

# TNW



TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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# Millions in travel debt threatens ANCWL assets

TESSA REED

**F**AILURE by the African National Congress Women's League to pay roughly R6,3 million in travel debt resulted in the league's assets being seized for an auction on Tuesday, January 9.

Unfortunately for the debtor, Atlantis Corporate Travel, nothing was sold because of insufficient attendance – only a couple of people turned up at Luthuli House for the auction. As a result, the company will obtain an order to attach immovable assets, or property, as well as seize bank accounts, to furnish the debt.

This comes after a high court judgement, handed down in mid-2017, ordered the ANCWL to pay the debt,

with interest and costs to Atlantis Corporate Travel. This is debt on an account that dates back to 2013, while the interest, at a rate of 13% since 2015, is itself over R1 million, increasing the debt further.

A spokesperson for Atlantis told TNW that the account was frozen due to non-payment around 2015, 2016. Initially the company tried to obtain the debt without going to court, but was compelled to seek legal action after letters of demand were ignored. Following the court judgement, the company again appealed to the ANCWL to cover the debt before obtaining a warrant of execution.

At the time of publication, the ANCWL had not responded to a request for comment. ■



## Hello Mauritius!

Beachcomber is offering an early-bird special on Mauritius packages for travel between February 1 and March 22. Packages booked 60 days or more in advance will be discounted 20% and packages booked between one and 59 days in advance will be discounted 10%. Pictured here are (from left): Lauren Blaine, Vladi Malkiewicz and Nikki Briant, sales executives at Beachcomber Tours. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## December dream holidays ruined after operator's 'misfortune'

TESSA REED

FRAUD charges have been laid against Heyneke Tours after clients' holidays, including honeymoons and anniversary trips, were ruined. According to clients canvassed by TNW, charges have been laid at Brixton, Honeydew and Roodepoort police stations.

TNW also understands that **Izak** and **Henda Heyneke** were arrested on December 18, and then released on bail.

One client, who drove to the company's business address, says a 'for sale' sign was erected at the house. Other affected clients told TNW that when confronting the operator, they were informed that the company was "bankrupt".

The operator took bookings from numerous clients without paying the money over to suppliers so that clients were forced to either rebook their holidays, paying once again, or cancel their trips.

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## Trade in uproar over SAA flight cuts

SARAH ROBERTSON

SAA announced last month that, effective January 15, a number of its Johannesburg-Cape Town and Johannesburg-Durban flights would be cut, while Mango added flights on the same routes as part of SAA's turnaround plan.

As the announcement made on December 14 advised that affected tickets needed to be re-issued on or before December 31, 2017, agents were forced to work through the holiday period and complained that SAA trade support was near impossible to reach.

**Rodger Foster**, ceo and md of SA Airlink, advised that the interline

agreement with Airlink and SAA would not be affected by the change as Airlink did not operate flights on either route. "While fewer flights bearing the SAA brand will reduce interline connectivity... this will be ameliorated by codesharing between SAA and Mango due to Mango adding frequencies concomitantly with SAA reducing frequencies. As long as the SA code features on a Mango flight, this flight inventory will be available for interlining."

SAA also confirmed that it would discontinue the A340-600s on the Johannesburg-Cape Town route while the new Mango flights would be operated by smaller Boeing 737-800s,

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## December holidays ruined

From page 1

TNW understands that at least 14 clients have been affected and, based on clients contacted by this publication, over R1,2m has been lost to these clients.

The majority of these clients became aware that their bookings were not paid and confirmed when they did not receive proper booking confirmations, while some were informed by airlines that their tickets had been cancelled when they tried to check in for flights.

The explanation given by Izak in a statement is that a "series of unfortunate incidents" led to the operator having "negative cash flow" and being unable to meet its commitments to the clients who had booked in December. He added that the company had appointed

a team of consultants to help turn around the business and reimburse clients owed money or enable them to complete their trips. This includes the development of a payment that it will convey to all creditors before the end of January 2018.

While Heyneke Tours was ticketing through Serendipity Worldwide Group until March or April last year, business development manager, **Donovan Moodley**, said the company was no longer ticketing through SWG.

Donovan emphasised that Heyneke had been in the industry for a long time, had passed the group's checks and had sound business practices up until last year.

Heyneke Tours is not a registered Asata member. ■

## NEWS

# Club Med opens new resort

CANDICE MAY

**C**LUB Med has opened its newest family-friendly ski resort, the Grand Massif Samoëns Morillon Resort, built on the Plateau des Saix in Samoëns, France.

The 420-room resort is an hour and 15 minutes' drive from Geneva Airport, making it appealing to families who want to avoid longer transfer times. Designed to blend in harmoniously with nature, it is at an altitude of 1 600m and overlooks the valley with a panoramic view of the surrounding mountains.

Guests have direct access to the slopes from the ski equipment room. They benefit from a lift pass that covers two domains – Massif (ideal for beginners) and Flaine (better suited to intermediate and expert skiers). Options for those looking to relax include a fitness centre, sauna, Turkish bath, indoor and outdoor heated pools and the Carita spa.

To keep the little ones busy, there are extensive kids' facilities, including kids' clubs for four-month-old babies to 17-year-olds; snowboard



The outdoor heated pool at the Samoëns resort.

lessons for children from eight years old; and a dedicated ski room for the children with direct access to the kids' club and slopes.

When hunger strikes, guests have three different dining options to choose from. The main restaurant has four different dining rooms and focuses on health and wellness, offering a range of local and international specialities alongside light dishes and gluten-free options. The Gourmet Lounge provides the perfect eating experience for every time of day, from a

comforting afternoon tea to a fine-dining dinner created by chef, **Edouard Loubet**. Then there is Bread & Co – a family restaurant that allows kids to play 'Petit Chefs', inviting their parents to share dinner.

Although the Grand Massif Samoëns Morillon Resort was built predominantly as a ski resort, it will be open all year round. **Olivier Hannaert**, md of Club Med Southern Africa, says the resort will have a lot to offer adventurous travellers in summer, too, with its unbeatable cycling trails through the Alps. ■

## Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



Bow hunting with Cupid

## SQ to fly to Cape Town daily

SINGAPORE Airlines is increasing its flight frequency to Cape Town.

From March 26, the carrier will fly daily to Cape Town via Johannesburg, up from the current four flights

a week. The additional flights are SQ478 (SIN-JNB-CPT) and SQ479 (CPT-JNB-SIN).

The new flights are subject to regulatory approvals.

SQ will operate the Cape

Town and Johannesburg flights using its Airbus A350-900. The aircraft seats 253 passengers in three classes – 42 in business class, 24 in premium economy and 187 in economy class. ■

## Trade in uproar over SAA flight cuts

From page 1

which reduces seat capacity on the popular domestic route.

Voyager frequent flyer members will continue to earn Miles on Mango-operated flights if booked on the SAA code and continue to enjoy the SAA baggage allowance and lounge access. Voyager members can also spend their Miles on Mango-operated flights by utilising miles or a combination of miles and a range of payment options.

### Festive scramble

Initially, agents were advised that affected clients needed to be rebooked on to another SAA flight at no extra charge, subject to availability of the same booking class, and clients were not offered the option to book on the

newly added Mango flight replacing the cancelled SAA flight. The resulting shortage in availability was not well received by the trade who struggled to accommodate clients with the reduced capacity, particularly when international flight connections were involved.

SAA did in some cases accommodate clients booked on cancelled SAA flights on Mango flights, however agents canvassed by TNW complained that the process to make these changes was lengthy, exacerbated by an inability to reach SAA.

A Durban-based ITC, who wished to remain anonymous, advised that the only available SAA connections for her affected clients required them to transit in Johannesburg for 10 hours. She called trade

support and was advised that rebooking on Mango flights was allowed subject to a written authorisation, but the new Mango codeshares were still not reflecting in the GDS. When none of the agent's emails requesting the authorisation was answered, she attempted to contact trade support on December 28, 29 and 30, waiting for over an hour before being cut off on some calls. Eventually authorisation was given just before the cut-off for reissue.

According to agents, the SAA call centre advised that the reissue deadline was extended until January 15, although no written notification has been sent out.

SAA had still not responded to TNW on this point at time of publication. ■

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## Fly Modern Ark eyes Air Zimbabwe stake

FLY Modern Ark has submitted a proposal to the Zimbabwean government to buy a 25% share in Air Zimbabwe, founder **Theunis Crous** told *TNW*. The move would result in an injection of US\$220m (R2,72bn) in new assets for the airline.

Fly Modern Ark's proposal comes as the new Zimbabwe government has invited bids for stakes in up to eight loss-making state-owned enterprises, including Air Zimbabwe.

Under the deal, US\$193m (R2,38bn) will be used to acquire aircraft, US\$16,1m (R199m) will be used for training and support, and

US\$10,9m (R135m) will be used on operations, safety and marketing.

Fly Modern Ark has been contemplating domestic routes in South Africa since last July (see *TNW*, July 25), although flights have yet to launch. With 12 aircraft, the airline said it wanted to offer affordable fares to the South African public, flying from secondary airports such as Graaff-Reinet and Ladysmith, as well as from rural areas.

According to Theunis, Fly Modern Ark is still planning to operate routes in South Africa, but as a feeder airline to Air Zimbabwe. ■



**You're the tops!**

Toward the end of last year, Beachcomber hosted its Beachcomber Top 10 Awards at Trou Aux Biches, Mauritius, to recognise its industry partners. Pictured here with **Joanne Visagie**, Beachcomber sales and marketing manager (left) and **Terry Munro**, md of Beachcomber, is **Tammy Hunt**, md of eTravel, which bagged the prize for top ITC consortium.

## Lufthansa rewards purchase of higher-priced tickets

SARAH ROBERTSON

**L**UFTHANSA Group announced last month that it was amending its frequent flyer programme, Miles & More, in order to reward the purchase of higher-priced tickets more strongly.

The new system will award miles based on the price of the flight and on the frequent flyer status of the participants in the programme rather than on booking class and length of route.

Miles & More participants will now receive four to six award miles per euro spent for tickets booked from March 12 onwards. The new system applies to flights with Lufthansa Group airlines – Lufthansa, Swiss, Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines and Eurowings – as well as all other Miles & More partner airlines, provided the ticket

was issued by a Lufthansa Group airline.

The bonus award miles that status members receive for flights with the network airlines and transatlantic joint venture partners will double to 50% from the current 25%. On flights with Eurowings, Brussels Airlines and all other Miles & More partner airlines, the award mile bonus will remain at 25%. Award miles can only be credited according to this new system if the tickets for the flight were issued by a Lufthansa Group airline, not by other airlines.

Frequent flyer status, allocation of status miles and the privileges associated with that status will not be affected by the new system for awarding miles.

**Richard Beadle**, sales and marketing director of the German Speaking Travel

Alliance, said the Lufthansa Group was considered a market leader in the industry and any major change implemented in its operations was likely to be followed by other airlines down the line, similar to the implementation of LH's push away from GDS bookings.

However, SAA rolled out a similar change to its Voyager mile awards in February 2015 with the introduction of the RE5 programme, which also awards passengers with miles based on the cost of the fare and carrier-imposed fees rather than on mileage and class flown. At the time, the programme was highly criticised as an attempt by SAA to positively spin its decision to write off a huge debt in Voyager miles by liquidating stored miles. Clients complained that they saw their miles devalue overnight. ■

## Asata appoints new board

ASATA has appointed its new board for 2017/2018, reflecting representation from all South Africa's major retail travel groupings.

The president, vice-president and treasurer will be elected by the board at its first meeting

at the end of this month.

The new board consists of **Colin Mitchley** (BidTravel); **Gary Mulder** (Club Travel); **Tammy Hunt** (eTravel); **Andrew Stark** (Flight Centre); **Vanya Lessing** (Sure Travel); **Dinesh Naidoo** (SWG); **Scholtz Fourie** (Tourvest);

**Mladen Lukic** (Travel Counsellors); **Steve Egan** (TWF); **Frank Palapies** (Wings); **Sailesh Parbhu** (XL Travel); **Jackie Turnbull** (wholesale member); and **Lance Smith** (partner member).

**Otto de Vries** remains ceo. ■

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## Tips from Louis the Lawyer – Social media and defamation

Advocate Louis Nel discusses the burden of proof.

THERE are many misconceptions about what constitutes defamation and what the defences are.

If a party (A) alleges he/she has been defamed by another party (B), A has to prove the following: That the statement refers to A; that there is publication/communication to a third party; that B has the intention to defame A; that the statement is wrongful; that the content is defamatory; the causal connection between the statement and damages suffered; the quantum.

Publication to a third party includes communication by the defendant B to a third party. This includes statements in an e-mail copied to various parties and any form of social media. Publication need not be intentional – a person may be held liable even for the unwitting dissemination of defamatory matter. This means you have to be extremely careful not only about what you say but to whom you say it, who you share it with and how you share it. For example,

is it marked as 'private, confidential and for the recipients' information only'?

A statement is considered to be published not only by the person who originated it, but also by anyone who subsequently repeats it, making the liability for defamation potentially very wide.

The allegation that someone is a rapist is undoubtedly defamatory in law. Both the people who originated it and those who shared or retweeted it are potentially liable.

Here's a drastic example: **Maung Saungkha** is a poet turned activist who served prison time over a satirical poem he posted on Facebook in 2015. The poem was deemed by a court to be an insult to the president of Myanmar, despite the president not being named. He served six months.

More about elements that comprise proof of defamation, namely intention and wrongfulness, will be covered in the next insert. ■

## Travelport receives level-3 NDC certification

TRAVELPORT has achieved Level-3 aggregator certification under IATA's New Distribution Capability (NDC) initiative.

It is the first GDS to acquire this certification and will work with airline technology specialist, Farelogix, to implement the first such NDC connection with a major global airline. Details of this development will be

announced soon.

Level 3 is the highest IATA certification and is reserved for companies that demonstrate the ability to provide full offer and order management.

"As a certified aggregator, Travelport will now be able to bring NDC to its existing base and broaden the scope to a wider range of airlines," said **Yanik Hoyles**, director of IATA's

NDC programme.

Travelport's senior vp and md of Air Commerce, **Derek Sharp**, said NDC status would complement its airline database ATPCo, which connected travel buyers to more than 280 ancillaries. "It will also complement our extensive existing API connections, our tools for critical workflows, servicing and synchronisation." ■

## Zambia partners with ET to revive national carrier

THE Zambian government plans to relaunch the national carrier in partnership with Ethiopian Airlines, with the Zambian government as the majority shareholder.

"Cabinet has approved the re-establishment of the long-awaited national airline

at an initial estimated cost of \$30 million (R370m)," Transport Minister, **Brian Mushimba**, told local press.

Acting Information Minister, **Stephen Kampyongo**, said Zambia would have a 55% share in the national airline while Ethiopian Airlines would

hold the remaining 45%.

The national airline will operate as Zambia Airways 2014 Limited, succeeding the defunct Zambia Airways. Zambia Airways was liquidated in 1994 and, since then, the country has had no national carrier. ■

Advertorial

## Travel Vision kicks off 2018 with renewed focus

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As for our **tailor-made packages**, we looked at the destinations that have proved popular, based on requests from our agent partners. Travel Vision will continue to specialise in the United States and Walt Disney World, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, the UK, Disneyland-Paris, Italy, Russia, Greece, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and India. With the help of our ground-handler partners and nearly four decades of expertise in these destinations, we offer almost anything to suit travellers' most sought-after holiday. Travel Vision is an authorised **Walt Disney World** Tour Operator, offering a wide variety of Disney Resorts in Orlando, Los Angeles and Paris, Park Tickets and Dining Plans.

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**Our Corporate Africa** product covers over 47 countries in Africa, offering accommodation, transfers, private drivers, security and assisting with the logistics of conferences, meetings and incentive groups.

**The Adventure** programmes at Travel Vision are unique as they allow customers to decide the style in which they want to travel and explore the destination of choice. There are packages to choose from worldwide that could be anything from a spiritual trekking

in the Himalayas, to exploring Darwin's theory of evolution on the Galapagos Islands. The emphasis is on small group experiential travel or private groups.

Travel Vision has partnered with many of the airlines in South Africa, offering air-inclusive packages or stand-alone flights.

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# All aboard MSC's newest ship

TNW's Tessa Reed spent a night on the *MSC Seaside* before it headed to Miami, from where it will cruise the Caribbean.

THE latest ship to be unveiled by MSC Cruises, the *MSC Seaside*, is part of a new generation of ships within the operator's fleet, which includes the *MSC Meraviglia*, also launched in 2017. The latest offering from MSC boasts a few firsts for the group. *MSC Seaside* is the largest ship in the fleet. Accommodating over 5 000 passengers, it has the largest kiddies' area on board an MSC vessel and also has the widest boardwalk ever constructed on a ship.

The ship's design takes inspiration from the beach condos characteristic of Miami, its home port, and it has been designed with the intention of bringing its passengers closer to the sea. This is achieved by design features like the

glass-walled atrium, which spans two decks and offers spectacular ocean views, as well as the boardwalk, which surrounds the ship and leads into a variety of bars, restaurants and shops. Other features blending the outdoors with the indoors include two panoramic elevators and a glass-bottomed skywalk.

The ship has over 2 000 suites, and accommodation options include interior suites and terraced balcony cabins overlooking the promenade and the horizon; luxury suites with their own private Jacuzzis and hanging gardens; and aft corner suites with larger balconies and panoramic ocean views. For families, there are modular connected staterooms that can accommodate up to 10 people. All suites feature



The *MSC Seaside* boasts the widest boardwalk ever constructed on a ship and accommodates over 5 000 passengers.

espresso machines.

The MSC Yacht Club offers 57sqm Royal suites, 21sqm deluxe suites; and 21sqm interior suites. MSC Yacht Club benefits include a 24-hour butler service and dedicated concierge, à la carte dining in the

exclusive MSC Yacht Club Restaurant; an exclusive deck and lounge, unlimited drinks in all MSC Yacht Club venues or from the mini-bar, and complimentary beverage selection in all on-board bars and restaurants, along with

other privileges.

Facilities include a gym, spa, Jean Louis David Hair Salon and a barber for men. The spa is the largest on an MSC ship and is open from 09h00 to midnight. The gym offers spinning, yoga and Pilates.

## A smorgasbord of dining options

With its 11 different dining venues and 19 bars and lounges, guests on the *MSC Seaside* are spoilt for choice. Complimentary options include the Seashore Restaurant, serving breakfast and lunch and the Ipanema Restaurant, which serves a three-course dinner. There is also a Marketplace Buffet. The Ipanema Restaurant offers a fine-dining experience with a three-course meal and has three sittings – at 18h30,

21h00 and 22h00. Touches, such as having the same waiter every night, ensure that guests enjoy a more personalised experience.

Other dining choices include the Asian Market Kitchen; Bistro La Bohème, serving French cuisine; Ocean Cay, serving American-style seafood with a Mediterranean twist; and Butcher's Cut, which serves cuts of meat and craft beer.

The Asian Market Kitchen is the creation of celebrity chef, **Roy Yamaguchi**, and

includes three distinct dining concepts: Asian Fusion, an à la carte restaurant serving gourmet Asian cuisine; a Sushi Bar; and Teppanyaki, where food is prepared on four teppanyaki grills, providing a modern twist on Asian cuisine. At the Teppanyaki grill, guests sit at the cooking stations, watching chefs prepare their meals.

The Champagne Bar will delight guests with a penchant for bubbles. Here, champagne and sparkling wines from all over the world are served. The selection changes roughly every two weeks. Other options include a sports bar. The Seaside Bar is perfect for aperitifs and martinis ahead of dinner and a Wine and Cocktails bar is located near the speciality restaurants.

For those with a sweet tooth, the Miami-inspired South Beach Bar serves gelato, and the ship also features an artisanal chocolate and coffee bar. The South Beach Bar is also the venue for a silent disco and serves Caribbean-style cocktails and mocktails too.



The Asian Market Kitchen offers three distinct dining concepts: Asian Fusion; a Sushi Bar; and a Teppanyaki grill.



Bubbles, in the form of a constantly changing selection of champagnes and sparkling wines, are served in the Champagne Bar.



Enjoying cocktails at the atrium are (from left): **Anthea Hurly** (MSC); **Marco Cristofoli** (BidTravel); **Antoinette Stapelberg** (Pentravel); **Claudia Naude** (Flight Centre); and **Stephen Howarth** (Sure Travel).



# Entertainment

There is enough on board the *MSC Seaside* to keep guests occupied day and night. The ship features a full-size bowling alley, an interactive cinema, an arcade, six pools, waterslides and the longest zip line at sea – measuring 105 metres – as well as 934-seat theatre. The arcade features an F1 simulator, allowing guests to experience the feel of driving a Ferrari. For shoppers, there are duty-free boutiques and jewellery stores.

The theatre will offer four sittings of a Broadway-style show, with different shows every day. It currently features seven different shows, including *Peter Punk*, a new spin on the battle between Peter Pan and Captain Hook, and *My Life In Music*, which features some of the most famous movie soundtracks and is inspired by composer Ennio Morricone. The theatre will also play host to late comedy shows in partnership with BeerProv.

Passengers will also be entertained in the atrium, with three surprise shows throughout each cruise where music, lights, special effects, dancers and acrobatics come together. Guests can also expect flash mobs, while other entertainment options include game shows and karaoke, and live music fans have eight venues to choose from, featuring music styles that include funk, Latin, country, live piano entertainment, jazz, classical and folk.



One of the many entertainment options on the *MSC Seaside* is a full-size bowling alley. Photos: Tessa Reed



The kiddies' area is the largest one on an MSC vessel and has six dedicated areas catering for all age groups, from babies to teenagers.

## For the kids

The *MSC Seaside* features the largest kiddies' area on an MSC vessel, at 70sqm. It has six dedicated areas that cater for babies (up to three years old), toddlers (aged three to six), young kids (aged seven to 11), pre- and early teens (aged 12-14), and teens (aged 15-17).

Highlights for kiddies include the Doremi Family Cinema, offering up to two family screenings per cruise, and a Lego room with tens of thousands of bricks. Child minders dressed up for different events and activities are also on hand to take care of children, should parents want some time alone. There is also a late-night babysitting service for children aged from three to 11, allowing parents time to enjoy the ship's nighttime offering.

## Behind the scenes

Guests can also book behind-the-scenes tours, allowing them a sneak peek into the operations of the ship. Booking well in advance is recommended as this tour is limited to a small number of guests.

## The itinerary

The *MSC Seaside* will cruise the Eastern and Western Caribbean, including stops at Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Mexico, Bahamas and the US. MSC Cruises has developed a range of tours allowing guests to shop, dive, discover history or escape into nature. At Cozumel, Mexico, guests can take a tour of the caverns, walking, wading and even swimming along parts of the route. In the Bahamas, they can visit Blue Lagoon Island and enjoy a buffet of grilled fish, chicken, vegetables, salads and sweet fruit. Bike tours of Nassau and the Cayman Islands are limited to groups of 20 guests.

## A new destination

The Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve is a privately owned destination in the Bahamas, which MSC has leased for 100 years. MSC expects to unveil this destination later this year, when guests will have the option to overnight on the island. MSC Cruises has worked with the Bahamian government and ecologists to set up this protected area. The beaches, calm lagoon and tropical underwater life make the destination perfect for sunbathing, swimming and snorkelling. Aquatic sports are also offered and the island has a dedicated family area. Attractions of the island also include seaside restaurants and tiki bars, while a second island, linked to the main island, hosts a spa.

## Future plans

With two ships unveiled in 2017, another four to launch in the next three years, and plans to launch a ship every year until 2026, MSC Cruises is looking to double its capacity, carrying nearly five million passengers annually. Ships to be unveiled in the coming years include the *MSC Bellissima*, *MSC Grandiosa* and *MSC Meraviglia Plus*, all to be unveiled in the next few years. The expansion plan will culminate in the launch of four World Class ships, accommodating roughly 7 000 passengers.

## Cleaner cruising

Speaking at the launch of the *MSC Seaside* in Italy at the end of 2017, **Pierfrancesco Vago**, MSC executive chairman, outlined MSC's initiatives to achieve a zero environmental impact. He said, in order to set new standards, the *MSC Seaside* sports scrubbers designed to minimise emissions. The ship also has a water treatment system to remove pollutants and hazardous substances from waste water. Grey water is also recycled and reused on the ship to wash windows. Moreover, the *MSC Seaside* uses LNG (liquefied natural gas) propulsion, the cleanest technology available, to minimise the environmental impact of the vessel. ■

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# Industry Outlook

From economic instability to terror attacks and an influx of new technology, 2017 was a year of change for the travel industry. Sue van Winsen speaks to industry stakeholders to find out what's in store for the coming year.

## Economic uncertainty to prevail this year

WITH economic downgrades, a volatile rand and rising costs, South African consumers are expected to continue to feel the pinch into 2018 and this is likely to impact directly on corporate and leisure travel.

Late last year, **Angus Macmillan**, group spokesperson for City Lodge, said big influencing factors would be the ANC presidential candidate (since confirmed as Cyril Ramaphosa) and the Finance Minister's budget in mid-February. "Sustainable economic growth is vital for the hospitality industry."

But with most of these factors far outside agents'

control, opportunity still exists for those who find methods of conducting trade, despite pressure from these external circumstances.

**Terry Munro**, md of Beachcomber Tours, says the unpredictability of the value of the rand will be one of the biggest challenges, and that the travel industry is going to need to find ways to still do business in this tough economic climate. For example, he says, the industry needs to encourage clients to travel to give them the stress relief they will need, but will have to source good value-for-money packages.

These sentiments were

echoed by **Ramesh Jeenarain**, md of World Leisure Holidays: "Continued political and economic uncertainty will be one of the biggest challenges affecting travel in 2018. Our recommendation is that travel agents encourage their clients to take advantage of great deals and, where possible, book and pay for future travel so as not to be negatively impacted by currency devaluations."

More optimistic about prospects for the new year is **Elisna Bergset**, key account sales for Development Promotions. "We think any challenges that may arise in the industry

will be internal – we have seen time and time again that South Africans travel despite economic pressure and perceived global threats. Instead, the challenge will be who gets that business." She believes the travel industry will need to be more proactive rather than reactive to clients' needs.

Elisna says the economic pressures are more likely to impact on destination choice rather than whether to travel or not. "The destinations clients choose will depend greatly on affordability, and good value-for-money product will rise to the top – not necessarily the cheapest

products, but definitely ones that offer value."

She also believes that tighter budgets will result in consumers and corporates heading back to travel agencies for advice and deals. "The public have become savvy and realise the value of booking with an agent instead of being a queue number online." She says suppliers and tour operators will need to strengthen relationships with agents. "For us, this means good commission, not taking direct bookings and, of course, great service. We understand that we must work as partners with the trade instead of their opposition."

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MSC Musica is coming to South Africa.

## Cruising to feel the crunch

The impact of the economy is likely to be felt by the cruising industry, says **Ross Volk**, md of MSC Cruises. "With rising costs and unemployment, the available cash for holidays is limited. This will put pressure on all facets of our travel sector, including cruising."

He says this hasn't been helped by changing government regulations around visas and other

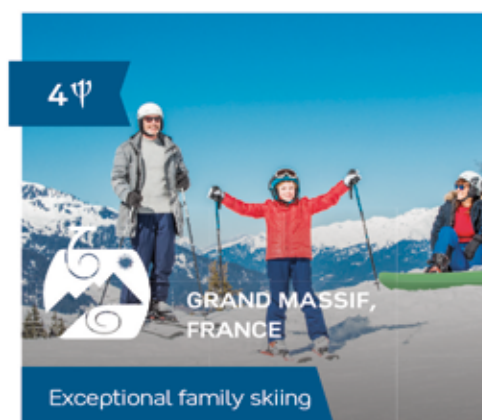
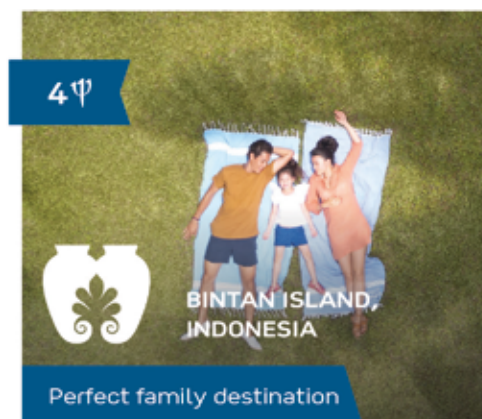
documentation, such as the recent amendments in Mozambique, which meant cruise passengers who did not hold South African passports were unable to disembark in the country if they hadn't obtained visas prior to arrival.

However, Ross says the arrival of the MSC Musica is something new and exciting for South Africa and an important opportunity for agents to leverage off.





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## Brace yourself for more red tape!

**OTTO de Vries**, ceo of Asata, says the biggest challenges for travel agents in 2018 will hinge on compliance and legislative requirements – from POPI and PCI DSS to the VAT issue. “To retain IATA accreditation, travel agencies will have to become PCI DSS compliant as of March 1. Expectations are that POPI will also be implemented early next year, requiring travel agents to be compliant in terms of protecting the personal information of their clients.”

He warns that agencies are going to need to proactively take steps to ensure they

follow the letter of the law. “The Asata Code of Conduct and Charter requires its members to comply with South African legislation.”

In terms of VAT, Otto says Asata will continue to represent the travel industry’s interests in discussions with Sars.

“The zero-rate VAT issue raised by Sars was unexpected and will continue to impact the travel industry in 2018. We are in discussion with our legal representation, industry stakeholders and Sars to understand the issue and try to resolve it.”

## INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

### Crunch-time for GDS decisions

GDS fees remain a significant factor in agents’ expenses but, according to **Wally Gaynor**, md of the Club Travel Group, with the implosion of GDS surcharges by airlines, agents are finding themselves between a rock and a hard place.

“You can go with direct channels to save on fees and remain competitive, or stick with the GDS systems and potentially lose clients,” explains Wally. He anticipates this will become an increasingly difficult choice in 2018.

It’s clear that airlines – including Lufthansa, which was one of the pioneering airlines to shift bookings away from the GDS – intend to continue along this path. **André Schulz**, gm of the Lufthansa Group Southern Africa, says the airline plans to expand its direct channels



**Wally Gaynor**

in 2018, a continuation of a new sales and distribution strategy it began implementing back in 2015.

“The long-term goal is to be a ‘first mover’, offering attractive flights and services that meet the increasingly specialised and dynamic requirements of sales partners and corporate customers,”

he says. “With the most recent technological solutions, customers will benefit from additional content that could not be made available before, as well as from optional services that are more innovative, affordable and customer-oriented than before.”

Direct Connect is the core of the Lufthansa Group’s future distribution strategy, and André says it will be a big focus in 2018 for developing markets, including South Africa. “Saving the €16 (R237) GDS charge by using Direct Connect is just one short-term benefit for the TMC. The major long-term benefit will be content differentiation, which means specific sales promotions or discounted ancillary products will be displayed with preference via the Direct Connect distribution channel.”

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## INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

### Tech: more friend than foe

WHILE the continued growth of online travel agencies and the threat of suppliers encroaching on agents' territory by going direct are some of the threats commonly associated with technology, **Wally Gaynor** of Club Travel still believes tech can unlock some big opportunities for travel agents this year. "Combining technology to increase productivity and enhance personalised service will be a key focus."

**Aadil Esack**, marketing and product manager of XL Travel, agrees and says the possibilities that technology can cater for are endless and "extremely exciting". He says TMCs would be wise to invest in the right solution for their business.

"Big challenges will be faced by those who are unwilling to adapt or adopt as technology provides



**Ramesh Jeenarain**

solutions that make sense in terms of effort and money. But it requires change and, in our industry, many are happy to be stuck in their comfort zones or may feel that it does not impact them – but it will, sooner or later!"

Tour operators are going to play a big role in providing technology to the benefit of agents, says **Ramesh Jeenarain** of World

Leisure Holidays, a company that has launched an online booking engine that agents can use for quoting and booking. "It is white labelled, so they can take the quote as they receive it, add their own logo and send on to their client," he explains. Technology is also enabling operators to be available around the clock, says Ramesh. "Essentially, we are now operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week for those agents who embrace technology."



### Mobile lags behind

In 2017, mobile was touted as being the arena where the travel industry expected to see the most growth. However, according to **Yolandé Bouwer**, director of Agentivity – Africa, the ability of the industry to deliver on customer needs has been inadequate so far.

Yolandé says the reason for this is that many of the available solutions are not necessarily priced for the agent but rather the large, multinational



**Yolandé Bouwer**

customer. "Also some agents do not realise that by partnering with a local developer, they can actually get something done quite cost-effectively – they think it's all cost prohibitive."

She explains that while Agentivity has seen an uptake among clients in the pushing of itineraries to either third-party mobile itinerary

suppliers or their own custom-built ones, there is opportunity for far more growth than seen in the previous year.

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Tough climate continues for airlines

RISKS concerning policy uncertainty, the junk status of the country and weak economic growth are all likely to have an impact on the aviation sector in 2018. This is according to **June Crawford**, ceo of Barsa. "Airline profitability will remain a key challenge as will ways to minimise cost without compromising operational safety and ensuring improved service."

Her views are echoed by **André Schulz** of Lufthansa, who says the overall rising costs of travel while maintaining profitability and exceptional customer service, as well as the continual changes to regulations in various markets, will be major challenges for the new year.

"2017 did present a few unexpected developments, specifically within the regulatory environment, that impacted on all airlines. The continued challenging world economic state and the volatility of currencies and oil prices will probably have an impact in 2018," adds André.

Government's stance

It appears that African and international carriers should not expect the South African government to ease any of the regulatory burdens that have bedevilled the industry in recent years.

Of particular concern, says June, are some of the statements made by the Minister of Finance, **Malusi Gigaba**, in his



Maintaining profitability and changes to regulations will pose challenges for airlines.

Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement in October last year on the topic of the SAA bailout. The Minister said: "It is in our national interest to have influence over our connectivity to all parts of the world, and not have to rely exclusively on the profit and scheduling considerations of global airlines. SAA sells South Africa's economy, tourism

and culture to every one of its passengers. Global airlines do not, and will not, perform this priceless marketing and branding role for us."

their routes to South Africa and marketing the destination either directly or through tour operators and destination marketing organisations.

Agent-airline collaboration

However, in this difficult environment there are opportunities for far more cohesive co-operation between agents and airlines. June points out that the two are inextricably linked: "I would hope that in 2018 we would see better collaboration between the two because, ultimately, both want to provide the best possible customer service experience."

She adds that one example of this would be providing passenger contact details to the airline for delay information to be provided directly to the customer. "Ultimately the needs of the passenger should be paramount."



André Schulz

June says this statement undermines the role that African and international airlines play in investing in the development of

Barsa to drive collaboration



June Crawford

In line with Barsa's belief that closer collaboration between role players is a winning formula for all stakeholders, the association will be convening an aviation and tourism summit in March. June says: "We need to establish common goals

and pursue common interests for the common good of the aviation industry and its long-term sustainability."

Other focus areas for the association will include working to build strategic partnerships to grow the air transport sector and ensuring aviation safety and airport operational efficiency, amongst others.

"The global Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) remains at the centre of our environmental agenda," says June.

"Barsa continues to collaborate closely with IATA to ensure that airlines are ready to implement monitoring and reporting mechanisms for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from January 1, 2019."



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The Maldives is expected to be much in demand this year.

Big-selling destinations for this year

INDIAN Ocean island destinations are expected to be the top selling itineraries for 2018, with Maldives continuing to gain an increasing portion of the market share.

**Ramesh Jeenarain** of World Leisure Holidays says: “The introduction of direct flights from Johannesburg to Maldives will bring the destination within easy reach of South African travellers and I know that we are going to see an even greater demand for this destination than we’ve seen in the past.”

He adds that Mauritius is an “evergreen favourite destination” for South

Africans, and that World Leisure Holidays also expects to see an increase in traffic to Réunion, Seychelles and Zanzibar.

According to Development Promotions, which offers products in all seven continents, high-value destinations will continue to do well. **Elisna Bergset** says: “Something that has seen a surge recently are bucket-list itineraries like the Northern Lights, Alaska, several Southern American itineraries and iconic European cities.”

She adds that Cuba has been one of the big surprises of late. “Many South Africans are

enthusiastic about seeing Cuba before globalisation changes its historic charms. We were quite surprised to hear that some suppliers have dropped their Cuba itineraries when our sales there have increased.”

Sri Lanka is another destination South Africans are showing huge interest in. Elisna says: “With the golden beaches and favourable diving conditions, as well as being known for the most delicious tea, we shouldn’t really be surprised that Sri Lanka is garnering interest from avid travellers.”

Interestingly, Elisna says one of the most unexpected yet pleasant developments

in terms of destination choice in 2017 was the resilience of South African travellers, despite growing security concerns. “Turkey is a great example. When many European and North American travellers avoided it, South Africans still travel there without incident. Even our trips to Iran through G Adventures have increased!” she says.

For Trafalgar, judging by forward bookings, France, Russia, Egypt, Greece and Turkey are expected to make a big comeback in 2018. “France is definitely on the rise again and looks to be a sought-after destination for 2018,” says md of Trafalgar

South Africa, **Theresa Szejwallo**. “Russia has shown strong growth with a 68% increase in sales from 2016. This could be partly due to the fact that South Africans no longer need visas to visit Russia.”

Regional destinations in Africa are also expected to be popular choices in 2018. **Wally Gaynor** of Club Travel says the dropping of visas in Angola may see it emerge as a new destination for South Africans.

Wally also expects Asia to continue to grow, with consumers travelling further afield than Thailand into Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

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# Top travel trends

Industry experts weigh in on what they expect the big trends will be for the new year.

## 1. Personalisation

**Otto de Vries** of Asata says the association's 21st Century Travel Agent study revealed a need for travel professionals to specialise and to assist their customers with an end-to-end experience, no longer just the transaction.

This growing demand for personalisation stems from a large number of travellers educating themselves about destination and product offerings before they even consult an agent, says **Ramesh Jeenarain** of World

Leisure Holidays. "They are looking for something other than the norm of sun, sea and sand and often there is opportunity for agents to showcase different value offerings to their clients that might spark their interest. In Mauritius, for example, we have partnered with our European counterpart and are offering a golfing and culinary tour in March to Long Beach with a French chef and South African celebrity chef who will not only be playing golf

with the participants, but conducting master cooking classes," adds Ramesh. There is also tremendous opportunity to make use of technology to offer clients great personalisation, says **Yolandé Bouwer** of Agentivity. "It's really missing in the current travel sales environment and can be achieved through harnessing the very rich customer data your agency generates every day and using it to add incredible value to all your customer touch points."

## INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

## 2. Airport technology

Access to live information is likely to enable travellers to better manage their travel experience before arriving at the airport.

**André Schulz** of Lufthansa says the Lufthansa app, which has been developed in conjunction with major European airports, will allow travellers to receive ancillary offers with personalised push notifications, take advantage of upgrade offers and receive baggage belt information after landing, via their smart devices.

"Third-party businesses

supplying travel-related products, such as suitcases, will work with airports to streamline processes," says André.

"For example, Rimowa worked with Lufthansa to develop the tagless suitcase that could be tracked in real time by the traveller in the airport, and Lufthansa rolled out Amadeus Airport Pay, a wireless payment solution, which makes traveller transactions on upgrades and additional baggage fares more convenient," he adds.



## 3. Last-minute travel

The uncertain economy is likely to lead to many South Africans looking for a good deal. According to **Theresa Szejwallo** of Trafalgar South Africa, this will lead to lots of last-minute decisions with an increasing number of clients waiting for the right deal and then booking on the spot. "We will see more people

booking their holiday closer to departure date than before."

To incentivise travellers to book longer in advance, Trafalgar has created interest-free payment terms. After paying a deposit, Trafalgar will hold a seat and guarantee the price, and the earlier clients settle the balance, the more they can save.

## 4. Corporates go green

Environmental friendliness is becoming a big factor in corporate travel, says **Angus Macmillan** of City Lodge. "This trend will continue particularly when it comes to energy, water and waste

management efficiency." Angus notes, however, that this goes hand in hand with hotels meeting the vital prerequisites of location, security, WiFi and quality food and beverage offerings.

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## 5. Group travel revival

According to Theresa, group travel is becoming ever more popular as people realise that travelling together can be more enjoyable than travelling alone. “The hassle-free element of group travel in an increasingly uncertain world and an extremely volatile South African market is also increasingly attractive to travellers today,” she says. “Travellers want to eliminate risk as much as possible. They don’t want to face the risk of something going wrong with their reservation, the risk of having to pay more due to the volatility of the rand and the

risk of not receiving a return on their investment – that is, an enjoyable holiday.” She adds that group travel is also becoming a popular option for ‘bleisure’ travel (those combining a business trip with a holiday) as an add-on option. “Often corporates have limited time before or after their business trips. Travel agents can offer these travellers a City Explorer to one of the European business hubs and advise adding between six and eight days to the client’s trip.” She says Trafalgar offers City Escapes in London, Paris, Rome, Amsterdam as well as

two new destinations, Berlin and Madrid. “The appeal is that clients don’t have to pack and unpack as their entire stay is in one city.” She expects that guided holidays will also gain in popularity as staff incentives. “No one has the time these days to put a detailed plan together and at the same time know how to deliver ‘the good life’ as Trafalgar does. Trafalgar will take care of all the details and the logistics for incentive trips in any of the 65 countries that we cover. Group discounts also apply for groups from five guests.”

## Asata focuses on professionalism

WHILE economic and political instability may be viewed by some as a threat, others believe this climate provides the perfect environment for travel agents to get back in the game as travel professionals.

**Otto de Vries** of Asata says the plethora of information on the Internet, the volatile geopolitical environment and the increasing maturity of corporate travel are all areas in which 21st century travel agents can show their true value.

“Asata is working to enhance the professionalism of the sector through such initiatives as the travel designation of travel practitioner through Saqa and the Asata Professional Programme,” he says. “By going beyond the transaction and assisting our customers with the entire journey and, strategically in terms of corporate

travel and shaping travel policy, we have an opportunity to show our customers how we add value and charge for it accordingly.”

To achieve these goals, the association says its annual strategy will be based on five strategic pillars: effective communication, member support, consumer awareness, partner relations and self-regulation. “Within each of these pillars, Asata has been conducting initiatives and will continue to run these into 2018,” says Otto.

These initiatives will include the relaunch of the Asata Professional Programme and awarding of Travel Practitioner designation, the Asata Awards, new sponsorship opportunities for partner members, engagement with Treasury and Sars and its ‘Travel with Peace of Mind’ consumer awareness campaign.

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## Car rental to compete on price and tech

CAR-RENTAL companies are facing increasing pressure to offer ever-more competitive pricing, despite rising costs and overheads.

**Lance Smith**, executive: Sales at Avis Southern Africa, says car-rental companies' ability to raise rates in line with increasing costs is a huge challenge, especially as these may accelerate as a result of the ratings agencies' downgrade of the SA economy.

This was echoed by **Melissa Nortje**, executive head: Strategy, Development and Marketing at First Car Rental, who says she expects the industry to be highly competitive on price in the coming year, especially in light of the financial woes many consumers and corporates are facing.

### Price wars

"In 2017 South Africa experienced a technical recession, and the economy continues to struggle, resulting in a loss of both consumer and business confidence in South Africa. Political instability, which is expected to persist until at least the 2019 national elections, and its effects on the credit rating are

an impending concern – a downturn in the economy means there is less travel spend, while interest rate hikes pose substantial fiscal impact on fleet companies' bottom line," says Melissa.

She says car-rental companies have looked



**Melissa Nortje**

toward inbound leisure markets as a result of declining local demand – but this has been impacted by a price war between rental companies. "Traditionally there would be an upside to a weaker rand, resulting in growth from the inbound leisure segment, but unfortunately



some car-rental operators were extremely aggressive and irresponsible with their pricing in the market place, resulting in non-profitable business for all – and damaging the baseline for 2018 pricing too."

### Tech at the forefront

Rather than competing on price, Melissa believes car-rental companies' technology offering will set them apart. "To remain competitive in this industry means we would continue to provide consistent exceptional service combined with high-value, data-driven technology and resource efficiency.

"In recent years, the implementation of smarter IT systems and the subsequent use of the Internet across mobile platforms are becoming increasingly prevalent. First to market on a customer

efficiency level takes market share, so constantly evolving IT development becomes a large company expense, and one that is necessary to stay in business and relevant," explains Melissa.

These technological innovations are not only aimed at the consumer but agents as well, who are demanding access to information 24/7. "Self-service will be the key to any successful supplier; gone are the days where our customers ask us for reports," says Melissa.

First Car Rental has launched its FirstCarConnect platform for agents, which has additional security measures allowing administrators to add, amend or remove agents who can book cars. A dashboard with statistics highlights exact car-rental usage and there are various structured data dump

options for reservations or invoices. "Any service we provide for them can be accessed via this platform," Melissa adds.

Lance agrees that technology will reshape car rental in the near future, and mobile, in particular, is expected to dominate Avis's technology strategy. "As a company, we believe that our future will be mobile-driven. For us this means that the entire car-rental experience will change. The old model of customers queuing for service at a car-rental counter, then painstakingly selecting options from a checklist, is on its way out."

Avis has re-engineered its app to allow customers to search for cars by size or features. It gives local car-rental locations; special offers and extras; allows the tracking of loyalty benefits and effects booking amendments or upgrades.

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Zipcars could be a future feature of SA car hire.

## Zipcar heading to SA?

Zipcar is an international car-sharing service that forms part of the Avis Budget Group. Customers join the service for a monthly fee and are then able to reserve and drive any one of the numerous Zipcars located around major cities.

Currently there are more than 10 000 cars on fleet across 500 cities in nine countries. Zipcars are commonly found at airports, stations,

universities, businesses and residential complexes.

Lance says, far from being a rival to car rental, Avis sees Zipcar as a complementary service. "If we feel there is a demand for Zipcar in the local market, we'll bring it to South Africa. When we do, our Zipcar membership will live on your smartphone as an app. When you need a car, you'll have a car," says Lance. ■



# Valentine's Day



Agents should ensure they don't miss the opportunity to promote special deals for the month of love, writes Debbie Badham.

## Are agents missing out on a great selling opportunity?

**V**ALentine's Day may once have been considered over-commercialised, without enough genuine sway to tempt couples to travel, but this is slowly but surely beginning to change.

"Over recent years, Valentine's Day has become a big thing with retailers and restaurants, and the travel industry is following suit," says **John Ridler**, PR and media manager of Thompsons Holidays.

The result is a tangible pick-up in the pace of bookings for the Valentine's period, notes **Ramesh Jeenarain**, md of World Leisure Holidays. "Valentine's Day offers



**Monica Horn**

certainly entice travellers to consider a romantic getaway. In fact, I would estimate that

about 30% to 40% of leisure travel in February revolves around Valentine's Day and the 'month of love' theme. We also see a number of honeymoon packages being sold over this period."

For Trafalgar, the number of romantic getaways over February is even more significant.

"I would say couples constitute around 75% of our holidaymakers over February," says md, **Theresa Szejwallo**. "Couples, young and old, often like to escape over this period as it gives them an opportunity to spend quality time together."

Ramesh believes the reason for the increase in bookings is because a

number of travellers have already firmed up their traditional year-end travel and are now focusing on the new year. This fits in with the overall trend of forward bookings, driven by uncertainties in the political and economic arena, he says.

Another reason for the popularity of travel over the Valentine's period, Ramesh says, is that some travellers have decided not to travel over the peak season and are rather deferring their travel to a quieter time of year. "Valentine's Day therefore gives them the perfect opportunity to spoil themselves and their better halves."

However, it seems that travel agents may not be taking as much advantage of the public's increasing interest in Valentine's Day as they could. "The current feedback is that we are not seeing a spike in bookings over this period, which suggests to me that there could be an opportunity to promote Valentine's Day packages moving forward," says **Monica Horn**, product manager of Harvey World Travel.

She believes part of the reason for the opportunity having been missed up to now is that historically agents haven't seen particular interest in travel around this time.

## There's no price tag on romance

**ONE** OF the significant advantages of booking a romantic getaway is that couples are typically looking to indulge and don't mind adding on all those extra bells and whistles, which translate into more revenue for agents.

Four- and five-star properties tend to be the most popular choices, confirms **John Ridler** of Thompsons Holidays. He says Valentine's packages generally include extras like romantic turndown services in the bedroom with petals and sparkling wine. "Romantic dinners might also be included as add-ons, as well as couples'

spa treatments."

In terms of destination choice, John says packages for properties within a two-hour drive of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban are always a winner. "Most popular Valentine's specials are between two and seven days' long." He adds that Thompsons offers a wide variety of Valentine's packages to agents that are usually valid for the whole month of February. These are also typically on offer well in advance.

When it comes to popular international destinations over the Valentine's period, Trafalgar's **Theresa Szejwallo**, says Peru is

growing in demand. "And Trafalgar offers great trips to this romantic destination."

Trafalgar has also seen significant uptake of its Regional Explorers and Discovery itineraries which take place throughout Europe. "For travellers looking to see as much of the continent as possible, the Discovery itineraries are perfect as they cover multi destinations. Our Regional Explorers itineraries on the other hand, are best enjoyed by repeat guests or those who would like to have a bit more of an in-depth exploration of a region or country," says Theresa.

Worth noting for agents

is that Trafalgar currently offers a 7.5% early payment offer on its 95 European and British itineraries.

Eastern Europe is particularly popular for romantic getaways at the moment, especially when it comes to cruising, says Harvey World Travel's **Monica Horn**. The Caribbean is a trending destination for the same reason, she adds. "We are noticing encouraging growth in international cruising because of the value it can provide. Harvey World Travel is also noticing a rise in interest in the UAE as a destination, with bookings in general showing an

encouraging increase of 230% over last year."

Not surprisingly, travellers headed on romantic getaways favour more leisurely trips, such as Trafalgar's At Leisure packages. "This is especially the case for honeymooners, as these trips offer later starts and see travellers spending no fewer than three nights in one country or city," says Theresa.

"With these, and all Trafalgar trips, everything is taken care of, so all agents need to do is book and they will receive the full commission on the trip price."





## Give timeless destinations that special touch

THERE are certain romantic destinations that will always remain popular. While in some respects this makes it simple for agents to sell packages to these places, it also means they need to find ways of providing additional value to differentiate any specials they are offering.

"Zanzibar, Mauritius and Thailand continue to be our top three destinations," says **Monica Horn** of Harvey World Travel. She says they remain a favourite with South Africans, partly because of their affordability and partly because of the ease of access that preferred airlines provide.

World Leisure Holidays' **Ramesh Jeenarain** says Mauritius is particularly well-positioned for romantic trips. "It's a quick three-and-a-half-hour flight and no visas are required by South African



**Theresa Szejwallo**

passport holders."

He points out that Valentine's Day also happens to be a convenient time for travellers to visit the island because February falls outside the peak season. This also means there are often great

offers available for both accommodation and flights, Ramesh says.

To take advantage of these great deals, agents can visit the World Leisure Holidays website and log on to the online booking tool.

In terms of activities that agents can recommend to couples, Monica says romantic dinners on the beach are always a win.

"Those travelling to Zanzibar should include a sunset dhow cruise and, for Mauritius, a day excursion on a catamaran, which usually includes a barbecue, is lots of fun," says Thompsons' **John Ridler**.

When it comes to international travel, Trafalgar's **Theresa Szejwallo** says Italy, and particularly Sicily, will always be seen as a romantic destination. "The combination of countryside,



**Sicily is viewed as a romantic destination.**

food and cultural experiences, makes Sicily very popular with couples."

Paris is another great romantic destination, according to Theresa. From wine regions to street cafés and picnics in the countryside, Paris is practically synonymous with love.

For something extra special, Theresa recommends dining in the Vatican after hours – something that can only be done on a Trafalgar trip.

Indeed, Ramesh believes

that a truly phenomenal romantic getaway is made complete by unique touches and spectacular surprises. And for agents looking to differentiate the package they are selling, attention to these details is key.

"This is why at Sun Resorts we endeavour to make guests' stays more memorable in any way we can. From special turndown services to tropical fruit baskets and bottles of prosecco, it's these special touches that help create timeless memories." ■



**Love<sup>2</sup>**

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Luxury living

Thompsons Holidays, in conjunction with The Planhotel Hospitality Group, hosted agents to ‘Live the Diamonds Lifestyle’ at the Mowana Spa at The Indaba Hotel in Johannesburg. During the cocktail function, agents were given first-hand knowledge about all the Diamonds Hotels & Resorts. Pictured are (from left): **Joanne Adolphe**, ceo of Thompsons Holidays; **Bobby van Jaarsveld**, Afrikaans pop singer-songwriter; **Thandi Malapi**, consultant of Sure Lloyds Travel; **Julia Ashby**, director of sales and marketing of Planhotel Group; **Claudia Pillay**, consultant of Harvey World Travel; and **Kristen Seeley**, consultant of Reynolds Travel Centre. Photo: Kylie Granat



MK says thank you

Air Mauritius hosted a Christmas lunch with travel agents and industry members at the end of last year to thank them for their support. Pictured here are (top) **Carla da Silva**, regional manager for Southern Africa and Latin America of Air Mauritius, with **Ramesh Jeenarain**, md of World Leisure Holidays; and **Monica Horn**, product manager of Harvey World Travel. Photo: Tessa Reed

Cathay Pacific has adopted its own company rhino, **Lula**, through the Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre to support the ‘Save the Rhino’ initiative. “I am personally very excited about this as it is a great cause and we should be doing more to save these wonderful animals,” says **Ashish Kapur**, country manager for South Africa and Indian Ocean. Pictured is **Lula** frolicking with some of her friends.



Meet Lula

Appointments

■ PMR Hospitality Partners has announced **Graham Wood** as a new partner. As a respected former hotel ceo, a recognised adviser to the African hotel industry and the former md of Tsogo Sun Hotels, Graham draws on vast experience in the strategic leadership of large



portfolios that comprise ultra-luxury, deluxe, full-service, economy and budget hotel brands.

■ FlySafair has appointed **Marise Banks** as its new sales and distribution manager. She replaces **Samantha Winchester**, who has relocated with her family



to New Zealand. Marise had extensive travel trade experience and has just moved to Johannesburg from Port Elizabeth to join the FlySafair team. “Marise’s appointment is very much in line with our strategy to place great focus on providing top-quality product and service to corporate South Africa and the TMCs that manage that business,” says **Kirby Gordon**, head of sales and distribution.

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Vacancy Notice



Business Development Corporate Sales Executive

Based at Air Mauritius Bedfordview Office.

Requirements

- Tertiary Education required in relation to the job profile
- Minimum 5 years sales experience in particular, corporate, Online Travel Agency & Travel trade environment
- Knowledge of the travel landscape in South Africa is compulsory.
- Proven track record in new business acquisition & key account management
- Ability to communicate, negotiate at a Senior Management level.
- Digital/E-Commerce experience is an added advantage
- Knowledge of Power-point, Word, Excel & Outlook is compulsory
- Required to travel

Responsibilities

- Self-motivated with gravitas and high integrity
- Excellent listening skills
- Proven analytical & innovative thinker/decision maker
- Excellent communication, interpersonal & presentation skills essential.
- High EQ, confident, optimistic, energetic, resilient and determined

- Proven business acumen with strong commercial/financial awareness and ability to communicate (verbal & written) with demonstrable skill.
- Proven track record in winning & retaining new business.
- Achieve & exceed set revenue targets
- Proven track record in managing large customer/supplier accounts and ensuring revenue is delivered to contractual targets – compulsory.
- Equally comfortable with detail and big picture thinking.
- Flexibility to travel, attend after hours’ functions and work weekends – undefined hours
- Excellent judgement and ability to quickly identify revenue opportunities
- Excellent command of the English language.

Please note you work undefined hours as per the operational requirements of the airline.  
**Only qualifying candidates** may submit a CV by email to [Ailsa.Goddard@airmauritius.com](mailto:Ailsa.Goddard@airmauritius.com) by 31 January 2018. **No late submissions will be accepted.** Air Mauritius reserves the right to reject profiles that do not meet the minimum level of requirement. Applicants must have South African Citizenship. We conform with the Employment Equity Act. All Security checks & referencing will be done.

QUICK READ FOR BUSIEST PEOPLE

Wednesday January 10/17 2018 ■ 19





Kenya Airways is to introduce daily flights between Nairobi and New York in October after securing a landing slot at JFK. **Michael Joseph**, KQ chairman, said the carrier had acquired the required permits to fly to the US. Kenya Airways plans to deploy a 234-seat B787 Dreamliner on the route, with 204 seats in economy class and 30 in business class. Bookings have already opened, according to Michael.

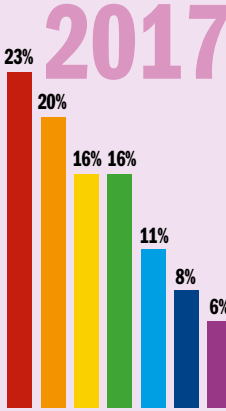
## *pulse poll* brought to you by eTNW and TRAVELINFO



### And the biggest story was...

What was the biggest story of the year?

- ADMS (airlines clamping down on travel agents for mistakes on the GDS)
- The challenges facing SAA
- Security concerns impacting travel (natural disasters and terrorist attacks)
- PCI DSS compliance (trade chases its tail as the March 3 deadline fast approaches)
- Treasury stopping TMCs from earning commission and overrides on government travel
- SARS (auditing travel agencies for VAT on earnings on international air tickets sold by local vendors)
- Flight Junction defaulting on its lata guarantee, costing airlines millions



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### Free messaging with Delta

Passengers flying on Delta Air Lines will be able to send messages on iMessage, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger free on all flights. Pictured (from left) are **Nellita Scholtz**, sales executive, **Shareen Akoodie**, regional sales and marketing manager, **Yolanda Williams**, marketing co-ordinator, Delta Air Lines. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## Club Med, Beachcomber partner on Seychelles resort

CANDICE MAY

**C**lub Med has taken over the marketing and sales of Beachcomber's Seychelles Saint Anne Resort & Spa under a new leasing agreement that involves significantly expanding the capacity of the resort infrastructure. The 'new' resort will launch in 2020.

**Terry Munro**, md of Beachcomber Tours, explains that the resort had too few

rooms to achieve a profitable situation. "By adding more rooms to the resort and renting it out, Beachcomber will now make a substantial profit on this asset."

For this new project, Club Med will work alongside New Mauritius Hotels (NMH), the oldest and largest hotel group in Mauritius, where it operates all of the Beachcomber Tours resorts on the island.

The opening of the new Club Med resort will

represent a total investment of around €70m (R1bn) for NMH that will boost the resort's capacity from 87 to about 300 rooms.

"I am particularly happy to see Club Med secure a base in the Seychelles, one of the most luxurious destinations alongside the Maldives and Mauritius," says **Henri Giscard d'Estaing**, president of Club Med, adding that the operator plans to open three to five resorts per year between now and 2020. ■



## SLEEP LIKE A BABY... DO THE ADM WORKSHOP

Written by South African travel agents for their colleagues. Brought to you by **TRAVEL INFO +PLUS** & **agentivity**