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Travelstart says goodbye to ITCs

SARAH ROBERTSON

AFTER four and a half years, Travelstart has discontinued its agent booking platform, neXt. Commenting on the decision, ceo **Stephan Ekbergh** said: "Serving the ITC community is no longer in line with [the company's] vision."

"As a company who develops several digital products, we need to consider where we believe the future is. We will continue to develop new products but also halt those that we no longer believe in," he told TNW.

Stephan added that neXt did not fit its core business, which was to offer the most affordable

fares to consumer and corporate travellers directly.

Travelstart has committed to continuing to support existing neXt bookings, advising agents to email them should clients' need to amend their bookings.

"Serving the ITC community is no longer in line with [the company's] vision."

When asked if neXt agents could now make use of the Travelstart consumer website for bookings, a spokesperson told TNW that travelstart.co.za was intended to pass

on the best deals directly to the consumer. He acknowledged that agents are using the direct portal but said that policing this use was not a priority for Travelstart.

Rian Bornman, md of FlightSiteAgent (a direct competitor) said FlightSiteAgent was thriving in the space, with over 400 active agent users. FlightSiteAgent also offers a web-based portal allowing agents without GDS experience to book tickets.

"I believe that the non-GDS segment continues to be overlooked by incumbents because the segment does not present lucrative return on margin

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Durban says cheers!

The Durban leg of Thirsty's was hosted at The Capital Pearls Hotel, in Umhlanga. Looking glamorous is **Marga Wilson** (left) and **Nash Mughoo** (right), both from Corporate Traveller. Photo: Tessa Reed.

Spanish Consulate calls BS on BLS

CANDICE MAY

TRAVEL agents are still receiving conflicting information regarding Spanish visas.

Last month, agents reported that consultants at the BLS Application Centre in Pretoria were advising that a new requirement had been introduced for SA

minors, requiring that their Unabridged Birth Certificates be stamped specifically by Home Affairs, certified within a six-month period, as part of their visa application. BLS consultants confirmed this new requirement to TNW.

However, the Spanish Consulate has subsequently told TNW that there is no new requirement and that

the Consulate will still accept copies of UBCs certified by the police. The Consulate told TNW that agents should ignore the information communicated by BLS.

Spousal visas

The Spanish Consulate has also clarified new requirements around

spousal visas, confirming that travellers applying for a Spanish visa as the spouse of an EU passport holder would now need to prove their marriage was registered in the same EU country as their spouse's passport. They would do this by obtaining a marriage certificate from that country. Previously, an SA

unabridged marriage certificate and a copy of the spouse's EU passport had been sufficient to prove the marriage. Meanwhile, agents have reported that BLS is advising applicants that this is not a requirement, resulting in applications being denied.

Liam Flett, owner of

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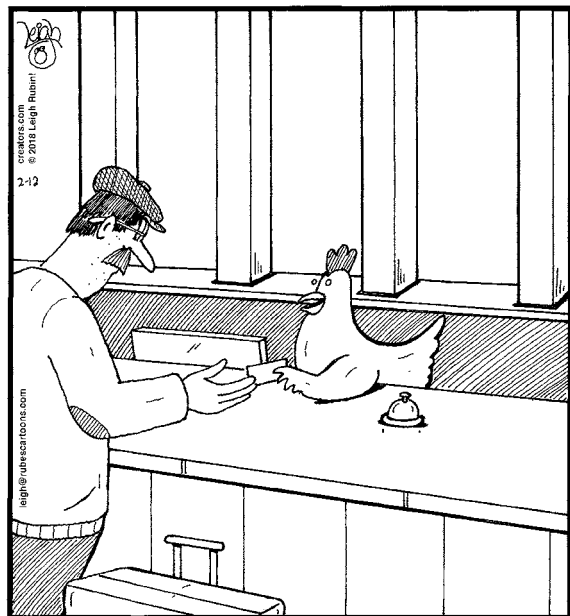
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BA issues ADMs for changes to unticketed bookings

SARAH ROBERTSON

ACCORDING to agents, British Airways has issued a recent spate of ADMs for uncollected date change fees for amendments made to bookings before they were issued.

Standard practice in the industry has always been that changes can be made without penalty to provisional bookings with fees only incurred after issuance.

However TNW understands that here BA listed "charge not collected for change in PNR before ticket issue" as the reason for the ADMs.

One source said his agency had received a handful of these ADMs in the last two months. They had been charged

the full change penalty for the relevant fare class amounting to between R1 800 and R2 000 per ADM.

According to the agent, BA's fare rule states, "Charge R1 700 for reissue or revalidation. Charge applies per transaction per passenger."

When the agent queried how they could reissue a ticket that had not been issued at the time, BA allegedly responded saying that the ADM would stand and that the penalty should have been collected as an electronic multipurpose document.

Sara Mokua, air operations manager for Flight Centre Travel Group, explained that BA also raised ADMs for any closed changes made to PNRs between issuance and revalidation.

"We received an ADM recently for doing multiple changes in a booking but only collecting the change fee the day the ticket was reissued. BA responded that the penalty applied per transaction per passenger for every saved transaction made," she said.

Flight Centre only found out about BA's practice when they received this recent ADM, but Sara said Lufthansa and SWISS had introduced a similar policy last year.

At the time of going to print, British Airways was unable to confirm what their official policy relating to these two issues was, but a spokesperson at the airline told TNW that no recent amendments had been made to their policy on unticketed changes to PNRs since 2011. ■



Cruise through Europe

Avalon is offering three river cruises in Europe, with packages starting from R43 900 pps. Cruises currently being promoted include the Blue Danube Discovery cruise, which sails 13 days from Budapest to Prague; the Romantic Rhine, which sails eight days from Zurich to Amsterdam; and Canals, Vineyards and Paris, which offers 10 days from Paris to Amsterdam. Packages include accommodation, a Worldwide Travel SIM card, meals and excursions as per itinerary, port charges and gratuities, and a Safety Net Protection Plan. Pictured: Cinzia Deiana, sales executive, Perfect Destinations.

Photo by: Shannon Van Zyl

Helen Johnston selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Bantry Bay.** (Cape Town) Corporate special from R1 590 per single room per night, including breakfast. Valid until December 10.
- **Dream Kist Tours.** Wonderful Turkey offer from R11 789pp sharing. Offer includes return transfers, selected domestic flights, six nights' accommodation, breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, entrance fees, transportation between destinations and more. Visit Istanbul, Troy, Pergamum, Kusadasi, Ephesus and Pamukkale. Valid until October 15.
- **Perfect Destinations.** Mauritius honeymoon package from R13 790pp sharing. Offer includes return flights departing Johannesburg, approximate taxes, return transfers and seven nights' accommodation with breakfast and dinner daily plus honeymoon value adds. Valid from May 19-September 26.
- **Mozambique GSA.** Diamonds Mequfi special offer from R24 690pp sharing. Offer includes return flights departing Johannesburg, approximate taxes, return transfers and seven nights' accommodation at the Diamonds Mequfi Beach Resort with breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Valid until June 30 and from October 1-December 22.
- **Mayfair Hotel.** (Eastern Cape) Winter weekend special from R990 per room per night. Rate includes breakfast. Valid until June 30.



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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.

TNW6602SD

New investor to augment TC offering

TESSA REED

TRAVEL COUNSELLORS has been acquired by Vitruvian Partners in a buyout from Equistone Partners Europe.

Mladen Lukic, gm of Travel Counsellors in South Africa, says the investment by Vitruvian will help Travel Counsellors continue to develop its offering for travel counsellors in South Africa and the rest of the world.

“The presence of an investor of Vitruvian’s standard is going to increase our ability to offer even more support for travel counsellors,” says Mladen. “That investment is going to be used to make sure that we continue to develop our systems and our support structure to make sure that our travel counsellors are even more competitive.”

Vitruvian Partners has previously backed travel businesses Skyscanner, JacTravel (a b2b travel provider) and OAG (a global provider of digital flight information).

“The presence of an investor of Vitruvian’s standard is going to increase our ability to offer even more support for travel counsellors.”

“The fact that we have secured a secondary buy-out is testimony to the confidence in the long term growth prospects and plans for the company,” said

Steve Byrne, chief executive at Travel Counsellors.

Travel Counsellors was founded in 1994 by travel entrepreneur David Speakman, and has expanded to include international operations in Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Australia, the UAE and South Africa. In October 2014, Equistone backed a management buy-out of the business led by ceo Steve Byrne.

Since then, the business has continued to experience growth, with annual total transaction values growing by £130 million (R2,18 billion) to £512 million (R8,59 billion). Profit has seen strong growth over the period, growing by an average of over 20% per annum respectively. ■



Tips from Louis the Lawyer – Social media and defamation

Advocate Louis Nel discusses the intention to defame

ONE of the much-debated conditions required to prove that defamation has occurred includes proving that the alleged ‘defamer’ had the intention to defame.

The test on this case is subjective. In other words, the defendant (publisher or person who utters the vexed words or statement) must realise the impact on the plaintiff’s reputation. If the plaintiff argues that it was a mistake or an honest belief that was justified, this may be a defence.

Proof must also be provided that the defendant knew that what they were doing was wrongful or unlawful and that the plaintiff could lose customers.

Courts will sometimes go beyond intention and find negligence or recklessness are adequate for this proof if it can be deduced that the defendant acted with disregard and should have been aware of the possibility of defamation occurring.

The court may also find that intention is implied or inevitable as was done in the case of *le Roux v Dey* (CC 2011) i.e. “A defendant who foresaw the possibility that his attempt at humour might be defamatory of the plaintiff, but nonetheless proceeds with the attempt will have *animus iniuriandi* or intent in the form of *dolus eventualis*.”

Furthermore the required intention must be placed in context. For example, stating that ‘Joe is a jerk’ is an opinion but stating that Joe stole \$1 000 from his employer is a statement of fact. If this statement isn’t true it could be considered defamatory as it could cause injury to Joe and cause him to be fired. ■

Espressoly for agents



FlySafair is running a competition where agents stand a chance to win one of three Smeg coffee machines by signing up for the FlySafair newsletter. Enter at www.flysafair.co.za/travel-agents. The competition ends July 27. Ts & Cs apply. Pictured here is Marise Banks, sales and distribution manager, FlySafair. Photo by: Shannon Van Zyl

Move to standardise date-change penalty code welcomed

SARAH ROBERTSON

AIRLINES are introducing new global date-change penalty codes in line with industry tax code definitions. Industry leaders approve, saying standardisation of penalty codes will make the reissue process easier for them.

Airlines that have introduced this policy including Emirates, BA Comair, Kenya Airways and Latam. For the airlines that have adapted this policy, date-change penalties will now be collected under the OD code.

Latam says the new procedure comes in response to the industry’s need to comply with the new format used to recognise revenue at the time of flight,

as provided by accounting standard IFRS-15. The Emirates release explains that the OB code, which the airline had previously used, generically refers to ticketing fees including both credit card and ticket fees, while the OD code specifically stands for penalty fee.

The OD form of collection will be standardised in the automatic reissue tools in those GDSs where they are still active, says Latam. Otherwise, agents must record the penalty collection in the ticket tax breakdown. In countries where the penalty is taxable, the amount of that tax must be reflected separately in the respective tax field. The change in the reservation and the ticket reissue must

be processed during the same day and must be associated with a single ticket for each passenger.

An Iata spokesperson told TNW that IFRS-15 is the international accounting standard with which South Africa has decided to comply. To enable compliance, Iata is also making adjustments to the billing and settlement system.

David Pegg, md for Sure Viva Travels said that he was always for standardisation in the industry as it made things easier for everyone.

Sarah Mokua, air ops leader for the Flight Centre Travel group agreed saying that one tax code for all airlines would help to reduce the number of incorrect tax code reissue errors. ■

To the point



BRITISH Airways will add four weekly flights to its double-daily London-Johannesburg schedule from October 28. BA will operate the Boeing 787-800 Dreamliner alongside the existing 14 weekly A380 services.



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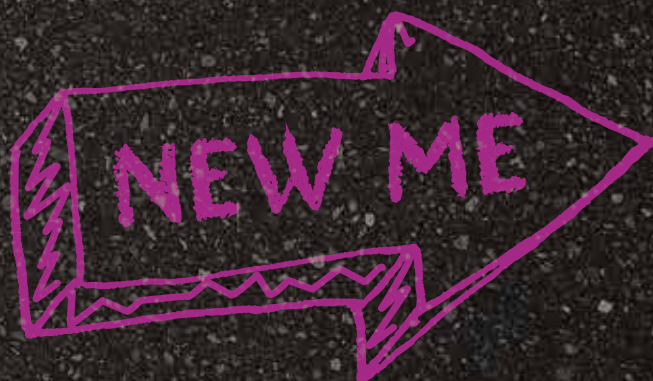
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Warming up to Russia

Dawn Weir of Harvey World Travel Holiday Travel recently visited Russia with HWT and Travel Vision. She shares her experience.

GROWING up in the '70s, my limited exposure to Russia was the US and Russian space race to reach the moon. As a result, I jumped at the opportunity to visit this enigmatic country that had long been on my bucket list.

"The Catherine palace was jaw-droppingly magnificent. Encrusted in gold, in typical Russian style, it offered a great insight into upper-crust life three hundred years ago."

Our Emirates flight connections were pretty good, with a five-hour stopover in Dubai, which offered excellent retail therapy. I also bought access to the Marhaba Lounge for a reduced rate of R610 (via the Lounge Buddy app) which provided access to clean, spacious toilets, showers, changing rooms, good food and drinks and a quiet lounge to kick back and chill in.

On arrival we were looked after by Travel Vision's ground handlers. These young, university-educated ladies were fluent in English, passionate about

their country and incredibly knowledgeable and hospitable.

St Petersburg is absolutely beautiful and offers a generous selection of good four- and five-star hotels. We stayed at the five-star Sokos Palace Bridge Hotel, which was central, offered a healthy and abundant breakfast and a choice of two restaurants for dinner in the evenings.

The Hermitage Museum ranks very high on the list of the many museums that I have visited in my 30 years of travel experience. You will leave with a real appreciation of the arts after seeing pieces by Rembrandt, Michelangelo and others.

The Catherine Palace was jaw-droppingly magnificent. Encrusted in gold, in typical Russian style, it offered a great insight into upper-crust life three hundred years ago.

Before we left South Africa, our biggest concern had been how we SAffers would cope with Russian winter temperatures of -15C. So, during our train journey from St Petersburg to Moscow, we tried two Russian favourites... pancakes with caviar, washed down with vodka. We weren't cold at all by

the time we arrived!

The Kremlin and Armoury Museum stand out as particular highlights in Moscow. We saw Catherine the Great's clothes, golden carriages, royal crowns and much more.

We were also lucky enough to see the ballet Giselle at the famous Bolshoi Theatre thanks to the efforts of one of our colleagues, who shopped around and bought us tickets in advance, (a real benefit of travelling with good travel agents!) The

seats were 'up in the Gods' for R2 000 apiece. Expect to pay more for a better view.

Moscow at night is stunning with all its buildings illuminated, the latest addition being champagne-glass-styled street lights.

Shopping in Tsum or Gum (famous Russian shopping centres) requires a hefty overdraft facility. So after window shopping only, we headed to the affordable Aviapark centre and made up for lost time.

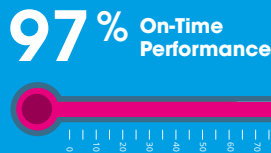
We used Uber which is half the price of what we pay in SA. The drivers spoke zero English, but it was definitely quicker and easier than the subway which, although beautifully decorated, is tricky to navigate with Russian signage.

Russia is a must-see destination. SA passport holders don't require visas for short stays. The architecture is breath-taking, the history enchanting and the culture rich. Definitely a worthwhile trip!



Pictured enjoying the gilded sights of Russia are Magda Cullen from MSC agencies; Farzana Moolla from Harvey World Klerksdorp; Yasmeen Motala from Harvey World Mayfair; Dawn Weir from Harvey World Holiday Travel; Marlissa Mielke from Harvey World Birnam; and Refiloe Makhetha from Travel Vision.

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Schedules are subject to seasonal changes and regulatory approval. The Singapore Airlines A350 is also available on all flights from Cape Town to Singapore.

TNW Thirsty's

D URBAN travel trade gathered at The Capital Pearls Hotel, in Umhlanga to catch up over a couple of drinks. Agents were treated to a whiskey tasting in a space

overlooking the sea. It was an evening of merriment and welcome respite from relentless clients and quotes. Look out for an invitation to the next TNW Thirsty's. ■



▲ Pictured (from left) **Reshma Haripershad** and **Zama Mthethwa** of **ATPI (Griffin Travel)**.



▲ "This is just Capital!" Pictured (from left) **Amy Olckers** (The Capital Pearls Hotel), **Monica Allanson** (Personal Travel Services), and **Logan Naidoo** (The Capital Pearls Hotel).



▲ "Skal!" (from left) **Michelle Lowes**, **Sharon Elder** and **Charleen Pottas** (Mocarmi Travel).



▲ Pictured (from left) **Susie Roelandt** (Travel Tyme), **Helen Busse** (Dynamic Holidays), and **Tanya Nothnagel** (Pentravel).



◀ Pictured (from left) **Lal Jayamaha** (Serendipity Tours) and **Natasha Schmidt** (TNW).



▲ Thirsty's is the place to meet new friends. Pictured (from left) **Margie Manser** (Bryte Travel Insurance), **Claudia Smith** (Amalfi Travel Promotions), and **Alison Chiocchetti** (Compassline Africa).



▲ TNW's **Yolanda Katsi** and **Kerry Brownhill** of **ATPI (Griffin Travel)**.

Photos: Tessa Reed and Natasha Schmidt

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Indian Ocean DESTINATIONS

Bursting with optimism but not with crowds, Sri Lanka is emerging as a must-visit Indian Ocean island, writes Candice May.

Sri Lanka climbs the popularity charts

LOCATED close to the well-trodden paths of Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean island of Sri Lanka, with a unique fusion of history, landscapes and culture, is luring travellers to explore. With its abundance of Buddhist temples, tranquil beaches, world-class surf, tea plantations and elephant safaris, it is no surprise!

According to **Carlos Luis**, leader – air, land and sea product of Flight Centre Travel Group, the number of South African tourists to Sri Lanka has climbed steadily over the last few years. The number increased by 37% this April alone, compared with the same time last year. “Sri Lanka is outperforming a number of more established European and Asian countries with travellers becoming more aware of what the destination has to offer,” he says.

Whether your client’s dream island holiday includes indulging in intricately spiced foods, a rough-and-tumble game drive, soaking in a sleek

pool overlooking the ocean or hiking through the mountainous terrain, this tick-all-the-boxes destination has got them covered. Below, experts highlight some spectacular reasons to visit the compact, tropical country.

The food

Cuisine may not be the first thing that springs to mind when you think of Sri Lanka, but **Lance van den Heever-Liebenberg**, md of Marmalade Toast Bespoke Travel & Destination Management, says that its food is some of the best.

A blend of Indian and Asian culinary techniques, Sri Lankan food revolves around curries, rotis and samosas served in terracotta clay ‘chatties’.

The capital, Colombo, and the large central city of Kandy are both home to bustling street markets where you can watch chefs shred rotis on hot iron sheets and prepare local vegetables. The most popular dessert on the island is the chocolate roti – a pancake and



Lucinda Tyler

flatbread filled with hot, melted chocolate – which is washed down perfectly with a cup of world-famous Ceylon tea.

The culture

Sri Lankan culture is reflected by its art, architecture and sculpture, says Carlos. The famed Cultural Triangle, to the north of Kandy, is a treasure trove of ancient monuments, royal cities and Buddhist temples that once served as the crucible of early Sinhalese civilisation.

A climb up Sigiriya, an ancient rock fortress, also known as the ‘Fortress in the Sky’, does not

only offer the reward of unbelievable views from the top, but also much to discover on the way up, says Carlos.

Sri Lankans are some of the most genuine, warm and welcoming people, he says.

The train rides

If you do not travel by train in Sri Lanka, you will seriously miss out, says Lance. The island’s train network is affordable and easy to navigate.

The most popular trip is undoubtedly from Ella to Kandy, but agents should not oversell it, advises Lance. Due to the shortage of pre-bookable tickets, clients can be left disappointed when this part of their trip does not happen, or their entire itinerary needs to be adjusted at the last minute to accommodate this train trip.

The tracks from Colombo down south to Hikkaduwa and Galle hug the coast, so passengers can watch the rolling waves of the Indian Ocean along palm-

tree-lined shores as they ride in the open-window carriages. The recently reopened route from Colombo to Jaffna is an eye-opening journey too.

The outdoor activities

While Sri Lanka is best known for its pristine beaches visitors should not overlook the other outdoor activities on offer, says **Lucinda Tyler**, product manager of Club Travel. The most popular are surfing and hiking.

Whether novice or expert surfer, Sri Lanka’s Arugam Bay (or ‘A Bay’ for short) has waves to suit everyone. With regular swells pushing up from the south, it is known as one of the best surf spots in the world. Surfers can hire a board from one of the many laidback cafés and head to the aptly named ‘Main Point’ or ‘Baby Point’, which run along the bay.

Hiking and climbing some of Sri Lanka’s tea plantations and mountainous terrain are other fantastic ways to see the island.

Points to note!

Different climatic regions:

The best weather on the west and south coasts and in the hill country is from December to March, while the best time to visit the east coast is from April or May to September.

Research the weather patterns, as Sri Lanka is affected by both the southwest and northeast monsoon.

‘Dry’ hotels and restaurants:

If your client enjoys a tippie, it is important to check which hotels or restaurants are ‘dry’ properties before booking. Due to stringed liquor licencing and a steep sin tax, many facilities are ‘dry’. When you can get it, alcohol is expensive – cocktails on the beach or at side restaurants in Galle and

Mirissa cost an average of R100 to R150 each, with a pint of Lion beer averaging between R25 and R35.

High cigarette prices:

It is illegal to take cigarettes into Sri Lanka and cigarettes are very expensive to buy. A box of Marlboro averages around R75 a box, while Dunhill goes for around R95.

Club Med to debut first resort in Sri Lanka

Club Med will open its first resort in Sri Lanka in 2019.

Located in the south-west of the country, just 90 minutes from Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo, the 372-room Club Med Ceylon will be fit for families, working-age couples and corporates.

“The resort will reflect

Sri Lanka’s unique culture and cuisine, vibrant traditional colours and bustling lifestyle, and will be the starting point to discovery of the surrounding breath-taking landscapes, rich wildlife and brilliant heritage sites,” adds **Lee-Ann Morgan**, customer growth marketing manager of Club Med Southern Africa.



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A travel agent's experience

LANCE van den Heever-Liebenberg of Marmalade Toast Bespoke Travel & Destination Management shares his Sri Lanka experience:

"Sri Lanka has been described as 'hiding in plain sight', with countless travellers flying overhead to more popular Indian Ocean Island destinations.

"The thing to note about Sri Lanka's tourism industry is that it is moving forward quickly, and with more people

discovering the innumerable charms that the island has to offer, the time is right to explore this incredible country, before it becomes over-commercialised.

"I was lucky enough to spend two weeks in Sri Lanka on our current three-month Southeast Asia sales trip. My partner, David and I took the slow approach to discovering the country, opting to spend time learning about the destination, its people and its culture.

"We explored the flavours

of Colombo – we highly recommend Paradise Road The Gallery Café for its world-famous dessert menu – and the history of Galle on the southwest coast, and spent days working remotely in seaside style from The Shack Beach Café on Dewata Beach. We also took the time to explore the tea of the old world, Ceylon, and discovered some of the most scenic train rides.

"It is important to keep in mind that seats on the Instagram-famous Ella to Kandy train trip are hard to come by, but well worth the hassle! However, this is by no means the only picturesque train ride you can take in Sri Lanka – we also highly recommend catching the train from Unawatuna to Mirissa, on which you can take amazing snaps of lush jungle as well as the raw beauty of the Sri Lankan coastline."



Tour operators partner on Seychelles resort

Club Med is taking over Beachcomber's Seychelles Saint Anne Resort and Spa Hotel.

It is set to relaunch in 2020, and the Club Med proposal to manage the property under a new

leasing arrangement with New Mauritius Hotels will see the hotel's capacity expand significantly.

The hotel currently has 87 rooms, but by 2020 will boast 295 rooms. The resort will offer families

a full range of childcare facilities and services, from Petit Club to Juniors' Club.

It will be open throughout the year and is within the Sainte-Anne Marine National Park.

Madagascar remains uncompetitive

RICH with intrigue and legend, Madagascar is a captivating island that South African travellers are growing increasingly interested in.

While travel agents have observed a spike in enquiries for Madagascar recently, they note that the majority are not converted to bookings due to uncompetitive prices on packages and airfare.

Lize Roodt, a Travel Counsellors ITC, explains that packages are very expensive due to the small number of tour operators that sell the destination. "Packages to Madagascar can be very pricey for what you actually get – I would say that the value for money is not quite there yet. However, it is a fascinating place," she says.

Currently, Airlink is the only airline offering direct flights between South Africa and Madagascar. The airline operates daily flights to the capital, Antananarivo, as well as weekly flights on Sundays to Nosy Be. During peak season, Airlink increases frequencies and capacity to Nosy Be. Ethiopian Airlines operates flights from its hub



Lize Roodt

in Addis Ababa to Nosy Be on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

According to **Rodger Foster**, ceo and md of Airlink, another significant reason why the market between South Africa and Madagascar is small is Madagascar's political stability. "This is an ongoing deterrent to direct foreign investment and tourism. The recent plague scare, albeit quite dramatised, was a setback to tourism as well. Ironically, the listeriosis outbreak in South Africa had similar [numbers of] deaths, but did not get the same publicity," he says.

Sun Resorts takes it back to the beach

SUN Resorts has introduced Timeless Memories, a concept that focuses on ensuring that each guest has a memorable experience, no matter which resort they stay at.

The concept was created around seven passion points: Sun Beach, Sun Golf, Sun Kids, Sunrise and Sunset, Sun Mixology, Sun Memory Labs and Sun Luxury Moments. Each passion point features

exciting new products and services – for example, Sun Beach features customisable props and furniture for lounging, beach carts offering fresh fruits and cocktails, spa treatments, and gourmet meals for a toes-in-the-sand dining experience. Sunset and Sunrise features yoga, stand-up paddle boarding, breakfast on board a boat at sunrise, dining under the stars and ceremonies with fire dancers at sunset.

Did you know?

Bandaranaike International Airport, Colombo serves a number of airlines, including Singapore Airlines (three hours and 50 minutes from Singapore) and Qatar Airways (four hours and 30 minutes from Doha).

Book it!

The four-star Mauricia Beachcomber Resort & Spa is offering a special five-night package from R13 900 pps. The package includes return flights on Air Mauritius ex-JNB, approximate airport taxes, return airport transfers, breakfast and dinner daily, kids' club and land and water sports, including water-skiing and wakeboarding. One child under six shares and eats free, and a 15% saving on massages. Valid for travel from August 1 to September 20.

Mauritius



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A man in red shorts stands on a surfboard, holding a long wooden paddle high in the air. A young boy in yellow shorts sits on the surfboard next to him, smiling. They are in clear turquoise water under a blue sky with light clouds. The background shows a lush green island with a sandy beach and a swimming pool.

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New ways of experiencing the well-known

MAURITIUS, the Seychelles and the Maldives remain at the top of the list of the most popular Indian Ocean islands among South African travellers.

But as well-practised Indian Ocean island holidaymakers may want to explore beyond. Fortunately, there are many unconventional things to do and places to see on these exotic islands.

Mauritius

In Mauritius, **Brenda Mitchell**, director of sales of World Leisure Holidays, recommends a guided electric bike ride to clients who are fitness enthusiasts, seeking adventure or nature. "This sweet escape into the wild is the perfect opportunity to contemplate the flora and fauna of Mauritius. If you are lucky enough, you might see wild boars, deer or geese while leisurely riding your bike," she says.

There are two rides available in the wilderness area of Domaine de Wolmar – the 'family' ride for beginners and the 'intermediate' ride for



Brenda Mitchell

experienced bike-riders.

Brenda also suggests 'Carlie Hiking', which allows visitors to explore hidden facets of the island in a 4x4. "Nature-lovers travel off the beaten tracks across the countryside and discover unmatched views," she says, adding that travelling into the forests is also possible.

Adrenalin junkies visiting Mauritius should consider doing a tandem skydive, says **Joanne Visagie**, sales and marketing director of Beachcomber Tours. After the 30- to 40-second freefall,

you descend for another three to five minutes. Joanne also recommends zip lining at Casela Park. "There are various courses available. I have even done this myself – there is nothing like flying through the air and feeling so alive. Plus, the scenery is amazing!"

For cultural aficionados, Joanne suggests a visit to the Mauritius Photography Museum. China Town and Aapravasi Ghat, an immigration depot for indentured labourers from 1849 to 1923.

Wine fundis can sip wines from around the world in a 175sqm wine cellar at Constance Prince Maurice, adds **Michele Abraham**, sales and marketing of African Synergy. "The cellar boasts some 25 000 exclusive bottles of wine!"

The Seychelles

The Seychelles is a haven for nature lovers with its lush, vibrant beauty, says Michele. "While the beaches are unspoiled and simply out of this world, there are also

other activities and sites for those who enjoy a more dynamic break, such as rock climbing and zip lining," she says, adding that you can take part in these activities at Constance Ephelia overlooking Port Launay Marine National Park, on the beautiful west coast of Mahé.

In between activities, visitors may want to grab a bite at Victoria Food Market, where they can also shop fresh fruit, spices and flowers, visit the giant tortoises on Moyenne Island or explore Launay Mangrove forest, says **Lucinda Tyler** of Club Travel.

The Maldives

The Maldives is an aquatic paradise, and snorkelling at the five-star Constance Moofushi resort teaches guests all about the underwater wonderland, says Michele. "Here, you get to snorkel with the resident marine biologist."

Those who prefer to stay above water can experience the Maldives on a marine wildlife cruise on board a traditionally crafted Turkish gulet, says **Sarah Robertson**, owner of Earth Wanderer. "On this cruise you get to snorkel beautiful areas." ■



Rock climbing at Constance Ephelia resort, Seychelles.

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OCCASION: Adventure

GROUP SIZE: From one to large group

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"New" face at MSC

Tracey Krog has been appointed international sales manager at MSC Cruises SA. Tracey has been in the cruising industry for a decade, starting her career in 2008 at Cruises International as sales manager. Tracey spent 10 years at Cruises International, apart from a two year sabbatical she took to complete her studies from late 2014 to early 2016. During this time, she also spent three months at Development Promotions, where she set up the Abu Dhabi account.



Dressed to the nines

Beachcomber Tours recently hosted an educational to Mauritius giving agents the opportunity to visit the Trou Aux Biches Beachcomber Golf Resort & Spa and explore the island. Agents enjoyed a themed dinner at the resort's Indian restaurant – Mahiya. From left: **Lucie Fink**, Comair account manager; **Kate Remas**, Pentravel Mall of Africa; **Vladi Wessels**, sales executive Beachcomber Tours; **Charne Williams**, Travel By Arrangement; and **Doreen Botha**, XL The Travel Professionals.

Topdeck celebrated its 45th birthday in style. 120 'Flighties' came together in Dubrovnik to celebrate the brand as the last stop on their MegaFam18, a programme that invited them to explore three different Topdeck itineraries. From left, back: **Shawn Voges**, team leader at Cruiseabout The Point; **Cedric Frank**, team leader at FC Cavendish; **Stephen Cooke**, Topdeck business development manager; **Ricardo Paulo**, consultant FC Canal Walk; **Erin Maxwell**, assistant team leader FC Canal Walk; **Zayboonisha Ferguson**, team leader FC Bedford Square. Front: **Ané Steyn**, FCA consultant; **Kirshleigh Young**, consultant FC La Lucia; **Reza Small**, team leader FC Mall of Africa; and **Chardé Sparks**, assistant team leader FC Mall@Reds).



Topdeck turns 45

Appointments

■ **Anel Ferreira** has joined Travelbags as secretary. Anel started out as an air hostess, before working in hospitality. She has been running her own business – Mogul Muse – for the past five years, including importation, marketing, sales and training.



■ **Candace Ash** has recently been appointed at Cruises International in the capacity of KwaZulu-Natal and coastal business development manager. Candace is a passionate sales person with travel industry experience.



■ ABTA has appointed **Nadine Clarke** as its regional director for Africa. Nadine spent several years in the African travel sector as the Head of Corporate at Diners Club and later Head of Strategic Relationships at American Express International. She will be responsible for the strategic expansion of ABTA across Africa and increasing membership and sponsorship.

Pick of the week

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Family Fun

The Victoria Falls Hotel now offers guests a chance to brush up on their putting stroke. The putting-green provides both a family-friendly activity and a place for guests to test their skills before tackling the 18-hole golf course. Golf clubs and balls are available on site. Pictured: Faith Mwale, sales manager, The Victoria Falls Hotel. Photo by: Shannon Van Zyl.

Airport blocks Qantas PER-JNB plans

CANDICE MAY

QANTAS' plans to launch seasonal flights between Perth and Johannesburg are no longer a certainty because of the carrier's long-running dispute with Perth Airport about terminal use, **Michi**

Messner, regional manager - Africa of Qantas told TNW. Qantas wants to operate the flights to Johannesburg from Perth Airport's new international wing in Terminal 3 on the western side of the airport to better handle transit passengers. However, Perth Airport says

the airline can only use Terminal 1 for the flight. All of Qantas' flights, both domestic and international, operate from the Terminal 3 and Terminal 4 facilities. The four-times-a-week service was to start in December and run through to April. ■

WebJet creates separate division for hotels

SARAH ROBERTSON

WEBJET's aggressive acquisition strategy in the b2b hotel aggregator market has resulted in the creation of a separate division called WebBeds. These now include lots of hotels, JacTravel, totalstay, sunhotels and FIT RUUMS with a new specialised operator expected to start later this year. The division has restructured internally regionalising client distribution into three geographical territories, namely European, Asian and AMEA (America, Middle East and Africa) markets. The AMEA division has moved its contact centres,

which used to be located in London and Romania, to Cairo and Dubai. The offline WebBeds contact centre now offers group bookings for destinations around the world. The different aggregator brands will continue to be marketed individually in order to capitalise on existing brand awareness. Lots of hotels and totalstay have the strongest brand presence in the African market and the acquisition of the later last year effectively made two of the biggest competitors in the market sister companies. Lots of hotels will remain wholesale driven while totalstay will continue to operate mainly in the retail sector.

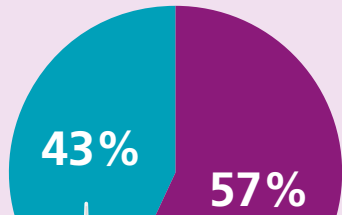
Janine McLoughlin, regional head of sales - Africa, commented that the company is now able to offer agents improved service with an expanded sales team of five located in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. The WebBeds product sourcing teams have also been merged to leverage more buying power. Two dedicated contracting teams are now focusing on product expansion with smaller hotel chains in the South African, African and Indian Ocean Islands regions. Technological advantages will also be filtered down through the sister brands including a focus on increasing direct dynamic inventory links to global hotel chains. ■

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New tickets needed

Poll: How did the SAX grounding affect your clients?

- My passengers had to buy new tickets
- I managed to reroute my passengers



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Travelstart says goodbye to ITCs

From page 1
without scale. While the numbers are important, we are building scale organically by investing in travel entrepreneurs for the long term," said Rian. Maden Lukic, gm of Travel Counsellors in South Africa, says neXt's closure was unlikely to have much of an impact

on the ITC market as they understood it. He explained that the term ITC could not be homogenously classified as a group of home workers interested in selling travel. As a result, he said that the non-GDS market that neXt serviced differed to the professional ITC market that Travel Counsellors operated in.

He also added that any business strategy which opened entrance to the travel industry to non-professionals was an irresponsible one, explaining that agents needed consulting experience and an understanding of the implications of handling secure client information. ■

Spanish Consulate calls BS on BLS

From page 1
Simply Visa, says BLS providing conflicting information only causes unnecessary chaos among both visa companies and agents. He says BLS is equally difficult when it

comes to application lead times: "The consultants refuse to help you if your appointment is not at least 15 days before date of travel, irrelevant of how busy they are." As a result, Liam says visa companies

are having to go directly to the Spanish Consulate to get last-minute applications for business purposes processed quicker. For more information on visas, see Travelinfo. ■

To the point

AIR Seychelles is increasing frequencies between Seychelles and Johannesburg. An extra flight on Tuesdays takes the frequency to six flights a week from July 3 following the addition of a Wednesday flight in March.