

TNW

TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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INSIDE	NEWS CHILD PASSPORTS Still no sign of changes Page 2	FEATURE <i>Thailand</i> Shedding the 'budget destination' image Page 6	REPORT MSC SEAVIEW TNW previews the new ship Page 10
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Is the national travel policy legal?

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

THE national travel policy framework introduced by Treasury last year may be illegal as it has not yet been tested in court.

This is according to **Gerrit Davids**, lead adviser at TaranisCo Advisory.

The new regulations did away with all TMC commissions and override agreements, stating that TMCs can only earn a management fee and that any commissions that might be paid are to be reimbursed to government. According to the policy, TMCs managing government travel and events are to report back to Treasury quarterly on all commissions earned, to ensure compliance.

was not considered legal until it had been tested in court and a judge had ruled that the policy was constitutional.

He said that while Parliament had ruled that Treasury may issue a national travel policy, the policy still needed to be tested against the Constitution. A judge would only be able to rule on the legality of the policy if a TMC (or member of the public) took government to court to test the policy.

"It is important that this policy is reviewed by a judge and a ruling is made, instead of the policy being accepted and enforced on merit."

Gerrit also suggested that government's stipulation in travel tenders that TMCs must be Asata members in order to qualify for the tender process could be problematic. Section 2.1.7 of the Constitution states that all tenders must be fair, equitable, competitive, transparent and cost-effective.

According to Gerrit, should a TMC that is not an Asata member challenge its exclusion from the tender in court, the judge might find that this requirement is in contravention of the Constitution and award the TMC the right to apply for the tender.

Gerrit said he was concerned that, instead of challenging the policy in court, TMCs might be driven to illegal behaviour in order to protect their revenue by claiming commission from suppliers. ■

"It is important that this policy is reviewed by a judge and a ruling is made, instead of the policy being accepted and enforced on merit."

At the time, TMCs expressed concern about how the loss in revenue would impact their bottom line and affect their ability to offer competitive prices.

Gerrit suggests that the trade may be able to challenge the legality of the policy.

He explained to *TNW* that a policy



Earn free tour leader tickets

Air France KLM is offering a group booking promotion until August 31. Claim one free tour leader ticket (excl. taxes) for every ten paying passengers with a base fare of less than R7 000 or for every five paying passengers with a base fare of more than R7 000. Group bookings must be created via AF KLM's AgentConnect.biz under the group sales icon in the toolbox. Pictured (from left): Air France KLM's Bernice Sun, group desk supervisor; Patricia Maphike, group desk agent; and Sabine Owen, call centre manager. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Operator changes card policy following fraud hit

SARAH ROBERTSON

ONLINE B2B operator, RezLive has changed its policy to allow only the use of agency cards. This is in contrast to a slew of airlines prohibiting the use of agent cards as a form of payment.

While airlines have stated that agency

card transactions incur higher costs and put the airline at greater risk, RezLive believes this form of payment poses less risk to suppliers.

This change in policy was sparked by RezLive being hit for \$28 000 (R370 000) in fraud this month.

To page 2



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Operator changes card policy

From page 1

The transactions were all processed at midnight in Indonesia and Pakistan for guests checking in to hotels the next day. As the fraudulent transactions were only reported after guests had checked out, RezLive was held responsible for honouring payments.

Sunitha Ganesh, business development manager for RezLive, says agency credit cards offer suppliers less risk, not more, as the operator visits and vets each agency that they work with to ensure that the businesses are sound. Vetting would not be possible when dealing with client credit cards worldwide.

Otto de Vries, ceo of Asata,

says the global payment space is revolutionising the way customers and travel agents can pay for products and services. While in most cases this ensures the safe, cheap, effective and quick transfer of funds between business partners in the travel space, airline settlement is the exception.

He adds that, despite Iata's argument that NewGen ISS is "modernising the agency programme", it is clear that the industry is actually moving backwards as more and more airlines refuse to accept various forms of card payment in the BSP and drive a cash settlement agenda, with all the associated risks attached thereto. ■

Child passport changes: trade still waiting

JASON SIMPSON

THE Department of Home Affairs has once again committed to printing the names of both parents in child passports, negating the need for minors to travel with unabridged birth certificates.

However, while the DHA first announced it in 2016, it has made no progress in rolling this out.

The announcement on July 12, said the printing of parents' names on children's passports would begin once upgrades to the department's offices had been completed and the automation systems were fully operational.

These upgrades were scheduled in various provinces from July 13-20.

Otto de Vries, Asata ceo, points out that this latest announcement is only a

rehash of the undertaking the department has already made and then failed to implement.

Printing parents' names on children's passports was a solution originally announced by the department in February 2016, with a promised roll-out within three to 12 months, and a prototype coming into effect from February 2017. This has not happened, leaving in place the requirement that minors travelling internationally must produce an unabridged birth certificate. There are further requirements for minors travelling with only one parent or with no parents, such as affidavits.

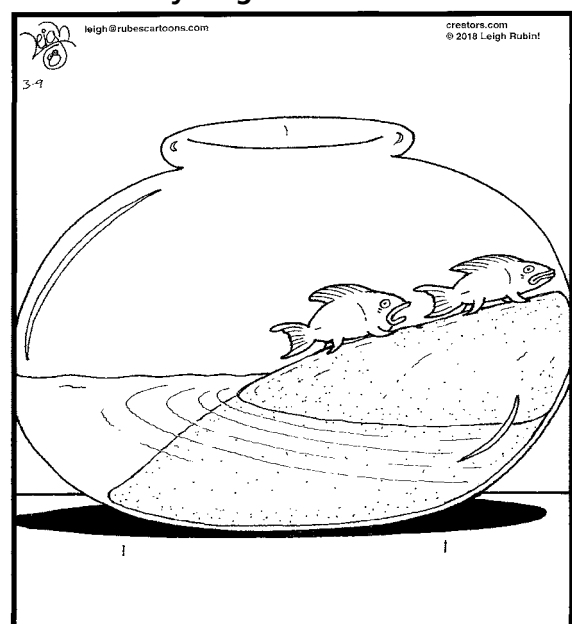
"It is absolutely ridiculous legislation that is hampering normal, best-practice travel for travellers to or from South Africa," said Otto. "Home Affairs is making

naïve assumptions about the structures of families, which no longer apply in the real world, especially in the South African context. What if a child is estranged from a parent, or a parent has died? These are questions Home Affairs must clarify."

Tony Da Silva, from Travel Scent, is optimistic about the impact, should Home Affairs deliver. He told *TNW* that, since the introduction of the new regulations he had had to drill it into his clients to make absolutely sure they were aware of the travelling requirements for a minor, but added that, even so, the process was still stressful for his clients.

TNW contacted the DHA on multiple occasions for further clarity and a more definite timeline, but no response was received at the time of publication. ■

Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



"Well, so much for travel being the remedy for our narrow worldview."

NDC to usher in new workflow

TESSA REED

THE maturation of Iata's new distribution capability will considerably change agents' workflow, while giving airlines more control of their content at the likely expense of transparency.

However, NDC adoption is still in its infancy, with many airlines having no NDC plans at this stage and NDC will likely evolve in parallel to existing booking technology for some time. This means that for the foreseeable future, the current GDS will continue to exist and be bookable in its current format.

These are some of the insights **Andy Hedley**, gm for Southern Africa at Amadeus, shared with *TNW* on the back of Amadeus's recent Iata level 3 NDC certification as an aggregator. Being certified level 3 as an aggregator means Amadeus is able to serve airline offers and manage orders on NDC APIs.

It is the serving of these NDC offers that will change agents' workflow. Currently, agents have access to all content that

airlines have loaded on the GDS, allowing them to make a selection and book fares at their discretion.

When bookings are made on the NDC standard, agents will not see all the flights and fare classes available for an airline. Instead, the agent sends through a request, to which the airline responds with an offer, or offers. The airline has the discretion to tailor this offer, packing whichever

"Agents see what the airline decides to show them."

ancillaries it thinks will be appealing to the customer, and limiting the choice available to the agent. The airline can also determine for how long the offer will be available.

"Airlines want to control what offer the customer gets," says Andy, adding that NDC is the tool that allows them to do this. He explains that, with NDC some of the transparency offered by the GDS is lost because agents cannot see everything that is available. "They see

what the airline decides to show them," he says, adding that the airline will show what it thinks the customer will want to buy.

On the plus side, Andy says that with NDC bookings, ADMs should fall away because the airline decides on the offer.

Andy says that because the two workflows are so different, Amadeus is developing a platform that will aggregate NDC content together with existing airline content, which it hopes to roll out in the next 12-18 months. This platform will aggregate all the offers airlines make based on the agent's request as well as the content currently available on the GDS.

Andy expects that agents will shift between this platform and the traditional GDS and that there will be two workflows for the foreseeable future. The current GDS structure will continue, he says, adding that event airlines that are implementing NDC programmes will not migrate off the GDS any time soon. ■

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SAA eyes Lubumbashi route

TESSA REED

SAA has applied for an air service licence to fly to Lubumbashi from OR Tambo, King Shaka International Airport and Cape Town International Airport.

The application was published in the July 6 *Government Gazette* and is for seven flights per week.

A relief schedule that was put together by SAA, Mango and Airlink shortly

after the grounding of SA Express, did not include the Lubumbashi route – which was previously serviced by SAX – because none of the airlines is licensed to fly to Lubumbashi.

Congo Airways commenced flights between Johannesburg and Lubumbashi in mid-May. The airline is not supported in the GDS and has appointed Lunar Travel as its preferred selling agent in South Africa. ■



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Conference in style

The Michelangelo Hotel in Sandton, Johannesburg, is offering a full-day conference promotion until August 31. For R595pp, clients receive three refreshment breaks, lunch (beverages excluded), table accessories (notepad, pen, water and mints), parking at Nelson Mandela Square, data projector, screen, and an after-conference refreshment. For an extra R395 per person, clients can stay on for a three-course dinner in the Piccolo Mondo restaurant. Kirsten Hendriks (left), Gauteng sales centre manager, and Hara Jackson, group sales manager, of the Michelangelo. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

GDS surcharges here to stay – court ruling

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

A COMPLAINT laid against Lufthansa when it imposed its €16 (R247) 'distribution cost charge' on GDS bookings was rejected by the European Commission at the end of May.

The Brussels-based GDS representative, European Technology and Travel Services Association (ETTSA), laid the complaint in 2015. The association argued that Lufthansa had breached the EU code of conduct on computer reservation systems (CRSs) by engaging in discriminatory behaviour in favour of its own CRS.

The EU's CRS regulation states that "air services by all

airlines are (to be) displayed in a non-discriminatory way on travel agencies' computer screens... as these distribution channels might influence consumer choice".

After spending two years investigating the complaint, and informing ETTSA in November 2017 that it had reached a legal decision, the Commission appeared to backtrack at the end of May.

In its ruling, the Commission said it "does not intend to conduct a further investigation" and considers it "inappropriate" to act, because "the rules relied upon in the complaint are under review and may be amended".

ETTSA has described this ruling as unacceptable and

has called on the European Parliament to "reprimand the Commission and insist it fulfil its role".

Otto de Vries, ceo of Asata, told *TNW* that he shared ETTSA's concerns. "It seems to me that the rejection was not made on adequate grounds, as complaints should be assessed based on existing rules and not potential, future changes. We support ETTSA and look forward to the outcome of the objection."

ETTSA formally objected to the Commission's ruling on June 19 and now awaits a formal decision regarding the next step, which it might only receive in the next few months. ■

FCM unveils Chatbot Sam

SARAH ROBERTSON

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's FCM will roll out Chatbot Sam, its first artificial intelligence (AI) device, next month.

Sam aggregates all the information a traveller needs, in one place when the user needs it, giving them their own 'personal assistant' on the move. It is fully integrated with FCM's booking and expense management systems, so that all bookings automatically appear in the traveller's itinerary, and prompts the user to take actions that comply with corporate policy guidelines.

Euan McNeil, gm of FCM Travel Solutions South Africa, says Sam's applications include sending travellers a weather forecast the night before travel, helping them know what to pack. On the day of travel, Sam can estimate options for travel to the airport, including cost and travel times, before connecting the traveller with company-approved transfer options.

On arrival, the traveller is automatically notified which carousel to collect their luggage from and given useful city guides, including information on currency, restaurants, tipping customs

and etiquette. If traffic is heavy on the day of departure, Sam rearranges travel plans to leave for the airport early. If a flight is missed, Sam provides details of available flights as well as alternative options, on the Eurostar, for example. It also gives travellers the opportunity to speak directly to FCM's team, if necessary.

After the trip, Sam reminds users to submit expense claims.

Euan says Sam has been developed to provide an additional interface for travellers that complements but will never replace the skills and insights of the TMC. ■



**World
Choir
Games**



**TSHWANE 2018
SOUTH AFRICA**



Gauteng becomes the stage for World Choir Games

The Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA) welcomed participants from around the world to the tenth World Choir Games, which was held in Tshwane (Pretoria) between July 5 and 14.

THE games attracted 16 000 participants from more than 60 countries to Tshwane, which won the rights to host the event following the 2016 World Choir Games in Sochi, Russia.

The games took place at various venues around the city, including the South African State Theatre, St Alban's Cathedral in Pretoria Central, ZK Matthews Great Hall at the University of South Africa, and the Musaion and Aula Theatre at the Hatfield Campus of the University of Pretoria (UP).

“ I can't find words to express how excited we are to host this prestigious event in Gauteng. It gives us an opportunity to showcase what the Gauteng city region, South Africa and Africa are about. ”

The World Choir Games Village was set up at the Hellenic Community Centre, across the road from the UP Hatfield campus. The village hosted the games' main operation centre, and held a range of entertainment attractions, live music, and a market every day during the games. The village also had a range of dining options as well as souvenirs on sale for the participants. The market offered taxi services to those who wished to explore the city, along with packaged tours and guides.

Speaking at a media conference ahead of the opening ceremony, which was held at the Sun Arena in the Menlyn Maine precinct on July 4, Gauteng Tourism board member, **Michael Sass**, said: “I can't find words to express how excited we are to host this prestigious event in Gauteng. It gives us an opportunity to showcase what the Gauteng city region, South Africa and Africa are about.”

He added: “As Africans, we are known for song and dance and we are going to get everyone dancing over the duration of the event.” In addition, he urged participants to explore Gauteng, which is unique in many respects.

The Gauteng City Region offers various shopping, cuisine, leisure and other visitor experiences. But it also offers unparalleled authentic cultural experiences, especially in the various townships across the city.

“The historic township of Mamelodi offers a wide range of culture and heritage attractions, which include Stanza Bopape Community Centre, Solomon Mahlangu Square, Fabian Ribero House, Mamelodi Rondavels, and Eerste Fabriek,” said acting Gauteng Tourism ceo, **Yoland Ruiters** Mamelodi, which means ‘the mother of melodies’ in English, is an important place for the South African music arena, particularly because of a strong jazz culture and history. The township is home to the late legendary Phillip Tabane and other jazz icons, including Vusi Mahlasela and Julian Bahula.

For nature and wildlife enthusiasts, the host city is home to the Dinokeng



Game Reserve. The establishment is the largest of its kind in the world, with Big Five roaming within a residential reserve that is adjacent to an urbanised area.

City of Tshwane Mayor, **Solly Msimanga**, welcomed the assembled media and guests to the games. He expressed hope that the event would be successful, and exceed expectations. The Mayor also reaffirmed the call for the participants to explore the city.

Yoland said events of this sort were a key aspect of growing the numbers of visitors to Gauteng. “It is the hope of GTA that attendees at the event will be inspired to visit the region again.”



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GAUTENG

Thailand



Still a firm favourite, Thailand is making strides with shedding its image as a destination for the masses. Sue van Winsen finds out more.

Moving from mass market to luxury

TO A large degree, the SA travel space to Thailand tends to be flooded with R10 000, seven-night beach packages, which has made it particularly popular with travellers on tight budgets. But the destination wants to shed its reputation for mass market and instead focus on targeted new niches – luxury travellers in particular.

John Ridler, PR and media manager for Thompsons Holidays, says Thailand has made some big strides in breaking away from the cheap beach breakaway stereotype. “There is a greater element of adventure and culture, available through tours and excursions, to give clients a true feel of the essence of Thailand, from interacting with elephants to temple tours, visiting the hill tribes in the jungle – there is so much more to offer than just the beach.”

Lesley Simpson, marketing representative for the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in South Africa, says it is an ongoing goal to highlight the diversity of different travel experiences to Thailand, and across all markets.

“Traditional markets would be family, honeymooners, and student travel but for the past two years we have also looked to special interest, covering luxury travel, sport such as golf, as well as the LGBT traveller. Thailand is not simply about Phuket and so the objective is to educate both



“It is an ongoing goal to highlight the diversity of different travel experiences to Thailand, and across all markets.”

Lesley Simpson

the agent and the traveller on the many different highlights and experiences Thailand has to offer,” says Lesley.

Open to ‘New Shades’

In an effort to encourage travellers to change perceptions of Thailand, TAT has launched its ‘Open to the New Shades’ marketing campaign. TAT deputy governor for marketing communications, **Tanes Petsuwan**, explains: “The Amazing Thailand’s ‘Open to the New Shades’ concept is about asking visitors to open their minds

and hearts to deepen and widen their experiences into a new perception of attractions and variety of experiences in Thailand.

“The communication campaign will introduce brand-new products to visitors, or reveal a new charming character of well-known destinations through creativity. This campaign aims to attract more repeat visitors and first-time travellers. Visitors can discover new perspectives in existing attractions or indulge in experiences in new tourist attractions,” he adds.

The campaign covers five main travel sectors: gastronomy, arts and crafts, Thai culture, nature, and Thai way of life. It is in line with the strategy to shift Thailand’s travel industry away from mass markets to niche markets, especially high-spending, long-staying travellers.

Mixed response

So, are agents getting more creative in terms of selling Thailand outside of the ‘cheap and cheerful’ packages we’ve grown accustomed to? Yes and no, says Lesley. “Some most definitely,” she says, “But as TAT, we are always looking for new creative ways in terms of joint marketing. It cannot be the same as previous years as travellers’ demands have changed. We need to get more creative and even look at more B2C (business to consumer) opportunities.”

Emerging high-end options

Khao Lak

About an hour-and-a-half from Phuket airport, Khao Lak is definitely on the up, says Lesley. “It is much quieter than the likes of Patong, so well suited to the repeat client but also the more discerning traveller, as there are a few beautiful properties such as the Beyond Resort, Centara, Bangsak Merlin, as well as the

smaller, more boutique equivalent of the Sarojin.”

Northern Thailand

Heading inland, northern Thailand – Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai in particular – are taking shape with increased demand. “It is such a beautiful part of the country, offering everything opposite to the southern parts – even its food,” says Lesley.

Luxury on the seas

Further reinforcing Thailand’s luxury offering, this year for the first time, the Tourism Authority of Thailand opted to give its media briefings at Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) on board luxury yachts moored at the Ocean Marina Pattaya.

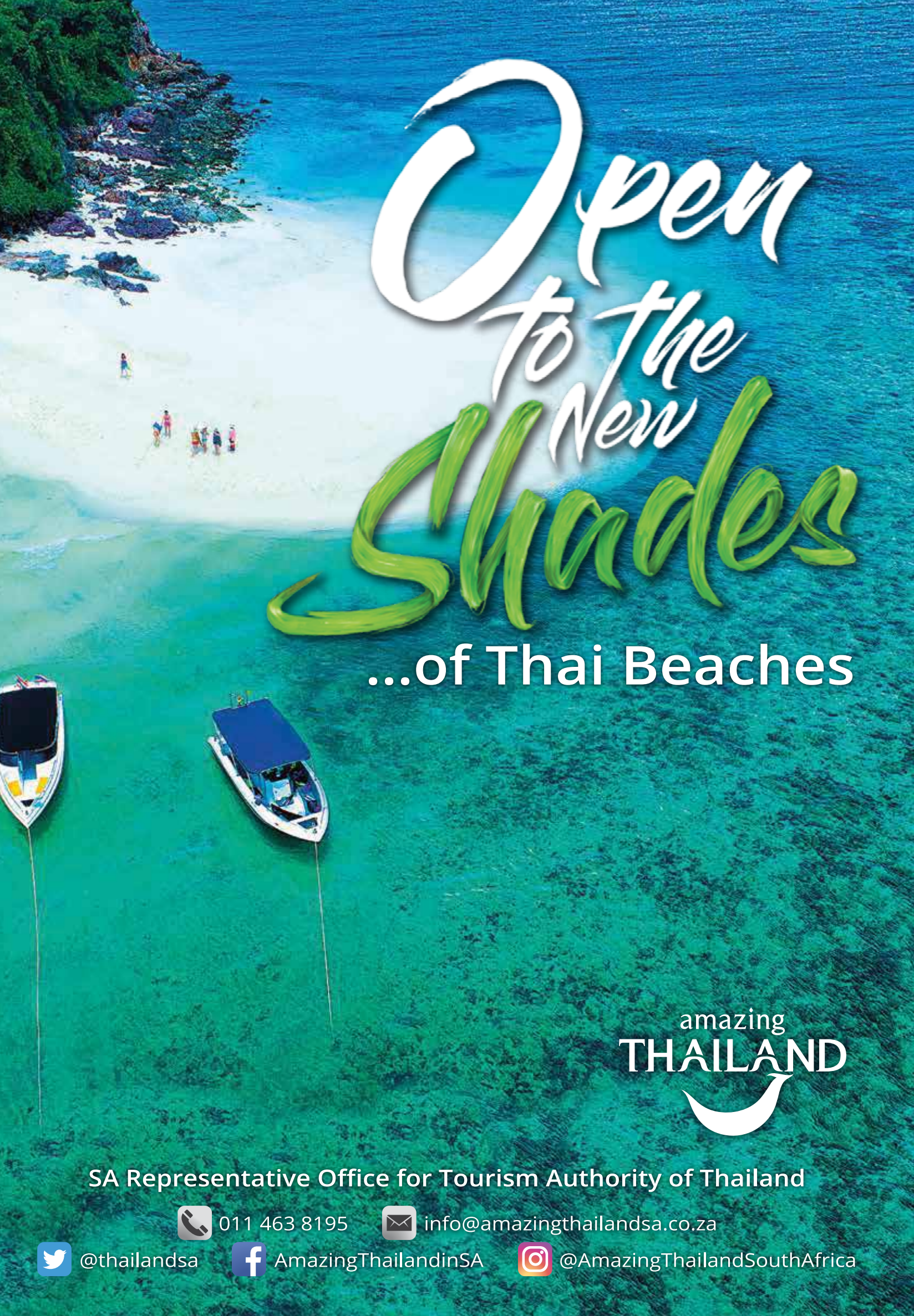
The deluxe, multimillion-dollar yachts are available for daily or overnight cruises and charters by clientele celebrating special occasions such as honeymoons, weddings and anniversaries.

Explaining the decision, Tanes says: “This year, we shifted the focus

(of TTM+) to a niche market theme, ‘Million Shades of Romance’, so it was decided to shift the focus of the media briefings accordingly, too.”

Discussing topics addressed, he added: “We were asked everything from the treatment of animals to new infrastructure projects to garbage disposal to opening up of secondary cities and new airline connections.

“There is no doubt a sea change is occurring in the way travel journalists report on developments.”



Open to the New Shades

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Temporary visitor ban at key attraction

FOLLOWING the decision to implement a four-month tourism ban to Maya Bay in Phi Phi National Park (ending on September 30), the Thai government has explained that it will be strictly enforced. No boats are permitted to enter the bay in front of the beach, or even drop anchor at nearby Loh Samah Bay.

During this period, the government will undertake a coastal and marine environment quality evaluation study on the condition of reef and beach resources, environmental control, and tourism management. This will be used to determine measures during future off-tourist seasons.

Book it!

Wendy Wu's 'Culinary and Cooking in Thailand' private tour (ex-JNB) starts from R30 824 per adult in a twin/double room. Rates include international economy-class flights on Singapore Airlines, domestic flights, six nights' accommodation at three-star hotels, private airport transfers, specific meals, English-speaking guides on excursions, boat trip, two bottles of mineral water per day and government taxes. It excludes airport taxes of approximately R904. Valid until end-September 2018.

THAILAND



Monks are second to the monarchy in social hierarchy and are accorded great respect.

Keep your guests out of jail

HOLLYWOOD may be to blame for creating the misconception that Thailand is a destination where 'anything goes' with depictions of wild full-moon parties and never-ending street parties, but the reality is the country is very firm when it comes to certain issues. It is often the job of the agent to explain to clients that certain behaviour will not be tolerated by Thai authorities.

Discussing the royal family

The royal family are loved by the Thai people and it is a crime to speak disrespectfully about any member of the monarchy. It is considered extremely impolite to ask any probing or potentially seditious questions. Travellers may even notice that access to certain news sites has been blocked in Thailand because of stories they have reported about the royal family. **John Ridler** of Thompsons Holidays, says the Thai take "great offence" at any criticism or defamatory remarks. "Show nothing but respect when making any reference to their King or Queen."

E-cigarettes and vaping

It is illegal to bring vape or e-cigarettes into Thailand and those caught trying to do so could end up facing

harsh repercussions, including up to 10 years in prison. According to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the sale and supply of e-cigarettes are also banned, with a heavy fine or up to five years' imprisonment if found guilty.

Smoking on beaches

In January this year, the Thai government introduced a smoking ban for specific beaches in Koh Samui, Pattaya, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Chon Buri and Songkhla. The FCO says those caught smoking in non-designated areas could face a THB100 000 fine (R40 500) or up to a year in prison.

Images of Buddha

When travelling in and out of Thailand's airport, your clients are likely to notice signs stating that it is a crime to buy Buddha images for decorative purposes. In Thailand, it is prohibited to export any image of Buddha without written permission from the Thai Government Fine Arts Department or a licence. If a tourist is planning to purchase a Buddha, this needs to be done from a licensed vendor – also, they cannot carry more than five statues at any time and each statue should not be larger than 12cm.

General etiquette

TAT's **Lesley Simpson** says she always recommends that travellers learn to 'wai' when visiting Thailand. "This involves pressing palms together and bowing your head slightly followed by the gents' or ladies' equivalent of 'sawadeeka' or 'sawadeekap'." She also recommends learning a few easy words, even if just to say 'thank you', adding that these words change when addressing men and women. As is the case in many destinations, it is strongly advisable that travellers dress conservatively when visiting temples. In the case of women, it means covering their legs and shoulders, and everyone should remove their shoes upon arrival. Advise travellers to keep a look out for signs indicating whether photography is permitted or not. If sitting down, never point feet toward a Buddha image. John adds that monks come only just beneath the monarchy in the social hierarchy. "Theoretically, monks are forbidden to have any close contact with women, which means, as a female, you mustn't sit or stand next to a monk, or even brush against his robes. If it's essential to pass him something, put the object down so that he can then pick it up – never hand it over directly.

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Book it!

Thompsons Holidays is offering a four-star, seven-night Koh Samui package (ex-JNB) with rates starting from R22 434pps. Rate includes return flights to Koh Samui (including airline levy), return airport-hotel transfers, accommodation, WiFi and breakfast. Surcharges apply for weekend travel. Valid September 1 to December 10.

THAILAND

Cave could be a tourist attraction

JUST a day or so after the rescue of a young soccer team from the 10km-long Tham Luang Nang Non cave outside Chiang Rai, news services were reporting that the cave may be developed as a tourist attraction.

At a news conference on July 10, **Chongklai Woraponsathron**, Thailand's deputy head of national parks, put forward the idea that the labyrinth of caves, one of Thailand's longest, could be in line for tourist site status.

Caves are already popular attractions in Thailand, strongly associated with adventure tourism. They are also spiritual

sites, often housing Buddha images and shrines.

Cave kayaking or canoeing in Phang Nga Bay is a highlight of a visit to Phuket, where participants paddle into lagoons and chambers within limestone outcrops that jut out of the sea. For many years tourists to the Phi Phi islands took an excursion to the nearby Viking Cave with its mysterious drawings of Viking ships, and from where birds' nests were harvested for Chinese soup, but it has since been closed for preservation purposes.

For advanced cavers, there are many caves to be explored

in the country in a sport that combines climbing, hiking, rafting and a good level of fitness.

Among those rated most impressive are the Tham Lot Cave south of the village of Pai in the north, Tham Chiang Dao – a complex of 100 caves near Chiang Mai, Phraya Nakhon Cave in the Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park in the Gulf of Thailand, Phi Hua To Cave, adorned with prehistoric paintings in Krabi, and Tham Lum Khao Ngu or Snake Mountain Cave in Kanchanaburi, which is said to house the tallest cave column in the world at 62m.



Provinces are tapping into their tourism potential.

Riviera project to enhance tourism offering

THE Tourism Authority of Thailand is spearheading the marketing push of four coastal provinces known as the 'Thailand Riviera'.

A masterplan has been prepared by the Thai government that will see the provinces of Petchaburi, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Chumphon and Ranong upgraded to tap into their potential for natural, cultural, historical, gastronomic, sports and community-based travel.

Within the provinces are 25 national parks and water parks, 538km of coastline, 37 beaches, 10 bays and 25 islands,

as well as six community-based tourism projects. Other attractions include several golf courses, shopping centres and sporting facilities.

Next steps to enhance the tourism offering of the Thailand Riviera will see the completion of infrastructure development (particularly in terms of water supply and road networks), development of night markets and support for food, adventure and ecotourism ventures. Specific niche market projects will include the development of the area as a global health tourism hub.

Did you know?

Singapore Airlines is offering promotional fares for sale until July 31 for travel ex-Johannesburg to selected destinations, including Thailand. Fares start from R5 000 (inclusive of all taxes) for flights on SQ481, which is an additional service between Johannesburg and Singapore introduced from July 1-August 31 on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays over and above the airline's daily service. The flight departs in the evening at 18h40, arriving in Singapore at 12h00 the following day. Passengers who travel during the two-month period (having booked during June or July) and are in transit, are also entitled to an additional SGD20 (R194) Changi Dollar Voucher. To claim, agents must contact Singapore Airlines' reservations and ticketing office in Johannesburg before departure. This is in addition to the SGD20 Changi Dollar Voucher that passengers can collect at Changi Airport while in transit. ■



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Travel is only valid from Johannesburg to Singapore on SQ 481 on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays from 1 July till 31 August 2018. Fares are valid for sale till 31 July 2018. Fares are also available to other destinations. Terms and Conditions apply. *On top of the Changi Transit Reward valued at SGD20 (ZAR 200), the first 500 passengers to purchase Singapore Airlines tickets in the month of June and July that are transiting in Singapore will receive an additional SGD20 (ZAR 200) reward. Redemption is only valid for passengers travelling on SQ 481 from 1 July till 31 August 2018. To claim the additional transit reward, email JNB_WL@singaporeair.com.sg or contact Singapore Airlines at (011) 880 8560 when the ticket is issued.

A new ship joins MSC's portfolio

MSC Cruises unveiled the *MSC Seaview* in Genoa on June 9. Jason Simpson spent three nights on the ship before it set off on its Mediterranean itinerary.

MSC Cruises' newest ship, the *MSC Seaview*, is the second ship in the company's Seaside Class and sister ship of the *MSC Seaside*, which launched late last year.

Both ships have features designed to bring guests closer to the sea, including glass lifts between the two main pool areas, a glass-floored bridge and catwalks, and wide boardwalks.

The *Seaview* will sail on two itineraries. During the Northern hemisphere summer 2018 season it is spending time in the Mediterranean, visiting Naples, Messina, Valletta, Barcelona, Marseille and Genoa. For the winter 2018/2019 season, the *Seaview* will sail from Brazil, with destinations including Santos, Camboriú, Buzios, Salvador, and Ilha Grande.

The ship can accommodate up to 5 331 guests and has 2 066 air-conditioned cabins, 47 of which are accessible for guests with reduced mobility.

Families are catered for by connecting two or three balcony cabins, each with its own bathroom, and accommodating up to 10 people.

Other options include Grand suites, with a bath and a balcony, some of which are able to accommodate up to five people; and two-bedroom Grand suites, measuring 49 sqm, with one double bed, two single beds, and two bathrooms. There are also three suites that come with a private whirlpool bath. They are bookable on the Aurea

experience, which includes priority boarding, all-inclusive drinks, a spa package, and access to a private solarium.

The *Seaview* features the MSC Yacht Club, where guests have a 24-hour concierge service, a private pool and sundeck, and a 630 sqm private restaurant that seats 128 guests. Suites in the Yacht Club are situated across three decks, and include two Royal Suites, each with a private whirlpool bath; 70 Deluxe suites; nine Interior suites; and five suites (two Deluxe and three Interior) for guests with reduced mobility.

Where to eat

Dining venues include two buffets – the Market Place on Deck 8 and the Ocean Point buffet on Deck 15 – and six speciality restaurants.

The Ocean Cay by **Ramon Freixa** serves Mediterranean-style fish and shellfish dishes. There are three dining concepts on offer from Japanese-American chef, **Roy Yamaguchi** – Teppanyaki, where guests can watch Japanese dishes prepared on teppanyaki grills; Asian Fusion, an à la carte restaurant serving gourmet Asian dishes; and The Sushi Bar, serving sushi, sashimi, and tempura.

Twenty bars and lounges are each created in a different style. The poolside Jungle Beach Bar on deck 18 serves fresh cocktails and juices, while the Champagne Bar on deck 7 serves cold dishes and a selection of champagnes. The Sunset Beach Bar overlooks one of the ship's



The Forest Adventure Park is 970 sqm of water play space designed to keep children entertained.

pools, and serves a range of drinks, including cocktails, punches, beers and wines. At the centrally located Seaview Bar, guests can have a pre-dinner cocktail, or a coffee before an excursion.

MSC Cruises has partnered with Italian chocolate-maker Venchi, to create the Venchi 1878 Chocolate Bar, serving chocolate creations from a master chocolatier; and the Venchi 1878 Gelato and Crêperie, which serves gelatos freshly made daily.

Facilities and entertainment

Health and wellness options include the MSC Aurea Spa, featuring a private treatment area, the Medi Spa Centre, a Thermal Area, Jean Louis David hair salon, Barber Shop, Make-Up Room, Nail Spa, Yoga area, and a fully equipped, 870 sqm gym. The *MSC Seaview* also features eight specially created vinotherapy treatments using Lagatica cosmetics, which are made from grape extracts from the Bocelli family vineyards.

Entertainment options cater for all ages. The Odeon Theatre has 934 seats and will host seven new, original shows that include *Simply*



The Aurea Bar, one of twenty bars and lounges on board.

the Best, a tribute to Tina Turner; *Eclipse*, recreating the psychedelic experiences of Pink Floyd; as well as acrobatic shows, songs and dances. Shows will also be held on the ship's four-storey Atrium, which has a programme of activities including trivia, themed parties, and flash-mobs.

There are six dedicated areas for children, including the Forest Adventure Park, the LEGO Island room and the LEGO Pirates room. The Baby

Club has toys and equipment for the under-threes.

Social media challenges are on offer for teens to create a story about their cruise, as well as MSC's Summer Selfie Contest, where they compete to complete a list of 30 must-have selfies on board.

The ship also has a casino and an entertainment area with a Formula 1 racing simulator, arcade games, and two full-size bowling alleys, 105m-long zip lines, and 160m-long waterslides. ■



Pictured shortly before the launch are Collin Khomo (left), from Cruise About, and md of MSC Cruises South Africa, Ross Volk.



The casino is just one of the many entertainment venues designed to cater for all tastes and ages. Photos: Jason Simpson

Births, deaths, marriages, promotions – we want to know! Please fax or e-mail TNW's Savannah Freemantle, at savannaf@nowmedia.co.za or (011) 214 7324.



Tickle your taste buds

Johannesburg-based members of Travel Counsellors recently participated in a Thai cooking class held at Taste-Buds Cook Club in Randburg, and hosted by The Holiday Factory and the Tourism Authority of Thailand. From left: Travel Counsellors Angela Symons, Natalie Matthews, and Kirsty Mayson, and Gold Travel Counsellor, Siobhan Nel.

Appointments

■ **Mike Jameson** has been appointed general manager of Destiny Hotel & Convention Centre by BON Hotels.

■ **Pamela Jonah** has been appointed sales and marketing executive of BON Hotel Elvis, Wuse 2, Abuja, and national sales manager of BON Hotel International West Africa.

■ **Janneman Britz** has been appointed general manager of BON Hotel Stratton Asokoro and regional manager of BON Hotel International West Africa.

■ **Frederic Feijs** has been appointed Radisson Hotel Group regional director for Francophone Africa and Egypt.

Rene takes the reins

Following Alet Steyn's decision to join her husband in Dubai, **Rene Swart**, will take over the reins at Wendy Wu Tours as gm for South Africa. Rene worked in the leisure department at Reynolds Travel before moving across to the Wendy Wu team when Reynolds Travel took over the GSA account two years ago.



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APSO MEMBER

THE Travel Corporation South Africa has restructured its team in a move it says will bring efficiencies.

Under the new structure, **Teresa Richardson** will hold the positions of SA md as well as head of marketing and communications, while **Kelly Jackson** is head of sales.

The former brand management roles for Trafalgar, Insight Vacations, Uniworld, Contiki and Busabout have been dissolved, with sales managers incorporated

within two sales teams reporting to Kelly. One sales team will represent open-age brands (Trafalgar, Cost Saver, Insight, Luxury Gold and Uniworld) and the other will represent all youth brands (Contiki, Busabout and U by Uniworld)

"TTC sales managers will have fewer brands to represent, giving them more time to service their agents," says Teresa.

Cullinan Holdings, which owns TTC, delisted in March and sold its stake in Wilderness Safaris earlier this month. ■

Amex GBT expects early closing of HRG deal

AMERICAN Express Global Business Travel (GBT) expects to complete the acquisition of Hogg Robinson Group plc (HRG) on July 19 following the receipt of EU merger control clearance.

In a media statement, American Express GBT said: "The combined group is expected to offer

clients and travellers a wider range of products and services, bringing together the best of both businesses, including technology, people and a comprehensive geographic footprint."

Amex GBT announced its intention to acquire HRG in February this year subject to approvals. ■

HWT turns 20!



Harvey World Travel celebrates two decades in Southern Africa this year. In 1997 an international business delegation landed in South Africa with the aim of opening an HWT franchise. Today HWT South Africa is a well-established retail brand with 70 agencies across the country. From left: **Anneke Geldenhuys**, gm of Harvey World Travel Southern Africa; **Lidia Folli**, ceo of BidTravel; and **Marco Cristofoli**, coo of BidTravel leisure cluster and md of Harvey World Travel Southern Africa. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Airlink applies for Indian Ocean island routes

TESSA REED

AIRLINK has applied for licences to fly to Mauritius, the Seychelles and Mayotte.

The application to the South African Air Services Licensing Council (ASLC) is for seven weekly flights between Durban and Mauritius; seven weekly flights between Johannesburg

and the Seychelles; and one weekly flight between Johannesburg and Mayotte and Durban and Mayotte.

There are currently no flights between South Africa and Mayotte, while the Durban-Mauritius and Johannesburg-Seychelles routes are serviced by Air Mauritius and Air Seychelles respectively.

The airline's application

for licences to operate flights to Abuja, Libreville, Douala, Luanda, Brazzaville, Moroni and Cotonou have been approved by the South African ASLC and the airline is awaiting foreign operator's permits before it can launch flights on these routes.

A number of these regional routes have been affected by a reduction on SAA frequencies. ■

SA Tourism yet to renew Asata campaign

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

SA TOURISM has yet to implement phase three of its Local Leisure at its Best campaign with Asata, despite committing to partner with the trade to increase bleisure travel and address the seasonality gap.

"The first two phases exceeded all expectations, reaching 20 000 direct potential travellers over the past two years, ending in October 2017," said **Otto de Vries**, ceo of Asata. "We then proposed a third and final phase that would focus on government employees. We are confident that

this would continue to contribute meaningfully to [SA Tourism's] 5-in-5 campaign's aim to add one million more domestic holiday trips through leisure and business tourism."

SA Tourism told TNW that it had not renewed the campaign and had no partnerships with Asata for this financial year.

"Our budget will be spent on campaigns that aim to encourage domestic travel through showcasing the affordability and unique experiences provided by our hidden gems, pushing bleisure, and addressing the seasonality gap by targeting millennials,

romantic getaway and solo travel markets," said **Sisa Nthsona**, ceo of South African Tourism. "We will also continue to increase our focus on events by entering into relationships with the Sports, and Arts and Culture ministries."

This is a strategy that SA Tourism has carried forward with the recent launch of its new domestic campaign: 'It's your country – enjoy it!' This campaign is aimed specifically at the 'up-and-coming' black South African market. Sisa added that all trade partnerships would need to support this focus to retain SA Tourism's support. ■

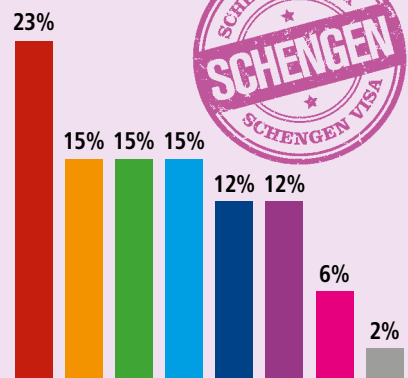
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