet is twice the size. ■

Will SA trade use bitcoin?

From page 1
transactions, you simply provide the sender your bitcoin wallet address (not a long list of sensitive information) and the transaction, once confirmed, is permanent.”

Expedia has been accepting bitcoin for some time now. Spokesperson for Expedia, **Victoria Cagliero** told TNW: “At Expedia we are always looking ahead to new and emerging technologies, which is why we were one of the earliest adoptors of bitcoin.”

Dinesh points out that, with bitcoin, there are no credit card fees, no merchant fees, and the risk of fraud is considerably reduced as customers can’t dispute a bitcoin

transaction. “That’s a huge advantage,” he says.

The downside is the volatility of the crypto currency. Says Werner: “If you’re quoting a customer in bitcoin – which you calculated is a certain amount of rands – the price of bitcoin could change between the time you quote them and the time you receive the payment, which can result in admin and bookkeeping discrepancies.”

However, Werner points out that companies can mitigate this risk using a service provider like PayFast (which relies on the Luno API), which guarantees the rate of exchange for 10 minutes. This means the customer has ten minutes to complete the payment

(it usually takes only a few seconds). If they failed to make the payment in that time, the agent will need to re-quote, using the new/current rate of exchange.

Dwaine Van Vuuren, director of Sharenet, a company that lets people keep track of prices of crypto currency, says a lot of middle class South Africans hold bitcoin. “Many have made huge gains over the last two years, since bitcoin is up over 300%. To take some of these gains and spend it on travel today will require them to liquidate some of their bitcoin to acquire rands.” He argues that an agency accepting bitcoin would be first choice for these travellers. ■

TNW

TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY
www.etnw.co.za
Published by
Travel & Trade Publishing (Pty) Ltd
Printed by Juka Printing (Pty) Ltd

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

EDITORIAL
Editor: Tessa Reed tessar@nowmedia.co.za
Features Editor: Michelle Colman michellec@nowmedia.co.za
Publisher: Anton Marsh antonm@nowmedia.co.za
Deputy Publisher: Natasha Schmidt natashas@nowmedia.co.za

Journalists:
Dorine Reinstein Candice May
Sarah Robertson Hilka Birns

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 Harris antheah@nowmedia.co.za

PRODUCTION
Design Head: Dirk Voorneveld

SUBSCRIPTIONS
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SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS

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Professional recognition available for SA agents

SA AGENTS will soon be able to apply for the official designation of Travel Practitioner (TPrac) following the accreditation of Asata by the SA Qualifications Authority.

Saqa has recognised Asata as a professional body and registered the professional designation TPrac on the National Qualifications Framework. By registering with the Asata Professional Programme, agents will be able to update their professional profiles, knowledge, skills, qualifications, experience and continuous professional development and submit for review by their line manager and Asata to apply for the designation.

"Years of preparation have led to Asata becoming the first recognised

professional body in the travel and tourism industry in South Africa. In addition to enhancing the professionalism of the travel industry, this designation will contribute to skills development and professional service delivery in the country's travel and tourism sectors," says **Otto de Vries**, ceo of Asata. "Members of Asata have signed a charter committing to professional service, ethical conduct and trustworthy behaviour so that the public can travel with peace of mind. Bringing this designation to the market shows how seriously Asata takes the professionalism of the travel industry."

All SA agents – not only Asata members – can apply for the designation TPrac. ■

Virgin hits the road!



Virgin Atlantic held the Johannesburg leg of its annual roadshow at the Protea Hotel Fire & Ice! by Marriott Melrose Arch on September 8. Agents were treated to breakfast before seeing a showcase of the airline's latest product offerings and must-know UK visa information. Pictured, from left, are **Roulla Janse van Rensburg**, consultant of Songhai Travel; **Zamokuhle Sikakane**, sales executive of Virgin Atlantic; **Suhana Girdhari**, consultant of Rennies Travel; **Carolyn Kitsikopoulos**, consultant of Sure Dynamic Travel; and **Nicola Hards**, account manager of Virgin Atlantic. Photo: Candice May

Travelport and IndiGo team up

CANDICE MAY

TRAVELPORT has teamed up with IndiGo, India's largest domestic airline and the largest carrier with 40% share of the Indian market. This is the first time IndiGo has struck a deal with a global GDS.

Travelport's unique agreement with IndiGo distributes all its fares and ancillary products to Travelport-connected agents through the Travel Commerce Platform. This distribution platform, which is unique to Travelport, enables IndiGo to provide its content via an API connection rather than the

more traditional fare-filling methods and still have fares and ancillaries displayed, compared and booked in exactly the same way.

Gordon Wilson, president and ceo of Travelport, says: "This launch is very good news for our connected travel agents both in India

and around the world."

Aditya Ghosh, president and whole time director of IndiGo, says the arrangement provides an opportunity for the airline to reach new travellers.

IndiGo now plans to expand its route network to the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East and southeast Asia. ■

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Princess Cruises starts construction of new ship
THE steel cutting of the new ship for Princess Cruises took place on September 8 at Fincantieri's shipyard in Monfalcone. The new ship will be able to accommodate 4 250 passengers. It will be the fourth edition of the class for Princess Cruises, following 'Royal Princess', 'Regal Princess' and 'Majestic Princess'.

Le Boat reveals new additions for 2018
LE BOAT, Europe's largest self-drive boating company, has revealed highlights for next year. They include a new Canadian route, its first destination outside Europe; the relocation of its North American headquarters to Smiths Falls, Ontario; the mid-August launch of a new 62-page brochure, featuring Europe and North America; and two new boat models to accommodate larger groups.

Viking launches new world cruise itinerary
VIKING Cruises' second world cruise, scheduled for January 2019, will sail for 128 days, and visit 21 countries and 44 ports, with 10 port overnights. The Viking World Cruise costs US\$49 995pp (R647 400), which includes business-class transatlantic air travel, transfers to and from the ship, all gratuities and service fees, visa service, luggage shipping services, and Viking's Silver Spirits beverage package.

Maputo – hotel market roars ahead

HILKA BIRNS

THE hotel market in Mozambique is expected to boom in the next couple of years.

Hotel values in Maputo – based on recent market performance in US dollars as recorded on January 1, 2017 – have jumped up 133% in 2016 with a compound annual growth rate of 36,6% between 2010 and 2016, making it the most improved market in Africa in terms of hotel values.

This is according to the latest Hotel Valuation Index (HVI) published annually by HVS Global Hospitality Service. (The HVI valuation parameters reflect short-term and long-term sustainable financing models.) It monitors annual percentage changes in the values of typically four- and five-star hotels in 23 major African cities and ranks each market relative to an African average.

Topping the ranks of the HVI 2017 in terms of most improved hotel values are, in declining order, Maputo, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Windhoek, Casablanca, Kampala, Dakar, Cairo, Nairobi, Cape Town, Lomé and Accra.

The worst performing African cities in terms of hotel values (percentage change in US\$ in 2016 over 2015) are Sharm-el-Sheikh (-54%), Harare (-36%), Marrakech (-23%), Addis Ababa (-16%), Dar es Salaam (-15%), Johannesburg (-11%), Gaborone (-11%), Durban (-7%), Lagos (-10%), Lusaka (-1,2%) and Abidjan (-0,8%).

“Markets such as Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda are on the rise because of political stability and removal of visa restrictions.”

HVS Cape Town consultant, **Laura Dutrieux**, says markets such as Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda are on the rise because of political stability, government promotion of international tourism and removal of visa restrictions. Others, such as Sharm-el-Sheikh, Harare and Marrakech, have to cope with terrorism or political instability.

She says while tourism prospects in Africa may not be as positive as previously thought because of the impact of oil prices and the

economic downgrade in South Africa, most African countries are experiencing slow, but realistic, growth that investors can rely on.

Continuing to hamper Africa's growth were issues of inaccessibility, with lengthy and expensive flights and lack of competition on air routes still the norm. However, some markets like Kenya and South Africa were receiving more direct international flights and seeing more local low-cost carriers emerging.

Visa availability was still being plagued by lengthy procedures and corruption, but this was starting to be addressed. The African Union has launched the African Visa Openness Index that encourages countries to open up and allow greater movement of people, with 44 borders in Africa now issuing visas on arrival.

Laura said Cape Town would add 2 500 new hotel rooms in the next year, new direct air routes were coming online and rates were expected to increase by an average 6,6%. However, while hotel values were booming in rand terms, the fluctuating currency value meant returns looked far less exciting when converted into US dollars. ■



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Kenya plans Likoni cable car project

MATHIAS RINGA

THE Kenyan government will start construction of the first cable car project on the Likoni channel in Mombasa County in November.

The project will cost KES5,5bn (R693m) and is expected to ease traffic between Mombasa and the popular holiday resort of Diani in the South Coast.

Over the years, hoteliers and tour operators in Diani have attributed low business to transport challenges on the Likoni channel, triggered by frequent ferry breakdowns.

Diani is popular with

foreign holidaymakers because of its scenic coastline, which is also ideal for snorkelling and scuba diving. However, tourists heading to the South Coast from Moi International Airport, Mombasa, face delays when crossing the Likoni channel due to the ageing ferries.

Kenya Ferry Services MD, **Bakari Gowa**, says a concession agreement for the construction of Likoni crossing has been finalised. He says the project will be implemented through a public-private partnership and will take 18 months to complete.

He says the cable cars will transport 80 000 passengers a day, easing the burden on the ferries. The five ferries transport more than 300 000 people and 6 000 vehicles per day.

It is estimated that the Likoni Express Cable car will take two and a half minutes to cross the 500m stretch. Currently, ferries take between five and 10 minutes to move passengers across the channel but breakdowns cause delays of up to 40 minutes.

Twenty-two cable cars, each carrying 38 passengers, will make nine trips per hour. ■

To the point

Ethiopian Airlines will operate its São Paulo service nonstop, effective September 16. The flight previously stopped in Lomé, Togo. On Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, flight ET 0506 will depart from Addis Ababa at 09h30 and arrive in São Paulo at 16h15. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays flight ET 0507 will depart from São Paulo at 01h35 and arrive in Addis Ababa at 20h00.



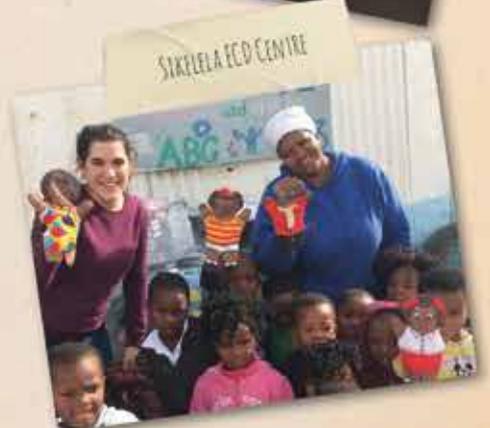
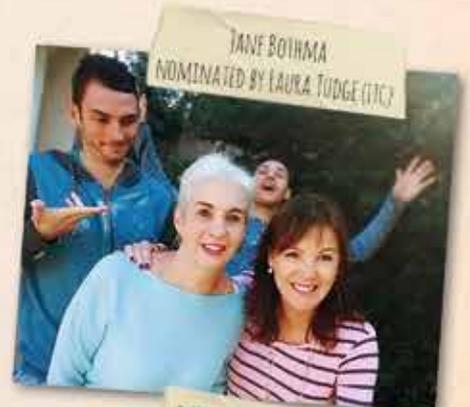


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A snapshot of the week's airline news

HM ups JNB flights, speeds up check-in

AIR Seychelles will add four services on its JNB-SEZ service over the peak end-of-year season, boosting availability to six flights a week. The extra flights will operate as follows: HM061 will depart Seychelles at 09h20, arriving in Johannesburg at 12h25 on December 12 and 19. HM060 will depart Johannesburg at 13h45, arriving in Seychelles at 20h40 on January 2 and 9. The airline is also speeding up passenger processing at Seychelles International Airport by introducing SITA's common-use passenger processing systems (CUPPS).

QR adds two new routes

QATAR Airways will start flying to Sarajevo later this year and will add Canberra to its existing Sydney routing in the course of next year. QR's second daily DOH-SYD flight will continue on to Canberra from February 2018, subject to government approval. The route will be served by a 358-seat Boeing 777-300. Four weekly flights will operate to Sarajevo from October 31. The Doha-Sarajevo flights will be operated by a 144-seat Airbus A320, configured in two classes.

MK increases Perth frequency

AIR Mauritius is to increase flights to Perth to three a week from November. MK 440 operates on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, departing Mauritius at 22h15 and arriving in Perth at 09h10 the next day. MK 441 departs Perth on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays at 13h05, arriving in Mauritius at 17h10.

Oman Air and KQ sign codeshare

KENYA Airways and Oman Air have signed and implemented a codeshare for services between Muscat and Nairobi. Kenya Airways has placed its KQ code on the Oman Air flights. The codeshare flights, operated by Oman Air, are as follows: On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays Flight KQ4750 departs Nairobi at 00h45 and arrives in Muscat at 06h45; on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays return flight KQ 4751 departs from Muscat at 13h50 and arrives in Nairobi at 17h55.

Lufthansa suspends San Jose service

LUFTHANSA is to suspend its five weekly flights between Frankfurt and San Jose, California, from October 26 for operational reasons. A year-round service on the route will recommence on March 25, 2018 for the 2018 summer flight schedule. Lufthansa expects the positive economic development that it has seen on the route to continue next year. Passengers with existing bookings can request to be rebooked on alternative flights from Frankfurt or Munich to San Francisco.



Abu Dhabi's Louvre to open in November

Louvre Abu Dhabi will open to the public on November 11. Visitors can walk through the promenades, overlooking the sea, beneath a vast dome, which is made up of 8 000 metal stars. On display will be the museum's collection of important artworks, artefacts and loans from France's museums, from prehistoric objects to commissioned contemporary artworks. In addition to the galleries, the museum will feature exhibitions, a Children's Museum, a restaurant, a boutique and a café. Manuel Rabaté, director of Louvre Abu Dhabi, said: "With a unique global narrative and a vision to explore the history of art in a fresh context, Louvre Abu Dhabi is a place where visitors can come to understand their own and others' cultures." Pictured are Johnathan Hollard, South Africa trade and MICE executive, with Jean Martins, country manager, Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl



Tips from Louis the Lawyer – Social media

Advocate Louis Nel discusses responsible social media use and the pitfalls of defamation

Social media – play it safe

INFORMATION communicated on social media is instantaneously shared across the globe, making the impact of such content far reaching, whether positive or negative.

The latter is the issue I will be addressing in this and subsequent publications. This week I will focus on defamation, defined by Wikipedia as the infringement of one's reputation or good name.

To pay it safe, social media users need to comply with the terms of the social media platform; make sure they are with the code of conduct of any employer or association they are a member of; and the laws of the country.

There are the rules or terms and conditions pertaining to each form of social

media. In terms of FGASA (Field Guides Association of Southern Africa), there is a comprehensive COC and the following aspects impact on the use of social media:

- Compliance with the constitution and laws
- Treat people with respect
- Avoid insensitive and irresponsible behaviour
- Be tactful.

The South African Constitution enshrines freedom of expression (section 16), but this must be balanced (by the courts) with the right to maintain one's reputation and dignity unblemished and that of privacy (section 14). See the case of Herholdt v Wills: 'Facebook is fraught with dangers especially in the field of privacy' and therefore the Court agreed that by

intervening it may have a positive effect on the use of Facebook. The Court stated that 'the tensions between every human being's constitutionally enshrined rights to freedom of expression and dignitas is all about balance'.

Each form of social media has its own terms and conditions. For example, Facebook has a 'Statement of Rights and Responsibilities' including a 'Data Policy' which includes its 'Privacy Basics'. It should also be noted that, in the US, Congress (1995) passed the Communications Decency Act, which protects Internet Service Providers and website hosts from defamation claims.

More about this and the T&C of other forms of social media next time. ■

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To the point

The Avani Bel-Ombré Mauritius Resort & Spa will open during 2019. The resort will be located along a stretch of the island's unspoilt southern coast, about 30 minutes from Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, and is aimed at millennial-minded travellers seeking a unique travel experience. The 150-room beachfront hotel will offer accommodation in 134 standard rooms, 16 suites, and 12 four-bedroom residential (offer-for-purchase) pool villas. Meeting facilities will be able to handle a range of events – from MICE bookings, to weddings and other celebratory functions. Other facilities include a gym, six-room spa, children's entertainment area, boathouse, pool bar and two restaurants.

A brief look at this week's hotel news

IHG expands in Dubai

THE InterContinental Hotels Group is to expand its footprint in Dubai with the signing of two new properties in partnership with API Hotels & Resorts. The Crowne Plaza Dubai Business Bay is to open in 2019. It will be on Business Bay Canal near the Burj Khalifa and The Dubai Mall. The hotel will boast 290 rooms and suites, all-day dining, gym and an outdoor infinity pool, as well as a ballroom and several meeting rooms to host conferences and events. The InterContinental Residence Suites Dubai Business Bay will be on the Business Bay canal extension of Dubai Creek, across from the new Crowne Plaza. The waterfront property will offer a total of 160 studios and suites.

Anew Hotels launches additional property

RECENTLY established Anew Hotels has launched its newest property, the three-star Anew Hotel Hluhluwe & Safaris. The hotel, formerly the Protea Hotel Hluhluwe, is on the outskirts of Hluhluwe in Zululand. Several soft refurbishments have been completed and further developments include an additional conference room, two four-bed self-catering rondavels and a signature five-star, self-catering thatched safari lodge for six guests. The lodge will come online from October 1.

New guest house for Western Cape

BLUE Sky Guest House has opened in Arniston, Western Cape. The six bedrooms are equipped with aircons, Nespresso machines, safes, a minibar fridge and en-suite bathrooms. There is an onsite restaurant and a bar. Facilities include universal plugs, USB ports and Internet throughout the property. The guest house is about 450m from the beach and is close to Die Mond, a coastal nature reserve, and De Hoop, a World Heritage Site.

CTICC completes major expansion

THE Cape Town International Convention Centre, East Expansion, is complete. The City of Cape Town contributed R550 million toward the cost of the 31 148 sqm expansion, which adds 10 000 sqm of multipurpose conference and exhibition space

through six halls across two floors. The facility also includes 3 000 sqm of informal and formal meeting space in the form of four larger meeting suites, a terrace room, and five smaller meeting pod rooms. The new centre is built across six floors and has more exterior balconies.

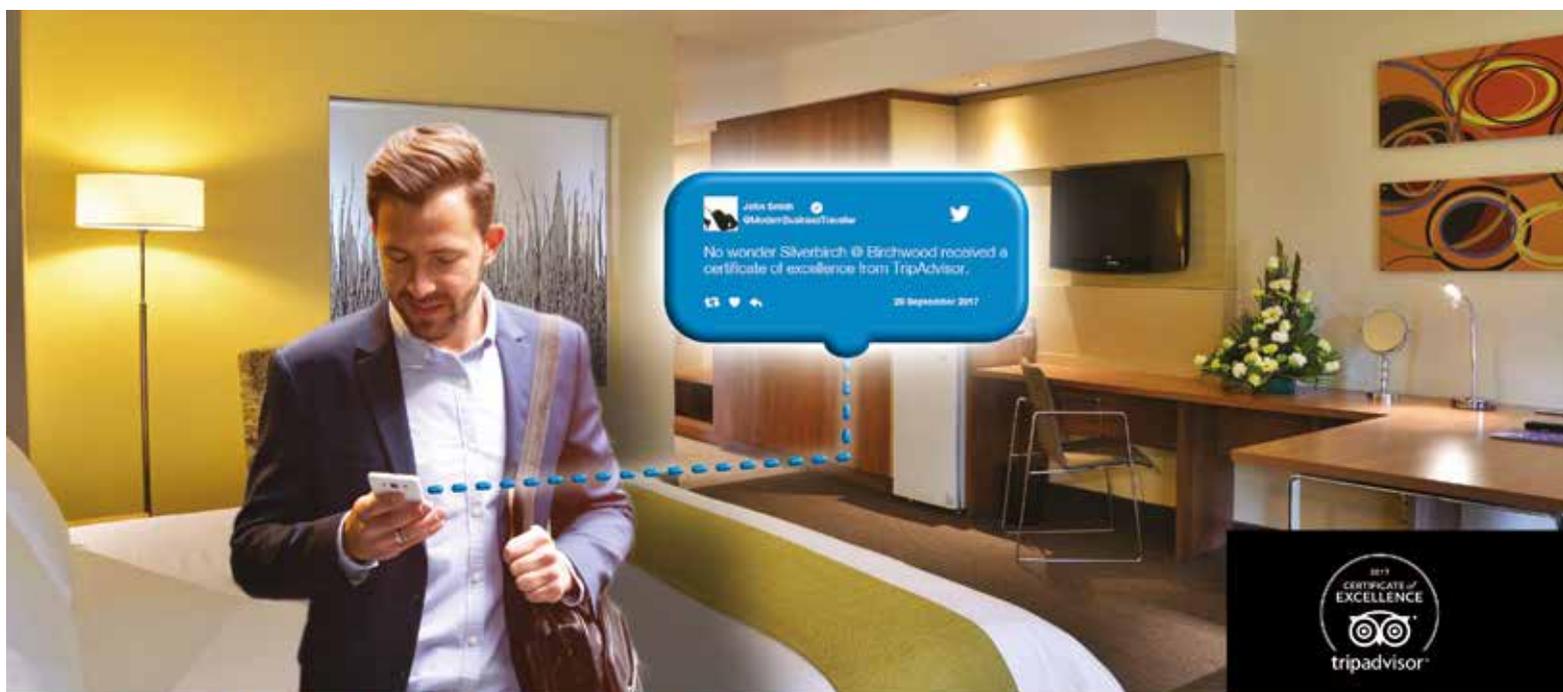
CTICC 2 will also be able to operate as an independent facility. Its design received a four-star Green Star rating by the Green Building Council of South Africa. Construction of the sky bridge across the Heerengracht connecting CTICC 1 with CTICC 2 will commence in 2018. ■

More Mauritius for Cape Town pax

AIR Mauritius passengers from Cape Town will have an extra day and a half on the island when the airline launches its new schedule in March. At the same time, the airline will start operating the wide-body Airbus A340-300 aircraft on the route. Effective from March 28, there will be two flights

a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays. The new schedule includes an overnight flight from Cape Town and a late afternoon departure from Mauritius. The flights depart Cape Town at 22h05 and arrive in Mauritius at 05h10 the next day. The return flights depart Mauritius at 16h15 and arrive in Cape

Town at 20h20. Cape Town is currently served by three flights a week on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, departing Cape Town at 13h40 and arriving in Mauritius at 20h55. The return flight departs Mauritius at 08h45 and arrives in Cape Town at 12h50. ■



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Southeast Asia



Southeast Asia continues to attract South Africans – both first-timers and repeats. Candice May finds out what is hot and happening in this ever-popular region.

Themed holidays lure repeaters

SOUTHEAST Asian itineraries are often formulaic, combining a bit of beach, a dash of culture and a whole lot of shopping. The region, however, incorporates multiple strands of interest and lends itself to themed holidays in which each country shines in its own way.

The region enjoys a strong element of repeat tourists from South Africa, drawn by value for money and its warmth of welcome. By tailormaking holidays to themes, the trade make it possible to deepen the South African experience in these countries, rather than offering the 'same old'. Here, *TNW* presents some ideas offered by experts in the field.

Calling all foodies!

Lance van der Heever, travel director of Marmalade Toast Bespoke Travel & Destination Management, says the whole of Southeast Asia is a gastronomic experience – from Thailand to Vietnam. "I love exploring the regional flavours when travelling through Asia. Thai curries in the

north have little coconut milk, whereas on the islands and coast, they are more coconut milk-based because coconut palms are prevalent on islands such as Koh Samui – that's why it is referred to as the island of a thousand coconuts.

"Vietnam, on the other hand, has the coffee and baguettes, which are used to make dishes such as Pho and Bánh xèo."

Marmalade Toast Bespoke Travel & Destination Management has put together food packages throughout the region, including the 14-day Food Glorious Food! Sri Lanka Discovery, 12-day Myanmar Foodies Delight, Hanoi Scenic Ride for Foodies Day Tour and Authentic Home Dining Experience in Bangkok



"Travellers get to learn the secrets of Vietnamese cuisine and whip up their very own feast, which they then have the joy of devouring!"
Alet Steyn

with renowned chef Aoy. The Myanmar package is one of Lance's top picks: "The people of Myanmar love eating and sharing dishes. Travellers get to discover traditional Asian to fusion with Mediterranean flavours, and learn how local specialities are prepared. They also get to enjoy food from the many food stalls in the city."

Alet Steyn, gm of Wendy Wu Tours, agrees that every country in the region offers a unique foodie experience due to their different ingredients, spices and styles of cooking. However, her favourite is Vietnam. Wendy Wu Tours offers food excursions for Vietnam, including cooking classes in Hoi An, tea and coffee plantations in Dalat, street

food tours in Saigon and a Mekong Delta Cruise. Alet says: "Every morning, the market in Hoi An is packed full of just-picked fruits and vegetables. Travellers get to learn the secrets of Vietnamese cuisine and whip up their feast, which they then have the joy of devouring!"

Real adventure

Chantelle Brown, senior product manager of kulula holidays, says Thailand is ideal for a real adventure holiday. "There are a variety of options – kayaking in Phang Nga Bay (off Phuket), rock climbing in Ton Sai (near Krabi) and Railay (Krabi), trekking the jungles of northern Thailand, surfing in Phuket or trying out the Flight of the Gibbon – a zip-line canopy tour in Chiang Mai. You can even get your Open Water Scuba Certification in Koh Tao."

Kulula holidays' most popular Thailand package is the Banthai Beach Resort & Spa package, which includes return flights from Johannesburg to Phuket, seven nights' accommodation in a superior room, return airport transfers and breakfast daily. Value-adds include

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Visitors to Vietnam can enjoy everything from cooking tours to trekking.

welcome drinks and a Thai set dinner at the Port Restaurant.

Alet says travellers can't visit the region without going on some sort of adventure. For this reason, Wendy Wu has introduced Discovery Tours for the more inquisitive, which feature authentic cultural and active experiences to immerse travellers in the raw charm of the region. Some of the packages include trekking in Sapa (Vietnam), kayaking in Vang Vieng and zip-lining in Champasak (both in Laos) and quad biking in Siem Reap (Cambodia).

Spiritual trips

Theresa Szejwallo, md of Trafalgar, recommends Myanmar, India and Japan to travellers looking for a spiritual experience. Trafalgar's

Spiritual Burma takes guests through a land of sacred stupas, ancient traditions and spiritual reverence. "Some of the world's holiest Buddhist sanctuaries are found here," Theresa says. Trafalgar's India's Golden Triangle with Varanasi, which is new for 2018, features a scenic sunrise boat trip in Varanasi to the holy River Ganges.

On the Spiritual Japan trips, travellers experience rituals performed through the millennia. "The Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Route is a Unesco World Heritage Site dotted with shrines, temples and the impressive Nachi waterfall. Hayatama Taisha is one of Kumano's most important shrines and holds an important place in Japanese mythology," Theresa says.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Vietnam a cultural, natural and culinary delight

VIETNAM continues to grow in popularity among leisure travellers. It is easy to see why – the country offers an astonishing mix of natural highlights and cultural diversity, with dramatic

scenery that ranges from jagged peaks, winding mountain passes and fields in every shade of green. While rural areas hold antiquity and charm, the big cities pulse with contemporary life.

A travel agent's experience

Lance van der Heever of Marmalade Toast Bespoke Travel & Destination Management, shares his Vietnam experience:

"My partner, David, and I have been fortunate enough to spend a fair amount of time in Vietnam. Our last trip in 2016 was a bucket-list-style adventure that saw us spend a month travelling from the Mekong Delta to Hanoi in the north using as many modes of transport as we could find – everything from horse-drawn carts to scooters, taxis, trains, planes, long-tail boats and open-top 'war-era' Jeep Willys.

"We started in the south and cruised along the back canals, exploring daily Vietnamese life in the Mekong in rickety boats – as a large Westerner I was always dispatched to the front of the boat to ensure that it didn't capsize – and horse-drawn carts.

"We then headed up to Saigon by taxi



David on the Reunification Express from Saigon to Da Nang.

to explore some of the food culture. We indulged in authentic street food at a restaurant called bánh mì and Pho, exploding rice at Anthony Bourdain's

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

From page 11

favourite restaurant Com Nieu Sai Gon – the other exotic items on the menu here, such as sheep's womb and river toad, left us in hysterics – and fine food at Cuc Gach Quán. The latter is on the outskirts of an urban neighbourhood known as District One and is widely believed to be one of the best restaurants in Saigon. The meal was exceptional!

"Next, we caught the Reunification Express from Saigon to Da Nang. This train ride was an incredible experience thanks to the Vietnamese family that we shared a cabin with. The rural views on this journey were also something special – to watch a sunrise over rice paddies in Vietnam is a somewhat spiritual experience. Plus, the train was one of the cleanest we had ever

experienced in Southeast Asia.

"From Da Nang, we moved to Hoi An, where we quickly learned to navigate chaotic traffic on a scooter, ate all sorts of interesting foods, sipped copious cocktails on the beach and took in the rich history of the city. We also drove the Hai Vân Pass, known as the Ocean Cloud Pass, which has been voted one of best scenic drives in the world. It was a glorious experience. We had music from the '50s and '60s – think Good Vibrations by the Beach Boys – while we drove up the pass and got to learn about the Vietnam War from a Viet Cong war vet who now makes sampans on China Beach.

"Our trip ended in Hanoi, where we spent our days in the French Quarter drinking cà phê đá – Vietnamese



Ta Hien Street comes alive at night with music and street food vendors.

iced coffee served strong with lots of condensed milk – on the edge of Ho Hoàn Kiem Lake, the Lake of the Restored Sword, where legend abounds.

We spent the evenings on Ta Hien Street sitting on kiddies' stools listening to live music, feasting on street food and drinking beers.

"Vietnam is a truly magic country that offers something for everyone, and every pocket. I find it humbling how the Vietnamese have endured so much yet harbour no grudges – they are generous spirits and wonderfully hospitable, which makes their beautiful country all the more enjoyable! It is hands down one of my favourite destinations in the world."

A round-up of top Vietnam travel tips from agents

• Go south

The Mekong Delta region is worth the trip. Not only is there a relaxed atmosphere but some of the very best food that Vietnam has to offer – the kind that makes you want to slurp every last mouthful of broth from your noodle soup!

• Learn the war history

It is impossible to put Vietnam into context without knowing something

about it – and there are lots of opportunities to get in touch with its war past. A tour of the Cu Chi tunnels on the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City gives visitors a momentary sense of what the conditions must have been like during conflict.

• Catch a bus into town

Most bus companies run free shuttle services from bus stations to hotels. They are usually

unmarked and unpublicised to foreigners, so tell your clients to watch the locals and follow their lead. It can save a likely inflated taxi trip into town!

• Go on a walking tour

A free walking tour in Hanoi is the best way to experience the capital from a local's perspective and make new friends. A student-run organisation, Hanoi Free Tour

Guides, provides free English guiding services around the city. However, visitors need to cover any admission fees, lunch and tips for the student guides.

• Visit Sapa

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Dynamic packaging versus tour operators

WHEN it comes to putting together multi-country trips, what is the better choice – dynamic packaging or going through a tour operator? Travel agents have mixed opinions.

Lance van der Heever of Marmalade Toast Bespoke Travel & Destination Management, believes dynamic packaging is the way to go. "This is mainly because my partner, David, and I spent three years living in Southeast Asia and have existing relationships and direct contracts with some of the region's most dynamic ground handlers and travel service providers from hotels to tour guides. These relationships, combined with our first-hand experience of hotels and excursions, give us the ability to create bespoke and often unique itineraries that are not on offer on the market."

Sarah O'Mahoney, global purpose specialist of G Adventures, agrees



Taryn Agliotti

that dynamic packaging offers clients flexible, tailor-made itineraries and is ideal for those who do not enjoy travelling in groups.

Shirley Watson, destination owner for the Far East of Flight Centre Travel Group, says dynamic packaging allows clients to decide how much time they want to spend in each country.

However, Sarah points out that dynamic packaging

may not necessarily offer the benefits of experienced ground handlers in the area. "Using a tour operator limits flexibility, but tour operators are knowledgeable and experienced in providing the most authentic experience," she explains.

Alet Steyn, of Wendy Wu Tours, adds that it can be time consuming to contact different ground handlers.

Having visited Southeast Asia numerous times herself, **Ros Chimes** of Ros-4-Travel, says that

tour operators are great for first-time travellers, but not repeat travellers. "After the first trip, I believe a travel agent needs to tailor-make the client's trip so that it speaks to their interests and passions. This can't be found in conventional packages," she says.

According to **Taryn Agliotti** of Sure Travel 24-7, tour operators are the best way to go for travellers who are on a budget, as packages are more affordable than tailor-made itineraries. "From a reliability perspective, using only one tour operator is the best. This will also allow travellers to take advantage of tour operators' relationships with ground handlers," she advises.

Alet says using a tour operator is also much less stressful for travel agents. "If you're tailor-making a package and something goes wrong, it could be a nightmare to make changes to other components. It is best to let one reputable operator handle all the components of the trip." **Annamarie Lexow**, sales and marketing manager of Travel Vision, adds that it can be especially problematic for travel agents to assist clients with problems when they are in a country where English isn't spoken freely.

Book it!

- Global has a number of Cosmos packages to Southeast Asia, including the Thailand Experience (from R16 500), Simply Vietnam (from R32 300) and Mysteries of Myanmar (from R28 900) – all prices per person sharing.
- Wendy Wu Tours is running specials on 2018 tours, including Vietnam at a Glance (from R31 730), Burma Explorer (from R44 285) and Indochina Delights (from R48 995, all per person twin share). All tours include international flights from Johannesburg, airport taxes, accommodation, meals, transportation on tour, comprehensive touring, national escorts for group escorting and local guides.
- Globus is offering a 13-day Exploring Vietnam & Cambodia tour from R50 300 per person sharing. Highlights of the all-inclusive tour are Ho Chi Minh City, Hoi An, Hue, Hanoi, Siem Reap and a Ha Long Bay cruise.

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Ho Hoan Kiem Lake in Hanoi is a major scenic spot in the city.

Multi-country trips – what you need to know

Multi-country trips have long been the prevalent method of touring Southeast Asia. *TNW* looks at the opportunities and challenges in selling such itineraries.

Challenges

Ground handlers: Trafalgar's **Theresa Szejwallo** says perhaps the biggest challenge for travel agents is finding a company with reliable ground handlers to deliver quality experiences in each Southeast Asian country on the itinerary. "Language barriers and being able to negotiate the cultural nuances are both challenges for travellers," she explains. Theresa suggests that travel agents should use companies that have on-the-ground local experts and travel directors who will help travellers navigate cultural taboos with grace and diplomacy.

Flights: **Shirley Watson**, destination owner for the Far East of Flight Centre Travel Group, points out that there are limited direct flights out of South Africa to Southeast Asian countries. **Deborah Beckett**, owner of Can Discover Travel, adds that connecting flights in the region can be a headache because some of the best airlines are not bookable on the GDS. "Air Asia is one example. Still, they aren't the most reliable, and because it is an online booking, making flight changes is difficult." **Chantelle Brown** of kulula holidays, says

backtracking is also difficult to avoid as onward connections often tend to be from the same hub cities.

Hotels: **Ros Chimes**, owner of Ros-4-Travel, says travel agents must do very thorough research on hotels they haven't experienced themselves before making recommendations. "Our knowledge of a three-star hotel is very different to a three-star hotel in some towns and cities in Southeast Asia," she explains. "You will end up with very disgruntled clients if they do not get what they have come to expect!"

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Opportunities

Upselling: Chantelle says upselling is a major opportunity because clients are more likely to opt for a higher standard, quality tour when booking Southeast Asia travel due to price. Shirley, agrees: "Clients will be keen to travel to multiple countries as Southeast Asia is a reasonably priced destination."

Return clients: **Taryn Agliotti**, consulting director of Sure Travel 24-7, says if you are able to pull off a seamless multi-country trip and provide your client with a fulfilling holiday, they are likely to return. To do this, **David van der Heever** of

Marmalade Toast Bespoke Travel & Destination Management, suggests including extraordinary activities in the client's itinerary, such as local transport, dinner with locals, local delicacies, trekking in jungles or even something simple such as a private blessing by a monk.

"These are special experiences that the client will remember for the rest of their life. But if you do not do your research or profile your client properly, they can be bad experiences that they remember for the rest of their life!" he says.

Visa requirements

Jaendre Terblanche, owner of Visas Zone, gives an update on the latest visa

requirements for SA travellers for countries that fall under the Southeast Asia region.

COUNTRY	VISA REQUIREMENT
Vietnam	Visa required
Laos	Visa on arrival
Cambodia	E-visa prior to arrival
Thailand	No visa required
Myanmar (Burma)	Visa required
Malaysia	No visa required
Indonesia	No visa required
Singapore	No visa required
Philippines	No visa required
Brunei	Visa on arrival
Andaman Nicobar Island	Indian visa

Book it!

Wendy Wu Tours is running its 2018 Asia sale, which gives discounts of up to R7 000 across Southeast Asia, China, Japan and India Tours. To qualify for these discounts, travellers must book and pay the tour deposit of R2 500 per person by September 29. ■

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Mauritian memories

The Holiday Factory and Marriott Mauritius hosted nine senior travel partners on an educational to Mauritius to experience the luxury of the four-star Le Meridien Ile Maurice, the five-star Westin Turtle Bay Resort & Spa and the five-star Deluxe St Regis Mauritius. Free-flowing champagne, fine dining, a beach buffet, chasing the sunset on a sundowner cruise and a cocktail-making competition were all part of the memories made. Pictured (from left): **Le-Ann Smalberger** (XL Flight Specials); **Nicole Smit** (The Holiday Factory In-house Marriott Mauritius specialist) and **Sandy Wood** (The Travel Factory).

FCM Travel Solutions rewards staff

Seventeen black, female employees of FCM Travel Solutions received their first dividends this month as part of the Employee Share Scheme. The dividend comes as the corporate travel solutions provider announced its Level 2 BEE rating. "Following a very successful year for FCM, we were able to distribute R310 000 among 17 employees who have worked for the company for at least three years and are part of the Employee Share Scheme," explains **Euan McNeil**, FCM Travel Solutions SA gm. The Employee Share Scheme owns 30% of FCM. "We are proud to have a BEE



From left, **Mummy Mafojane, Za Nkosi.**

strategy that is delivering sustainable and measurable results for our customers, employees and the communities we support. By 2022, we expect to have over 50 senior long-standing employees participating in the scheme," says Euan.

Appointments

■ The Etihad Aviation Group has appointed **Abdul Khaliq Saeed** (right) as the new ceo of Etihad Airways Engineering, replacing **Jeff Wilkinson**, who is leaving after 11 years with the company. Abdul brings over 35 years of international maintenance, repair and overhaul industry experience, and joins Etihad Airways



Engineering from Abu Dhabi-based Turbine Services & Solutions (TS&S) where he has been ceo since 2014.

■ Radisson Blu Gautrain Hotel has appointed **Jessica Ferreira** as its executive assistant gm. Jessica has a wealth of experience in the hospitality industry, and prior experience with the Rezidor Group, of which Radisson Blu Gautrain Hotel is a part.



Obituary

■ Former Travelbags president and industry stalwart, **Lyn Bickerstaff**, died on September 8. Lyn left Johannesburg in May this year to settle in Cape Town where she wanted to spend time with her family and it was there that she spent four months surrounded by the people she loved. Her funeral was held on September 14 in Cape Town and a Johannesburg memorial will be held on September 21.



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New OTA targets 'price-conscious'

TESSA REED

ONLINE travel portal, justGO.co.za, launched this month, offering users the ability to compare fares when booking bus and airline travel.

Travellers can mix and match bus and airline travel in one transaction on the website. All major bus and airline companies in Southern Africa are represented, including Intercap, Greyhound, City to City, Translux, Mango, kulula.com, SAA, and FlySafair.

Users are served comparative options and alternatives to and from all intercity bus stations or airports in

Southern Africa.

When, for example, a user wants to book a return trip from Johannesburg to Maputo, the user can search flight or bus options and compare prices, across airlines or buses.

The portal also offers flights to and from the rest of the world. No credit card fees are charged.

Director, **Theunis Potgieter**, says this is a first for the Southern African region. He says the website is aimed at "everyone, from millennials to gogos, leisure to business travellers, and locals to expats". ■



QuickTrav celebrates 25 years!

Quick Software celebrated Heritage Month recently to coincide with the 25th anniversary of Peter Kohler releasing the first version of QuickTrav. The majority of the staff have been with QuickTrav for most of that time. Peter employed **Colette Groenewald** and **Trisha Morris** over 20 years ago, and fellow directors, **Len Kohler** and **Chris Curtis**, have been with the company for 18 years. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Google ramps up travel offering

GOOGLE expanded its travel offering at the end of August with the introduction of Flight Insights.

This new feature shows travellers' recommendations and tips on how to make their air travel more cost-effective.

Flight Insights suggests variations in travel dates as well as alternative airports, highlighting the cheapest and most expensive options. This appears alongside an estimated travel time between various airports and the destination to allow travellers to weigh up whether the savings are worth the distance.

When booking a flight from Durban to Johannesburg for example, Google will advise travellers that a trip to Lanseria could be more cost-effective. It

will even show Wonderboom as an option.

The new Flight Insights feature will also suggest the cheapest day to travel if a day before or after the date that the traveller has entered is cheaper. It will show the airfares in a calendar format so that selecting a cheaper travel date is easy.

The new feature is currently available on mobile and will roll out to the desktop version later this year.

This comes as the search giant is increasingly positioning itself in the eyes of the consumer as an OTA such as Expedia or Travelstart.

Over the last years, Google has entered more and more areas of the travel industry through the introduction



Flight insights.

of Google Flight Search, Google Hotel Finder and the optimisation of Google Maps for hotel bookings. Destinations on Google is a mobile platform that offers itineraries put together by an algorithm based on online searches.

Google Flights road test

DAVE MARSH

Google Flights shows a comparison of airlines' fares and you book your choice through the airline's website. It has some nice features but it is of little use to cost-conscious

South African travellers in its current form.

What I like:

- Easy to use in browser (Google.com/flights).
- Comes up with a price range and indicates when there are flights during the

day in that range.

- The idea of seeing on one screen the prices compared with the day before and day after.

What I do not like:

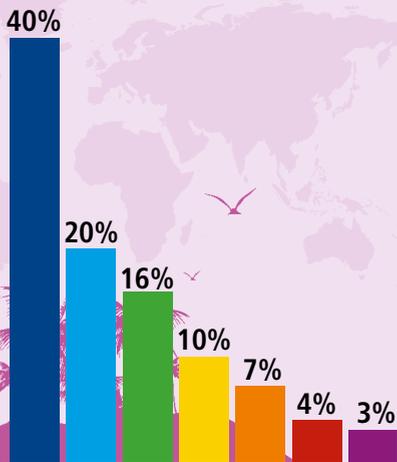
- No kulula.com flights
- No FlySafair flights. ■

pulse poll
brought to you by **eTNW and TRAVELINFO**

Something exotic please!

Which destinations are most popular for December 2017 bookings?

- Indian Ocean Islands
- Asia
- Domestic
- Europe
- Australia
- US
- Americas



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Incoming SAA ceo is tough

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difference at SAA, it would be Vuyani.

"This man is honest, hard-working and driven. He is also capable of making tough decisions," TNW was told.

"He is a workaholic and if he operates at SAA like he does at Vodacom, his fellow

executives can expect weekend calls and burning the midnight oil as he sinks his teeth into turning the airline around."

According to *Business Day*, Vuyani says his lack of aviation experience does not worry him. All in all, along with the recapitalisation that has been promised by Finance Minister,

Malusi Gigaba, it does seem that for the first time in many years, a ceo of SAA will be in with a fair chance of making the airline work. He will need to be tough, though.

Business Day also reported that Vuyani was recruited through an external headhunting process. ■