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# Alitalia is back!

SARAH ROBERTSON

ALITALIA commenced its much anticipated inaugural flight to South Africa on April 8 and is now operating a direct service four times a week between Johannesburg and Rome.

**Fabio Maria Lazerini**, chief commercial officer and revenue management for Alitalia, said the airline had great confidence in South Africa both for the present and the future.

Describing Johannesburg as Alitalia's gateway to Central and South Africa, he said the airline was looking forward

to operating in South Africa after an absence of 17 years. He said about 4 000 passengers moved between South Africa and Italy every week and that the introduction of direct flights was expected to increase these numbers further. South African passenger numbers to Italy also grew by 9% during 2017.

"There are a large number of Italian companies operating in South Africa already and many South African companies travel to both Italy and the rest of Europe. Italy has always been popular with South Africans and South Africa has always been

popular with Italians from a leisure perspective," he added. Fabio also hinted that Cape Town was being strongly considered, should costs, time slots and permits prove favourable.

"We are hoping to attract both leisure and corporate clients on this new route," said Fabio confirming that tour operator and corporate fares were already available in the market in addition to the standard market fares.

The airline also offers Italy, Europe, Middle East and North Africa passes to South African travellers, which can

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Marking the inaugural flight from Rome to Johannesburg are (from left): **Fabio Maria Lazerini**, chief commercial officer and revenue management, **Maria Sacconi**, regional manager Europe, Middle East and Africa, **Nicola Bonacchi**, vice president leisure sales, **Giovanna Speranza**, media relations and **Paolo Guidi**, area manager Africa Sub Sahara, from Alitalia. Photo: Sarah Robertson

# SAA addresses missing corporate fares

SARAH ROBERTSON

SAA's SME, corporate and government fares expired on March 31, without communication, resulting in agents being forced to offsell to other airlines, contrary to their standard practice of maximising SAA override agreements wherever possible.

However, SAA has since responded with an official apology saying it had to realign its value proposition to its partners following the recent network rationalisation. TNW understands that the airline has also scheduled an April 12 meeting with new ceo, **Vuyani Jarana**, and leading corporate travel trade members, and advised that it expected the new Customer Loyalty Programme to be distributed by April 18.

The revised corporate special rates are being activated to minimise the inconvenience already

caused, said the airline.

In the interim, agents have now also been authorised that they can manually build last year's fares using authorisation number WF18.J50.XXX and the corporate number (CK) in the endorsement box. The fare basis must also be changed to SAACORP/SAAGOV and ticket numbers must be forwarded to SAA for tracking purposes.

For used tickets issued from April 1-12, SAA has committed to retroactively refund the applicable discounts using the last financial year's fare sheet structure. For unused tickets issued from April 1-12, agents can submit these via BSP Link for a full refund with new tickets issued as per the interim process above. SAA will also waive its refund administration fees.

Travel trade sources told TNW that a handful of new corporate agreements had now also been released by

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## For the record

In TNW's coverage of Joon's new services between Cape Town and Paris, we incorrectly reported that Joon is a low cost carrier, when the airline is a full service carrier. The two-meal service in business, premium economy and economy is the same as the service offered on Air France flights. The one-way and round-trip fares referred to in the article also only apply to tickets with travel origin in Europe. We also reported that the French market grew 3% in 2017, when it grew 33%. TNW apologises for the errors.



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SARAH ROBERTSON  
AND JASON SIMPSON

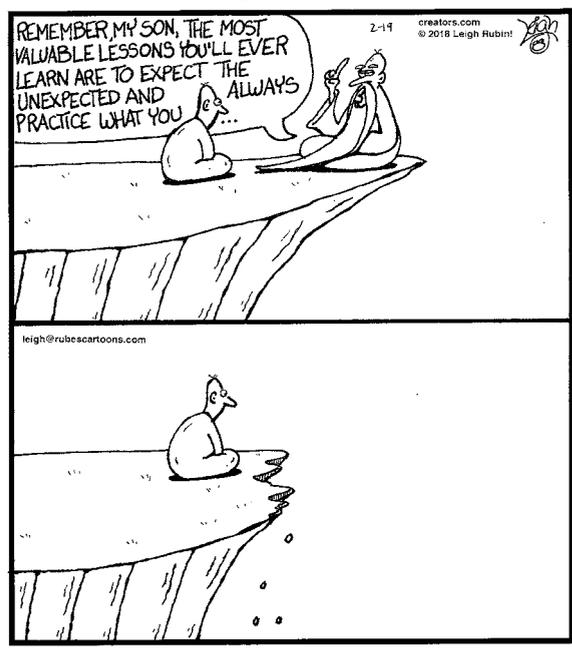
FLYSAFAIR flights currently do not reflect in the GDS after the end of October 2018. This is due to the airline finalising its slots for the next lata season, which runs from March to October.

Head of sales and distribution at the airline, **Kirby Gordon**, told *TNW* that the slots should be finalised by the end of April, and possibly within the next 10 days. He also confirmed that, despite rumours, FlySafair would not be discontinuing routes.

He explained that the airline was taking delivery of two new aircraft, which would be added to the schedule. As soon as the carrier had finalisation from the airports about which slots could be used for the new aircraft, the fares would be loaded in the system for the upcoming lata season.

"Bookers can expect that there may be a few time slot changes as per the adjustments but no cancellations," he added. "Our schedules are very tight so we like to make sure that we have 100% confirmation on slots before we load." ■

## Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



# NEWS

## Transfers now bookable on the GDS

TESSA REED

**A**MADEUS has launched a fully integrated, multi-provider transfer solution, Amadeus Transfers, allowing agents to book transfers within the GDS – a first in the SA market.

The solution allows agents to book transfers as part of an itinerary or as a stand-alone booking.

Amadeus Transfers launches in South Africa in partnership with EZ Shuttle and is also partnering with global ground transfer companies, covering more than 1 000 destinations in 142 markets.

"Until now, transfers have always been a high-effort, low-reward component of the travel spend," says md,

**Guyck van Heerden**. "This is mainly because transfers are booked over the phone or separately from the other trip components, which means the bookings are not confirmed in real-time and turnaround times are long."

It's for this reason that **Rachael Penaluna**, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel, describes the solution as a "game changer". Bookings on the solution have the added benefit of counting as a GDS sector, she says. Moreover, the transfer companies have been verified by Amadeus.

Rachel says transfers are a key part of travel. "You need to make sure your clients get from A to B, safely, with a reputable company and at

a good cost." **Andy Hedley**, gm of Amadeus Southern Africa, adds: "When travelling globally or in Africa, reliable ground transport is one of the key considerations for travel companies and their travellers."

**Franz von Wielligh**, Flight Specials gm, also thinks it's a great solution. He adds that it's not a threat to tour operators because they still offer value as specialists in packaging destinations. Moreover, he points out that online hotel aggregators already allow agents to book transfers.

According to Guyck, the solution will expose travel agents to competitive commercial arrangements for transfer services. ■

## Travelex launches Corporate Online

CANDICE MAY

TRAVELEX has launched Corporate Online, a new booking tool designed to make buying foreign exchange for FICA-registered corporate travellers more convenient and efficient, both for travellers and travel agents, by minimising the friction and constant follow-ups often associated with arranging forex.

Corporate Online, which is accessible from any smart device, allows travel agents to place orders on a corporate's behalf, which are then delivered with no need to deliver FICA documents. The travel agent can also track

the orders up until delivery without having to send emails or pick up the phone.

**Kananelo Makhetha**, ceo of Travelex Africa, says Corporate Online benefits corporates by allowing them to assign approval to their TMC to help track their spend, and equally benefits travel agents in a sense that they can incorporate and white label it into their TMC's online platform or booking tool.

In order for a travel agent to place orders on behalf of a corporate, the corporate has to get its company's shareholders to set up a once-off meeting with Travelex to finalise and store the

company's FICA documents, create a company profile and register those who can buy on its behalf.

Thereafter, Travelex reviews these documents every six months and closely monitors its transactions for any abnormal buying patterns. Should Travelex observe any abnormal buying patterns, it will question the company appropriately.

Kananelo says Travelex may consider turning Corporate Online into a mobile app in future.

Corporate Online is available at no cost to companies who make Travelex their preferred forex supplier. ■

## Asata rolls out Professional Programme

TEN years in the making, the Asata Professional Programme was unveiled on April 10.

The programme gives agents the platform to build up a comprehensive profile and portfolio of evidence to support their application for professional designation of Travel Practitioner. To qualify for the designation, agents

need a minimum of two years' experience and the requisite skills, while this must be verified by their line member. As this stage, only Asata members will be awarded the designation.

Asata is accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority as a professional body and has also registered

the professional designation Travel Practitioner on the National Qualifications Framework.

"We believe this designation will contribute to skills development and professional service delivery in the country's travel and tourism sectors," says Asata ceo, **Otto de Vries**. ■

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A330 - 300 is scheduled to start flying Johannesburg / London route effective 25 March 2018. SAA reserves the right to change aircraft type any time due to operational reasons.

# Exodus to distribute full Headwater portfolio

SARAH ROBERTSON

UK-BASED adventure operator, Exodus Travels, is now handling the international distribution, sales and marketing functions for all Headwater tours.

Headwater was founded in the UK in 1985 and offers a wide selection of walking, cycling and canoeing holidays in 18 countries, predominantly in Europe.

Both Exodus Travels and Headwater were sold by Tui

to the Travelopia group in mid-2017 and the decision to combine international distribution is intended to streamline the sales and marketing functions of the two companies.

While a number of best-seller Headwater tours already feature on the Exodus website and in their brochure, the new development will now incorporate Headwater's full tour portfolio.

International sales manager, **Andrew Appleyard**, said European self-guided

walking and cycling holidays were becoming increasingly popular in the South African market and that the larger number of active tours in this region would offer Exodus clients more choice in both tour itineraries and departure dates.

"Agency distribution is a key component of the Exodus business model and we are thrilled to have a relationship with agents in South Africa through the representation of our local sales agents," added Andrew. ■

## More calls to place SAA under business rescue

TRADE union Solidarity has called for SAA to be placed under business rescue in a letter to President **Cyril Ramaphosa** and Ministers **Nhlanhla Nene** and **Pravin Gordhan**. The union also confirmed plans to initiate a court process to achieve this.

The letter says: "The dismal state of SAA is well recorded and undisputed. The taxpayer has subsidised SAA [for] far too long and its current composition and model have no reasonable prospects of generating any profits, let alone any growth."

Solidarity's proposed

model would be one in which the State was no longer the sole shareholder in SAA.

The union has also called for an investigation into those individuals who were found, in the Auditor General's report, to have committed gross negligence on the part of the Board of SAA.

Last month, **Alf Less**, DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Finance, said his department had been suggesting business rescue, but this had been avoided due to concerns that banks would recall multimillion-rand guarantees should this occur. ■

# ONOMO enters SA as part of pan-African expansion

HILKA BIRNS

CASABLANCA-based ONOMO Hotels has entered the South African hotel market with the purchase of the Signature Lux Hotel in Sandton; The Inn on the Square in Cape Town; and a newly built ONOMO hotel in the Durban CBD, which opened in March.

Commenting on the Signature Lux acquisition, **Cedric Guillemot**, ceo of ONOMO said: "Once Signature Lux Hotels was on our radar, we knew they had the right formula and product offering to take over the mid-scale hotel industry." He said they were ahead of their time in

offering self-service check-in and technological additions that attracted not only millennials, but travellers seeking convenience at an affordable price.

"They are a great addition to the ONOMO portfolio and complement our current brand strategy."

The group's entry into South Africa forms part of its pan-African expansion plan, made possible by a €106m (R1,57bn) equity fundraiser late last year by its controlling shareholder, the Luxembourg-based Batipart SAS, an equity and venture capital firm.

The latest acquisitions bring its portfolio to 10 hotels across Africa, with

representation in Dakar (Senegal); Abidjan (Ivory Coast); Libreville (Gabon); Bamako (Mali); Lomé (Togo); Conakry (Guinea); Kigali (Rwanda) and Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban.

ONOMO's regional director of East and South Africa, **Samantha Annandale**, says the group aims to become the leading three-star hotel chain in Africa, focusing on corporate city hotels or hotels near airports, which they own and operate themselves.

She says ONOMO already has a strong foothold in West Africa, but had now set its sights on East and



Signature Lux Hotel by ONOMO in Sandton.

South Africa. Expansion in 2018/19 is planned in Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania, Benin, Gabon,

Congo and Ethiopia, with further acquisitions in Casablanca, Addis Ababa and Accra envisaged by 2020. ■



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### Be aware when applying for a visa

Jose Cruz says 85% of applications are rejected due to mistakes agents make when submitting clients' documents. Candice May and Jason Simpson investigate.

#### Uniworld's newest Super Ship sets sail

ON APRIL 5, Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection's newest ship, *SS Beatrice*, set sail on its maiden voyage along the Danube from Budapest to Giurgiu in Romania. The ship is the first of Uniworld's floating boutique hotels to be upgraded to a Super Ship and features a renovated lobby, as well as a redesigned lounge. Artwork on the ship includes pieces by Pablo Picasso, Alexander Calder, and Pino Signoretto. The ship's four dining options are inspired by famous Austrian composers, and include Mozart's, its main restaurant; Wolfgang's bar and lounge; Schubert's, an 18-seat café; and Max's, a restaurant offering cooking classes. The ship has two new Grand Suites, each measuring 28,8 sqm, and a 36,2 sqm Owner's/Royal Suite.

#### Celebrity reveals dining options on new ship

CELEBRITY Cruises' new ship, *Celebrity Edge*, will offer passengers 29 different dining venues when it sets off on its inaugural voyage in December. The four complimentary main dining restaurants are the Tuscan Restaurant; Normandie Restruarant; Cyprus Restaurant; and the Cosmopolitan Restaurant. The five other complimentary dining options are Oceanview Café and Mast Grill, Grand Plaza Café, The Spa Café and Juice Bar, and Eden Café. Speciality restaurants include the Fine Cut Steakhouse, the Rooftop Garden Grill, Eden Restaurant, Raw on 5, Dinner on the Edge, and Le Grand Bistro. The 11 bars and lounges are: The Retreat Lounge and The Retreat Pool Bar; The Theater Bar; The Casino Bar; The Club; Café al Bacio; The Pool Bar and Edge Cabanas; Sunset Bar; and Il Secondo Bacio. Suite-class guests will have access to a private restaurant, Luminae at The Retreat, while AquaClass guests will have exclusive access to Blue, the spa-inspired restaurant.

#### Free WiFi on Oceania Cruises

MIAMI-based shipping company, Oceania Cruises, is now offering free WiFi to all passengers. The cruise line said the unlimited, complimentary Internet access would be available across all its ships by the end of April. The new Wavenet high-speed Internet service will allow passengers to do low-bandwidth activities, such as surf the net and post to social media. Passengers who would like to stream music and movies or video chat with friends and family will need to upgrade to Wavenet Prime at a cost of \$9,99pp (R120).

**J**OSE Cruz, national executive and client services manager of HRG Rennies Travel, and **Michele Kendall**, md of Visalogix, advise agents what to look out for when applying for a visa.

According to Jose, ensuring that all the client's required documents are in order is essential. "I have seen so many cases of rejected visa applications due to missing documents," he says.

"What is always tricky are the requirements and extra documentation that each application needs. There are so many countries, each with its own interpretation of what is necessary and its own special requirements," said Michele.

She gave the example of proof of finance. One may require a copy of the client's latest bank statement, with an original bank stamp, while another may require three months' bank statements, or credit card statements. Another may request an original bank letter instead of the above.

"This is just one from a list of, on average, 10 items," Michele said. "It's not easy for South Africans, who often have to hand in a book

of documents."

One document that can cause confusion is proof of travel insurance. Jose explained that some agents might assume that their client's credit card or medical aid company will automatically cover them for their trip, but this is not always the case. "Only if you have a black credit card or are on the top medical aid scheme will you be covered for most countries." He added that the criterion was for your credit card or medical aid provider to offer €30 000 (R446 300) for Schengen countries.

Concerning visas for the 26 Schengen countries, Michele said some travellers didn't even know which forms to fill out, because they did not know which consulate they needed to apply at, and therefore which requirements to follow. "Business visas, for example, need specific requirements such as legalised letterheads of the inviting company, or a government stamp on the letterhead of invitation. Some require the letter of invitation to be translated into their language. Different consulates also require

different formats. "This can be difficult for agents, and the public, to find out, and if the visa is incorrectly applied for and gets rejected, there is a domino effect of costs and delays."

For Australia, she emphasised the need to make sure one is applying for the correct form, explaining that filling in the wrong form may lead the authorities to think clients are 'ducking and diving'.

When applying for a US visa, Michele said it was best to be as honest as possible. "Even if you had a parking ticket, state that. Because they will know if you have had an incident, even a small one, if the police were involved."

Michele added a few more useful tips:

- Don't submit documents in Afrikaans – these will not be accepted.
- Be presentable when visiting consular offices in person.
- Double check your requirements list.
- Don't be late – you could be charged for another time slot.
- Be honest.
- And, above all, be patient. ■

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### New cancellation policy from RCI

CANDICE MAY

ROYAL Caribbean has implemented a new cancellation policy, increasing charges for cancellations made less than 90 days before sailing.

With the new policy, for sailings of five nights or longer (including holiday sailings), cancellations made more than 90 days in advance will not be charged extra, cancellations made 89 to 75 days in advance will cost 25% of the cruise fare per person, cancellations made 74 to 61 days in advance will cost 50% per person, those made 60 to 31 days in advance will cost 75% per person and for 30 days or less in advance, the charge will be 100% of the fare.

For sailings of one to four nights, Royal Caribbean will not charge for cancellations made 75 days or more in advance, but will charge 50% per person for cancellations made between 74 and 61 days in advance, 75% for those made 60 to 31 days in advance and 100% for cancellations made within 30 days.

Royal Caribbean's old cancellation policy allowed cruisers to cancel sailings up to 57 days in advance with only the deposit charged and 100% of the cruise fare for cancellations of 14 days or less from departure.

The new cancellation policy is to encourage travellers to cancel earlier if they wish to do so, according to Royal Caribbean. ■

#### To the point



AccorHotels has acquired a 50% stake in the South African-based Mantis Group, which has a collection of five-star, privately owned, managed, and branded properties around the world.

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## Thrown into the spotlight

In the latest Who Is... Tessa Reed chats to Zuki Jantjies, newly appointed director of sales and marketing at City Lodge Hotel Group.

**N**EVER one to draw attention to herself, taking on the role of director of sales and marketing at City Lodge Hotel Group has forced **Zuki Jantjies** out of her comfort zone and into the spotlight.

However, with a firm foundation in communications and branding and being someone who is especially results driven, Zuki is well suited to the new position.

An ideas person, Zuki is also excited about being on the executive committee and having input to, as well as driving, City Lodge's strategy.

"Hospitality is new to me and it's a new challenge," she says.

Her ambition is to make City Lodge a favourite brand and a household name, synonymous with hotels, in the same way 'Skip' has become the byword for detergent.

Heading up sales and marketing for one of the most prominent hotel groups in sub-Saharan Africa, Zuki has come a long way from the small township of her birth – Kwa-Thema, south-west of Springs on the East Rand, Gauteng.

Her mother was a nursing sister, who worked shifts at a local clinic. The shift work meant that Zuki sometimes only saw her briefly in the morning before trotting off to school.

Her father, a Human Resources practitioner, was a key influencer in her life.

After completing a business degree, her first job was in HR. Her life was also shaped by her accounting teacher at Tlakula High School, who took a special interest in her.

**"Things come to us at the right place and at the right time. I believe your path is set already; you just have to find a way of aligning to it."**

"Today I am very grateful for the attention she gave me," says Zuki. She was a diligent pupil and it's paid off.

As a child, she tried her hand at tennis, but poor sight in one eye (only picked up later) meant that she wasn't much of a star on the court. "I was a bit blind and needed glasses. I would think, 'there's the ball coming', but miss it."

Where she did shine was the dance floor. Zuki spent afternoons and weekends ballroom dancing at a nearby clubhouse. She still loves dancing today and would like to go back to ballroom dancing when she finds the time.

Zuki found herself in the travel industry by

chance but, as she loves travelling, we can expect her to stay. She started working at Nampak after university and it was at a talk given by **Coleman Andrews**, former ceo and president of SAA, that her interest in aviation was sparked.

After six and a half years at SAA, Zuki spent seven years at SA Express Airways in the customer services portfolio, which included product and development, operations, communications, marketing, sales and complaints.

Her belief that our paths are already mapped out for us has taught Zuki not to fight for things.

"Things come to us at the right place and at the right time," she says.

"I believe your path is set already; you just have to find a way of aligning to it." She says we evolve if we allow ourselves to open up. "There is a bigger universe and what you put in is what you get back."

Sharing her strategy for bouncing back from setbacks, Zuki says: "I don't take things personally and I speak about things." She doesn't back away from uncomfortable conversations.

"Everybody has setbacks and they are brought to us for a reason," she says. "At times, we need those setbacks to position us so that we know where we need to go."



Zuki Jantjies

### Getting to know Zuki

- Zuki is an avid reader. *The Blessed Girl* by Angela Makholwa is currently on her bedside table.
- All things food appeal to her: she loves eating out, entertaining friends and cooking.
- She describes herself as an intro-extrovert because, although she loves people and getting to know what makes them tick, she doesn't like to be the centre of attention.
- A regular church-goer, Zuki is a spiritual person who is guided by her faith.
- She has a 15-year-old son, Vuyo, who, like her, avoids the spotlight. "He is my world," she says. ■

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# Mauritius



Already a top seller, Mauritius may get even bigger this year. Sue van Winsen reports.

## Even more affordable for SA travellers

**T**HE strengthening of the rand early this year, followed by its stabilisation, has made many destinations more affordable for South Africans, including ever-popular Mauritius.

According to **Terry Munro**, md of Beachcomber Tours, this has been clearly illustrated by the increasing number of South Africans travelling to the island.

"Prices are cheaper with the stronger rand and bookings taken in January were 23% up on last year for Beachcomber, so we are expecting a great year in 2018," says Terry.

**John Ridler**, PR and media manager of Thompsons Holidays, agrees that Mauritius continues to be a "hot seller and favourite for SA travellers". "The exchange rate has improved our package pricing, making the island even more accessible to travellers."

### European decline

Another factor that could result in attractive pricing for the South African market has been the recent decline or sluggishness in travellers from some of Mauritius's key markets in Europe.

For example, arrivals from France (Mauritius's top source market) were largely stagnant with just 0,5% growth during 2017 when compared with 2016. This year has started more positively, with the big markets of France, the UK and Germany showing modest growth in January and February, but South Africa, which follows behind in fifth place in terms of arrivals (just behind China), has shown double-digit growth of 17,7%.

It is possible that this could translate into more specials and packages being released to the SA market to entice travellers. John points out that any downturn from European markets

can only spell even better prices for SA travellers so that hotels can balance their occupancies.

Sales director for World Leisure holidays (WLH), **Brenda Mitchell**, explains that the company works with room allocations at all its products and when there is additional capacity, WLH is advised so it can assist wherever possible in filling the rooms. "We are constantly working with our partner properties to offer the best value for money to the travellers in Southern Africa," she adds.

But Beachcomber says it's unlikely to have a major impact. **Joanne Visagie**,

running at good occupancies so I doubt that they would reduce prices or introduce more specials."

### More rooms

With several big renovations taking place last year, there are more rooms to sell, which could also result in attractive packages. For example, the new-look Canonnier Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa opened along with the adults-only wing at Victoria Beachcomber Resort and Spa with 40 additional rooms. "These developments, plus the drop in sales from Europe, bode well for our SA market and we expect good growth," said Terry.



**Terry Munro**

Beachcomber Tours sales and marketing manager says: "Beachcomber hotels are

### Did you know?



Each year, MSC Cruises offers just one cruise to Mauritius – an 11-night New Year's cruise to Port Louis (pictured) where the ship docks for three days. This year, the cruise departs Durban on December 27 and spends the following days at sea before arriving at Port Louis on December 31. The cruise then departs Port Louis on January 2, arriving at Pointe des Galets, Réunion, on January 3 where it docks for two nights, departing on January 5 and arriving back in Durban on January 7, 2019. This cruise is very popular with South African travellers and usually sells out well in advance of season start.



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TNW8641SD

## A busy sporting calendar for winter 2018

MAURITIUS has long been associated with days spent sipping cocktails while lazing on sun-drenched loungers overlooking the ocean, but the island is fast becoming one of the

region's most exciting new sport tournament destinations.

Whether participating or simply spectating, many operators and resorts are offering special packages targeting this new breed

of active Indian Ocean island traveller, and in some instances even sponsoring the events.

TNW rounds up some of the sporting events coming up over the next few months.

### May

#### May 12, Royal Raid:

The 13th edition of this trail race will take place on May 12. The event actually comprises three races that are run simultaneously – an 80km route which must be completed in under 20 hours, a 25km route in under nine hours, and a 15km route. Participants will run through some of Mauritius's most scenic areas, including Yemen Nature Reserve, Black River National Park and Bel Ombre Nature Reserve and its sugar cane fields. The race is organised by Mauritius's running association along with LUX\* Sports.

**May 17-19, Mauritius Tour Beachcomber (MTB):** Nature-loving mountain bikers can discover Mauritius on a set of challenging routes across



The Royal Raid road race. Photo: Royal Raid

the island. There will be four races in total: 65km, 40km, 22,5km (night ride) and 63km. Beachcomber is offering a special package for participants, starting from R19 550pps in a superior double or twin at or R24 730 for a superior single room at Shandrani Beachcomber Resort and Spa. The rate

includes return airfare from Johannesburg and approximate airport taxes, airport transfers and transfers to the starting point on race days, four nights' accommodation with three meals a day and drinks, land and water sports, race fee, entry to the race village and a souvenir T-shirt.

### June

#### June 15-17, Beachcomber World Rugby 10s:

Beachcomber is inviting rugby enthusiasts to travel to Mauritius to watch six of the world's best clubs compete in the World Rugby 10s, combined with a beach holiday. Guests will stay at the same resort as one of the teams and will even be able to play a game of touch rugby with some of the biggest names in the sport, followed by cocktails. Rates start from R14 120pps for a

five-night stay at Mauricia Beachcomber Resort and Spa in a standard double room or R19 730pps for a five-night stay at Paradis Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa in a deluxe double or twin room. The package includes return airfare from Johannesburg and approximate taxes, airport transfers, breakfast and dinner, land and water sports, game tickets for all three days and a souvenir gift. Valid for set departure June 13-18.

### July

#### July 15, LUX\* Mauritius Marathon:

This event includes a full 42km marathon, a 21km half marathon and 10km fun run. The routes include 20km of coastal road in the south of Mauritius, and take runners through coastal villages before finishing on the beach.

#### July 22, Kiteival Mauritius:

This event is open to all levels of kite surfers and takes place at the best kiting lagoons in Mauritius. The locations vary according to weather conditions, but festivities include parties, a freestyle competition and an awards ceremony.

#### July 27-28, UTRB:

The Ultratrail Raidlight Beachcomber event is a trail run that includes four scenic routes that zig-zag through the Mauritian landscape.

Each route varies in length and for the first time it will include a 100km race as well as 47km, 25km and 10km events. For the 100km race, participants can run solo or as a team of two for those who prefer to run in relays. Beachcomber is offering participants special rates from R17 750pps in a superior double or twin or R22 930 for a superior single at Shandrani Beachcomber Resort and Spa. The package includes return airfare from Johannesburg and approximate airport taxes, airport transfers and transfer to race start on race day, four nights' accommodation with all meals and drinks, land and water sports, entry to the race village, T-shirts and medal as well as an invitation to the closing gala on July 30.

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Kiteival is open to all levels of kite surfers.



# BEACHCOMBER TOURS



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The golf course at Tamarina.

## Golf still a highlight

**BRENDA Mitchell** of World Leisure Holidays says golf has always been a popular sporting activity in Mauritius. “WLH actively promotes the golfing packages that are unique to our Sun Resort properties – you can stay

at any one of the resorts and play free at Ile aux Cerfs,” she says. “Guests who stay at Long Beach can also play golf free at Anahita and guests of Sugar Beach have complimentary access to Tamarina.”

## MAURITIUS

### Don't forget about insurance!

IF YOUR clients are planning to take part in a sport event, it's important to check that they will be covered by their travel insurance policy, should they be injured. **Simmy Micheli**, manager of sales and marketing for TIC, says: “Most



**Simmy Micheli**

leisure sporting events are covered, but there are some restrictions for competitive, professional or hazardous and high-risk events.” She adds that it's important for clients to consider the level of cover they're planning

to take. “Some policies might restrict the benefit limit considerably for sporting activities. Opt for a product that offers the full medical limit, including evacuation and repatriation costs when they are participating in sporting activities. Then they will have the peace of mind that should something happen, they won't be left with a possible co-payment,” she says.

### Activities with a twist

COMING up with creative itineraries for a destination that's already so well known can be a challenge, but there are many exciting add-ons to liven up repeat visitors' Mauritian itineraries.

- Fine dining in a submarine. Blue Safari Submarines offers guests the opportunity to enjoy lunch and fine wine at 35m below the Indian Ocean on board the BS600. This five-seater submarine features a large panoramic window at the front and the pilot can take guests to see local reefs or the wreck of the *Star Hope*.
- Tea-tasting at Bois Chéri. Dating back to 1892, this tea plantation offers tours through its factory and lands, as well as a visit to a museum that chronicles the history of tea in Mauritius. Bois Chéri produces a range of flavoured teas, including vanilla and caramel, which visitors will be able to taste. The museum is open from Monday to Saturday. Guests can even overnight at the Bubble Lodge – a transparent eco-friendly structure that enables travellers to sleep under the stars in luxury.
- A floating beach. If your guests have a hard time deciding which beach in Mauritius offers it all, then perhaps you

should suggest they try out Z'ile Beach – a 'floating island' or platform moored in the middle of the lagoon in Mont Choisy, about 500m from the main shoreline. It comes complete with sand and artificial greenery and is accessed via a shuttle boat service. Umbrellas, seats, showers and ablutions complete the offering, which can accommodate up to 80 people on a shared basis or for a private rental.

- FLYn'Dive-Board. Clients

with superhero dreams can live out their fantasy on the FLYn'Dive-Board at Grand Baie Beach. The device is connected to a powerful water pump by a hose that creates a water jet that sends the participant into the air. An instructor will help them to master the basics and, according to FLYn'Dive-Board company, 95% of first-timers learn how to 'fly' in just a few minutes and can steer and control their elevation.



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WHOLESALE MEMBER

### Did you know?

Air Mauritius launched its new Mauritius to Amsterdam service on March 26. It will serve the route twice-weekly (Mondays and Fridays) with a third-weekly flight being introduced on Wednesdays in July and August. The airline will operate the route with its A340-400.

# MAURITIUS

## Top specials from Travelinfo

- From Thompsons' Costsavers comes a Mauritius special at the three-star Pearle Beach Resort & Spa, offering seven nights ex-JNB and ex-DUR from R15 776pps; and ex-CPT from R16 840pps. Valid from June 23-July 14 it includes return flights on Air Mauritius, including airline levy; return seat in coach airport-resort transfers; accommodation in a Deluxe Garden Room and breakfast and dinner daily. Bonus services include free WiFi throughout the hotel; complimentary tea/coffee and pancakes served daily between 15h00 and 17h00; Happy Hour at the hotel bar between 18h00 and 19h00 daily with a 'buy one, get one free cocktail; fruit skewers on the beach daily; 15 minutes' free use of sauna and Hammam; and water sports including pedal boat, kayaks, glass-bottom boat excursion and snorkelling.
- Beachcomber Tours is currently advertising a 20% early-booking special for travel from July 23-September 27. Five-night packages start at R14 380pps and seven nights at R17 240pps. Rates are inclusive of return Air Mauritius Travel Smart Programme airfare ex-JNB; approx. airport taxes; return transfers; breakfast and dinner daily for all resorts except Shandrani, which is premium all-inclusive; and free land and motorised water sports as per brochure.
- A Mauritius and Réunion Island combo is on offer from LUX\* Resorts & Hotels for travel until October 31. Accommodation is at the LUX\* Saint Gilles or Hotel Le Recif in Réunion and LUX\* Grand Gaube in Mauritius. A free meal plan upgrade is offered at the Mauritian property. Rates are from R20 840pps and include return economy flights ex-JNB on Air Mauritius, return airport transfers, four nights in Mauritius and three nights in Réunion with breakfast daily. Bonuses include free WiFi, and unlimited water-skiing and snorkelling.

## To the point



Club Med has announced plans to renovate La Pointe aux Canonnières in Mauritius, expanding it with 108 new rooms. Current rooms will also undergo upgrades and the resort will feature a new spa, family pool, Zen space and transformed speciality restaurant.



## Here comes The Test Kitchen

Shangri-La's Le Touessrok Resort & Spa in Mauritius will host the well-known Cape Town fine-dining restaurant, The Test Kitchen, for a six-week culinary promotion at its Republik Beach Club & Grill. The Test Kitchen's Chef-Patron, Luke Dale Roberts, and a team of 20 are taking their gourmet talents to the island from April 11-May 26. The dining experience echoes the restaurant's Dark Room/Light Room theme in Cape Town, and guests will start their evening at the Republik Bar area for tapas and cocktails and will continue on to the beachfront restaurant where two five-course set menus are on offer. Getting into the culinary mood are Elinda van der Merwe (left) and Mischa de la Pierre sales executives at World Leisure Holidays, which is currently promoting The Test Kitchen Experience. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## Book it!

World Leisure Holidays is offering special discounts for repeat guests with rates from R14 800pps for a five-night, all-inclusive stay in a Superior Garden Room at Ambre from May 19 to September 8. Package includes return flights ex-JNB, return coach transfers and approximate taxes.

## NEW YEAR IN MAURITIUS

One of the best value holiday packages for 2018! A cruise to Mauritius on board MSC Musica, 11 nights commencing 27th December 2018. An Indian ocean paradise offering palm fringed powder white beaches and azure lagoons. Perfect destination for holiday makers offering shopping, dining and tourist delights.

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# Mauritius



## THE NAKED AGENT

The purpose of the Naked Agent is to assess the experience from only a sales skills perspective and not the effectiveness of the travel agency.

## Keep it personal!

SCENARIO: A seven-night mountain biking holiday for a couple in Mauritius. Both are regular mountain bikers who would like to stay somewhere with easy access to some long and challenging trails. The hotel should be four to

five star to allow for post-ride relaxation. Travel should be outside the school holidays in either May or June, with a budget of R20 000pps. The couple would like to take their own mountain bikes along on the trip.

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## Travel Rendezvous, Roodepoort

WINNER

Within five minutes of sending my request via the contact form on Travel Rendezvous' website, I had received a response from **Brian Jackwitch** advising me that his business partner, **Jenny Jackwitch**, and co-owner of Travel Rendezvous, would assist me with my booking.

Shortly afterwards, Jenny was in touch and I was very impressed that she immediately requested our bicycles size and weight so that she could enquire from the airlines about any additional charges. Jenny was the only agent to do this – and showed real thought and attention to detail. While she followed up with the operators and airlines, she sent through some information on mountain bike passes in the Black River National Park in southwest Mauritius so that I could do some background reading.

Jenny constantly let me know how far along she was in the process, so I never felt like she had forgotten about me. Once she had spoken to the airlines, she sent through

comprehensive details about how the bikes should be packed and advised that while both SAA and Air Mauritius would accept the bicycles, she said one seemed slightly more flexible in terms of the size of the bike bag. Jenny also sent through the flight times and details about whether tickets would be refundable and asked me to select an airline. Based on this she said she would provide the quotes.

She then sent through five different options, all within budget and situated close to the Black River National Park. She knew all the hotels well and was happy to recommend them. Another extra she had taken into consideration was including private transfers so that we wouldn't have any issues transporting our bicycles from the airport to the hotel. She recommended that we go for an all-inclusive option and said we should request



Jenny Jackwitch

the hotels to pack us picnic lunches if we were out for rides during the day and could miss lunch. A final aspect that impressed me was that she emphasised that the package rates

included a special airfare that would expire and urged me to make a decision as quickly as possible or risk a price increase.

Overall, I felt that Jenny had really applied herself when it came to the details of my request – assessing each aspect of the brief and ensuring that the final quotation took all my needs into consideration while at the same time respecting my budget limitations. She also asked me of plenty of questions which enabled her to offer such an exceptionally high degree of personalised service.



## Pentravel, Clearwater

For speed of response, this agent was unbeatable, sending through quotations and details within two hours of receiving my booking request. She definitely factored in that cycling was the main purpose of the trip and said she had quoted us on hotels near areas that would provide us with easy access to trails. She also quoted us on private transfers as shared coach transfers would be problematic. A nice extra

was that she had done online research and found a website with great information on some of the island's best cycling routes.

The agent provided an impressive five options, which all fitted our budget. Some were all-inclusive packages while others were half board – but it was nice to have a choice of both. She also included a quote on travel insurance which would cover us in the case of

an accident while taking part in adventurous activities, which was an excellent plus. She followed up a few days later to find out whether I had made a decision. The only negative was that she didn't advise me on the logistics of transporting our bicycles, but it's possible this would have been addressed during the finalisation of the booking.



## Club Travel Corporate

I received a short response within a few hours of sending my request, saying the agent would be working on it. The next day she sent a few options, and that she recommended Paradis for cycling, although it would be quite a lot over our original budget. The other options however fell within our guideline of R20 000pps.

I would have liked a few more suggestions in terms

of cycling opportunities – recommending potential trails or routes. Also, the packages included coach transfers which could potentially be a problem when transporting our bicycles. Overall, I didn't feel that she had truly factored in that the main focus of the trip would be cycling, and instead offered fairly neutral packages that would suit a general traveller to Mauritius.

What I appreciated, though, was that she offered to assist with travel insurance – which could potentially be an important factor, as we would be embarking on an adventurous holiday with opportunity for injury. Additionally, travel insurance could come in handy should there be any damage to our bicycles during the flight.



## Jenny's top tips

- Ask questions and get as much information as possible from your customer before you quote. It saves them frustration and you a lot of time.
- Go the extra mile. Don't

expect the worst from people just because a few treat you badly. Generally, people treat you as well as you treat them.

- Give the customer a choice of hotels but not so many

that they cannot make up their minds.

- Google what you don't know or phone/email someone. Research is king. People expect a travel agent to know more than they do. ■



## Alitalia is back!

**From page 1**  
be issued in conjunction with their intercontinental Alitalia flights with a minimum of four and a maximum of eight sectors allowed per ticket. Pass prices start from €58 (R865) per person, excluding taxes, for destinations within Italy, €90 (R1 340) for European destinations and €110 (R1 640) for the Middle East and North African pass. Additionally, a free stopover in Rome is on offer until December 31, and Alitalia has negotiated stopover hotel rates from €70 (R1 045) per person sharing for four-star hotels in the city.

Flights will depart Rome on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 22h10, arriving in Johannesburg at 08h20. The

Johannesburg to Rome flights will operate on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays departing at 21h00 and arriving in Rome at 07h25 the next morning.

Three cabins will be available on the South African service – economy, premium economy and Magnifica, an Alitalia cabin class sitting somewhere between first and business class, offering Poltrona Frau leather seats, lie-flat beds, award-winning cuisine and WiFi.

The airline also offers excellent flight connections beyond Italy into Europe, and North and South America, and has an agreement in place with Delta, Air France and KLM offering a large variety of destinations and flight schedules. ■

## Missing corporate fares

**From page 1**  
SAA but these showed far lower discount levels than usual. "We believe the new Corporate Loyalty Programme

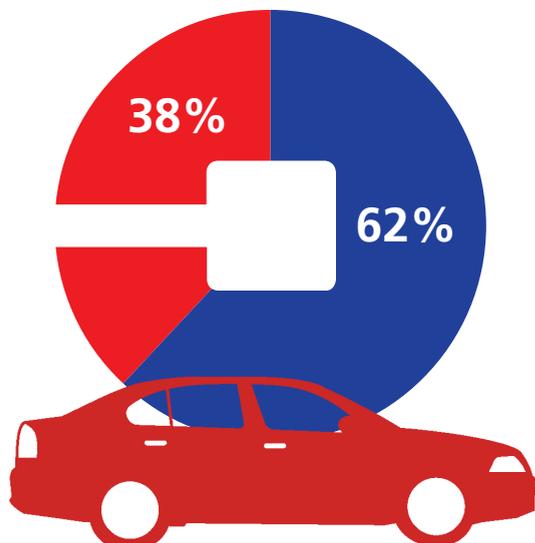
will not be offering the same rich discounts to enterprises compared with what has been offered in previous years," said one anonymous source. ■



### Corporates like Uber

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- Yes
- No



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## Book now with Beachcomber



Beachcomber Tours is offering a 20% discount at selected four- and five-star resorts for bookings made for travel between July 23 and September 28, subject to 60-day advance bookings. Pictured here are **Vladi Wessels** (left) and **Nikki Briant**, sales executives at Beachcomber Tours. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## Ben Langner bows out

TESSA REED

**A**FTER more than three decades at the organisation, **Ben Langner** is retiring from BidTravel, leaving his position as ceo of Carlson Wagonlit Travel.

Ben, who describes himself as a 'veteran of mergers', joined World Travel as a consultant in 1987 and was appointed a director three years later and made md in the early 90s.

He was md when the company was sold to **Michael Delahunt** and later to Gen Food, when it merged with Gen Travel. World Travel was then acquired by Bidvest in 1999. When the group later acquired Uniworld, Ben oversaw the merger of Uniworld into World Travel.

When Bidvest acquired Concord, Ben managed a merger that would later become CWT as it is today, when business travel was taken out of World Travel brand and merged with Concord, trading as CWT. World Travel was retained as a GSA company and Ben served as md of World Travel and CWT before **Marco Cristofoli** took the reins of World Travel in 2016.

Ben says he has had a long and interesting career, working with wonderful people. He has no definite retirement plans, but will be starting off with some travel.

Ben will be succeeded by



**Ben Langner**

**Louis van Zyl**, who was appointed ceo designate, effective April 1. Ben says he is delighted that Louis has been appointed his successor, describing him as the perfect person to take the business to the next phase.

Louis joins the group from Tourvest, where he was coo. I am confident that Louis will lead our global brand in reinforcing its footprint in the markets, offering support for numerous online booking tools, adopting different strategies and offering a value-add product to customers," says **Lidia Follis**, ceo of BidTravel. Lidia also joined the group from Tourvest in 2017. ■

## ANC to repay millions in travel debt

SARAH ROBERTSON

THE ANC has stepped up and agreed to repay the ANC Women's League's debt to Atlantis Corporate Travel, which amounts to more than R7 million, including interest, a representative from the company told TNW.

A court order issued in mid-2017 instructed the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL)

to pay Atlantis roughly R6,3 million in travel debt. Since then asset seizure and a January auction with insufficient attendance has failed to repay this debt.

A number of meetings were held during last month and an initial payment of roughly R100 000 has been made to cover legal fees, with a monthly payment plan expected to commence during May.

The representative explained that they were optimistic that the ANC would follow through on this commitment but added that a Warrant of Execution had also already been issued. This means that should the ANC fail to meet these repayments, Atlantis Corporate Travel would then proceed to seize ANCWL immovable property in order to repay the debt. ■

## Etihad axes Perth, Edinburgh routes

CANDICE MAY

ETIHAD Airways will suspend flights to Perth and Edinburgh from October 1 as part of a wider review to improve profitability after incurring a major loss in 2016.

In separate statements, EY said it was still committed to its regular services to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, as well as London Heathrow and Manchester.

Etihad will accommodate clients affected by the changes by booking them either on flights to other cities, or on another airline.

SAA has also scaled back its Johannesburg-Perth route by cancelling some flights during February, March, May and June due to low market demand.

There have been speculative reports that Qantas Airways is positioned

to fill the gaps on this route.

In response to these reports, **Michi Messner**, Qantas regional manager for Africa, told TNW that while the airline was always considering and reviewing potential routes, it had nothing to announce at this time. She added that flights between Cape Town and Perth were possibly in the pipeline, but not in the short or medium term. ■