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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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Shambolic schedules as SAX struggles

SARAH ROBERTSON

PASSENGERS are missing meetings and connecting flights and, in some instances have to overnight, because of delays and cancellations of SA Express flights.

Mbali Zibi, communications specialist for the airline, told TNW that due to financial challenges, it had opted to reduce its schedule to stabilise it and better service passengers. "The schedule is reviewed on a monthly basis, given the number of aircraft available to operate."

She confirmed that the airline was using leased aircraft to bolster the schedule, irrespective of the route. Clients have recently reported flying on unbranded aircraft, Air Maloti aircraft and even branded Russian aircraft.

Agents say SA Express delays and cancellations have escalated to unmanageable levels this month, while the airline is regularly operating leased aircraft on its routes.

Agents are asking, what has happened to SAX and where have all its aircraft disappeared to?

Tessa Hattingh, travel manager of Bloemfontein-based Sure Etnique Travels,

says SAX's Johannesburg-Bloemfontein route is "diabolical". She explains that the airline is no longer able to regularly operate its own aircraft and clients are reporting that three flights or more are being consolidated on to one leased aircraft.

"I really feel for the SAX employees too. They are bearing the brunt of the anger of both passengers and agents and don't know what will happen from one day to the next."

"CemAir is doing well on the route but this is not the best option for international passengers as there are no interline agreements in place. To avoid missing international connections, passengers are asking us to book the 09h00 SA Express flights to Joburg, hoping that they will land in time to connect with 21h00 international ORTIA departures," says Tessa.

"I really feel for the SAX employees too. They are bearing the brunt of the anger of both passengers and agents and don't know what will

happen from one day to the next."

"It has got so bad that clients are asking to fly on other carriers," says eTravel ITC, **Gillian Gerber**, from Timeless Travel Solutions. "SAX does offer full refunds and has given 25% compensation letters, but this doesn't make up for the inconvenience and frustration experienced."

The delays are not confined to Bloemfontein, with agents reporting problems on Kimberley, George and Gaborone flights.

Michelle Minnaar, manager of Harvey World Plettenberg Bay, received a call from SAX on April 23, advising her that the next morning's George-Joburg flight had been cancelled. "As the clients would now miss their connecting flights with Qatar, SAX advised us that the clients should book a kuluLa ticket at their own expense in order to connect. Have you ever heard of anything like this?"

Denise Cumming, senior consultant at Harvey World Travel Shelly Beach, says one of her clients who regularly travels on the Sunday lunchtime East London-Durban route, often had to stay over in East London because of delays. ■



Book now for the Passion Play

Austria Connection is offering a number of tours that include the 2020 Oberammergau Passion Play. The play dates back to the 1600s where the citizens of the small German village of Oberammergau made a sacred pledge that every 10 years they would perform a play of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ if God would protect them from the plague. Calling all theatre lovers is **Inge Dobiha**, md of Austria Connection. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Eurowings cuts Cape Town flights

TESSA REED

EUROWINGS, Lufthansa Group's low-cost carrier, has confirmed that it will suspend flights between Cologne and Cape Town indefinitely from October. "This decision is directed by the strategic

requirement to address gaps within primary seasonal destinations for the airline over the winter schedule period," Eurowings said.

Asked if and when the flights would be reinstated, **André Schulz**, gm of

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Air Botswana looks to resume CPT-GBE flight

AIR Botswana is in negotiations with the Botswanan government to secure funds for the acquisition of a new aircraft to service the Cape Town-Gaborone route.

“The Cape Town-Gaborone route is currently out of service,” Botswana’s Minister of Transport and Communications, **Kitso Mokaila**, told a press briefing. He said the Ministry intended to procure a new jet

within three months. “The service will resume when our jet comes,” said Kitso.

The Cape Town-Gaborone route was operated by Air Botswana through a lease and codesharing agreement with CemAir. Kitso said the agreement had since expired and Air Botswana had not renewed it.

Air Botswana previously operated a four-times-a-week service on the route. ■

QF positioned to supplant SAA on Perth route

CANDICE MAY

QANTAS is in discussions with Perth Airport to launch a four-times-a-week service between Perth and Johannesburg from December to April, **Michi Messner**, regional manager for South Africa of Qantas has confirmed.

Industry players see the planned seasonal service as a threat to the sustainability of the daily year-round service offered by SAA, which has been serving the route for 60 years.

In February, SAA cancelled some flights on the JNB-PER route during February, March, May and June due to low market demand and the requirement for aircraft rotations on other routes within the airline’s network. “Non-stop flights on Qantas will undoubtedly have an

impact on SAA’s service,” says **Wally Gaynor**, md of Club Travel, adding that there have even been rumours that the route may be cancelled altogether.

Wally adds that even though SAA gets feeder traffic on the route from Virgin Australia, with its own domestic network, Qantas will be a lot more difficult to compete against.

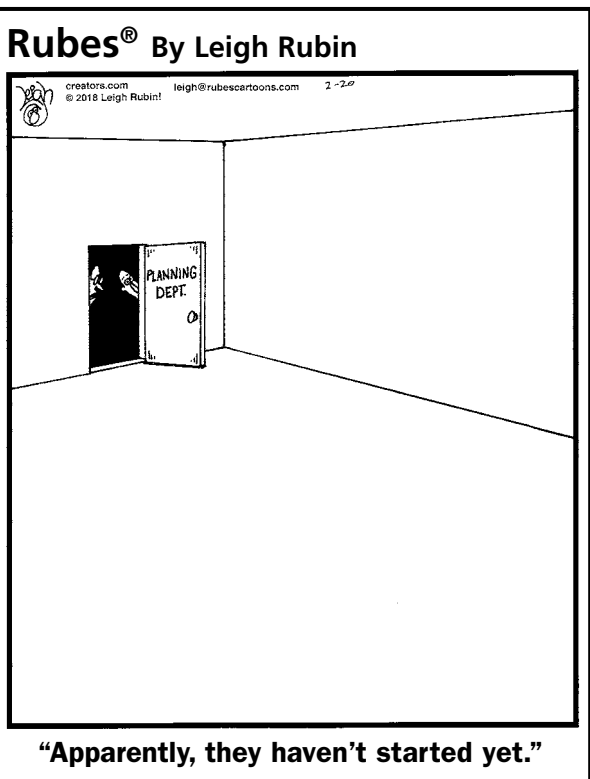
However, agents are upbeat about the potential flights. “Qantas has multi-stop tickets that offer great value,” says **Vicky Steinhardt**, product manager of Pentravel. “At the moment, Perth is not included in these multi-stop tickets as

South Africans would have to backtrack via Sydney to get home,” she says. The proposed service is at an impasse over which international terminal can

be used. However, Michi says the airline is hopeful that it can turn the proposal into a reality. Perth Airport wants Qantas to use T1, the main international terminal, whereas Qantas wants to use the newly upgraded T3 international wing. The airline argues that it wants passengers from around Western Australia and Australia to connect with the proposed flight.

“Integrating our domestic and international operations in T3 has been very successful so far and we are keen to keep expanding this western hub concept with new destinations,” says Michi.

Qantas’s PER-JNB service, flights QF65 and QF66, would start on December 7 and be operated by an Airbus A330-200 aircraft, with 36 business-class suites and 199 economy seats. ■



“Apparently, they haven’t started yet.”

DP snaps up Oceania and Regent

DEVELOPMENT Promotions has signed a direct distribution deal with luxury cruise lines, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

“We are thrilled to offer these two prestigious cruise lines within the stable of cruise lines represented by Development Promotions,” says md, **Jackie Adami**. She says the company has achieved phenomenal growth for Oceania and Regent

Seven Seas’ sister cruise line, Norwegian Cruise Line, in the South African market since it was appointed joint GSA in 2016.

Oceania is the world’s largest luxury cruise line, with six ships spanning the globe from the Adriatic to Alaska. Voyages range from seven to 44 days. Regent Seven Seas Cruises is the world’s most inclusive luxury experience, with a four-ship fleet that visits more than

450 destinations around the world. In early 2020, Regent will unveil *Seven Seas Splendor*.

Development Promotions currently has direct sales agreements with Costa Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Holland America Line, Ponant, Le Boat and Hurtigruten, A-Rosa, and Pandaw Cruises and has access to booking many other cruise options for agents. ■

Nikita Tavlet selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Just Holidays.** Namibia cultural experience from NA\$17 130pps (R17 122pp). Offer includes return flights from Windhoek to Ondangwa, approximate taxes, two nights in Ruacana, two nights in Opuwo, one night in Ondangwa, breakfast and dinner daily and five days’ 4x4 vehicle – fully covered with unlimited mileage. Valid until October 31.
- **Curious Traveller.** Peru, Lima and Kuelap offer from R20 858pp. Offer includes seven nights’ accommodation, selected meals, visit Lima and the Larco Museum, the Kuelap Ruins and Leymebamba Mausoleum and Museum, and more. Valid until October 31.
- **Aha Simon’s Town Quayside Hotel.** Early-bird offer from R5 070 per double room for three nights including breakfast. Minimum three-night stay applies. Valid until November 30.
- **Wendy Wu Tours.** Enjoy Vietnam from R13 190pp sharing. Offer includes seven nights’ accommodation, selected meals, internal flights, all transfers, excursion and entrance fees with an English-speaking guide. Visit Hanoi, overnight on Halong Bay, Hoi An, Mekong Delta and Saigon. Valid from May 1 to December 20.
- **Whitestar Cruise & Travel.** Mediterranean offer from £1 119pps (R19 455). Offer includes 14 nights’ accommodation on board in an inside stateroom, all meals, 24-hour room service, selected drinks, entertainment and use of on-board facilities, port charges and handling fees. Set departure, September 29.



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

EDITORIAL
 Editor: Tessa Reed tessar@nowmedia.co.za
 Features Editor: Michelle Colman michellec@nowmedia.co.za
 Journalists:
 Candice May Sarah Robertson
 Hilka Birms

Photographer: Shannon Van Zyl
 Production Editor: Ann Braun

PUBLISHER
 Natasha Schmidt natashas@nowmedia.co.za

GROUP PUBLISHER
 David Marsh davem@nowmedia.co.za

ADVERTISING
 Sales: Natasha Schmidt natashas@nowmedia.co.za
 Sales Director: Kate Nathan katen@nowmedia.co.za
 Ad Co-ordinator: Anthea Harris antheah@nowmedia.co.za

PRODUCTION
 Design Head: Dirk Voormeeld

SUBSCRIPTIONS
 Circulation: tvsubs@nowmedia.co.za

www.etnw.co.za
 Phone: (011) 327-4062
 Fax: (011) 327-4094
 E-mail: twn@nowmedia.co.za
 Web: www.nowmedia.co.za
 Address: Now Media Centre, 32 Fricker Road, Illovo Boulevard, Illovo, Johannesburg, PO Box 55251, Northlands, 2116, South Africa.

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World Leisure renews focus on groups and golf

SARAH ROBERTSON

WORLD Leisure Holidays has renewed its focus on groups and MICE bookings, moving this function away from its reservations department and creating a separate team consisting of four consultants headed by new group sales manager, **Martine Sanderson**.

Martine headed up the groups department for Club Med for four and a half years. Prior to that she ran the incentives division for Creative Incentives for two years and also managed the greater northern Johannesburg region as an account manager for Sun Air.

While sales director, **Brenda Mitchell**, confirmed that World Leisure's current FIT department remained exclusively focused on its Indian Ocean island and Maldives products, she advised that the group department was able to entertain

agent requests to other destinations around the world as well.

The new department is also strongly focused on re-energising awareness of World Leisure golfing packages.

"We are one of the only tour operators that include free golf with all our packages. A round of golf is about R3 500 in Mauritius at the moment. This inclusion is always a win with corporates, as they feel that a lot of business is still done on the golf course," said Martine adding that they had noted a recent increase in smaller groups arranging to take their top 10 clients away to Mauritius for short golfing trips.

Brenda also advised that weddings and honeymoons were other focal points, while Martine added that the groups department was able to assist agents with corporate incentives and was involved with a number of Mauritian sporting and cultural events. ■



Thank you, agents!

El Al celebrated its top supporters at a special breakfast event in Johannesburg last month. The airline announced that it would be increasing flights to five times a week from October 29. Flights to Tel Aviv will depart Johannesburg on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Return flights will operate on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. With effect from October 29, El Al has introduced special fares in economy class, from R7 500 all-inclusive, and from R32 500 all-inclusive in business class, for travel on specific days. Pictured here, at the event, is one of the top agents, **Yochee Katz** (middle), of DAK Travel, with Israeli Ambassador to South Africa, **Lior Keinan** (left), and **Roz Bukris**, El Al agm for Southern and Eastern Africa. Photo: Natasha Schmidt

Overtourism: collaborative approach needed – Tollman

TESSA REED

THE travel industry needs to unite to address overtourism, says **Gavin Tollman**, chairman of Cullinan Holdings, highlighting that travel agents need to be conscious of the impact of travel.

Travel agents have a key role to play, says Gavin. "You cannot simply be an order taker, you have to make sure you are engaged in speaking to your client and there is no doubt that sustainability should be part of that conversation."

The problem of overtourism has come into sharp focus following a slew of demonstrations last year during the European summer. Local residents in Barcelona, Dubrovnik and Venice took to the streets to protest against the influx of

tourists in these cities, causing overcrowding and harming the environment.

The anti-tourism sentiment was not limited to Europe. Last month, Philippine President **Rodrigo Duterte** closed the island of Boracay for up to six months for a clean-up after environmental damage caused by overcrowding and development.

Reducing travel or taxing tourists are not solutions to the problem, says Gavin. He says the dialogue should be about preservation of the destinations we go to and suggests a three-pronged approach: dissemination, dispersal and direct action.

Gavin says we need to ensure that huge volumes of tourists are not descending on a destination

at the same time, instead spreading the load. Likewise, tourists should be encouraged to not just visit the major cities. He says that while iconic attractions draw people to destinations, they should be encouraged to explore further. "Connecting the smaller communities outside of the key destinations is one of the most exciting and enjoyable parts of travel itself."

Gavin highlights the example of Barcelona, which had 32 million visitors last year, while only 25% actually stayed in the city and had a direct positive impact on the community. The bulk of these tourists, then, could be seen as what Gavin calls "ice-cream tourists".

He relates the story of an hotelier

who now regrets his success at attracting cruise ships to his destination. The hotelier paints the picture: "The cruise ships come, they drop their guests off and the tourists come ashore, they buy an ice-cream, they drop the napkin, and then they leave. That is their entire contribution to the destination."

In addition to dispersal and dissemination, the travel industry – tour operators, agents and travellers – need to become more conscious of their impact, he says. He uses the water crisis in Cape Town as a good example of direct action. He says while this action was taken out of necessity, some 120 communities globally are affected by water shortages and can benefit from the learnings from Cape Town. ■

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New feature added to RCI res system

CANDICE MAY

ROYAL Caribbean International has added a new feature to Espresso, its travel agent reservation system, that will allow agents to transfer individual client bookings into larger group reservations.

The new feature applies to all Royal Caribbean's brands, including Celebrity Cruises and Azamara Club Cruises, and is intended to give agents more online control over their bookings.

"The feature will be available for promotional and family groups but not incentives," says groups

and incentives manager of Cruises International, **Lizaan Schnettler** adding that other terms and conditions for the feature will apply.

Over the last year, Royal Caribbean has upgraded Espresso to make it easier for agents to push through group bookings. In November a feature was introduced that allowed agents to reserve specific staterooms not in their group block.

Other improvements include a feature that allows agents to book into headquarter groups and to share and purchase group amenity points. ■

REPORT: NDC

Agents are still in the dark

TESSA REED

FEWER than one in five travel agents have an understanding of New Distribution Capability (NDC). Roughly 46% have a limited understanding of NDC, 25% have no understanding of the system and a further 15% have a misconception of what the NDC is.

This is according to a recent snap survey on eTNW where we asked readers about their concerns. We attempt to address these below.

A common misconception is that the NDC is a new platform that will replace the GDS. The NDC is an XML-based data transmission standard enabling airlines to communicate offerings to all their clients (whether airlines or consumers) in a consistent manner. The NDC also allows for the sale of airline ancillaries within one workflow. It has been launched by IATA.

The standard is open to third parties, intermediaries, IT providers and non-IATA members. This means that technology providers can make use of the standard within the GDS, while airlines can also make use of the standard to make their content available on their own direct connections.

All three of the major GDS companies are becoming increasingly NDC compatible. Both Sabre and Amadeus are level-three certified as IT providers and NDC level-one certified

as aggregators. They are expected to be certified level three as aggregators later this year. Travelport is level-two certified as an IT provider and was level-three certified as an aggregator last December. Level three is the highest level of NDC certification.

"Agencies do not want to become content integrators because it's a lot of work, it's very expensive and it's not what they want to have to focus on."

While the NDC is viewed as a threat to GDSs, **Kathy Morgan**, vp of Product Management at Sabre Travel Network, emphasises that the NDC will not replace the GDS and adds that consistent feedback from agencies at present is that they do not want to invest in the NDC, building their own platforms, but expect GDSs to drive this investment. "They do not want to become content integrators because it's a lot of work, it's very expensive and it's not what they want to have to focus on." However, the NDC does change the relationships between agents, airlines and GDSs.

Should the NDC take off, says **Andrew Stark**, md of Flight Centre Travel Group MEA, airlines would decrease their distribution costs, but GDSs and agents are the ones that would

be left out of pocket. He says this is because NDC transactions present less value to both parties.

TNW understands that per segment incentives will not be earned on NDC bookings.

Earlier this year, Travelport announced a roadmap to extend its content offering, allowing agencies to access traditional and NDC content on Travelport's platform in a single workflow. At the time, **Claudette Thorne**, Travelport country manager for Southern Africa, told TNW that agents booking on NDC connections on the Travelport platform would be exempt from GDS surcharges. However, whether bookings via the NDC would go into an agency's bulk for GDS agreements was still to be confirmed.

Common concerns among agents included whether there would be adequate training for agents to use the NDC; that booking through the NDC would be more laborious than current bookings on the GDS; that it would be more costly; and that the NDC was a way of bypassing agents.

Agencies that have incorporated NDC connections into their booking systems, as Tourvest has with Travelit, say agents will not notice a difference. Furthermore, while NDC connections will be pushed on airlines' own platforms, these connections will be available to agents too. ■

AirHeads



A snapshot of the week's airline news

Air Seychelles drops Madagascar route

AIR Seychelles has suspended its Antananarivo route indefinitely, according to **Isla Moffet**, sales and marketing manager for GSA. The discontinuation of the route was announced in January, and came into effect on Tuesday, April 24. This comes as part of Air Seychelles' transformation plan, which will focus more on domestic and regional routes in an attempt to safeguard its long-term profitability.

Emirates adds second daily Prague flight

EFFECTIVE May 1, Emirates will introduce a new tax code to collect date change fees. The current tax code OB will be replaced with code OD. Emirates will also add a second daily flight between Dubai and Prague from July 1. The flight will be operated by a 360-seat Boeing 777-300ER, with eight private suites in first class, 42 lie-flat seats in business, and 310 seats in economy.



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Skiing



Max Marx looks at different ski options and how to get the most value out of a ski holiday.

Ski sales soar

WHILE it's difficult to ascertain the exact number of South Africans going on snow holidays annually, Club Med saw a 29% increase in South Africans holidaying at its snow resorts in 2017 compared with 2016, and further growth is expected in 2018, says **Olivier Hannaert**, md of Club Med Southern Africa.

"Increasingly, South African families are opting for snow holidays. They're seeking resorts that cater for the whole family and find Club Med a good option as children stay free at selected snow resorts, and daily ski and snowboarding lessons are included in the package price."

The best and least-hassle snow holidays come from booking an all-inclusive holiday, adds Olivier. "All-inclusive will ensure clients are getting the best value and quality for what they're paying. And what better way to enjoy a snow holiday than having everything covered and paid for in advance before leaving South Africa and not having to deal with organising flights, transfers, accommodation, meals and drinks, entertainment and everything else associated with the skiing activity."

He says that with the unpredictability of the rand, more South Africans are looking for travel packages that don't come with surprises or hidden costs. "Once a client has booked and paid their deposit for a Club Med holiday, the price is locked, so won't be affected if the rand takes a dive."



"With the unpredictability of the rand, more South Africans are looking for travel packages that don't come with surprises or hidden costs."

Olivier Hannaert

Inge Dobihal, owner of Austria Connection, which offers a wide range of accommodation options at many different ski resorts across Europe as well as ski hire, ski passes, ski school lessons and transfers, says South Africans who have already experienced a ski holiday and know their way around ski resorts, don't necessarily opt for booking all-inclusive ski-holiday packages. They often prefer just to book accommodation and transfers and make their own way once at their resort. "This can sometimes work out cheaper than a fully inclusive ski holiday," she says.

John Ridler, Thompsons Holidays' pr and media manager, says Italy, Austria and France offer excellent resorts to suit all budgets. He says to get more value for their clients' ski buck, agents should recommend self-catering apartment-style accommodation.

While snow holidays are typically assumed to be for snow sport enthusiasts, they've become a popular option for those seeking wellness, health and relaxation retreats, says Olivier. "There is so much more to do at a snow-filled destination than just skiing or snowboarding. Ski resort guests can shop, indulge in spa treatments, hop on and off chair lifts to discover the best views of the region, go tobogganing and snow-shoe walking, enjoy a Jacuzzi in the snow, or simply relax in front of a fireplace."

"Skiers and non-skiers alike can also enjoy many different adventures, and activities such as sleigh rides, bum boarding, cooking lessons, solarium tanning, excursions and sightseeing," says John. "And of course, the best time of the day is après-ski time where the stories become more fantastic with every drink."

Another trend, says Olivier, is that business travellers are trading boardrooms for snowboards and spa days for skis. "Voluntarily spending time in below-freezing temperatures may not sound conducive to business brainstorming or as an incentive, but you'd be surprised at how

Beware the selfie!

IN A new development for insurers, the 'selfie' injury is becoming a common occurrence among skiers.

"A leading UK-based travel insurer," says **Simmy Micheli**, sales and marketing manager of Travel Insurance Consultants (TIC), "found that 51% of experienced skiers had injured themselves while trying to film or take photographs of themselves on the slopes. About 28% required medical treatment as a result. While recording the experience on the slopes can be fun, safety can be compromised and agents should warn their clients about this."

Simmy adds that while most good travel insurance policies include automatic cover for leisure skiing, consultants should check whether the policy includes off-piste and black slope skiing, which is necessary in the

case of more experienced skiers. Although all TIC policies cover off-piste skiing – provided it is with a guide – and black slope skiing, there are other policies in the market that may not.

She says the risk of injury for skiers is ten times more than for ordinary travellers. "And as most South African skiers are inexperienced, their risk of injury is high. The most common ski claims are for knee, ankle and hand injuries respectively. Some injuries, such as back injuries, can be very serious and extremely costly to treat. This can have dire financial implications for travellers without insurance."

Although leisure skiing is fully covered on a TIC policy, those who compete professionally or participate in competition, need to apply to TIC for a sporting extension.



Many experienced skiers have injured themselves while trying to film or take selfies.

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Jacuzzi in the snow.

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inspiration can strike atop a chair lift or how business relationships are strengthened while sipping on a chocolat chaud during a spontaneous après-ski session. There is evidence that such informal encounters with like-minded people can be the key to unlocking some of the most valuable business conversations."

Inge says to book the right ski resort for clients, agents must know their ski experience level and whether they are upmarket clients or budget-minded. "Kitzbühel is a resort that

caters for everybody – from beginners to advanced skiers, for upmarket and budget-conscious clients as well as for non-skiers. From Kitzbühel, day excursions to Innsbruck and Salzburg are easy."

She adds that while many ski resorts cater for all levels of skiing competency, there are certain ski resorts that are especially geared for advanced skiers (such as Lech, St Anton and Ischgl) and are more expensive. Such resorts are usually found at higher altitudes, with snow available for skiing from December to the beginning of April.

"Beginners or intermediate skiers will never be able to make full use of all the facilities at these resorts so they may as well opt for less-expensive resorts."

For beginner and intermediate skiers who want an upmarket resort, Inge recommends Seefeld in Austria, which does not cater for advanced skiers. "It is also an ideal winter holiday resort for non-skiers with great facilities such as shops, cafés, bars, a casino and indoor sports centre with a swimming pool. It's very close to Innsbruck and offers excursions to nearby attractions," says Inge.

Spoilt for choice in South America

WITH the Andes running along the Chile-Argentina border, both countries boast excellent ski resorts, which, a month away from the start of snowfalls in June, are readying for the ski season.

Chile is *The Lonely Planet's* choice as the country to visit in 2018. Within short distances of the capital Santiago, are three ski resorts – El Colorado with two snow parks and 112 ski slopes, La Parva with 30km of slopes and Valle Nevado – one of the largest in South America.

Portillo, 164km from Santiago, is the oldest ski resort on the continent and the training ground for champion skiers.

Further out, Nevados de Chillán couples skiing with the benefit of hot springs, and at Corralco, Pucón and Antillanca, visitors can ski down volcanoes.

In Argentina, the Bariloche area in Patagonia is perhaps best known, with a ski season that runs until end October. But there are close on 20 others to plump for. Las Lenas attracts the advanced skier, Chapelco appeals to families, Penitentes has 25 ski runs for all levels of skill, and Cerro Castor, one of the newest and located near the winter playground of Ushuaia, offers cold temperatures that run to the end of September. ■

Tips for affordable ski holidays

FOR an affordable ski holiday, Thompsons Holidays' **John Ridler** says agents should recommend booking only the essentials – flights, transfers, accommodation (self-catering), ski pass and

ski hire. He adds that booking for early- or late-season trips usually offers the best value.

The earlier a client books a ski holiday, the better rates they are likely to get, says **Olivier Hannaert** of Club Med.

The cheapest period to take a ski holiday, says Austria Connection's **Inge Dobihal**, is the last three weeks in January, while the best deal for hotel accommodation always includes breakfast and dinner.



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Australia

Australia's popularity has inflated its price tag, but the destination remains popular with South Africans, buoyed by the VFR market. By Max Marx.

Oz on a budget

ALTHOUGH a visit to Australia can be pricey, there are budget-friendly ways to explore the destination and still have experiences that make it memorable, says **John Ridler**, Thompsons Holidays' PR and media manager.



John Ridler

For those on a tight budget who want to explore more than one city, John recommends hiring a campervan or staying in three-star hotels. "Hiring a campervan offers cost-effective accommodation and wheels in one, with excellent facilities at Australia's many caravan parks."

He also recommends that budget travellers keep stays in the big cities to a minimum as they are more expensive. "Budget travellers should head for smaller towns like Cairns where one has access to the sea, many activities and the Great Barrier Reef. Savvy travellers will also be on the look-out for reduced entrance fees to attractions, which are usually available later in the day."

Elisna Bergset, Development Promotions brand ambassador, agrees that a road trip in a rented car or campervan is an economical way to travel

Australia. "This is especially cost-effective if there are more than two people travelling together, as costs can be shared. Australia's highly developed infrastructure also makes it easy to get around."

She says most Australian cities offer

affordable hotel options, including backpacker lodges. "Using public transport, which is reasonably priced, is a good way to explore the cities."

Most first-time travellers from South Africa go to Sydney, but there are less expensive destinations in Australia that also offer fantastic experiences.

"One such is Melbourne," says Elisna, "which is bohemian, arty, and cosmopolitan with a healthy café street culture and exceptional beaches. South African rands definitely stretch a little further there."

Organised touring is another cost-effective option for multi-destination trips. "Tours offer excellent value for money as the tour rate includes accommodation and transportation, and travellers have the benefit of a tour guide who can add great value in terms of knowledge," she says.

Cities on a shoestring Sydney

- Climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge is not inexpensive, but visitors can stroll, free, along the pedestrian pathway at a lower level.
- The Art Gallery NSW offers free entry and talks on Wednesday evenings.
- Entry to the permanent collection at the Museum of Contemporary Art at Circular Quay is free and the café on level four has spectacular views of Sydney Harbour.
- Visitors can also take advantage of Sydney's

magnificent beaches, such as Bondi and Manly.

- The Bondi to Coogee coastal walk is a popular excursion.
- **Elisna Bergset** of Development Promotions, says if the crowds at Bondi get too much, visitors can head to the tranquil beach at Camp Cove near Sydney Harbour that offers swimming, snorkelling, picnicking and paddling with scenic Sydney Harbour views.
- The Opera Bar at the Sydney Opera House

offers free live music every night and during weekend afternoons.

- Visitors can enjoy I'm Free Walking Tours, starting at 10h30 and 14h30 daily. At the end of the tour guests decide how much they would like to pay. The Sydney tour takes in the Sydney Opera House, The Harbour Bridge, The Rocks District, Parliament House, Underground Tunnels, Museum of Currency and Notes, and the Queen Victoria Building, among many other places.

Melbourne

- In Melbourne, entrance to the National Gallery of Victoria is free and is the world's first major art gallery to showcase Australian art exclusively.
- Riding Melbourne's City Circle Tram is free and takes commuters to some of the city's top

attractions. There are also free tourist shuttle buses that stop at all the major attractions.

- The best place to watch live music free is the Esplanade Hotel.
- Visitors can also enjoy a walking tour with I'm Free Walking Tours. The

Melbourne tour starts at the State Library of Victoria on Swanston Street and takes in Federation Square, Melbourne's Laneways, Flinders Street Station, Yarra River, Chinatown, Princess Theatre, Carlton Gardens and more.

Perth

- In Perth, visitors can take a free, guided walk through Kings Park and Botanic Garden. They can cycle or walk along the Swan River, or enjoy a river cruise.
- At Penguin Island, 45 minutes from Perth, visitors can watch penguin feedings (adults pay AU\$27 (R250) for Penguin Island Ferry and Discovery Centre), go swimming, snorkelling, enjoy a picnic, and explore the many nature trails. The island is

open from September to June.

- Perth has 19 white-sand beaches. Cottesloe Beach is one of the city's most popular swimming, snorkelling, surfing and sunbather spots, with a boulevard of restaurants, cafés and bars.
- Rottneest Island, just 18km from Perth, is a favourite with locals for swimming, surfing, snorkelling, fishing and relaxing. It is surrounded by coral reefs

and shipwrecks. A local Bayseeker bus drops people off at secluded beaches and bays. Guided tours of a former Aboriginal prison, underground tunnels, the lighthouse and colonial buildings are also on offer.

- A visit to the Fremantle Markets is highly recommended, where artists and artisans share space with fashion designers, homeware and food sellers.



The Great Barrier Reef can be included in a guided tour.

For the well-heeled

ELISNA Bergset of Development Promotions, recommends the Park Hyatt Sydney for the ultimate in luxury accommodation. "This hotel offers rooms so exclusive that they do not advertise prices on their site. The hotel has hosted the likes of Pippa Middleton and Kim and Kanye West."

She also recommends The Langham Sydney and the Four Seasons Hotel Sydney. "The Langham Sydney is the place to go for a total gastronomic extravaganza. And the cr me de la cr me of drinks spots is Hacienda at the Sydney Harbour, where clients can sip of a variety of novel cocktails."

Exploring Sydney Harbour by seaplane or luxury

yacht charter is also highly recommended. Sydney Harbour Exclusive offers luxury yacht charters to Watson Bay, Rose Bay, Mosman, Circular Quay, Darling Harbour, Pyrmont and more. Further afield, Exclusive Getaway offers luxury yacht charters in Cairns, Port Douglas and Whitsunday Islands in the Great Barrier Reef.

For clients travelling to Sydney at the end of March or in April, the annual outdoor Handa Opera on Sydney harbour is spectacular and is not to be missed. The season usually runs for a month.

For the well-heeled, Thompsons Holidays' **John Ridler** recommends the long-stay guided tours from

AAT Kings. For example, the 13-night Inspiring Australia tour, which takes in Palm Cove, the Daintree Rainforest, Great Barrier Reef, Cairns, Alice Springs, Kings Canyon, Ayers Rock, Blue Mountains, Hunters Valley and Sydney. The 11-day Taste of Southern Australia tour, which takes in Sydney, Canberra, Beechworth, Melbourne, Warrnambool, Naracoorte, Kangaroo Island and Adelaide, is also popular.

"These are experiential packages that offer clients great value. Clients with high-end budgets can also visit Hamilton Island near the Great Barrier Reef and Hayman Island – a private island resort on the nearest island to the Great Barrier Reef."



Dream your way to OZ

From May 18, Singapore Airlines will operate its new B787-10 Dreamliner on one of the four weekly frequencies between Singapore and Perth (SQ215). The Dreamliner has 36 business-class seats and 301 in economy. Also on the route are the A330-300 and B777-222. Singapore Airlines offers premium economy class on the South Africa-Singapore route as well as on the Singapore to Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne routes. South Africans will also be able to experience Singapore Airlines' new cabin products on its A380 from May 18 on the Singapore-Sydney route. Pictured here are (left) **Tariro Marongwe**, passenger sales executive and **Rachel Mhlanga**, corporate sales executive, Singapore Airlines. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Book it!

From Development Promotions come these options:

- For high-end luxury, seven nights at the Park Hyatt Sydney in an Opera View Room with full breakfast for R46 047pps. Alternatively, seven nights at the Langham Sydney in a Deluxe City King room with full breakfast is going for R23 152. Prices are valid until March 31, 2019.
- A budget-friendly youth option (18- to 39-year-olds) is the Great Ocean Road West – Melbourne to Adelaide five-day trip for R7 020pp that starts in Melbourne and takes in Port Campbell, Halls Gap, and Adelaide. Travellers enjoy a walk through the rainforest at the Great Otway National Park, see rock art, enjoy the waterfalls and trek in the Grampians National Park.
- Melbourne, Outback and Uluru Adventure (12 days) from R36 619pp starts in Melbourne with stops in Mornington, Port Campbell, Little Desert National Park, Adelaide and Uluru (Ayers Rock). These packages do not include flights, are subject exchange rate fluctuations and are dependent on availability.

QUICK READ FOR BUSIEST PEOPLE

AUSTRALIA



G'day mate!

On the lookout for a special? **Carla da Silva**, regional general manager: Southern Africa and Latin America for Air Mauritius, advises that the airline is offering an economy-class special of R9 950, including taxes, to Perth and a business-class special of R25 990. These specials apply to departures from Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban and are valid for travel up to November, excluding peak periods. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Did you know!

Wouter Nel, Air Mauritius head of sales and marketing: Southern Africa, says the airline offers great added value to SA passengers flying to Perth. They can check in two 23kg pieces of luggage in economy class and two 32kg pieces in business class. They can also make one free booking date change and benefit from competitive fares. Ancillary products such as emergency exit seats or upgrades to business class via Upgradenow are available for booking on Air Mauritius's website. ■

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TNW8666SD

Wednesday May 2 2018 ■ 11



The Indonesian island of Bali attracts South Africans, young and old, in droves. Sue van Winsen speaks to experts for their top tips on selling this South East Asian destination.

Great on value and price

NO LONGER the new kid on the block – Bali is firmly entrenched as a South African favourite, despite the long flight and lack of a direct connection. That said, agents need to brush up on their knowledge before selling it, as simple mistakes such as recommending the wrong area or activity can make or break a client's holiday.

When it comes to presenting Bali as an option, one of the easiest approaches, says **Nicole Stoltz**, a travel agent from Pentravel Cape Gate, is to recommend it to travellers who have already been to Thailand and are looking for something similar in terms of value and price.

"Many travellers do not wish to return to the same destination, therefore Bali is a great alternative."



Glenda Ingram

Selecting the right area

The atmosphere in different parts of the island varies greatly, so it's essential that agents do proper research to match their client with the right area.

As **John Ridler**, pr and media manager for

Thompsons Holidays points out: "Kuta and Seminyak are favoured by the younger crowd."

These areas are ideal for young travellers who want budget accommodation and to be near nightlife, shopping and markets, adds Nicole.

Glenda Ingram from West Beach Travel, says Nusa Dua and Benoa are the best for beaches and therefore well-suited to families, and couples on romantic, relaxed trips. Nicole says Sanur is also great for beaches. "Both are a bit pricey, however; you pay for direct beach access and the resort facilities and activities on offer."

Despite being inland, Ubud has huge appeal and is a great option for yoga and relaxation.

"It is located right in the heart of a forest, and you can view waterfalls, the rice

terraces and monkey forest," says Nicole.

"This is a tranquil and peaceful part of the island. Everything seems to relax here and there is also an excellent market where you can find some great bargains and items not found elsewhere. This is a destination for couples, honeymooners, or even young travellers, as there are many bars in the town."

Finally, for surfers, the most-visited areas are Uluwatu and Padang Padang and Balangan beaches.

Key differentiators

In general, says Glenda, the East tends to be well-priced for rand travellers. Bali is particularly affordable, agrees **Steven Cooke**, sales manager: Africa for Topdeck, who says the destination is "very cost effective on the

ground when it comes to meals and accommodation".

But, while price will always be an important factor for South African travellers, this isn't the only appealing point, emphasises Steven, who says the beauty, people and culture of the destination are all big drawcards.

Despite being active with regular eruptions, Bali's volcanoes are a great attraction for travellers, who can hike to the top of Mount Batu – a sacred spot according to Hindu tradition. It can be summited in about two hours by fit hikers who can join organised tours to watch the sunrise and enjoy a breakfast cooked by the steam of the volcano.

Those who enjoy the outdoors and wellness will be impressed with Bali's surfing, yoga and healthy food choices, says Glenda.

How does it compare with its competitors?

While there are some similarities between Bali and Thailand, the destinations are also very different, each offering its own unique cultures, sights and attractions. **John Ridler**

of Thompsons Holidays, says many travellers perceive the pace in Bali to be slower and more relaxing. "The atmosphere in Bali is less commercial." **Nicole Stoltz** of Pentravel

Cape Gate says: "Having been to Bali, I would say it does have its busy areas such as Kuta and Seminyak, but even these areas can offer some peace, provided you find the

right hotel or resort for your clients – especially those who are on a bit of a tight budget."

Another reason travellers may opt for Bali is that it's just one island with

relatively short distances between various places that can all be included in one trip, says **Glenda Ingram** of West Beach Travel. Destinations like Thailand require island hopping.

Agents' top tips for clients

"WATCH the sunset from Jimbaran Beach – the area is well-served by multiple restaurants and vendors selling food and beverages along the beach," –

John Ridler, Thompsons Holidays.

"Take a day tour of Lembongan Island for stunning snorkelling and explore the island.

Lembongan is only 40 minutes by speedboat and lets visitors experience a small rustic island. For the more adventurous, Gili islands are two-and-a-half hours from Bali

by boat. Here you can enjoy some of the best snorkelling and diving and really get a feel for island life. Another tip is to go and drink Kopi Luwak coffee – this is some

of the most expensive coffee in the world and really is worth it! You can also enjoy herbal tea tastings and more whilst there." – **Nicole Stoltz**, Pentravel Cape Gate

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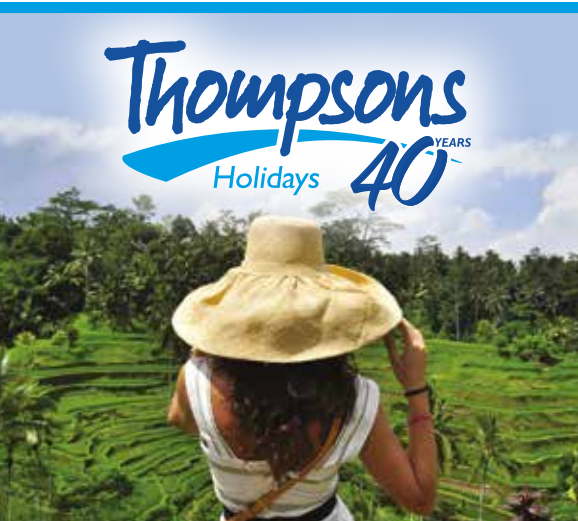


A great way to fly



Take a bike!

A 'Cycling Indonesia's Islands' tour from Earth Wanderer sells from R25 540pps. It offers 13 days' cycling through rural Bali and eastern Java on roads and dirt tracks. Cyclists traverse rice paddies, jungles and plantations, volcanoes and villages. The price covers 12 nights' accommodation with all breakfasts, 10 lunches, three dinners and bike hire. Valid until September. (See TI)



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Need-to-know travel basics

HOW well do you know Bali? TNW rounds up some of the most important information for agents to know when selling the destination.

Accessibility

Like many destinations in the East, says **John Ridler** of Thompsons Holidays, travel is via one of the nearby hubs, many of which offer the potential for a fun stopover. Popular airline options include Singapore Airlines, Emirates, Qatar and Cathay Pacific.

Sally George, market development manager for South Africa for Singapore Airlines, says with just 13 hours and 40 minutes' travel time from Johannesburg via Singapore to Bali, the airline offers one of the quickest options. "We operate daily flights from JNB and CPT (flights are via JNB) to Singapore. This will increase to 10 flights a week from JNB to SIN for two months from July 1 to August 31. Singapore Airlines operates four daily flights between SIN and DPS. SilkAir, our regional wings, also operates a daily service between SIN and DPS," she says.

When it comes to travelling around the island, it's probably best to book your clients on an organised tour as the roads can be very congested, with hundreds of motorcycles, trucks and cars. It's also important to stress that your clients will need to have a valid international



Sally George

Seminyak will probably find it easy to hail a taxi.

Infrastructure

Despite opening a new international terminal in 2013 and a domestic terminal in 2014, Bali's airport, known as Ngurah Rai International Airport, is struggling to keep up with demand. Current capacity is around 20 million passengers per year, and it is already at its maximum. There are plans to build a new airport in the northern part of Bali to cope with the growing numbers of air passengers. Shopping centres are located in Kuta, Legian and Nusa Dua – all in southern Bali, but shopping at the informal markets is a traveller highlight and possible in all tourist areas.

Entry regulations

South African passport holders do not need to acquire a visa ahead of travel and can obtain a 30-day visa on arrival. As usual, the passport must be valid for six months from the arrival date and have at least two blank pages. Travellers should also have proof of

motorcycle licence if they are planning to hire a scooter or motorbike, as there are police stationed across the island who will request proof.

Otherwise, says **Nicole Stoltz** of Pentravel Cape Gate, those staying in areas like Kuta or

accommodation and return ticket with them in case it is requested. For stays of 30 days or more, visitors will need to apply for a visa beforehand.

Special precautions

The rainy season runs from October to March, so travellers who feel strongly about avoiding rain should try and travel outside this period. However, Nicole points out that it tends not to rain for a full day, but rather there are scattered showers.

Travellers should be mindful of Bali's cultural traditions and practices. "Every morning, the Balinese people will perform their blessings and take part in ceremonies throughout the year. This is evident in many of the temples found throughout the island, some of which are not open to members of the public and only open during ceremonies," adds Nicole. "You can enter other temples, however you must cover your legs out of respect," she says, advising that travellers should avoid beachwear or revealing attire when planning to visit religious sites.

Finally, when shopping at markets, you should advise your clients to prepare to bargain and negotiate. "This is normal practice for the Balinese people and they encourage it. It can be intimidating at first, coming from our 'this is the price, take it or leave it' culture. However, in Bali the only prices pre-set are those found in actual shops and quoted by more established tour operators," says Nicole.

Book it!

- From Azure Travel comes '11 Days Bali Romance', valid from July 1-October 31. There are three resorts to select from (with land rates quoted). Parigata Resort from R5 895pps; Grand Inna Kuta Beach from R7 770pps; and Sadara Boutique Resort from R8 410pps. The rates include return airport-hotel transfers, 10 nights' accommodation in standard double rooms, breakfast daily, two full-day tours and a half-day tour, along with the full assistance of a local representative.
 - A Club Med Bali special runs from June 1-23 at R19 312 land only, and includes seven nights in premium accommodation based on a Club room, breakfast, lunch, dinner and scheduled snacks, a wide choice of land and water sports, evening entertainment and basic travel insurance for under-69s.
 - Thompsons Holidays currently has a seven-night special at the five-star Melia Bali Villa & Spa, running until July 14 and priced from R19 826pps ex-Johannesburg. It includes return flights with airline levies, transfers, accommodation, breakfast daily, two full-day and a half-day excursion. As a bonus, there's a bottle of wine or a voucher for a Balinese massage.
 - Perfect Destinations has the following offers at four-star and four-star plus properties:
 - Ossotel Legian Hotel, Kuta from R14 220pps (valid May 1-June 21; September 16-November 30). Value-adds: set dinner for two and Beach Club facilities.
 - Segara Village Hotel from R16 690pps (valid May 1-June 21; September 1-November 30). Value-adds: a lunch for two, daily afternoon tea and cake, beach bag per room.
 - Bali Tropica Resort & Spa, all-inclusive from R21 565pps (valid October 1-31).
- See Travelinfo for more information. ■

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.

Comair welcomes the President



President Cyril Ramaphosa was given an unofficial inauguration on board a recent BA Comair flight. On flight BA6212 on April 23 from Durban to Johannesburg, BA honoured the President by sending first-time flyer and praise poet, **Lutendo Evans Mugagadeli** (commonly known as Vendaboy Poet) to give the President the warmest welcome on board.

To celebrate Globus turning 90 this year, the operator ran the 90-day Win-A-Car incentive from January 1 to March 31. **Lyn Biggs** (right), of Hilton Travel, won a 2018 Volkswagen Polo Vivo. "We are excited to announce that Lyn is the well-deserving winner of this incentive," says **Janine Pienaar**, sales and marketing manager of Globus.



Lyn wins new wheels



First Group cares

First Group's ethos is one of social responsibility and is the reason it is so passionate about supporting charitable organisations. One such organisation is the Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust (HACT), which First Group has supported since 2010 with a total donation of R886 800. The funding has helped to provide round-the-clock care to AIDS patients in the Respite Unit. Pictured here during a visit to HACT are (from left) **Patrick Klaff, Sanelisiwe Ngcobo, Annestashia Kistensamy, Pashnie Govender, Musa Mbele, Sbu Mthethwa, Pam Mtshali and Mark Ridl** of First Group.

Appointment

Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris has appointed **Mark Wernich** as gm of Taj Cape Town. **Puneet Chhatwal**, ceo of Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts

Safari, says Mark offers the perfect blend of business acumen and exceptional leadership skills. "We are confident that Mark is the right person to take Taj Cape Town forward and are

excited to see how he grows its already strong offering. His depth of experience, honed over a stellar career spanning 25 years, will bring an immeasurable value to our special Cape Town hotel."

Pick of the week

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Lack of insurance for elderly throttles bookings

CANDICE MAY

WITH no more travel insurance options left to cover people over the age of 85, clients over this age are less inclined to travel and are even unable to apply for certain visas.

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, creating the void.

While international options are being explored, none have been found to date. **Farai Mutiwanayuka**, marketing

communications manager for EEMEA of International SOS, confirms that there are no travel insurance options available to people over the age of 85. "It is quite sad, really," she says.

As a result, clients are having to think seriously about whether to travel or not now that there are no travel insurance providers that offer cover to travellers over age 85, says **Michelle Boshoff**, gm of Central Services of Pentravel.

Clients who only have a South African passport can no longer get visas to visit certain countries, such as

those in the Schengen area, which require proof of travel insurance as part of the application process, points out **Ros Chimes**, ITC of eTravel.

Michelle says Pentravel currently has an 86-year-old client in the process of making a R200 000 booking.

She was applying for a Diners Club card so that she could utilise the travel insurance benefit but stopped the application after finding out that there was now an age cap in place. "The client is investigating an overseas company to provide medical insurance for her, but she still

may cancel the holiday."

Ros has observed a decline in bookings among elderly cruising clients.

Simmy Micheli, sales and marketing manager of TIC, says it is tricky for insurers to offer infinite coverage due to the large costs of medical claims. "For us, 70% of the travellers we insure are under the age of 70, however, 70% of the cost of medical claims is from travellers over the age of 70," she says. However, Ros argues that if the risk is higher for elderly travellers, insurers should simply charge a higher price. "Or, they should

do a doctor's assessment to determine if they are fit to travel like the Australians do to get their visas," she adds.

Anya Black, senior consultant of Helderveu Travel, has approached Diners Club to ask if they will consider reintroducing the unlimited age option and was advised that it is a possibility as their policy structures are revised annually. Agents who would like this option reintroduced should send an email to Diners Club at aigsafeedback@aig.com and copy in saclientservices@za.aegisglobal.com. ■

Eurowings cuts CT flights

From page 1

Lufthansa Group Southern Africa, commented: "At this point, the flight schedule for 2019 has not been finalised, and therefore we are not able to provide further information until the strategic planning has been concluded."

The airline launched flights between Cologne and Cape Town in November last year, operating one flight a week on the route. The launch was well received by the industry, with expectations that the flights would make travel to Europe more affordable for South Africans. ■



It's so easy!

SkyTeam, the global airline alliance co-founded by Delta, has launched a series of interactive mobile maps, giving passengers a clear and detailed view of their surroundings from check-in and departures through to baggage collection. The interactive layout also helps travellers quickly locate the airport lounges, a last-minute bite to eat or a souvenir to take home, with ease. Navigating their way are (from left) account managers **Nellita Scholtz** and **Kim Bruk-Jackson**; and account manager – corporate, **Carey Haynes**, of Delta Air Lines. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

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Gooooood morning, Vietnam!
Which emerging destination has received most interest?

Vietnam	53%
Cuba	22%
Sri Lanka	15%
Japan	10%

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Embattled agency faces liquidation, lawsuit

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A COMPANY that made headlines earlier this year, when it failed to deliver on travel packages, faces involuntary liquidation, while criminal charges are also pending against the owner couple, **Izak and Henda Heyneke**.

Fraud charges were laid against Heyneke Tours after clients' holidays, totalling an estimated R1,2 million, fell through. The saga was the subject of a *Carte Blanche* exposé this past Sunday.

Heyneke Tours was served with a section 345 letter of demand in late March. This section of the Companies Act compels a company to pay its debt to the party serving the letter within three weeks, or enter into a settlement arrangement.

Armand du Plessis, the attorney representing two couples in relation to the

section 345 letter, says that should the company fail to pay his clients' debt or reach an agreement in the timeframe, he will lay a formal liquidation application. Notwithstanding delays on account of the public holidays, the period will lapse this week.

Attorney **Carol van Molendorff**, who is representing eight affected clients, says that while a number of clients have laid charges individually, combining the matters will build a stronger case, which can be heard in the commercial crimes court. She explains that one matter on its own is a civil matter. "The moment it becomes a pattern and you have more than one complainant, it becomes a criminal matter."

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

the beginning of the year, affected clients and police officers have been unable to trace the couple, although *Carte Blanche* located them on the West Rand.

After the arrest in December, a letter was sent to a number of the affected clients, apparently from financial consultants, which seemed to make a veiled threat to any clients pursuing forced liquidation.

"You can force the company into liquidation, but they have no assets, so you are likely to get 5 cents in the rand of your money back," the letter reads. "You can force the company into business rescue, but then you are likely to get 40 cents in the rand of your money back, if you are lucky." Carol questions whether the letter was written by consultants, or the couple themselves.

Heyneke Tours is not a registered Asata member. ■