

TNW

TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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Dreams sets a new course

SARAH ROBERTSON

OUR operator, Dreams, has appointed **Jana King** as its new gm. Bringing years of industry experience to her role, Jana says that she is committed to setting the company on a new course with an expanded offering of Southern African properties as well as international product, new destinations in the pipeline and a renewed focus on service.

Seventeen years ago, Jana founded Fairfield Corporate Events, which was later bought out by Songhai Capital in 2011. This marked the holding company's first venture into the travel industry, with Jana assuming the



Jana King

position of gm for both Songhai Tourism and Events and Songhai Travel, the corporate TMC.

Songhai Capital is a level-2 B-BBEE company named after a West African tribe of conquerors. It acquired Dreams three years ago and the operator has undergone a number of restructures in the interim.

Top of Jana's agenda is establishing relationships with the trade. "Dreams will be undergoing a rapid period of service offering refinement – an introduction of a technology-hinged and client-centric strategy aimed at delivering its current and new clients a range of previously unexplored

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Insurance age cap costs agents bookings

CANDICE MAY

AGENTS are losing out on cruise bookings from elderly passengers who have had no travel insurance options left since Diners Club Travel Insurance, the last insurance company to offer infinite coverage, imposed an age cap of up to and including 85 years old on February 1.

Ros Chimes, owner of Ros-4-Travel, is one agent whose bookings have been affected. She explains that the cruise market is predominantly made up of elderly passengers, who have the time and money to go on super-luxury and world cruises. **Megan Fineberg**, owner of Constantiaberg Travel, who has also been affected, says most of her clients were Diners Club members just for the travel insurance perk.

Ros adds that the cap may also prevent SA passport holders from obtaining visas they may need for their cruise, depending on whether the embassy they are applying at requires proof of travel insurance as part of the application documentation.

Thaybz Khan, contemporary brand manager of Cruises International, and **Ingrid Roding-Tudor**, marketing manager of MSC Cruises, haven't seen an effect on bookings as a result of the changes.

Thaybz says the company offers cruise line insurance for the contemporary products in its portfolio, but at the time of publishing, could not specify the extent of this insurance. Ingrid said travel insurance was not part of MSC Cruises' core business.

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Money, money, money!

Norwegian Cruise Line is launching a trade initiative with Development Promotions over the next five weeks, where travel agents could win one of three vouchers to the value of \$1 000 to use on a cruise, redeemable any time in 2018. Every passenger booked through DP until the end of March gives one entry into the draw on April 10. There's also a 5% bonus commission for all sales up until March 11. Pictured here are Jackie Adami (left) and Jane Davidson, directors of Development Promotions.

Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

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Insurance age cap costs agents bookings

From page 1
While agents are yet to find an alternative option for elderly clients, Megan, says World Nomad may be an option. She is currently looking into its policies, which offer cover to independent travellers from over 130 countries, including South Africa. Ros is also looking into what the various medical aid companies offer so that she can advise her clients accordingly, but as **Simmy Micheli**, sales and marketing manager of TIC points out, like most major credit card companies, most medical aid schemes

also only provide travel insurance cover up to a certain age.
Anya Black, consultant of Heldervue Travel & Adventure, has been in touch with Diners Club regarding the matter and has been advised that its policy structures are revised annually, so age cap could be done away with in future. Agents who would like to dispute the introduction of the age cap should send an email to anyone from the Diners Club Travel Insurance Team for consideration.
Diners Club declined to comment. ■



The winner is...

Last week Turkish Airlines hosted a golf day for the travel industry. The Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup Johannesburg qualifier is part of the 2018 Qualifying Series, which will feature events in 100 destinations across 63 countries worldwide. Pictured here are Adem Ekmekci (left), gm Johannesburg, Turkish Airlines; and the winner on the day, **Jonathan Martin** from Golden Era Packaging.

Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



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Rebranded hotel group to leverage brand equity

CARLSON Rezidor Hotel Group has rebranded to Radisson Hotel Group, in a move that it says leverages the powerful, international brand equity of Radisson.
The move will see a significant investment in rebranding or repositioning more than 500 hotels globally.
“The creation of the Radisson Hotel Group is an evolution of our long-term partnership with the Rezidor Hotel Group. Together, we are clarifying and executing a new brand architecture to create more value for our guests and owners,” said **John M. Kidd**, ceo and chief operating officer, Radisson Hospitality, Inc. “It’s the right time for us to align

our strategic and operating plans and go to market as one solid player.”
Federico J. González, president and ceo of the Rezidor Hotel Group and chairman of the Global Steering Committee, Radisson Hotel Group, said
“We are clarifying and executing a new brand architecture to create more value for our guests and owners.”
the company would redefine its value proposition, optimise its portfolio, streamline operations and invest in new technology systems.
The brand portfolio across

market segments will include Radisson Collection, a premium brand replacing the company’s Quorvus Collection as well as existing brands Radisson Blu; Radisson; Radisson RED; Park Plaza; Park Inn by Radisson; and Prizeotel, catering for the “modern economy segment”. Country Inn & Suites by Radisson has added ‘by Radisson’ to align the brands.
A few of the brands have been or will be refreshed with changed logo and visual identity, including Radisson, Radisson RED, and Park Plaza. Radisson will also undergo changes to its product design and guest experiences that will focus on delivering Scandinavian-inspired hospitality. ■



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Airlink to suspend route

AIRLINK will suspend its services from Pretoria’s Wonderboom National Airport to Cape Town, as of May 8.
The route has been in operation since mid-May 2015 but has not

performed according to expectations, says **Rodger Foster**, ceo of Airlink.
Rodger says Airlink is not closing the door on the route, as a Pretoria-Cape Town connection is important and could

be potentially viable in the future. “With this in mind, we will continually re-assess the market and the economy so that we can resume the service when the conditions are conducive.” ■

New Seychelles resort opens

FOUR Seasons Resort Seychelles on Desroches Island opened on March 1. The luxury resort features 71 lodgings, including beach bungalows, villas, suites and private residence villas.

Desroches is one of the Outer Islands and can be reached in 35 minutes by air from Mahé. Activities at the resort include bicycle rides around the island, learning about the island’s variety of

vegetation and marine life at the resort’s interactive discovery centre, getting up close with the giant tortoises at the tortoise sanctuary, snorkelling and diving, among others. ■

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MSC Cruises announces new itineraries

MSC Cruises has unveiled new Mediterranean itineraries for the 2019/2020 winter season, a new ship that will head to the Middle East, and its own private island, The Ocean Cay Marine Reserve. *MSC Sinfonia* will offer cruises of 11, 12, and 14 nights in the Mediterranean. One of MSC Cruises' newest ships, *MSC Bellissima*, will come into service in the Med in March 2019, before heading to the Middle East for the winter. *MSC Meraviglia* will sail two new itineraries from New York, before it starts cruises from its homeport in Miami. The Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve will open in the winter of 2019. This private island in the Bahamas has 16 hectares of beach, with six distinct areas, and will provide a new port of call for *MSC Meraviglia*, *MSC Divina*, and *MSC Armonia*. ■



Members of the travel industry gathered at Gentlemen in Travel's (GIT) first event of the year, at Cesco's restaurant in Randburg, to catch up over some Portuguese cuisine and a few drinks. Pictured here are Ross Volk (left) md of MSC Cruises, and Corne De Witt, chief financial officer of MSC Cruises. Photo: Tessa Reed

Hello gents!

TAG launches training programme

SARAH ROBERTSON

THE Travel Assignment Group (TAG) has launched #TAGTalent, an in-depth eight-month training programme for its staff. The programme kicked off on February 20, with 11 successful applicants participating in the first of the eight training modules. Run by SITA-registered Dyad Training and Development, the programme will offer one training module per month followed by a number of practical assignments for participants to complete. **Lindi McClymont**, Dyad's

owner, says the models will cover a wide range of subjects, including Leadership, Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Finance, Strategic Thinking, Procurement Management, New Technological Age and Business, as well as a module focused on Building Personal Confidence. **Chantel Dougall**, bookkeeper for Trigon Travel in Cape Town, one of the participants, said she had applied to facilitate self-growth, particularly from a management level. Chantel said she had found the first module on Emotional Intelligence very interesting

and was looking forward to participating in the full programme. TAG's **Jonathan Gerber**, said: "We as a group are very excited by this programme and all that it will offer our staff. All staff had the chance to apply and we received 25 applications, which were then reviewed by our selection committee. We initially planned to offer the programme to 10 participants but due to the high level of applicants we eventually settled on 11 people, all of whom we have high future aspirations for within our business." ■

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From left, Monique Kiefer, gm of Fortis Hotel Manor; Grant McLachlan, ceo of Fortis Hotels; and Precious Zanelo, marketing, Fortis Hotel Manor. Photo: Jason Simpson

Fortis Hotels leaves Protea, rebrands six hotels

JASON SIMPSON

FORTIS Hotels recently launched six hotels under its own brand. The properties were previously branded Protea. Fortis Hotels will now operate the properties independently of the Protea Hotel and Marriott Group, after signing a management contract with the Boulevard Hotels Group on March 1. Boulevard Hotels Group leases the properties from private owners. Brothers Archie and Jimmy McLachlan opened the Boulevard Hotel in Pretoria in 1954, and a few years later built the Boulevard Witbank,

and the Boulevard Impala in Phalaborwa. The hotels converted to the Protea brand in 1993. Effective March 1, the hotels began trading under the new brand. The six properties are: Fortis Hotel Capital in the Pretoria CBD; Fortis Hotel Manor in Hatfield, Pretoria; Fortis Hotel Witbank and Fortis Hotel Highveld in Emalahleni; Fortis Hotel Malaga in Waterval Boven; and Fortis Hotel Evander in Secunda. “Our ambition is to be a sought-after African hospitality company known for a portfolio of individually managed hotels that create warm, welcoming, and happy

guest experiences at the same time as developing, and sustaining our people, our communities, and our environment,” said Fortis Hotels ceo, Grant McLachlan, at the launch. “We are now going to come up against Marriott Protea, the difference being we have seven hotels, and they’ve got 6 500. The goal of Fortis is to acquire more hotels to own, franchise, and manage.” Staff of both the Boulevard Group and Fortis Hotels own 40% of the equity of their respective companies, with Grant McLachlan, remaining the major shareholder after buying the trading companies from his family in 1998. ■

Check-in glitches inconvenience PE pax

SARAH ROBERTSON

TRAVELLERS on BA Comair departing from Port Elizabeth are unable to check their luggage through to their final international destination when connecting on to Comair flights, according to agents. Comair is also not able to assist with checking in clients for their international flights and issuing the relevant international boarding passes.

“If the system does not have agreements with an airline the process is denied.”

According to a Port Alfred-based agent, the check-in problems are affecting bookings on a number of international carriers. The agent tried to check in an affected client online but the service was also not available for the affected airlines when paired with a BA Comair flight. “This problem is very frustrating for our clients,

who now have to collect their bags at OR Tambo domestic, take them across to international and stand in another queue to check in for their international flights. We have received no communication from BA Comair about the problem and are therefore not even able to assist by booking longer connecting times for clients or to advise them in advance to expect that problems may arise,” said the agent. TNW understands that the issue is also occurring with some BA international interline agreements. Luane Lavery, brand communication manager BA and kulula.com, says the problem relates to the system that is used at check-in. “The system has agreements with certain airlines, which allows through checking of baggage and the printing of boarding passes. If the system does not have agreements with an airline the process is denied,” said Luane. Luane said this was not an ongoing problem. ■

Flyafrika Zimbabwe delays JNB flights – again

CANDICE MAY

LOW-COST carrier, flyafrika Zimbabwe, says it will open sales for its Harare-Johannesburg flights on March 5 and commence the flights on March 26. Earlier this year, the carrier said it would resume the route in February. After its Harare-Johannesburg route ceased in 2015, it invested R85m into its operations last year and has been planning to relaunch the route since. Cheryllynn Watson, spokesperson for flyafrika Zimbabwe, told TNW that

the further delay was due to the airline having to renew all its agreements with the Reserve Bank in Zimbabwe to ensure it met foreign exchange restrictions. “There are foreign exchange restrictions with remitting money in Zimbabwe. Some airlines are caught with funds here and cannot get them out of the country to pay foreign bills.” She said the airline had to ensure that it would not find itself in a position where it was limited due to inability to remit payments. TNW will keep readers updated on this story. ■



Europcar opens Gautrain branch

Europcar’s Sandton Gautrain branch is now open, offering convenient car rental from within the Gautrain station. The branch is one level up from the Gautrain entrance/exit and operates Monday to Friday from 05h30-21h00 and from 07h00-17h00 on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Cutting the ribbon are (from left) Bonita Velthuyzen, branch manager; Pieter Jacobs, operations executive; Martin Lydall, chief commercial officer and Jean Van Der Bank, gm operations: Gauteng, North West, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl.

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Quality in Tourism

TNW attended the recent Barsa Summit at the Hyatt Regency in Johannesburg. Sue van Winsen and Kerry Hayes report.

Agents ain't going nowhere

TRAVEL agents are not a dying breed but a constantly evolving animal, **Otto de Vries**, ceo of Asata, told members of the travel and aviation industry during a panel discussion on strengthening partnerships between airlines and the travel industry.

Marco Ciocchetti, ceo of XL Travel, said for a while people had been asking if there was a place for travel agents in the face of technology, but statistics showed that travel agents, whether online or offline, would still be responsible for 70% of travel bookings in 2020. "Most of them may be online travel agents,

but at the end of the day, it's still travel agents – human beings," he said "We have to progress with the times."

He said agents would have to enhance their offerings with technology, enabling mobile bookings, for example, and also specialise more, while on the corporate side, TMCs would have to offer more to their clients, such as analytics and data.

Otto said, despite airlines exploring different opportunities to build relationships with customers and expanding their value offering, there was still a large role available for travel agencies

and TMCs because the value proposition was constantly evolving.

He pointed to market trends, for example in the US, where millennials were more likely than any other generation to engage the services of a travel professional. He said this was also the group with the highest spend. Otto explained that the amount of information that was made available on the Internet was becoming daunting. "People are overwhelmed and they are looking for a professional to support and assist them in making the right choices that meet their particular expectations."



New SAA ceo, Vuyani Jarana, with Tourvest's Judi Nwokedi.

Cheaper fares?

ADEFUNKE Adeyemi, lata regional head member and external relations for Africa and the Middle East, highlighted the need for the establishment of the Single African Air Transport Market.

"The last time African airlines saw profitability was in 2010 and when we look at other regions, Africa is lagging far behind. Over decades, the real cost of travel has come down by 60% but intra-Africa travel is 45% more expensive than anywhere else in the world." She said while the

forecast for Africa was very positive, the right policy environment would be essential to realise these gains.

"Open skies is long overdue," said Qantas's **Michi Messner**. She said while it would benefit international airlines, it was also a gain for the economy through the opening up of routes and increased competition, leading to more affordable travel. "Airfares to Africa are more expensive than airfares to Europe – this needs to change."



From left: Abel Alemu of Ethiopian Airlines, Wouter Nel of Air Mauritius and Candy Kasonkomona of Hahn Air.

Whose customer is it anyway?

TRAVEL agents need to share customer information with airlines, urged **Vuyani Jarana**, ceo of SAA, and **Michi Messner**, deputy chairperson of Barsa and regional manager: Africa for Qantas Airways.

Discussing customer ownership, Michi said: "We have to make sure they get from A to Z in a safe manner, which means collaboration between airlines, associations and retailers or wholesalers." She emphasised the need for seamless transportation from start to finish.

Vuyani said it was essential for the trade to collaborate with airlines about the sharing of customer information. He stressed that, particularly in times of difficulty,

the customer must be reachable by all parties facilitating travel. "We must build trust so that the customer wins."

XL Travel's **Marco Ciocchetti** suggested that technology had contributed to the drifting apart and hesitancy to share customer information between airlines and the travel trade. "We used to be extremely close because we depended 100% on each other."

But he argued that technology also had an important role in re-establishing the relationship. "In our business, we are using technology to get closer to our clients and engage with them again. In the future, I think technology will also allow travel agencies to

get close to their airline partners again and the NDC will be one of the tools that allows us to work together."

Asata's **Otto de Vries** said there was a lot of misunderstanding around the NDC, describing it as a standard that enabled airlines to communicate offerings to all their value channels, including direct, with the same consistent information and content. "If we look at the complexities travel agents have to deal with today – they use one tool to make a booking and then have to go through to the airline's website or another channel for ancillaries – hopefully, the intent behind NDC is that travel agents will be able to service their customers on one platform."



From left: Ian van Rooyen of Menzies Aviation; June Crawford, ceo of Barsa and Bob Gurr of Swissport. Photos: Natasha Schmidt and Tessa Reed

Toward collaboration

THE Summit, which was themed the 'blueprint for collaboration', raised the importance of collaboration within the aviation, tourism and government.

Government was represented by Deputy Minister of Transport, **Sindiswe Chikungu**; Minister of Energy, **Jeff Radebe**; and newly re-appointed Minister of Tourism, **Derek Hanekom**.

Derek said he had already met with newly reappointed Home Affairs Minister **Malusi Gigaba** and that together they would

vigorously tackle barriers caused by the country's immigration regulations.

While the need to collaborate was reiterated in every panel, in closing, **June Crawford**, ceo of Barsa, charged stakeholders to "walk the talk". She undertook to share a summary of the discussions at the summit and emphasised that creating a seamless traveller experience, one of the strategies voted on by attendees, involved the entire travel value chain. ■

Luxury TRAVEL



Luxury is lucrative

Selling luxury travel is sometimes intimidating, with consultants fearful of losing the sale. Chana Boucher investigates how to do it effectively.

HELICOPTERS, private butlers, personal concierges, the finest cuisine ... the things dreams are made of. For many travel consultants, selling luxury holidays can be a bit of a nightmare – but it doesn't have to be.

Kathy Corser, product manager at Beachcomber Tours, says South Africa's travel and tourism industry is often perceived as being price sensitive "with a misconception that each client is after the cheapest possible option". She believes one of the reasons for this is advertising. However, she adds that there is "most definitely" a market for luxury travel options.

Md of World Leisure Holidays, **Ramesh Jeenarain**, says although there is a large portion of the South African market that is budget conscious, there are also many South



Kathy Corser

Africans who have the disposable income to afford a luxury trip. "Luxury travel also gives a more enriched experience and often comes with many added-value benefits and luxuries, starting with the room type, room amenities and staff attention, to mention a few."

"The majority of clients shy away from answering

a 'what's your budget?' question – so our suggestions would be to quote a range of prices to test the water and then continue the consulting process once clarity is gained about the price bracket," Kathy advises.

According to **Jane Davidson**, director at Development Promotions, there are a lot of travellers who aren't concerned about the cost of a specific holiday, such as Antarctica. "The customer just wants to be sure they're getting the right product, relevant, up-to-date and correct information and, most importantly, great service," she says.

Wouter Vermeulen, gm South Africa of Air France KLM, says the luxury travel segment has shown strong and stable demand over the last few years, indicating that there is a market for unique and exclusive travel experiences.

"Taking a flight is escapism; people want to enjoy their time in the sky. Air travel has long had a reputation for being glamorous and that's why people want it to feel luxurious," says **Jimmy Eichelgruen**, Delta's sales director Africa, Middle East & India, adding that the luxury sector provides a more personalised experience and the air of exclusivity can be a real selling point.

Less demand, more repeats

It stands to reason that demand for luxury travel is not as high as that for

budget or mid-range trips. At Development Promotions, Jane says there are fewer requests for luxury products than for the more contemporary brands, due to the higher price tag.

But Kathy points out that, while the luxury segment is smaller in comparison to other products that Beachcomber Tours sells, support for the higher-end products is "fairly consistent year-on-year, with many repeat clients returning annually to the brand they have a relationship with and where they know they will be welcomed back like an old friend".

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Luxury is lucrative

From page 9

Lize du Plessis, sales and marketing manager of Perfect Destinations, encourages more luxury travel sales for similar reasons. "The great thing about securing a luxury client is that you will most likely have a client for life." She explains that, generally, those who buy high-end travel packages prefer to work with an agent who knows their needs. "It provides a wonderful opportunity to properly understand a client and then find just the right itinerary for them. This is exciting and very rewarding... when selling luxury one has the opportunity to astound on so many levels and the opportunities to delight are endless. Understanding the client is key to this."

According to Ramesh, since luxury products serve a niche market, they aren't volume driven but appeal to repeat, quality clientele.

Janine Pretorius, sales manager of Encore Cruises, says the luxury travel market in South Africa is growing

year on year. "There is an enormous opportunity for agents to tap into the luxury market."

Levels of luxury differ

Nic Griffin, ce of the Thornybush Luxury Game Lodge Collection, says the term 'luxury' has a variety of meanings to different visitor source markets, but without a doubt implies 'exceeding expectations'. "Comfortable

"The great thing about securing a luxury client is that you will most likely have a client for life."

accommodation, good and varied food offerings, excellent game viewing, experienced rangers and trackers, and friendly helpful staff are the most referred to touch points as reported on travel websites like TripAdvisor," he says.

Within the Beachcomber collection, Kathy says 'luxury' is unquestionably the tailor-

made service at Royal Palm Beachcomber, due to its "anticipation of each guest's needs before they realise it themselves, and attention to detail".

Jane says the luxury products offered by Development Promotions are generally five-star and upward experiences in the cruise category, such as Regent Seven Seas Cruises, where everything is included. But luxury can also be out of the ordinary and bucket-list destinations. She cautions: "Luxury does not constitute high pricing, which is sometimes a misconception. Many agents are always seeking the 'cheapest' price as opposed to the best-suited product and price for their client to close the sale."

On its luxury portfolio, World Leisure Holidays has partnered with hotels and resorts where five-star is the minimum requirement. "They all strive to exceed guest expectations by offering unique and tailored experiences," says Ramesh.

Flying in style

AIR France has introduced La Première airfares, which are specifically targeted at the luxury leisure traveller. Options available include fares with an advance purchase, a four-day weekend travel option or a mini group offer.

Wouter Vermeulen of Air France KLM says: "These fares are substantially lower than our 'standard' La Première fares. By offering an alternative, you are not only servicing your client better, but also making sure they are aware that a tailored offer is possible."

He reminds agents to provide all the benefits of the La Première product: "For example, the dedicated La Première contact number in Paris that is open 24 hours a day for travel agents and customers, our meet-and-greet service that enhances a customer's

airport experience by ensuring smooth passage to the aircraft in South Africa and Paris, and, of course, our dedicated La Première lounge at Charles de Gaulle, which provides space to work, relax or enjoy fine dining with meals prepared by a Michelin-star chef."

"The dedicated La Première contact number in Paris is open 24 hours a day for travel agents and customers."

Wouter also points out that the La Première suite is at the top of the airline's product range. It is available on Air France's entire Boeing 777-300 fleet and is expected to be on board the A380 fleet in the near future.

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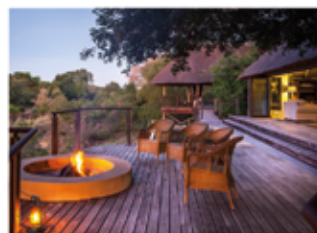
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All photography was taken in the Thornybush Nature Reserve.

Do your homework and understand clients' budgets

WHILE demand in the luxury segment is not as high as for lower budgets, industry stakeholders agree that the reward is greater. But many travel agents are reluctant to work in this space for fear of putting the client off with high prices.

There are some steps consultants can take to secure sales for the high-end customer.

"Be fully informed about the luxury product you are trying to sell," advises **Kathy Corser** of Beachcomber Tours. She says agents should ask probing questions such as what sets the product apart from its closest competitor and what unique selling points should be mentioned when quoting the client. She advises consultants to request marketing material from suppliers and to include images with quotes. "It is always a good idea to check online ratings platforms such as TripAdvisor and pick up the last one or two fantastic reviews to include with the quote and images."



Value-added services boost the sale of luxury products.

Similarly, **Jane Davidson**, of Development Promotions, says agents should know what they're talking about when selling high-end products. "If [consultants] haven't experienced the product first hand, rather source a contact at the operator who knows the product and/or destination. Let that person assist in closing the sale and give the client confidence that they're booking with the right agent." She adds that a little bit of

research will go a long way to close a big luxury sale.

Agents should also inform customers of a supplier's "entire offer", advises Air France KLM's **Wouter Vermeulen**. He says familiarising yourself with the different types of airfare options on offer helps to build the proposition for the customer.

Understanding the client is the first vital step for **Lize du Plessis**, sales and marketing manager at Perfect

Destinations. From there, she says travel agents should highlight unique selling points that match the client's expectations, needs and desires. "Know the product you are selling and point out the value in the package and why you have chosen it for them. They will love you for it."

Encore Cruises sales manager, **Janine Pretorius**, says be a great listener. "You need to really listen to what is important to your client in this trip and what they liked/disliked about their previous trip. Be confident in your opinion... concentrate on the added value."

What not to do

Kathy feels that consultants who make the mistake of not fully acquainting themselves with a product lack assertion. "They must ooze confidence when presenting the options to their client. They should also be ready to answer why the cost is so high, what makes the product unique and luxurious and why it is



Jane Davidson

worth forking out top dollar."

Lize warns against judging a client's budget. "Expensive for you is not necessarily too costly for them. Do your homework and understand their budget, then be confident in the package you have recommended. An agent should not undersell themselves or the value they are offering, [which is] of even more importance when the spend is high," she says.

When selling luxury products, Janine says agents

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should avoid getting “caught up in ‘oh my gosh, that cruise is \$1 400 per night’ [and rather] sell the experience”. Quoting a past client, she says: “The quality is always remembered, long after the cost is forgotten.”

Ramesh agrees, saying agents often don’t qualify their clients correctly and tend to focus too much on price and not enough on value. “Luxury properties need to be positioned on experience and not price.

One would not sell a Mercedes-Benz on the fact that it gets you from point A to point B. but rather on its build quality, style and how it makes you feel.”

Ross Volk, md of MSC Cruises, reiterates that focusing on price rather than experience, quality, type of holiday and the client’s wants and needs, is a common consultant mistake. “The great thing about cruising is that people can create their experience.”



Cruising allows clients to create their own experiences.

Packaging do’s

- Any type of luxury package must always include private transfers, says Kathy, suggesting that a choice of standard vehicles, upgraded luxury sedan and an SUV option are offered. Other tips include checking on the amount of luggage the client will be carrying; checking if a helicopter transfer option is available; getting a rate for a business-class upgrade; finding out whether there’s an option to purchase lounge access at the airport should business class be declined; and making sure a meet and greet is included in the quote.
- Jane advises agents to make the package as all-inclusive in the pricing and arrangements as possible. Also, establish whether passengers are loyalty members and if they are due any rewards and/or discounts.
- Even high-end clients want to see value for their money, says Lize. “Remember to

include value-adds, even if it is something as small as free WiFi in the rooms. Some properties even have a personal butler who will tend to your clients’ every need while on holiday. Give them prices to upgrade rooms or flights and explain the benefits of doing so.”

- Ramesh suggests upgrading transfers, including a type of concierge service and making it a unique experience from beginning to end with attention to detail.

Packaging don’ts

- Avoid standard transfers, particularly when clients are travelling in business class, says Kathy.
- Lize says mistakes include booking a seat in a vehicle transfer instead of a private vehicle, flights with long layovers, hotels that are going through renovations or anything that could inconvenience their trip. “Proper planning for the entirety of the holiday is



Janine Pretorius

vital to ensure expectations are met and delivered on throughout the journey.”

- Ramesh says for the high-end market it is difficult to compare apples with apples when it comes to pricing. Doing comparative quotes becomes counter-productive. “We would rather want to ensure we deliver a great experience to the agent’s client in consultation with us, as there are so many variables to consider.”




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- All reward travel redemptions must take place after the last qualification cruise departs (December Holiday voyages are excluded from the program)



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An agent's take

GARTH James, owner of Buchanan Execu Travel in Johannesburg, provides insight on the opportunities and challenges facing consultants when it comes to selling to the high-end market.

"Any problem with luxury travel is the same for all travel plans. I think it is just amplified when there is a lot of money at stake," he says.

"I find that South Africans can and do spend, but want the consultant to know a lot."

Garth defines luxury as "something better than we have at home or would normally have. Something that is wow, epic... the setting, the cuisine (not food), the spoils, the human touch, attention to details."

Some of the factors associated with luxury, he says, are sea-facing accommodation, superior quality beds and bathrooms, and well-appointed restaurants catering for the discerning palate.

"My luxury clients enjoy short connections; great lounges; easy, private car transfers; welcoming touches; great smells; music that fits; [staff] who remember one's name and preferences – especially on a return trip," he explains.

In terms of bestsellers, Garth says these are usually six-star resorts, smart vessels on European rivers and, when it comes to destinations, Japan takes premium experiences to a new height.

According to Garth, luxury clients are more inclined to visit a travel agency than a deal-hunter. "This is where we can and must capitalise as an industry," he adds. He suggests that agents ask



Garth James

the client many questions to ensure a tailored experience for them.

"I do find that South Africans can and do spend, but want the consultant to know a lot," he says.

Garth believes workshops on luxury travel will go a long way in opening doors to and creating more excitement around the market.

Well connected



Last year, Legacy Hotels & Resorts rolled out unlimited WiFi at eight of its premium properties, including The Michelangelo Hotel pictured.

Did you know?

The exclusive MSC Yacht Club, available on seven of MSC's ships (*Preziosa*; *Divina*; *Splendida*; *Fantasia*; *Meraviglia*; *Seaside* and *Seaview*) has been likened to a ship within a ship. It includes lavishly appointed suites, exclusive 24-hour butler service, dedicated concierge service, all-inclusive à la carte meals, unlimited drinks and exclusive access to The One Sun Deck and Top Sail Lounge. Guests have discreet access via a private lift to the MSC Aurea Spa. They also get to design their own tailor-made excursions.

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Barging with European Waterways

DEVELOPMENT Promotions advises that European Waterways has launched a new barging itinerary, aboard *Anjodi*. It departs on October 28 from Marseilles to Avignon.

A dream come true for foodies, historians and nature lovers, the trip includes oyster farms, muscat tasting and the Camargue National Park. Along the way, guests can

walk on a Mediterranean beach, stroll around in the walled town of Aigues Mortes, visit Arles and tour the world-renowned Chateaufort du Pape commune.

Reduced fares on Seven Seas

- Seven Seas Explorer:**

 - Barcelona to Rome (Civitavecchia) departs on April 23. The eight-night cruise, with up to 42 shore excursions, starts at US\$3 899pp (R46 640).
 - Monte Carlo-Barcelona departing May 8 is a seven-night cruise with up to 38 shore excursions, on sale from \$3 444pp (R41 216).
- Seven Seas Voyager:**

 - Monte Carlo to Barcelona, is a seven-night cruise from \$3 695pp (R44 196). Departing July 2, it includes up to 40 shore excursions.
 - 10-night Barcelona round trip from US\$5 305pp (R63 430), includes 50 shore excursions. It departs on July 13.

New itinerary for Crystal Bach

DEBUTING in May next year, Enchanting Moselle is a new itinerary on *Crystal Bach* that replaces the 14-night Jewels of the Rhine.

Some of the highlights of Enchanting Moselle include five maiden ports (Bonn, Bernkastel,

Dusseldorf and Trier in Germany, plus Arnhem in The Netherlands), a 10-day round-trip Amsterdam schedule, an exclusive event of music; art and culture, and a voyage through the beautiful Moselle River Valley.

Take note!

Crystal River Cruises has renamed its Michelin options, Epicurean Experiences. This is because the fine dining options now offer restaurants that are better than Michelin-starred venues.



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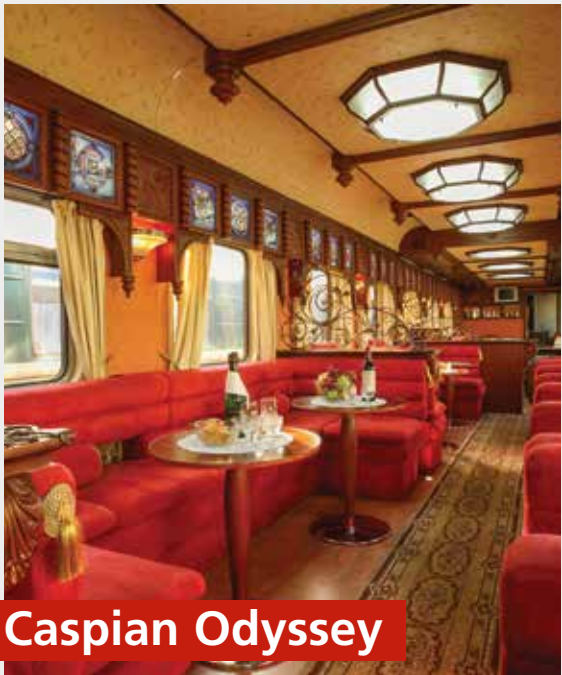
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Caspian Odyssey

From September 21 to October 6, the luxury Golden Eagle train will embark on The Caspian Odyssey through six countries on either side of the Caspian Sea – Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. This luxury private train, bookable through Development Promotions, offers three categories of en-suite cabins with 24-hour personal attendant service. The restaurant cars provide a five-star culinary experience. Photo: Golden Eagle Luxury Trains



Increased space in MK's new business-class cabin.

Unrivalled in-flight comfort from MK

AIR Mauritius's A350-900 aircraft are making flying a more pleasurable experience for passengers, particularly those in business class.

The business-class cabins feature lie-flat seats in a 1-2-1 configuration. The aircraft also offer in-flight WiFi connectivity and a state-of-the-art entertainment system.

Other features include an increased feeling of space through the higher ceiling, greater leg-room, larger overhead bins, an allowance of two roller-

bags per passenger in business class, full LED ambient lighting, the lowest cabin altitude, better controlled temperature, 20% fresher air in the cabin, wide panoramic windows and a cabin that is four-times quieter than others on the market.

Take advantage of the specials on offer – business-class return flights to Paris are on sale from R27 900, to London from R29 900, Perth from R24 545 and Mumbai from R22 700.

Inside AF's 'bubble'

AIR France invites its business-class customers to enter the 'bubble of wellbeing' at its recently redesigned lounge in Hall L at Charles de Gaulle's Terminal 2 in Paris.

Currently, the business-class lounge offers facilities such as private saunas and a detox bar but new features and areas will be unveiled in July. Further, between January and July, Air France is introducing a limited series of new comfort kits in the business-class cabin on all long-haul flights. They contain various biodegradable items, in keeping with the airline's commitment to sustainability.

Did you know?

Soiled or wrinkled clothing is one less thing to worry about when cruising. On 29 summer Mediterranean sailings on board the Seven Seas Explorer and Seven Seas Voyager, all guests have access to a free unlimited valet laundry service, including garment pressing.

What's new on Oceania Cruises?

TRAVELLERS embarking on Oceania Cruises now have more to look forward to. The cruise line has expanded its bistro lunch service and introduced new menus featuring more than 600 new dishes.

The Bistro now has the old favourites passengers have grown to love, infused with **Jacques Pepin's** hallmark specialities from France and other parts of the globe.

Oceania Cruises has also enhanced its Concierge Level Stateroom amenities to include free laundry and in-stateroom dining service from The Grand Dining Room during lunch and dinner.

Book it!

Couples travelling to Royal Palm Beachcomber in April receive a 30% discount on the accommodation cost, plus the dinner supplement, if applicable. The special is a great opportunity to experience the recently introduced Royal Grill. Taking place once a week, it is a braai on the beach, but with a twist, as it is done the 'Royal Palm way'.

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Wednesday March 14 2018 ■ 17

Ticking all the boxes at Sun Resorts

THE core mission at all World Leisure Holidays' Sun Resorts is to ensure that the guest's every need is met.

Some of the considerations included are:

- Better sleep, made possible with a pillow menu, Egyptian cotton and goose down bedding, and special mattresses.
- Unique beach services such as a butler and luxury beach gazebos.
- Honouring the sun with sunset and sunrise yoga, tai chi, Qi gong and active relaxation.

- Diverse golfing experiences, complimentary at three courses.
- Immortalising memories with the help of Sun Memory Labl, which offers digital printers and photo album printing.
- Sun Kids (kids' club) offers a break for parents while children learn, explore and are immersed in island relaxation and fun. For parents, there are art classes and cocktail mixing to take part in, as well as beach movies and more.



Delta Sky Club opens another spa

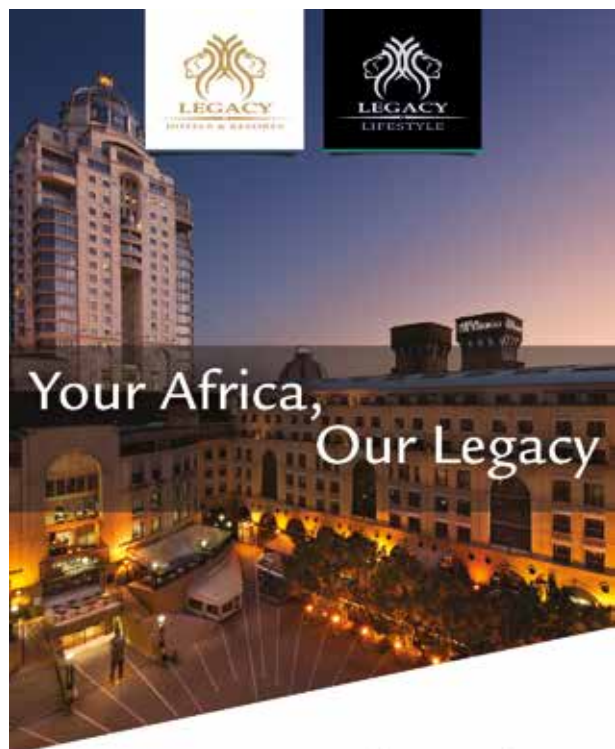
LAST month, an Asanda Spa Lounge opened at Delta Sky Club on Concourse E at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. This follows the launch of spa lounges at JFK and Seattle-Tacoma international

Airports in 2016.

"With the addition of Asanda Spa Lounge in Atlanta, we're providing industry-leading, innovative spa and meditation options, and another way to relax and unplug at the club,"

says **Claude Roussel**, md of Delta Sky Club.

Asanda Spa Lounge offers guided relaxation experiences, a variety of spa services, and a hair, skin and beauty product retail store.



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Supplier support assists VIPs

WHILE the market may be small, there are some experiences and products that exceed most definitions of luxury. With the right support, agents shouldn't hesitate to offer these products to clients looking for something truly exceptional.

Beachcomber Tours' **Kathy Corser** says while the interest in uber-luxurious packages to Mauritius is not large, a market definitely exists for it. To assist agents in selling these products, Beachcomber provides the online platform Travel Agents' Portal. "Individual resort fact sheets that detail food and beverage facilities, room category types and their sizes, the resort's amenities, the free land and water sports and more are available here, plus there are fantastic visuals in the form of slide shows that agents can email to their clients."

The Beachcomber sales team can assist agents with presentations to the client. "Travel agents know they are in the safest hands as each Beachcomber reservations consultant has been to each of the Beachcomber properties and visits them each year to ensure they are up to date with their product knowledge," says Kathy.

Ramesh Jeenarain says

World Leisure Holidays has multiple VIP offerings from upgraded road transfers to limousine and helicopter transfers. Also butler or concierge services, linked to 24-hour mobile connection to manage excursions in Mauritius, ensure clients' needs are taken care of.

"We have incredible properties in the Maldives that defy and go beyond anything dreamt of."

Some 15% of clients are looking for a unique, high-end luxury experience and, to assist agents in concluding these sales, WLH's new booking engine lets agents tailor the entire booking and gives them access to a multitude of services and excursions, room types and value-adds. The call centre agents, sales team and user-friendly website can also provide information and content.

"We have incredible properties in the Maldives that defy and go beyond anything dreamt of. Many of these we have personally inspected in order to sell it effectively," says **Lize du Plessis** of Perfect Destinations.

Jimmy Eichelgruen

highlights the VIP Select service Delta offers at its US hubs. This includes fast-track assistance through customs and rapid transfers in a Porsche for premium customers with tight connection times.

Delta has a partnership with a helicopter service that transports people from JFK to Manhattan in just five minutes. Jimmy says, in addition to its scheduled service, Delta operates Delta Private Jets, through which customers can hire their own aircraft. "It's the ultimate in luxury for our customers. There are different ways to take advantage of this, from purchasing a Jet card to being among the lucky few who are offered the opportunity to upgrade to a private plane when they're not in use elsewhere," Jimmy explains.

Similarly, Air France has a partnership with Wijet which provides La Première customers the option of a private jet transfer service to other cities in France and within a certain radius in Europe. "This offers our passengers a unique possibility to travel on an exclusive service that is fully integrated into the Air France offer," says AF KLM's **Wouter Vermeulen**.

Did you know?

Delta's exclusive One Suite, introduced in 2017 and offering customers more space and comfort, is currently exclusively available on the airline's new A350 aircraft. However, the Boeing 777, which serves South Africa, will be the first in the fleet to be retrofitted with the new cabin. ■

Births, deaths, marriages, promotions – we want to know! Please fax or e-mail TNW's Candice May, at candicem@nowmedia.co.za or (011) 214 7330.

Appointments

■ Tourvest Destination Management has appointed **Monique Bester** as gm Johannesburg in its Tourvest IME (Incentives, Meetings and Events) business segment.



Monique joined Tourvest in 2015 as manager of the group's inbound and outbound incentives. Prior to that, she held various senior positions at Dragonfly Africa, including manager of group operations and logistics. She has also worked at Wilderness Safaris, Il Leopard, Green Route, Traveller's Choice and Sun Air.

■ FCM Travel Solutions has appointed **Samuel Herman** as team leader for FCM Events. With a qualification in travel management and over 14 years' experience in incentive travel, Samuel's focus will be to raise the profile of FCM Events, enhance the brand and upskill the FCM Events team.



VIPs in Namibia

Cruises International treated six of its VIP clients to a Namibian desert experience as a thank-you for their support. The group are pictured here at the Deadvlei clay pan, in Sossusvlei, in the Namib-Naukluft Park. From left (standing) are **Nicky Potgieter**, leisure marketing leader of Flight Centre Travel Group; **Wally Gaynor**, md of Club Travel; **Tracey Visscher**, product manager of Travel by Investec; **Garth Wolff**, ceo of eTravel; from Cruises International, **George Argyropoulos**, ceo; **Thaybz Khan**, contemporary brand manager; and **Nirosha Sidat**, sales manager; with **Vanya Lessing**, ceo of Sure Travel; and (sitting) **Aadil Esack**, product and marketing manager of XL Head Office; and **Seymour Brugger**, luxury brand manager of Cruises International.



Lift off!

Cape Town Air Access, the Western Cape's multi-agency route development initiative, has received a boost with Tsogo Sun signing up as private-sector partner. The project is partly supported by the financial backing of private-sector partners and aims to secure direct international routes in and out of Cape Town. Since its establishment in July 2015, Cape Town has seen the launch of 13 new routes and the expansion of 14 existing ones. The next focal point is to secure direct air routes to North America. Pictured here (from left) are Wesgro ceo, **Tim Harris**; Western Cape economic opportunities MEC, **Alan Winde**; Acsa coo, **Fundi Sithebe**; and Cape Town Tourism ceo, **Enver Duminy**.



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Dreams sets a new course

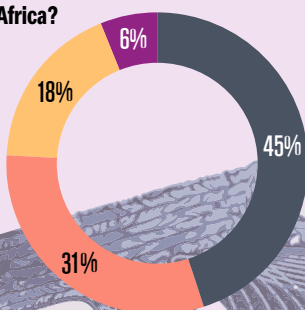
From page 1 destinations, packages and ways of doing business.” Dreams is still very focused on the travel trade, which generates over 90% of its bookings. Competitively priced South African family holidays is its current product focus with an expanded offering of hotels and resorts that include Marriott, Legacy and Tsogo Sun properties. Jana also hinted that the operator would soon be launching a handful of new international destinations but with the same product focus on providing affordable family-friendly holidays. ■

pulse poll
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Visas still cause problems


What is the most challenging part of organising travel to West Africa?



Challenge	Percentage
Visas	45%
Flight access	31%
Safety and security	18%
Language	6%

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TNW7136



Alitalia is returning to South African skies on April 9 with the launch of four weekly direct flights between Johannesburg and Rome, connecting to multiple destinations in Italy and beyond. Bookings are open in the GDS. Pictured in Italy at the Leaning Tower of Pisa are Yvonne Skerritt, business development manager, Discover the World – GSA for Alitalia – and Paolo Guidi, Alitalia, area manager for Africa Sub Sahara. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Home Affairs silent on promised child passport

SARAH ROBERTSON

TWO years after promising to roll out a new passport for South African minors that would eliminate the need for them to travel with an unabridged birth certificate, the Department of Home Affairs has failed to deliver. The passport, which would feature the details of both parents, was first announced in February 2016, with a roll-out promised within three to 12 months. The prototype was to come into effect from February 1, 2017. However, there has been no further word from the

DHA about a deadline extension. TNW followed up with the Department of Home Affairs for comment but the department spokesperson had not responded by time of publication. **Beverley Schäfer**, standing committee chairperson for Economic Opportunities, Tourism and Agriculture, said its department had also not heard anything further about the introduction of the new minor passports, while the unabridged birth certificate requirement continued to hinder both the travel and tourism industries.

“It was also promised that a presidential task team would look into the effects of the immigration laws on the economy but this initiative was also just shelved and forgotten about,” she said. Recently reappointed Minister of Tourism, **Derek Hanekom**, said at the recent Barsa Summit that he had already met Home Affairs Minister **Malusi Gigaba**, and that the two Ministers would tackle challenges around the immigration regulations “with vigour”. The two have frequently clashed on the subject of the immigration laws in the past. ■

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