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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

TNW8554SD

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## Conversions drive record sales at FCTG Travel Expo

SARAH ROBERTSON AND TESSA REED

**S**ALES for the Flight Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) 8th annual Travel Expo, held recently in Johannesburg, showed a 25% increase compared with 2017 figures, despite having roughly the same attendance.

Over 22 000 people attended the travel expo again this year, interacting with over 150 Flight Centre preferred exhibitors. The top selling destinations for the event were South Africa, Mauritius, Thailand and Australia.

Previously the show was free but the group introduced a R50 entrance fee for the first time this year with the results

revealing better conversions across the board, according to FCTG Middle East and Africa md, **Andrew Stark**.

Andrew said he was filled with positivity following this weekend's expo. "The change in outlook is palpably different compared with last year. The strong rand and the possibility of political change have given South African travellers renewed energy and optimism, which is reflected in their willingness to commit to travel bookings. While this time last year immigration fare enquiries were common requests, this year we saw a number of families commit to securing holidays in excess of R300 000 on the day..."

Honeymooners, couples and families were the big buyers at this year's show, said **Lesley Smith**, sales manager at WLH. She said matriculants were also among the buyers, looking to buy holidays before starting their tertiary studies. Like Andrew, she said demand was high. "Our stand was busy from start to finish on both days."

**André Dafel**, national sales manager – trade at Club Med, said there was high demand for snow holiday favourites such as Val Thorens Sensations and their newly launched Grand Massif ski resorts. They also saw a sharp increase in families looking for

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Thirsty's kicked off with a bang this year, with the first event taking place at City Lodge Sandton. Having a laugh are **Miriam Mwale**, SA Express and **Margaret Mpengula**, City Lodge Hotel Group. See more pictures on page 6. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl.

## 'Predatory' SA Airlink could face massive penalty

THE South African Competition Commission has referred SA Airlink to the Competition Tribunal for prosecution. This is on charges of 'excessive and predatory pricing' following complaints lodged by low-cost carrier Fly Blue Crane, businessman **Khwezi Tiya**, and the OR Tambo District Chamber of Business between 2015 and 2017, regarding the Johannesburg-Mthatha route.

Allegations lodged by the aggrieved parties' claim that SA Airlink's prices were excessive before Fly Blue Crane entered the route, and were lowered to below cost subsequent to Fly Blue Crane's entry. Upon Fly Blue Crane exiting the route, SA Airlink allegedly resumed its initial costing.

The investigation that followed found that SA

Airlink had contravened the Competition Act by abusing its dominance from September 2012 to August 2016, and that its exorbitant pricing was to the detriment of travellers who would have saved between R89m and R108m.

"The predatory pricing conduct of SA Airlink contributed to the exit of Fly Blue Crane, and the effect of

**To page 2**

## Amex to buy HRG

AMERICAN Express Global Business Travel has announced its intention to acquire Hogg Robinson Group (HRG). The acquisition is conditional on receipt of antitrust and other regulatory approvals and is expected to close in the second quarter of the year.

It is unclear whether this deal will result in a merger, or whether both companies will be run as separate entities. Neither of the global groups would provide

further information in this regard, citing tight regulations concerning listed companies.

However, at least a partial merger seems likely. An announcement of the deal said the acquisition would "create a world-class organisation, using the best available talent from both Hogg Robinson and GBT".

TNW could not get clarity from either of the local companies on how the acquisition will play out in the South African market. ■

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## FCTG Travel Expo

**From page 1**  
real all-inclusive packages and new experiences specifically on beach destinations like, Mauritius, Bali, Bintan Island and Kani. It also came as no surprise that the top months for travel requests were December and January.

Andrew said the additional R1 million that the expo entrance fees had brought in this year were not considered an additional revenue stream, as the expo cost about eight times as much to host. While he conceded that the entrance fee revenue had helped to offset some of these costs, he said the real benefit of the fee was the non-stop stream of good quality customers who attended this year and the

greatly improved conversion rates for both FCTG and its suppliers.

The group also launched a Travel Stokvel concept at the expo this year as an initiative to stimulate the spirit of travel among South Africans who may not have been able to travel previously.

**Lance Nkwe**, FCTG marketing manager – Emerging Market, said that aspiring travellers could create their own Stokvel group to contribute toward their dream holiday.

“By participating in the Stokvel, members receive expert travel advice, as well as exclusive discounts and promotions not available to other customers.” ■

## B-BBEE Commission to crack the whip on non-compliance

CANDICE MAY

**T**RAVEL is one of the industries under the scrutiny of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Commission.

**Bongani Lukhele**, head of media relations of the Department of Trade and Industry, says the commission will investigate probable issues of non-compliance within the travel industry, in the coming months.

**Busisiwe Ngwenya**, director of compliance of the B-BBEE Commission, would not disclose the number or details

of cases under investigation until they were finalised, but said the findings of concluded cases would be disclosed.

Players in the industry support the need for economic transformation.

**Andrew Stark**, md for MEA of Flight Centre Travel Group, says not being compliant in this day and age is simply not forward thinking. “Companies that are non-compliant have very little chance of growing their business in markets of the future.”

Another problem with companies that are not compliant is that nobody wants to do business with

these companies for fear that their own BEE requirements will be affected, **Marco Ciocchetti**, ceo of XL Travel points out.

**Mary Shilleto**, ceo of Thompsons Travel, says if industry players are truly committed to the empowerment of young people who have studied travel, mentoring and partnering with them is an obligation. “We cannot transform our industry in any shape or form if we do not actively make a commitment to spend time and money on training and upskilling the newcomers in the market.” ■

### Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



Eternity just got a little longer.

## Wendy returns to kulula holidays

SARAH ROBERTSON

**WENDY Goutier** has been appointed product manager for Far East and Mauritius at kulula holidays, leaving Dreams to take on her new position.

After starting her travel career at Holiday Tours, now kulula holidays, Wendy has gone full circle in her career. She joined the company's finance department in 1989 before moving across to the product department, which has been her

area of specialisation since.

Wendy is probably best known for her lengthy tenure as product manager for Thompsons Holidays, where she spent four years overseeing the Mauritius portfolio and five years as the Far East product manager. She also worked in the World Leisure



Wendy Goutier

product department and, most recently served as gm for tour operator, Dreams.

**Jana King**, gm of the Songhai Group, of which Dreams is a part, wished Wendy

all the best for her future endeavours, saying that she had been a great part of their team. ■

## Visa 'scammer' reappears

A SUSPECTED visa scammer has been “arranging” visas once again for SA travellers, industry players have reported.

In September 2014, *TNW* reported the case of a traveller who claimed she had been scammed by VCS Group, also trading as Visalogik. She asked VCS to handle her application for a Moroccan visa and contacted **Charles Jelliman**, owner of the companies, who assured her he would arrange the visa in

time for her holiday.

However, Charles never returned the passport to the client. She never heard from him again and was forced to cancel her trip to Morocco, incurring cancellation charges and penalties.

Although a criminal charge was laid against Charles, *TNW* understands SAPS never arrested him. Industry players have now reported that he is selling visas once again, under the company name

Alliance Immigration, and has registered another visa company website, although the website is no longer active.

One disgruntled client posted a complaint on Hellopeter in August last year stating: “My employee went to this company in Pretoria to get a work permit for SA. The whole business is a scam and Charles Jelliman has ducked with my employee's money and her documents. Please be aware!” ■

## 'Predatory' SA Airlink

**From page 1**  
the predation is also likely to deter future competition on this route from other airlines,” the Commission stated.

Airlink ceo and md, **Rodger Foster**, said: “Airlink has, and will continue, to co-operate fully and openly with

South Africa's competition authorities. We deny the allegations and welcome the opportunity to put our case before the Competition Tribunal so that the matter can be put to rest. We are confident our conduct has been, and remains, in full compliance with competition

rules and the law.”

Airlink would not take questions on the matter, so as not to prejudice the case.

The Commission is seeking an administrative penalty of up to 10% of Airlink's annual turnover, as well as for the tribunal to offer remedies to correct the conduct. ■

**TNW**  
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The aha Avondale Boutique Hotel opened recently in Durban.

## New properties grow aha's portfolio

TESSA REED

EARLIER this year, aha Hotels & Lodges opened a new boutique hotel, the four-star aha Avondale Boutique Hotel in Durban, and also opened aha Makalali Main Lodge in the Makalali Game Reserve, Limpopo, toward the end of last year.

The company's portfolio has been expanding since aha snapped up Three Cities Hotel Group in 2014, which added 21 hotels. Since then a further 16 properties have been added to the portfolio. These include Sefapane Lodges & Safaris in Phalaborwa, Beach Hotel Swakopmund, Swakopmund Plaza Hotel, Atlantic Villa

Boutique Guest House, and Epacha Game Lodge & Spa, all in Namibia.

Neil Bald, md of aha, says the company intends to grow its hotel portfolio in both key and secondary locations and expand its lodge portfolio in iconic destinations. He adds that the group intends to grow its footprint in key business locations. ■

## Avis expands offering

EARLIER this year, Avis opened a new KwaZulu Natal branch in Port Shepstone.

The new branch is off the N2, at Unit 01 Oribi Park, Lind Road, and it will share the premises with Avis Van Rental.

Rainer Gottschick, ceo of Avis Southern Africa, said: "We have a large fleet of vehicles to choose from, and the opening of the new branch in Port Shepstone allows us to reach a wider base of customers, whether

they are travelling for business or leisure."

Avis will move its Sandton Gautrain branch, effective from March 1. The new location will be across the road from the current one, at the Old Mutual building, on the corner of Rivonia Road and West Street, level B3.

Until then, Avis Sandton Gautrain is located at Shop 100 Chatz, on the corner of Rivonia Road and Fifth Street. ■

## To the point



SAA has filed aircraft changes for its Johannesburg-Dakar-Washington Dulles route, effective from March 25. The airline plans to operate the route with an Airbus A330-200 instead of an A330-300. The 249-seat A330-300 has 46 seats in business and 203 in economy. The 222-seat A330-200 has 39 business-class seats and 186 in economy. SAA recently increased capacity on this route in response to congestion following adverse weather conditions caused by an East Coast winter storm in the US in early January.

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# TNW's Thirsty's

**T**HE first Thirsty's of the year kicked off at the City Lodge Hotel Sandton. The travel trade were treated to bubbly on arrival and entertained by

a live jazz band. It was a fun evening that provided the perfect platform for networking. Look out for an invitation to the next Thirsty's. ■



Cheers! Ian Snowball (left) Bastion, and Otto de Vries, Asata.



From left: Mkulili Mojo (MK), Upmarket Travel intern, Lerato Mofokeng, The Departure Lounge, Lilly Masango, TTS, and Victor Maraba, American Express, enjoy a drink.



Megan D'Arcy, kulula holidays.



Lidia Folli, BidTravel, and Alastair Dooley, City Lodge Hotel Group.



Adrian Roodt, Computicket Travel, with Sean Bradley, FastJet, deep in discussion.



Lizaan Schnettler, Cruises International.



Catching up. Sue van Winsen, Travel and Meetings Buyer, with Kele Mohatle, Amadeus.



Winning smile! José Emilio García Martínez, Iberia – who snapped up a prize from City Lodge Hotel Group – with Minnie Nampula, City Lodge Hotel Group, and Tessa Reed, TNW (on the left), and Zuki Jantjies, City Lodge Hotel Group (on the right). Photos: Shannon Van Zyl

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## Morocco surprises and delights

Wanita Kerr from Denim Travel recently travelled on the Highlights of Morocco Cosmos Tour. Here she shares her experience of the trip.

I WAS delighted to receive an invitation from Cosmos Tours to visit Morocco, which had long been on my bucket list. Needless to say, I accepted with delight and anticipation.

When I received my itinerary I recognised only three cities on the itinerary – Casablanca, Marrakesh and Rabat. Everything else was new and foreign. It also looked very busy! Yippee! I had two goals – to explore Morocco and to experience Cosmos Tours.

My expectations of Morocco were high. I looked forward to trying new and spicy food, and soaking up colour, flavour and sounds. I hoped to visit markets and wanted to buy spices and a tagine. I expected to find a poor country without a great infrastructure. I bought as much summer clothing as I could find expecting a hot desert climate.

As our departure date drew closer I started getting input from friends and family. “Are you sure it’s safe?” they asked. “Look at the Internet – there are so many warnings about women travelling in Morocco,” they warned. There was a lot of ‘do this’ and ‘don’t do that’. I left my jewellery behind and made sure I had a scarf to cover up if I needed to. My expectations of Cosmos were, perhaps, lower. I anticipated a budget tour with low-cost accommodation and coach.

I was in for a surprise. The colour, sounds and atmosphere were all I hoped for and more. I have never taken so many pictures of tiles, doors and facades in my life. The markets were abundant and vibrant beyond my expectations. Markets were flooded with olives, dates and nuts. The road infrastructure was fantastic, without a single pothole. People were amazing, friendly and warm. I was reminded that, though language differences create barriers, a smile and a “thank you” are understood and

appreciated in any language. The country, though poor, was far from squalid and very clean.

I felt perfectly safe all the time – even walking around at night. In fact, I felt safer than I do at home. At no time was I threatened either as a woman or as a tourist. Morocco is an affordable destination. With our volatile exchange rate, being able to afford to do and buy things is a huge bonus. The food was less spicy than I expected. It ‘purrs in the mouth rather than bites or growls’.

Our itinerary gave us a delightful selection of mountain, desert, city and town experiences – taking us from a bustling Fez with its busy Medina to the quiet, Ifrane – French mountain ski resort. It covered a variety of activities from shopping in the medina to tours of a pottery factory, a tannery and more. We enjoyed an evening in the desert with star gazing.

The biggest and best surprise, though, was the Cosmos Tour experience.

Wow! The accommodation was excellent and well organised. The coach was modern and comfortable with a friendly and capable driver and co-driver helping us all the way. But it was our tour director who was the star of the show – entertaining, informative and helpful, he went beyond the extra mile.

As for tips for travel to Morocco, I would urge any prospective traveller to do a tour. Trying to do Morocco as an independent traveller would mean missing so many of the hidden gems. It would be impossible to negotiate the 9 000-odd alleyways in Fez Medina on your own. Finding authenticity in a country where much is designed to fool the tourist requires an expert who knows the destination. Cosmos provides just such an expert. Yes, there is a lot of time on the coach, but this is the only way to get to see and do so much. The travelling is comfortable and the sightseeing phenomenal.

Oh, and drink the orange juice – it’s amazing! ■



Photos: Wanita Kerr

**Avis Sandton  
Gautrain branch  
is moving to  
a new location.**

From 1 March 2018, the Avis Sandton Gautrain branch will move to the Old Mutual Building, corner Rivonia road and West street. Across the road from the Gautrain Station, level B3.

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**AVIS**





A snapshot of the week's airline news

# Major expansion planned for Cape Town Intl Airport

MAX MARX

**C**APE Town International Airport (CTIA) is embarking on a major infrastructure development programme that will increase capacity from 14 million to 20 million passengers a year.

The project, estimated at between R5bn and R7bn, will involve a new runway (R3,8bn); five new aprons; a new R600m domestic arrivals terminal offering more space, extra carousels and an increased

retail offering; and about R1,3bn invested in the international terminal, with more immigration counters, additional baggage carousels and more space for the processing of passengers.

The airport recently received final approval for the construction of a realigned runway. **Deon Cloete**, CTIA gm, says the current runway, which is 50 years old, is too close to the terminal buildings to enable sufficient space for aircraft parking bays. He says the maximum

number of aircraft that can be parked at any one time is between 29 and 32. "The five new parking bays we will add in the next three to four years will enable the parking of more aircraft and allow for more passengers to disembark simultaneously."

Once the new runway is operational, the old runway will be decommissioned and used as a taxiway.

Construction of the new runway is expected to begin next year and will take two years to complete. ■

## Fastjet now bookable on Travelport

TRAVELPORT-connected agencies now have real-time access to search, sell, and book fastjet's full content and inventory.

This follows a multi-year, full content agreement

between Travelport and fastjet, the low-cost African airline operating 10 routes in 55 southern African countries.

"We are delighted to have completed this agreement,

which will see fastjet's content added to our platform for the first time," says **Philip Saunders**, Travelport vice president, air commerce, Europe, Middle East and Africa. ■

## To the point



Protea Hotels by Marriott, part of Marriott International, opened a new hotel in Constantine, Algeria, on February 5. The Protea Hotel by Marriott Constantine has 72 guest rooms, two boardrooms, and a ballroom, and is within walking distance of attractions such as the Cirta Museum, and the iconic seven bridges, and is about 20 minutes from Mohamed Boudiaf International Airport.

**Air Seychelles ups capacity to Johannesburg**  
AIR Seychelles has increased capacity on the Johannesburg route on Wednesdays until March 21. The flight will be operated with an Airbus A330 with 18 seats in business class and 236 seats in economy class.

### Ethiopian launches Chicago flights

ETHIOPIAN Airlines will operate flights from Addis Ababa to Chicago, effective June 9. Flight ET 0510 will depart Addis Ababa at 22h15 on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, arriving in Dublin at 04h25 the next day. The flight will depart Dublin at 05h25 and arrive in Chicago at 07h55. Return flight ET 0511 will depart Chicago at 09h55 on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, and arrive in Addis Ababa at 07h40 the next day. The route will be operated with a Boeing 787.

### MK adds Sunday flight on DUR route

AIR Mauritius will add a fourth weekly flight on its Durban route from April 18. In addition to its Monday, Wednesday and Saturday flights, the airline will now also operate a flight on Sundays. The outbound flight will depart Mauritius at 09h00 and arrive in Durban at 11h20. The return flight will depart Durban at 12h20 and arrive back in Mauritius at 18h10.

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# Case study: the road to compliance

TNW's latest series tackles the main issues of the PCI DSS compliance conundrum. This week we discuss an agency's experience. Taryn Nightingale reports.

WHEN a Johannesburg-based agency began its PCI DSS compliance journey 15 months ago, its staff and directors had no idea what PCI DSS was. The level-four merchant has since successfully maintained its certification (for over a year) and has received notification and acceptance of its compliance from IATA. Due to the sensitive nature of PCI DSS, the agency has requested to stay anonymous to protect its clients and their data.

## Ensure compliance across systems

As stated by IATA, it is incumbent on the travel agency to verify the PCI status of each provider to whom it delegates card payment-related tasks.

"Like most agencies, we'd developed our own safety methods and just followed common sense in how we dealt with clients' credit card details," says agent A.

"On guidance from IATA, we contacted our acquiring bank as a first step toward official compliance," says agency owner A. "Standard Bank advised us that someone would contact us with further information," he says. The next day, the QSA call centre contacted the agency. "The QSA later tested our existing security systems for any potential vulnerabilities." Although the QSA confirmed that the agency's system was secure, agent A had not been satisfied with the results. "I wasn't sure whether we were ticking all the boxes, especially since the QSA had not tested the GDS and our back-office solution," he says.

"Agencies have to make sure they comply with the PCI requirements; we only assist and guide them to do so," says

**Richard Henwood**, business development of QSA, Foregenix.

Consequently, the agency contacted its back-office system provider, which then assured him that they'd be compliant by mid-February. "Travelport had helped by informing us of its tech migration from Transport Layer Security (TLS) 1 to TLS 1.2 and that agents may need to upgrade the version of Microsoft Operating System, .NET Framework or Internet Explorer from the one they currently use. "Our local Travelport rep was also very useful in answering questions," he adds.

However, not all travel industry players are following the same rules, says agent A. Agents may be compliant in the systems and processes involved in airline ticket sales, but a small guesthouse in the middle of the Free State is not necessarily going to be aware of PCI DSS compliance, he adds. This is especially a problem for agents with government clients as their options are limited when booking accommodation in outlying areas.

## Employee training is key

Old habits die hard and ensuring our employees are all on the same page is one of the most important aspects of PCI DSS. "It's a continuous process," says agent A. The most important action of enabling change is explaining the why, he adds. "Once all our staff understood the consequences of non-compliance, it was common sense that they had to follow correct procedures." The agency hosted several workshops and brief training sessions on compliance to educate staff. "Agency owners should ensure their staff confirm their understanding of compliance



and sign-off on training sessions to protect their business," says agent A.

## Positives outweigh negatives

"The consequences of the certification process have empowered our business," says agent A.

"Our processes are more streamlined, we're managing risks better and I can sleep better at night knowing we're compliant," he says. "The fines imposed for

non-compliance are in US dollars and can put a small agency out of business."

The agency submitted its compliance documents via the IATA portal. "IATA responded saying we were in the clear, provided the company that certified our agency was qualified to do so," says agent A. Agents can verify the certification status of their QSA on the official PCI DSS website. "Don't be afraid to ask for the QSA's certification licence," he adds.

## Top PCI DSS compliance tips

**Andrew Kirkland**, CEO of cyberTAN shares some tips on compliance:

- Don't panic – your agency can change – make sure you start as soon as possible.
- Get your QSA to help you outline policy and procedure documents that are visible to all staff in the office.
- Train your staff – Security Awareness Training on a regular basis helps minimise risk. Staff are your weakest link. Give them the knowledge to protect the business.
- Know your third parties as intimately as possible and don't be afraid to ask for their Attestation of Compliance (AOC). You're all part of the supply chain and no one wants to be the weakest link.
- Have an incident response plan: how do you and your staff react when you are breached?
- Run regular external vulnerability scans, especially if clients engage with you via your web page. It's also good practice. ■

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# Family Travel



Max Marx reviews current patterns, destinations and experiences finding favour with family groups.

## Immersion is the new trend

**E**MERGING strongly in family holidays is the trend towards immersive travel. The desire for engagement and meaningful experiences runs alongside the multi-generational pattern, which has characterised family travel for some time now.

**Theresa Szejwallo**, Trafalgar md, says: "Families want to return home from their holidays having learnt something or having had the chance to immerse themselves in cultures that are not their own."

According to **Lesley Simpson**, marketing representative for the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the recent surge in numbers to Thailand has revealed a new trend, where parents who are unable to travel during peak school holidays due to business commitments, plan holidays out of season.

"This is an interesting development, as it generally includes families with older teenage children, who

may have visited Phuket previously, and want to explore alternatives such as Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and the Golden Triangle," says Lesley.

South Africans are also visiting Thailand for experiences that may include local festivities such as Songkran – the traditional Thai New Year in April. They are getting involved in environmental activities such as elephant retreats like Elephant Hills in Khao Sok National Park or releasing baby turtles into the sea at Nakhon Si Thammarat in southern Thailand.

Families are also seeking value-for-money holidays that include adventure, art, food and museums, and destinations where children can enjoy activities on their own and parents can do their own thing, says **Lucinda Tyler**, Club Travel's product manager. "Popular destinations are Mauritius and European ski resorts."

**Ramesh Jeenarain**, World

Leisure Holidays md, says Mauritius continues to top the family destination list, thanks to the fact that visas and vaccines are not required, it's a short flight away and offers loads of excursions and activities to engage in.

Cruising is another firm favourite of families. **Thaybz Khan**, Cruises International's contemporary brand manager, says multigenerational family travel, big groups, and families travelling together to celebrate special events are current trends. The value, convenience and inclusions are the factors that draw families to cruising.

**Ross Volk**, md of MSC Cruises, adds that locally, South Africans love the short three- and four-night cruises from Durban to Mozambique.

Also very popular, says **Annemarie Lexow**, Travel Vision's sales and marketing manager, are Disney cruises in the Caribbean and Walt Disney World in Orlando. Disney offers options to pre-book dining plans and Magic Your Way



**Ramesh Jeenarain**

passes to its parks, enabling upfront payment and budget planning. Teenagers can thus explore parks on their own, swiping their MagicBand for meals.

In the United Arab Emirates, Dubai Parks, the Dubai Aquarium and Underwater Zoo, Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi and Ferrari World in Abu Dhabi appeal to family groups, says Annemarie.

**Rolene Kirkel**, Rennies Travel's VIP commercial

aviation specialist, says South African families love cruising and island holidays to Mauritius and Zanzibar.

"Most families want beach holidays and to visit famous sights, stay in places that are not overcrowded and immerse themselves in different cultures and experiences around the world. I would recommend a cruise holiday for the best value, as everything is included and you get to experience five or six different cultures and countries on one trip."

Rolene says agents should consider recommending an overseas holiday for families on a budget, as deals that don't cost much more than a family holiday in South Africa are available.

"One can find amazing specials to Bali, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia." She adds that, for high-budget clients, she would recommend Bora Bora in the South Pacific or a cruise on Cunard's *Queen Mary 2*.



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## All-inclusive is the way to go

SOME of the best family holiday value, agree agents and operators, is the all-inclusive package.

For **Lucinda Tyler** of Club Travel, Club Med is the all-inclusive family holiday winner. Club Med's guest officers ensure that guests have a great time, she says, and with all food and beverages included in the price, they can eat and drink as much as they like. Creative workshops, teen clubs and activities, land and water sports, cooking classes, trapeze and nightclubs are all included in the package price.

**Genine De Witt**, a Club Travel ITC, puts Mauritius and Zanzibar as top choices for families. "Mauritius is still one of the most popular all-inclusive family-friendly holiday destinations, with most resorts offering kids' clubs and loads of children's entertainment, allowing parents to relax while kids are having an



**Genine De Witt**

active, fun-filled holiday. Only a four-hour flight from Johannesburg, Mauritius is really ideal when it comes to family travel," she says.

Genine adds that Zanzibar is also a great choice for families, but that agents should check which resorts offer kids' clubs.

Locally, Genine recommends Sun City, Umngazi River Bungalows and Spa in Port St

Johns, the Beacon Isle in Plettenberg Bay, Umhlanga, or Club Mykonos in Langebaan – all suited for holidays with children.

For long-haul destinations, any Club Med resort, Disneyland Paris or Hong Kong, Walt Disney World in Orlando, or a family cruise could be options to consider. "Club Med Phuket is a resort we would recommend, with endless fun for kids and adults."

While Thailand is not that strong on all-inclusive packages, it does offer great value. Says ITC, **Keith van Heerden**, owner of Travelbuddy.travel: "Hotels in Thailand generally don't offer all-inclusive hotel stays. One or two properties do, but you pay a lot of money for all-inclusive and unless your client is a wine drinker, there is no point paying for all-inclusive when food, alcohol and soft drinks in restaurants and on the street are so cheap."



All inclusive family-friendly holidays offer great value.

TAT's **Lesley Simpson** says half the fun of visiting Thailand is exploring the streets and tasting street food. This year has been named the Year of Gastronomy in Thailand and the country has launched a new Michelin guide covering 98 Thai, Asian and international restaurants.

World Leisure Holidays' **Ramesh Jeenarain** says the eating habits of children and teenagers do not necessarily follow the norm of three meals a day. "There can be lots of additional snacking and

ordering of drinks that can add considerably to a bill for extras on check-out. That's why all-inclusive holidays are ideal for families."

He recommends the five-star Long Beach resort in Mauritius for teenagers, which offers activities such as archery, mini golf and bicycles and has classes for aspiring DJs, run by professional DJs, for adults, teens and younger children. With five restaurants, teenagers can dine with friends in a different location to their parents, yet stay connected with WiFi.



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## Top tips for family cruising

"ROYAL Caribbean and Celebrity Cruises are the ideal family-friendly cruise lines, with on-board experiences catering for multigenerational families. European and Caribbean cruises are definitely the most popular destinations for South African families," says Cruises International's **Thaybz Khan**.

She says Celebrity Cruises is hard to beat when it comes to on-board experiences and activities for older children. "They have access to Go Pro and Xbox and can enjoy art activities among many other adventures."

She offers these tips for families setting sail:

- Ensure the on-board activities offered by the cruise line match

the type of lifestyle or holiday the family would enjoy.

- Advise clients about stateroom configurations to ensure they're comfortable, along with times for family dining and babysitting options.
- While there are always medical facilities on board, clients should bring along any medication their children might need.
- Take time to understand client preferences, budget and expectations, to be able to make more informed decisions on which cruise brand or product to suggest.
- Don't be afraid to upsell, upgrade or offer add-ons, as this can add value for clients and help them enjoy a hassle-free holiday.

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Take flight times into consideration when travelling with young children,

## Good advice from the experts

- If families are travelling long-haul with small children, suggest a stopover en-route for a night or two, says **Lucinda Tyler** of Club Travel.
- Look out for resorts or cruise options where children can stay free, says **Genine De Witt**, Club Travel ITC. "It works out more cost-effective to quote on rooms where kids can share with adults, rather than booking separate inter-leading rooms. Also, research the kids' clubs on offer so they are age appropriate."
- Offer a variety of rooming options. For example, Trafalgar offers twin, triple and quad sharing options on some of its family holidays.
- Also see which discounts might apply, such as Trafalgar's Early Payment Discount and Young Traveller Discount, or Beachcomber's Early Booking offer.
- "Take flight times into consideration when travelling with young children," says Beachcomber sales and marketing manager, **Joanne Visagie**, "and preferably don't cross more than two time zones, as flying with children can be a nightmare."
- Know which destinations offer breakfast with accommodation, says **Annemarie Lexow** of Travel Vision. "Also find out up to what age children can stay free, which hotels have ramps for easy pram access, which hotels hire out prams and what the conditions are for room allocations. For example, a family of five would need two hotel rooms. Some hotels will not allow parents to stay in one room and children in the other; there has to be an adult with the children at all times. Also enquire about babysitters for parents who want a date night."
- Check on kids' clubs and baby-sitting facilities, advises **Ramesh Jeenarain** of World Leisure Holidays. "The majority of our hotels have kids' clubs. Sugar Beach and La Pirogue are both family friendly and their facilities can be used interchangeably." He suggests booking rooms with easy access to the beach, so when parents are relaxing in their rooms they can still keep an eye on their children.

## FAMILY TRAVEL

### Costa Rica for teens

TRAFALGAR'S **Theresa Szejwallo** took her two teenage daughters to Costa Rica and recommends this eco-friendly destination as the perfect holiday for teenagers and parents alike.

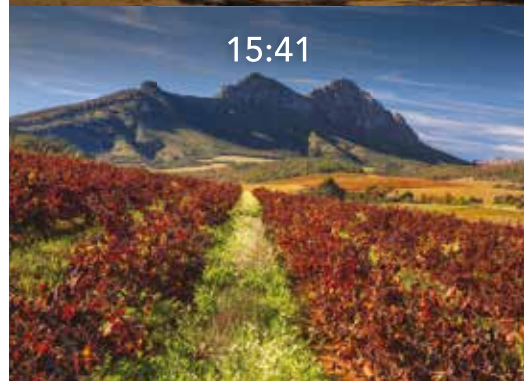
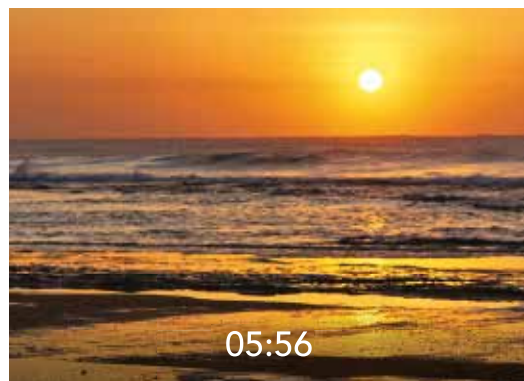
"Often teenagers are the most difficult to cater for on holiday. They're no longer amused by the kiddies' club but not yet old enough to venture off independently. My family holiday to Costa Rica was the perfect balance of interests for adults and teenagers. The 'Monkeys, Jungles and Volcanoes' guided holiday was ideal for teenagers. We zip-lined through the jungle, watched turtles hatching on the beaches of Tortuguero, took exciting boat rides, visited the Snake Garden Wildlife Centre, walked over the Arenal Hanging Bridges and loved the guided trek through the Arenal National

Park, where we sought out lava trails and took a dip in thermal springs."

At the Monteverde Forest, with its variety of eco-systems, Theresa and her daughters learned about thousands of plants and animal species, many endemic to the area. "There are more than 400 bird species and 30 species of humming birds in the forest. We saw howler monkeys, sloths, toucans and the resplendent Quetzal bird."

This trip is priced from R24 605pps. The Young Travellers' Discount and Early Payment Discount apply.

The 'Costa Rica Adventure with Tortuguero Extension' is priced from R17 300pps for 10 days. The Young Travellers' Discount (up to 10%) applies. A three-day optional post-tour experience to Guanacaste Beach can also be added.



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# Family value specials

- Book with Cruises International by February 28 and get 35% off standard cruise fares on Royal Caribbean for all guests in a stateroom for all sailings, excluding China. There's also a 50% reduced cruise fare on Celebrity Cruises for additional third, fourth and fifth guests in triple, quad and family state rooms (ocean view or higher).
- Trafalgar's 'Gladiators, Gondolas and Gold Family Experiences' guided holiday is great for families and takes in Rome, Florence and Venice. Highlights include a gladiator school; pizza-making in Rome; the Leaning Tower of Pisa; Piazza del Duomo – a Unesco World Heritage site in Florence; and cruising Venice's canals. Priced from R36 900pps for nine nights' accommodation with breakfast daily, the package also includes

- four dinners (including a Be My Guest event) and a farewell lunch. Quad room share applies, as does the Young Travellers Discount of up to 10% for children aged five to 17.
- Also great for families is Trafalgar's 'Greek Island Hopper Family Holiday' filled with myths and legends, trips to the Parthenon and Acropolis in Athens, the islands of Mykonos and Santorini, and a volcanic adventure at Nea Kameni. Priced from R37 700pps for 10 days, the package includes accommodation, breakfast daily and three dinners. Quad room share and the Young Travellers' Discount apply.
- Combine Beachcomber's year-round Early Booking Offer of 20% discount with its 'Free Kids' offer between May 1 and October 8. On this offer, kids stay and eat free when sharing with parents. The offer is applicable to children



## Cruising is the ultimate all-inclusive family holiday.

- under 18 at all hotels except Royal Palm Beachcomber. Children also stay free on all-inclusive packages when sharing with parents. The special is not applicable to family units.
- Travel Vision is offering a five-night package to the Disney All Star Resorts, valid for travel from April 8 to May 24, weekdays only, from R31 235pps. It includes return flights and taxes ex-JNB, five nights' accommodation, return airport/hotel transfers on

- Disney's Magical Express, a five-day Magic-Your-Way base ticket, transport on boats, buses and monorail between hotel and theme/water parks; extra Magic Hours at the theme parks before and after closure, complimentary MagicBand, and free WiFi.
- Travel Vision's seven-night Western Caribbean High Seas on *Disney Fantasy* cruise, from R35 806pps, valid for departures on September 29 and October 13 includes return flights and taxes ex-JNB, port

- charges, seven nights' full board in a deluxe inside stateroom, all on-board entertainment, including Disney character experiences and return airport/port transfers.
- Guests staying at World Leisure Holidays' Long Beach Resort in Mauritius can, until the end of April, take advantage of the Feast on East special, which includes a discount on the Long Beach drinks-only package, and a complimentary half-day chauffeur-drive to explore Mauritian sights.



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## Car rental: book special requirements in advance

BIDVEST Car Rental now offers bike racks for rent at all major airports in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth.

**Gaynor Von Loggenburg**, executive: sales and marketing, says agents must ensure the correct vehicle size is reserved. "It's important to ensure that there are enough

seats for all passengers and enough boot space for the luggage. All additional requirements such as GPS, baby seats and bike racks must be reserved at the time of booking. Our extensive product range and fleet of 13 500 economy, luxury and speciality vehicles can cater for all family holiday needs."



It's important to ensure that there is enough boot space for the luggage.

## FAMILY TRAVEL



Beachcomber's kids' clubs offer a laid-back environment. Photo: Beachcomber Hotels

## Beachcomber's all-inclusive offering hard to beat

BEACHCOMBER'S all-inclusive offerings at its Mauritius resorts are firm South African family favourites.

"The entry-level four-star resorts, Mauricia Beachcomber and Canonnier Beachcomber, are excellent choices for those who want to relax with their children in a laid-back environment," says Beachcomber's **Joanne Visagie**.

Both hotels have kids' clubs for children from three to 12 years old.

The four-star superior Victoria Beachcomber is

the ultimate family resort in Mauritius, says Joanne, with large rooms, a beach-based Kids' Club and a wide range of free watersports – including waterskiing and wakeboarding tuition. Teenagers have their own lounge and can make use of the TAM app to keep abreast of in-resort activities.

"But the pièce de résistance of all-inclusive packages in Mauritius is the five-star Shandrani Beachcomber's Serenity Plus premium package, with both adults and children spoilt for

choice," she says.

"Parents can enjoy quality imported wines, spirits, French Champagne by the glass and a wide choice of cocktails, while children have a selection of alcohol-free mocktails, soft drinks and milkshakes. Snacks and room service are also included – a small tray charge applies."

The five-star Trou aux Biches Beachcomber and four-star Canonnier Beachcomber also have teen clubs available for their 13- to 17-year-old guests.



# Children cruise free with MSC

AN ATTRACTION of cruising with MSC Cruises is that children under 18 sharing a cabin with adults, cruise free, only paying service charges and port duties.

"Combine that with good-value drinks packages that can be purchased in advance, and cruising becomes an attractive and cost-effective family holiday choice," says **Ross Volk**, MSC Cruises SA md.

The *MSC Sinfonia* and *MSC Musica*, which will be gracing South Africa's shores for the 2018/19 cruise season, are



**Ross Volk**

destinations in themselves, with kids' clubs catering for babies through to teens. "There is so much to keep kids entertained on both ships, from the Aqua Park, swimming pools and water slides to top game

consoles such as PS3, Xbox and Wii and high-tech gaming attractions like our Virtual World and 4D cinema," says Ross.

A varied programme and supervised activities, entertainment and social events are tailored to four different age groups.

Fun activities such



**The kids' spray park on *MSC Sinfonia*.**

as Fun Time Dinner (entertainment staff entertain little ones while adults have time on their own), Happy Dinners (young children dine with the family during the starter and are then

escorted to the mini-club), and Kids Around the Clock (supervised late-night play and napping) give everyone in the family space.

"It leaves children to explore a social life of their own on the ship,

and meet new friends in a safe environment, giving adults some much-needed free time to relax," adds Ross.

MSC Cruises' local cruise season runs from end-October to April.

## Maldives made memorable

"MALDIVES is undoubtedly one of the world's most beautiful destinations, and it is easy to see why many pick it for their family holiday," says **Lize du Plessis**, sales and marketing manager for Perfect Destinations.

She rates the group of Indian Ocean islands as well suited to children, and says there are many resorts in the destination that cater for families.

One in particular is

the four-star Adaaran Select Meedhupparu, which offers all-inclusive packages for family convenience. Here families can enjoy a variety of sporting activities, including tennis, beach volleyball, badminton or table tennis. For the more adventurous the resort has a full water sports centre offering jetskis, wakeboards and tube rides, among other aquatic pursuits.



**Adaaran Select Meedhupparu.**



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## Thailand – good value, great for family holidays

THAILAND is hard to beat when it comes to great value and is very child friendly, says Tourvest Travel Services ITC, **Keith van Heerden**, who lives in Bangkok.

He says while fantastic packages to Phuket and Koh Samui are often advertised in South African newspapers, these are not always child friendly, and agents must do further research. "For example, Patong in Phuket is a great party destination, but not right for little ones."

For young children, Keith recommends the beaches of Hua Hin and Koh Chang. "Hua Hin has shallow calm seas and is just 199km from Bangkok. Teenagers will enjoy monkey spotting and cave exploring. It is an ideal destination for families who have a little more to splurge."

In Koh Chang, which is more budget friendly, bathers can wade in shallow waters, explore the jungles, and enjoy kayaking and elephant interactions. "The best way to get to Hua Hin and Koh Chang is to self-drive or take a chauffeur-driven taxi. The highways are easy to travel and one can ferry one's car across to Koh Chang. Flights from Bangkok to Koh Chang are very expensive, so a road transfer is definitely the way to go," says Keith.

**Lesley Simpson** of TAT says Phuket will always remain a popular family destination but suggests that families explore less popular beaches such as Kamala Beach and Surin. "There are lovely luxury



**Dinosaur Planet in the heart of Bangkok offers a large dinosaur exhibition and giant Ferris wheel.** Photo: Dinosaur Planet

hotels at Bangtao Bay, between the two beaches."

Keith says Phuket and the Andaman Coast offer adventure for the whole family, if a hotel in a family-friendly area is selected.

In Phuket, he recommends the Kata and Karon Beach areas for families with small children and Hat Chaweng in Koh Samui for families with teenagers.

Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai are the other recommendations for families with children. "Chiang Mai is renowned for its great adventure activities such as river rafting, mountain climbing and hiking. And being in a mountainous region, it is also cooler than Bangkok. One can even hire a self-drive tuk-tuk to move around."

Lesley further suggests a local train ride to Kanchanaburi to the Bridge over the River Kwai, about two hours from Bangkok.

### Bangkok

Lesley also highly recommends Bangkok for families, regardless of age. "There is just so much to

do, from visiting places like Madame Tussaud's and Bangkok's famous water parks to shopping in markets.

A new tour takes tourists on a boat ride on the Chao Phraya River before biking through China Town or taking a tuk-tuk through busy streets. The Bangkok Skytrain also stops off at Bangkok's main tourist attractions.

Keith suggests booking a resort hotel in Bangkok with a big pool for children to cool off in and a large compound to play in, so that they don't have to be watched 24/7 or experience sensory overload from the bustling day and nightlife.

Great places for kids in Bangkok are:

- The Snake Farm at the Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute where children can watch live snake-handling demonstrations and venom extraction.
  - Dinosaur Planet in the heart of Bangkok, which offers a large dinosaur exhibition and giant Ferris wheel.
  - Lumpini Park, Bangkok's answer to New York's Central Park, which has paddle boats, jogging tracks, outdoor aerobics, play areas and giant monitor lizards.
- While the food in Thailand is spicy, there are suitable options for children. Most hotels also offer a Western menu with options such as burgers and chips.



**Susan Carr**, accounts manager at Travel Vision, points junior traveller, **Alice Schmidt** (18 months), held by **Annemarie Lexow**, sales and marketing manager at Travel Vision, in the direction of Sleeping Beauty's Castle at Disneyland Paris. Travel Vision is currently marketing a five-night Disneyland Paris package running from April 2-May 3 from R23 073pps. Included in the price are return flights and taxes ex-Johannesburg, return airport-hotel transfers, three nights' stay inside Disneyland at the Sante Fe Hotel and two nights in the three-star Elysées Ceramic Hotel with breakfast, Disney Park entrance tickets for the duration of the stay, access to all attractions, shows and meet and greet with Disney characters as well as Magic Express bus services. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

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## Island life

Beachcomber Tours hosted senior consultants on an educational last month to showcase its hotels and let them experience the island life. Pictured here, enjoying the Caudan Waterfront in Port Louis, are (from left): **Fernanda Maria Linder-Haber** of Flight Specials Welkom; **Wildi Smit** of Procorp Travel and Tours; **Lize-Marie Greyvenstein** of Flight Centre Associates; and **Vladi Wessels** of Beachcomber Tours.



## Hello, Penang!

Qatar Airways' first non-stop flight to Penang touched down last week, inaugurating the airline's second destination in Malaysia as it continues its expansion plans throughout Southeast Asia. Pictured here is the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, which operates flight WR 850, landing at Penang International Airport.



## Caring for Cape Town

This year's Flight Centre Travel Group's Travel Expo also hosted a very successful water collection drive for the drought-hit Mother City. In total, 32 000 litres of water was collected. Pictured here are some attendees of the Travel Expo handing in their five-litre donations.

## Appointments

### ■ Stuart Bailey

has been appointed new gm of Royal Palm Hotel in Durban. Stuart completed his hotel management studies through Intec College and then started his career at Gooderson Leisure as the food and beverage manager



where he remained for four years. In 2009, Stuart moved to Salt Rock Hotel and Beach Resort as food and beverage manager, before advancing to deputy gm and then gm for a further two years, followed by a move to La Montagne (First Group) as deputy gm and gm.

■ Minor Hotels has appointed **Adam Beadon** as regional director of sales and marketing, based at the group's Johannesburg office.

Adam will be responsible for leading the sales and marketing teams working on the company's Anantara and Avani brands in Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands. Adam joins Minor Hotels from his role as director of sales at the InterContinental Hotel Group's Festival City Cluster and has more than ten years' experience in driving sales at some of the major hospitality groups in South Africa and the Middle East.

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APSO MEMBER



Hit the slopes!

Club Med Cervinia in Italy has a special for all snow enthusiasts for April 14. The package, from R31 157pp, includes flights ex-JNB (incl. taxes), return transfers from the airport to the resort if flights are booked with Club Med, seven nights' stay in a Club room, unlimited dining for all meals, and open bar and snacks. Ski pass and ski or snowboard lessons, ski and boat hire as well as a range of activities and academies are also included. Pictured here is **André Dafel**, national sales manager – trade, of Club Med. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

# SACAA rubbishes CemAir's claims of 'bad blood'

CANDICE MAY

THE South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) has disputed the claim by CemAir ceo, **Miles van der Molen**, that its recent grounding is motivated by bad blood between the airline and SA Express.

**Kabelo Lebwaba**, manager: communications of SACAA, told TNW that the Authority found the suggestion that its action against CemAir was a sinister motive instigated and propelled by its competitor both 'ludicrous' and 'insulting'. He says the reports of an alleged affidavit that purports that the SACAA is out to 'nail' CemAir remains suspiciously elusive. "The SACAA is yet to receive the document despite having met with CemAir representatives on several occasions."

Kabelo says the history of the corrective measures taken by the SACAA clearly demonstrates that it does not favour any form of bias or favouritism.

On Sunday, Carte Blanche aired a report on the airline, pointing out that this was not the first time that Miles had made headlines, and uncovered past incidents connected to him. In 1999, one pilot and nine

passengers were killed in a crash in a Piper Chieftain aircraft owned by Miles, then owner and ceo of Flightline Charter Services. In 2002, Edenvale Regional Court Magistrate **PJ du Plessis** found that negligence by Miles had led to the deaths in the crash that the SACAA described as "the worst single civil aviation accident in almost 20 years".

*"The history of the corrective measures taken by the SACAA clearly demonstrates that it does not favour any form of bias or favouritism."*

Previous CemAir employees interviewed anonymously by Carte Blanche said safety checks were sometimes rushed and that overloading was not uncommon, while the organisation was characterised by a culture of fear.

However, Miles maintains the incident plays no role in the grounding and that it is merely due to a paperwork discrepancy.

He says the airline is making progress in relation to the re-certification process

and expects to be operating a limited schedule by the end of the week (Friday, February 16).

But Kabelo says the SACAA finds it disheartening that CemAir refers to the comprehensive findings outlined in the audit safety report as a mere "paperwork discrepancy" as the airline's corrective action plan has acknowledged the existence and root cause of the deficiencies. "Grounding or suspension of permits is the very last and most severe measure the SACAA can take when there are clear civil aviation safety and security risks," he explains. "Any talk of a mere paperwork discrepancy is an ill-advised public relations exercise. If this were the case, the matter would have been resolved in a few hours."

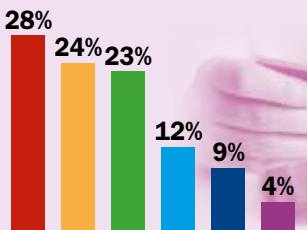
While Kabelo notes the progress made by CemAir, he emphasises that this does not change the current status, meaning that the airline's Aircraft Maintenance Organisation approval remains suspended pursuant to a successful completion of the re-certification process, which comprises four phases – formal application, document evaluation, demonstration phase and certification. ■

*pulse poll*  
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- Through aggregators like Expedia or Trivago (28%)
- Other (24%)
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- Direct using the hotel's reservations department (12%)
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## Higher oil price offset by stronger rand

SARAH ROBERTSON

THE oil price, which is currently trading at around \$68 a barrel, has increased by about 50% since June 2017.

As fuel accounts for around 30% of an airline's cost, this trading value is considered a strong inflationary indicator when it comes to the setting of airfare prices. However, airfare pricing for 2018 has been relatively stable. This is attributed to the stronger the rand.

**Chris Zweigenthal**, ceo of the Airlines Association of Southern Africa, said the oil price had risen quite slowly over the last period and therefore the sudden impact of an increase in jet fuel would not necessarily have been

felt. He added that the vast improvement in the exchange rate would also have somewhat negated price increases in our market.

"The overall growth in the market is still in the region of 3% to 4% and therefore airfares will remain competitive in the drive to retain market share," said Chris.

**Sally George**, market development manager South and Central Africa for Singapore Airlines confirmed that the carrier had folded its fuel surcharge into its airfares in April 2017 and had not introduced any further increases in market fare prices to the South African market since then.

Fuel could make up 30% to 45% of an airline's

direct operating costs, said **Kirby Gordon**, head of sales and Distribution for FlySafair. He said that, unfortunately, the increase in the oil price had to be passed on to the consumer because of thin airline margins.

However he also explained that, from a local perspective, the stronger exchange rate did not only affect the price of fuel but that it also affected other costs such as aircraft leasing and the price of spares and aircraft consumables. "Last year we saw the rand weaken quite substantially, which compounded the effect of the fuel price increase, but the recent recovery has helped to slow the bleeding somewhat," he concluded. ■