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Siza is back!

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

THE board of SA Express (SAX) appointed **Siza Mzimela** as the airline's acting ceo on August 1, with approval from the Minister of Public Enterprises, **Pravin Gordhan**.

Siza has more than 20 years' aviation experience. She was the executive vp of global passenger services at SAA from 2001 to 2002, and then executive vp of global sales and Voyager from 2001-2002, before being promoted to ceo of SAX, a position she held until 2010. She then took up the position of ceo of SAA until 2012, before launching Blue Crane Aviation as an executive chairperson in December 2012, and becoming the ceo in March 2015.

In the months preceding her return as acting ceo of SAX, Siza was part of the ministerial intervention team that was appointed in May to stabilise

the operations and finances of SAX, and to identify options to recapitalise the airline.

The trade has welcomed her appointment. **Mary Shilleto**, ceo of Thompsons Travel, called it "good news for SAX". "I believe she will make every effort to engage positively with TMCs and reassure corporates that they are able to travel with peace of mind and reliability."

Jonathan Gerber from Travel Assignment Group agrees, adding that her background with SAA makes her well positioned to assist with the proposed SAA, SAX, Mango merger.

"Siza's main focus initially will have to be on ensuring that the rest of the fleet receives its airworthiness certification and that the airline plans a sustainable re-launch and growth path. She will also need to instil a clear sense of SAX's role in the market. You cannot have an airline operating with schedules that are never

on time and aircraft that either don't work or present with safety concerns," said Jonathan.

Marco Cristofoli, ceo of BidTravel, believes the appointment bodes well for SAX. "Siza has industry experience and is a capable ceo. I would like to see her show strong leadership and good business acumen. I hope that she has the political will of the ANC backing her, otherwise the challenge that lies ahead of her will be all the more difficult."

He said, to restore industry faith in SAX, Siza must deliver on the promises she makes. "She should be careful to only promise things that she knows she will deliver on. Grand promises will fall on deaf ears. She will also need to 'hit the ground running' and ensure that she personally engages SAX trade partners to provide clarity on the way forward for the airline." ■



You're invited!

Thompsons Holidays' annual Disney Roadshow will take place on October 9, 10 and 11 in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg respectively from 09h00 to 12h00. Venues are still to be confirmed. The roadshow will keep the trade up to date on new rides, events and shows planned for Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida, and Disneyland Paris for the coming season. Pictured: **Leavarn Adams** (left), reservations consultant, Americas and Cruising, and **Natasha Carey**, reservations consultant, Thompsons Holidays. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Agent found guilty of fraud

TESSA REED

AN AGENT facing charges of fraud has been found guilty on one of the charges and is expected to appear for sentencing later this month. A court date for one of her other charges is also expected to be set for this month.

Fraud charges were laid against **Fatima Joosub** last year after she allegedly took money from clients and did not pay it over to suppliers. She was then arrested earlier this year on further charges and spent time in jail, before being released on bail. The charges were laid against her by clients of two

companies of which she was director, namely Ayka Travel and One for Travel Services. One of the affected clients has opted for an out-of-court settlement with an agreement that Fatima pay back the monies owed.

Fatima has denied owning One for Travel Services on the basis that due diligence was

not completed before she took ownership of the company. However, TNW has seen copies of the transfer of ownership and share certificates in Fatima and **Shameem Joosub's** (Fatima's mother) names.

Both were also listed as directors of the company on the Companies and Intellectual

Property Commission. The SA Police Service said earlier this year that Fatima and Shameem Joosub, were facing roughly 35 counts of fraud spanning Cape Town, Phoenix, Alberton, Douglasdale, Sandton and Pietermaritzburg. Fatima has reserved comment. ■

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"So maybe we should take up agriculture?"

TNW

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Into Africa show to feature product power hour

THE virtual trade show for corporate and leisure travel agents, Into Africa, will feature a product power hour in addition to speakers, who will address topical issues.

Exhibitors will have the opportunity to update the trade on their Africa offering in a series of five-minute presentations. Agents will be able to follow up with questions and private discussions at the exhibitor's stand.

Over 200 travel agents and corporate and leisure buyers are expected to attend the highly focused expo. The number of exhibitors is limited

Natalie Cumberlege

to ten. The concept is for exhibitors to be able to reach an audience that often miss traditional events due to time

constraints or simply because they are located outside the main centres.

The virtual trade show looks and runs like a traditional expo but agents will not have to leave their desk to attend the four-hour show, **Natalie Cumberlege**, business development manager of Online Expos explains.

Partners include Global Business Travel Association and the African Business Travel Association. The media partners of the show include *Travel & Meetings Buyer*, *Travel News Weekly* and *Travelinfo*.

Into Africa will take place on September 13. See page 5 to register. ■

Travel BEE trust established to develop black females

SARAH ROBERTSON

SINCE the founding of the first BEE travel and tourism trust during 2017, a few small agencies have got involved, with two large industry players on the brink of signing up.

Founder of The Travel and Events Empowerment Trust, **Michael Gladwin**, says he believes it is the first of its kind in the industry. It is deemed to be 100% black female owned, and Michael says it was set up to specifically support and develop black females in the travel and events industry.

He says traction for the fund was initially slow, as BBBEE is a strategic focus area and companies plan ahead before implementing new initiatives ahead of the next financial year.

"Suppliers can invest a percentage of their nett profit after tax into the trust to maximise their BBBEE points on the enterprise development and supplier development scorecards. Companies that invest a percentage of their annual salary bill can gain additional points through the skills development scorecard," says Michael.

Trust members source black females in the industry, identify their development needs and assist them with educational, mentorship, marketing, legal or financial requirements.

Michael has been an agency owner for 10 years now and says frustration about having to use the same small pool of big suppliers when arranging holiday packages was a key reason for founding the trust. He says there are so many

opportunities for the little guys to get business in the industry and envisages that a whole new supply chain in the South African travel industry could be built once existing development gaps have been filled.

The trust also offers BBBEE share ownership opportunities to traditionally white-owned companies. An agency can donate shares of between 10% and 51%, upping its BBBEE rating to level two or three. The trust is named a non-executive shareholder, which has no influence over the management of the travel company, but benefits from the arrangement in terms of receipt of shareholder dividends. These are then reinvested into further black female travel industry development. ■

Gina Richter selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Andgo.com.** Four-star Zanzibar offer from R10 840pp sharing. Offer includes return flights departing Johannesburg, approximate taxes, return transfers and four nights' accommodation with all meals and selected drinks. Valid from September 1-October 30.
- **Ican Holidays.** Cuba special offer from R22 190pp sharing. Offer includes three nights in Havana with breakfast daily, four nights in Varadero with breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, private transfers and two days' sightseeing with English-speaking Cuban guide. Valid for travel from November 1-December 18.
- **Mozambique Tours.** Five-night package from R22 720pp sharing. Offer includes return flights departing Johannesburg, approximate taxes, five nights' accommodation and tours. Valid until December 10.
- **Curious Traveller.** Lima and Cusco from R19 960pp sharing. Offer includes five nights' accommodation, taxes, tourist tickets, entrance fees, English-speaking guide and more. Valid until March 31, 2019.

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Regent Travel Insurance now fully integrated with Hollard

SARAH ROBERTSON

FROM July 1 Regent Travel Insurance has been fully integrated into Hollard's portfolio of travel insurance products.

Regent Insurance Group was purchased by the Hollard Group as part of a R1,8 billion deal last year, with Regent's staff moving across to Hollard's Parktown headquarters to form an expanded team of 18 staff. Since then, the insurance products have been gradually

integrated into Hollard's systems, officially launching as one combined brand this month.

This means that clients who had previously booked Regent insurance products will need to contact Hollard for new policies in future.

Uriah Jansen, md of Oojah Travel Protection, which administers Hollard's travel insurance, says the integration of the two entities has resulted in a much stronger business model. "We are in a much better

position in the marketplace due to the strength of the two teams' combined resources."

The majority of Hollard's Travel Insurance policies are booked by travel agents, with the XL Group being one of the insurance company's preferred partners. Hollard is also responsible for all the embedded travel insurance policies for MSC Cruises and Club Med and is also the underwriter for the Discovery card non-medical travel insurance cover. ■

FlySafair expands GDS offering

SARAH ROBERTSON

FLYSAFAIR expanded its GDS offering last month, bringing fares more in line with those on its website. The move has made selling FlySafair easier, say agents.

Previously only high-yield fares had been loaded in the GDSs with the airline saying that GDS costs were too high to absorb for lower-yield fares.

Iqram Mohamed, travel consultant at Thompsons Travel, said he was selling more FlySafair flights, explaining that the price difference between the airline's website and the GDS was now negligible. He said it was also much faster for agents to book through the GDSs on one booking platform.

Kirby Gordon, head of sales and distribution for FlySafair, confirmed that the uptake on the new fares

had been good, with a lot of positive feedback coming from agents about pricing and service.

However, despite the good uptake, Kirby is still concerned about high GDS distribution costs. "We had hoped that we might experience some economies of scale but, unfortunately, the results so far have not been especially encouraging. We're continuing to look at ways to reduce these distribution costs, and we're positive that we have some good options on the table, but if we're not able to scrape together some stronger savings, we will need to up the entry fares in the channel," he said.

The airline adopted a number of other agent-friendly initiatives recently, including signing preferred agreements with both the Flight Centre Travel Group and the XL Travel Group. ■

Celebrity Cruises to transform fleet

CELEBRITY Cruises has invested more than \$500m (R6,6bn) in a reimagining of its fleet. The upgrades are scheduled to start in 2019. All suites on *Celebrity Millennium*,

Celebrity Constellation, *Celebrity Infinity*, and *Celebrity Summit* will receive a makeover. *Celebrity Solstice*, *Celebrity Eclipse*, *Celebrity Equinox*, and *Celebrity Silhouette* will

each receive a Reflection Suite and Signature Suite. Additionally, every ship will now offer refurbished versions of The Retreat Sundeck and The Retreat Lounge. ■



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A brief look at this week's hotel news

BON Hotels acquires two new properties

BON Hotels has acquired two new KwaZulu Natal properties. The Protea Hotel Empangeni and the Protea Hotel Richards Bay will be rebranded the BON Hotel Empangeni and BON Hotel Waterfront Richards Bay. The Protea Hotel Empangeni comprises 55 rooms, an in-house restaurant, bar and three meeting rooms with a total seating capacity of 230 people. BON Hotel Waterfront Richards Bay offers 75 rooms with views of the ocean and yacht harbour. Facilities include a conference centre with three meeting rooms, restaurant, cocktail bar and lounge and swimming pool.

New Tsogo Sun hotel to open in Zambia

TSOGO Sun will open a new hotel in Zambia next month – the 130-room Garden Court Kitwe. In-room facilities include electronic safe and air-conditioning. There is complimentary WiFi, self-service workstation, a swimming pool and a gym. There are six conference venues and event spaces are available, with the largest seating 240 delegates. The Copper Club Restaurant, Bar and Terrace has a choice of dining options, from a buffet breakfast to pizzas from the wood-fired oven. The terrace is also available for sundowners.

Residence Inn by Marriott opens in London

MARRIOTT International has opened its largest extended-stay property yet, in Warwick Road in Earls Court, Kensington, London. The hotel features 319 suites in seven categories, some with their own private terraces. Both one- and two-bedroom suites have living, working and sleeping areas designed for guests on an extended stay. The hotel's eighth floor terrace will be available to use as an events venue. Each suite boasts fully equipped kitchens, complimentary WiFi, work desks and smart TVs. Guests can also enjoy a complimentary breakfast seven days a week.

Professional programme sees lacklustre response

SARAH ROBERTSON

NEARLY six months after the launch of the Asata Professional Programme, only a handful of designations have been awarded, with many consultants still unaware of the how the programme can benefit them.

The first two designations, Travel Practitioner, which requires two years' industry experience; and Travel Professional, which requires five years' industry experience; were opened for registration a few months ago. Asata is able to award designations for Travel Practitioner but not yet for Travel Professional.

Nivashnee Naidoo, professional project and programme manager for Asata, says nearly 200 travel agents have registered on the programme and a few Travel Practitioner designations have been awarded. There are an estimated 7 945 agents in SA,

based on Travelinfo users.

Nivashnee says Asata anticipates an increase in the number of designations awarded over the next few months. She attributes the slow uptake to differing internal roll-out times and strategies from the big travel consortiums in the industry. However, she says the majority of Asata members have committed their support to the programme.

She said the majority of consultants who had shown an interest in the programme had over five years' experience and were waiting for Asata to be able to award the Travel Professional designation, estimated for September or October, so that they could simultaneously register and apply for this designation.

Maria Watkins, gm of Tourvest Leisure Travel Group, WWTB and Product, says the programme is very important as it could entirely change

how the industry is perceived. However, she felt that the launch of the programme had not yet reached the intended target market of consultants with two to five years' experience. She said most of Asata's correspondence came via its newsletter and at regional meetings, which was an effective method for industry owners but not for the consultants.

"At this stage consultants do not fully understand what the programme can do for them. Asata should be working closely with TMCs to create internal awareness campaigns encouraging more uptake."

The launch of Certified Travel Professional and its corresponding curriculum is still in progress.

Nivashnee encouraged consultants to register for these two designations as soon as possible, as the discounted launch rate would expire in September. ■



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Living in service of others

In the latest Who Is ... Savannah Freemantle chats to Gold Travel Counsellor, **Siobhan Nel**.

“**W**ORK life balance?” Siobhan laughs. “I’m not the person to ask. Until a few months ago I started my day at 05h00 in the morning and finished it at 24h00. I don’t know if you can call that balanced!”

At 35, Siobhan prides herself on living her life in service of others. “I believe if you give now, you will gain in the future. I spend my hours in service of my clients, my foster children, my rescue animals, and the broader community.”

Initially, Siobhan studied Education and Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand before realising that it wasn’t the career for her. “As much as I loved education, I didn’t want to teach in South Africa. I then stumbled across a vacancy at Flight Centre and the travel bug bit me.” Siobhan was at Flight Centre from the end of 2004 until November 2008. She was promoted to team leader in 2006, before becoming a product development manager in 2007.

“If it wasn’t for Flight Centre, I wouldn’t be where I am today. It was like a crash course in travel. I was thrown in at the deep end and it was

a case of ‘sink, or swim’. It helped me to grow up very quickly, learn to problem solve and I developed a lot of confidence. It was also a lot of fun! It was a non-stop environment where you worked hard and partied harder. It was great for someone in their 20s. Working as a product development manager also cemented my expertise in Galileo, airline rules, and fares.”

“As much as I loved education, I didn’t want to teach in South Africa. I then stumbled across a vacancy at Flight Centre and the travel bug bit me.”

However, when it came time for Siobhan to settle down she recognised the need for a slower pace of life and more flexibility. “André and I got married in 2008 and wanted to have kids straight away. Both our mothers had been at home with us as kids, and this was something we really wanted for our children. Travel Counsellors offers the opportunity to manage your own time and work from home. I jumped at the opportunity.”

Siobhan and André started dating when she was just 14. “I was living in Pomona, Kempton Park, and André was one of the ‘bad boys’ from the neighbourhood. Initially I dated my well-behaved neighbour but then I decided that the boys who smoked Camel cigarettes and rode motorbikes were far more interesting. I started hanging out with them and met André. We didn’t click until one of his friends cancelled on me at the last minute for a school dance. André stepped in to save the day and we’ve been together ever since.”

When the couple discovered that they couldn’t have children they were devastated. “Going through a journey of infertility is one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, but we made it through together.” They decided to foster children instead. “We both grew up in beautiful families. We thought that if we could improve the life of a foster child by giving them even one day in our home, it

was worth doing.” Siobhan has since fostered 20 children, two of whom she is in the process of adopting. “The first child I fostered was my son, Valentino, he came to us at six months and he’s now seven. My daughter, Ashley, arrived at six weeks and just 2,9kg. She’s now four.”

“It blows my mind that there are so many broken families in this country. I believe that as humans it is our duty to heal from our trauma, while simultaneously helping others to do the same.

“Becoming a foster parent was one way I could do this.” Siobhan has also completed an Honours in Psychology, which help her in caring for her foster children.

In order to overcome her pain at not being able to experience pregnancy, Siobhan qualified as a doula, which is a non-medical person supports women before, during, or after childbirth. She spent evenings and weekends assisting mothers in childbirth at the Far East Rand Hospital Maternity Ward (a government-run facility). “You’re working with women who are scared, often alone, and without provisions.

The hospital itself couldn’t always provide even the basics for the babies. Some went without socks!” So, Siobhan started putting together care packages for the new-borns.

Siobhan is also an animal lover. “I regularly volunteer at Kitty and Puppy Haven. I aim to be a voice for the voiceless as much as possible. I have adopted seven dogs and absolutely love them! I couldn’t imagine my life without them.”

“I aim to live a life of virtue and to always turn mountains into molehills,” she says. One should never give up. Let’s be honest – the challenges life throws at us are hard, but that’s no reason not to push through. Whenever you want to complain, stop and think of a positive action you could take instead.”

Siobhan’s advice to younger agents is that the travel industry is not just about money. “Customer service is an absolute imperative. You are selling an experience and how you serve your customer is 100% a part of that experience. Don’t be hungry for money at the expense of that experience. It’s not a sustainable approach.”



Getting to know Siobhan

- Siobhan’s biggest goal is to successfully adopt her two children, Valentino and Ashley. She is currently in the final stages of this process.
- Her drive to do well in her career comes from her competitive nature. She doesn’t like to be second best. However, she does it for her personal satisfaction. She dislikes being recognised in front of others – something that made this interview challenging for her.
- In recent months she has started taking her health seriously. She trains with a biokineticist three times a week and focuses on eating a healthy diet.
- The best travel experience she has had was when Travel Counsellors hosted the Gold-awarded agents at the Bahia del Duque resort on Tenerife’ Island in 2015. She says the views were spectacular.
- She has travelled a lot over the course of her career, but never to Bora Bora – her dream destination. She would love to go there, because it’s in the middle of nowhere and challenging to get to! She describes it as being the perfect place for some quality alone-time.
- It’s important to her that she gets to know her clients on a personal level and that they become friends where possible. She has roped many of them into her charity work over the years. She considers her clients a part of her community and believes in the personal touch that knowing someone well brings to her customer service.
- Her most marked characteristic is that she will overcome any challenge thrown her way by looking for ways to turn it into a success for herself, and others. ■

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British Airways has moved its offices from Melrose to Sandton. The new address is Regus, West Tower, 2nd Floor, Nelson Mandela Square, Maude Street, Johannesburg. The call centre number and e-mail addresses for sales managers remain unchanged. The travel trade call centre number is 010 344 0127. Back (from left): Tracey Lanjopoulos, sales manager trade; Nothemba Jara, sales manager corporate; Salama Detlefsen, sales manager corporate; and Rindira Sing, sales manager trade, British Airways/Iberia. Front: Sylvia Pomeranetz, sales manager trade, British Airways/Iberia. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Hotel group walks away from five properties

KERRY HAYES

EFFECTIVE August 1, the management contract between aha Hotels & Lodges and Misty Blue Properties, has been terminated.

Both parties have stated that they have terminated the agreement and that the matter is being dealt with in a civil case.

According to aha, the group ended the agreement because of non-payment of management fees over several months. Misty Blue Properties has cited non-performance from aha's side.

As a result, aha will no longer operate or be responsible for Auberge Hollandaise Guest House; The Square Boutique Hotel and Spa; Urban Park Hotel and Spa; Waterfront Hotel & Spa (formerly Docklands Hotel); and Imperial Hotel. All these properties are in KwaZulu Natal.

The group will continue to operate KZN properties aha Riverside Hotel and Conference Centre; Avondale Boutique Hotel; and aha Gateway Hotel.

The previously aha-branded hotels will trade under their individual hotel names. ■

CemAir won't relinquish former SAX routes

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

CEMAIR will retain the routes and increased frequencies, that it implemented when SA Express was grounded, regardless of SAX's planned return, says **Miles van der Molen**, ceo of CemAir.

On May 24, when SA Express was grounded by the South African Civil Aviation Authority for "serious non-compliance", CemAir announced an

increase in capacity between Johannesburg and Bloemfontein and began operating a direct service between Cape Town and Hoedspruit (which was previously serviced via Johannesburg). A few days later, the airline launched flights between Johannesburg and Kimberley, and on May 29 between Johannesburg and Richards Bay.

Miles told *TNW* that the

airline would also still pursue the possibility of launching a Cape Town-East London service. "I don't believe that SA Express has truly addressed its structural challenges, which involve solvency and cash issues. As a result, I am sure it will need to rationalise its routes to remain viable. The unstable market conditions will make it possible for other airlines to absorb market share." ■

AirHeads

A snapshot of the week's airline news

Nigeria announces new national carrier

NIGERIA will launch a new national carrier, Nigeria Air, in December. Minister of State for Aviation, Senator **Hadi Sirika**, said the airline would initially operate 40 domestic, regional and sub-regional routes and 41 international routes. However, no destinations have yet been named.

CemAir forced to delay CPT-GBE route

CEMAIR'S Cape Town-Gaborone flights, loaded on to the GDS on August 1 and scheduled to launch on August 2, have been cancelled, as the Botswana Ministry of Transport has still not accepted the airline's route rights. However, the Bilateral Air Services Agreement between SA and Botswana provides for an unlimited number of air carriers to be designated by both sides and makes recognition of Cemair's rights to the route obligatory. These rights were awarded by the SA International Air Services Licensing Council in 2017.

Emirates ups Toronto frequency

EMIRATES will introduce two additional flights to Toronto from August 18. Both flights will be operated by an A380 with private suites in first class, business class (lie-flat seats) and economy class. Emirates said load factors on its Toronto route had been consistently full, averaging 90%. The additional frequency will add 65% capacity on the route.

Cathay Pacific to fly to Seattle

CATHAY Pacific will introduce a non-stop service from Hong Kong to Seattle from March 29, 2019, using an A350-900. Flight CX858 will depart Hong Kong on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 23h55 and arrive in Seattle at 21h00. Flight CX857 will depart Seattle on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays at 01h05 and arrive in Hong Kong at 05h25 the next day.

For the record

In the August 8 issue of *TNW*, reference was made to an incident of sexual harassment that Travel Counsellor **Moir McDermott** experienced at a former employer. *TNW* would like to clarify that this occurred before she joined Travel Counsellors.



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Romantic Getaways

Max Marx highlights destinations and experiences that offer a sense of romance, and explores budget-friendly getaways and great places to pop the question.

Millennials drive new trends

THINK romantic getaways, and couples enjoying romantic candlelight dinners come to mind, but millennials are turning the idea of a romantic getaway on its head. While some still seek out traditional, beach holidays and intimate dinners, the vast majority are looking to include adventure, culture and authentic experiences on their romantic getaways.

South Africans are following global trends, says **John Ridler**, Thompsons Holidays PR & media manager. "There is definitely a move away from the ordinary concept of romance. Couples want to learn about the local culture and enjoy adventure activities together. Those who do go to beach resorts



Teresa Richardson

want to include something active like diving, cycling or hiking."

Honeymooners, says John, are including multiple destinations on their honeymoon itineraries, and pair resort with city

experiences. "For the South African market, that's a little harder to do," he says, as resorts tend to offer seven-day packages. Honeymooners get around this by booking a multi-resort package and then island hop in Greece, the Seychelles or Maldives. Where they're not booking resorts, they then try and take advantage of all a destination has to offer like spending a few days in Bangkok, hiking in Chiang Mai and relaxing in Koh Samui.

Teresa Richardson, The Travel Corporation's head of marketing, says multiple-destination honeymoons are perfect for travellers who don't have unlimited time but who want to see and do as much as they can. "Trafalgar's Discoveries

guided holidays are a good option for couples seeking to experience what a destination has to offer in the shortest time," she says, "while Trafalgar's Explorers guided holidays have free time built in

"Couples want to learn about the local culture and enjoy adventure activities together."

to the itineraries, giving couples time to experience destinations on their own."

Curious Traveller owner, **Penny Bannerman**, adds that the 'romance of ice' has become a big attraction. "We're seeing interest in adventures in Patagonia, Iceland and Lapland. Travellers are realising that

global warming is going to significantly change the landscapes of the far north and southern regions, so want to experience these destinations before it's too late." In Iceland, one can drive inside a glacier mountain on a glacier car, and in Lapland, lie in an igloo and marvel at the Northern Lights, she says.

While demand for romantic getaways at resorts in the Seychelles, Maldives and Thailand remains strong, **Janine Pienaar**, Perfect Destinations sales and marketing manager, has also noted an increase in requests from millennials for experiential and culture-filled holidays. "Millennials seek adventure but also remain very budget conscious."

To page 10

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ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

From page 9

Destination weddings and honeymoons

Also big business in the millennial, romantic sphere, says John, are destination weddings and group honeymoons. “Couples are increasingly wanting to celebrate their destination wedding and share their honeymoon with friends and family. They usually make it official in South Africa, before heading off to Mauritius or Seychelles where they share the ceremony with family and close friends.”

Joanne Visagie, Beachcomber Tours’ sales and marketing director, says the wedding market has grown considerably and become an important part of Beachcomber’s business. “Not only is it cost-effective for all, but the wedding couple, their friends and children can all enjoy a fantastic beach holiday together.”

Activities that couples can enjoy with their guests to make the trip more memorable, such as



The wedding market in Mauritius has seen considerable growth. Photo: Beachcomber Resorts and Hotels

catamaran cruises, are very popular, says **Lizelle Morrison**, Beachcomber’s groups consultant. She says millennials are driving the change. “They want value for money, hassle-free, barefoot-in-the-sand experiences that they can share with friends.”

Penny adds that group honeymoons are generally shorter and friends pay their own way. “Cruising is popular for group honeymoons as there is lots to do,

everything is included and participants can explore exotic destinations together.”

Annemarie Lexow, Travel Vision’s sales and marketing manager, says millennials seldom make use of travel agents these days for advice on where to go. “It’s all about immediate gratification, what Facebook recommends and what they’ve seen on Instagram that convinces them where to travel.”

Mauritius, always a firm favourite

WHETHER it’s the great value offered by a Mauritius package, the quality of its resorts, the sheer beauty and tranquillity of the island or the culture of its people, Mauritius remains the romantic getaway favourite of South Africans. Club Travel ITC, **Caron Crocker**, says Mauritius is always the most popular choice for honeymooners and couples, with romantic, private dinners on the beach, rose petals in rooms, champagne and scented baths all special treats.

Alexis Bekker, LUX* Resorts & Hotels head of sales and marketing: South Africa and Africa, says while Mauritius may not be the newest and hottest destination on everyone’s list, it is the one that ticks all the boxes with a tried-and-tested recipe. “We have couples, young and old, coming back for more and we see this across generations.”

Beachcomber Tours’ **Joanne Visagie** says Mauritius is a destination one falls in love with over and over again. “No matter if you’re single, a couple or a family, it’s an idyllic getaway where great experiences, choice, space, beauty and Beachcomber’s amazing inclusions nurture body and soul. Our incredible resorts are at the best locations on the island, giving our guests the opportunity to live exceptional moments.”

Bubble Lodge, Ile aux Cerfs

Sun Resorts, represented by World Leisure Holidays (WLH) in South Africa, has signed an agreement with the owners of Bubble Lodge to exclusively sell the new luxury, eco-friendly romantic

getaway on Mauritius’s Ile aux Cerfs island, which opened in September last year.

The agreement means that travellers can book romantic nights at Bubble Lodge through WLH. It comprises three transparent bubble-style suites, each set in a secluded spot with beautiful island views. At night guests can stargaze from the comfort of their bubble.

“We have couples, young and old, coming back for more and we see this across generations.”

The Bubble suites come with a personal butler, there to meet guests’ every need, such as arranging a special dinner for two on the beach or under a Banyan tree. They feature a queen-sized bed, air-conditioning, a minibar and private bathroom with outdoor shower. For adults with kids, a sofa bed is available for two children under 14 years old at an additional cost. Breakfast and dinner can be enjoyed at the Ile aux Cerfs Golf Club restaurant and the rate also includes a one-hour golf lesson and green fees for a round of golf. There are five restaurants on the island, so guests are spoilt for choice.

At the nearby Ile aux Cerfs Adventure Park guests can navigate their way through a tree-top course and also enjoy windsurfing, diving, canoeing and fishing on the island. There are complimentary boat transfers between Ile aux Cerfs and the main island from the Point Maurice jetty at 08h00 and 18h00 daily.



The family suite at Bubble Lodge. Photo: Bubble Lodge

Book it!

Travel Vision is offering a five-night Rio City & Beach Combo, from R15 626pps, valid for travel until October 31. The package includes return economy-class fares and taxes ex-JNB, three nights in Rio at the three-star Astoria Copacabana, two nights at the three-star La Chimare Pousada, airport/hotel transfers in Rio, a Rio-Buzios Airport transfer and an HD Sugarloaf & City Tour.

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Romance on a budget

TRAVELLERS booking romantic getaways are still very price sensitive, says Travel Vision's **Annemarie Lexow**. She says Brazil is fantastic and a very reasonable, budget-friendly romantic getaway where visitors can divide their time between Rio and a beach destination like Buzios.

Teresa Richardson of The Travel Corporation says value more than price is a determining factor when it comes to romantic getaways. "A honeymoon, for example, usually comes along once in a lifetime. No one should have to skimp on creating incredible memories but should rather look to travel products that offer the best value. Our Costsaver product is one example."

"Self-drive holidays to destinations in South Africa can be just as romantic as getaways that include flights, which tend to be more expensive."

Going local is the best way to ensure a budget-friendly romantic getaway, says Thompsons Holidays' **John Ridler**. "Self-drive holidays to destinations in South Africa can be just as romantic as getaways that include flights, which tend to be more expensive."

When booking hotels, John advises agents to enquire about room inclusions. Rooms that exclude breakfast and dinner can sometimes work out more expensive.

For those seeking to go cross border, John recommends Mozambique. "It has fantastic stretches of coastline, accommodation that is almost rustic yet romantic, and fabulous food at good prices. There are also fantastic resorts in Mozambique for those with a bigger budget."

Victoria Falls and Botswana's Chobe National Park are also great options, says John. "People tend to forget that Victoria Falls is a Unesco World Heritage Site and one of the Seven Natural

Wonders of the World. And watching the sun go down deep in the Chobe bush is an unforgettable romantic experience."

Further afield, he recommends Italy. "Our Italy by Rail seven-night package is very affordable and includes Rome, Venice and Florence."

The remote island of Pomene in Mozambique, one of the destinations *MSC Musica* will sail to from mid-November, is ideal for romance on a budget, says **Ross Volk**, md of MSC Cruises. "The Pomene Nature Reserve is a place of authentic and wild beauty, with a restful lagoon, magical mangrove forest, and a picturesque beach providing everything one could want in a romantic getaway without the need for additional activities that can bite into one's budget."

For romantic experiences on a budget in Cape Town, **Kimala Ross**, Cape Town Tourism's communications and PR manager, recommends cycling on the Sea Point promenade, watching a movie at Cape Town's Labia Theatre; sharing a picnic at Bakoven Beach in Camps Bay, or watching the sunset from Signal Hill.

The Philippines is so romantic it's like landing in a box of Italian Kisses, says Curious Traveller's **Penny Bannerman**. "From the white sands of Bohol Beach, Bohol's limestone cliffs, forest canopy walks, zip lining, coral islands, and rivers, it has everything one could wish for."

Another romantic must-do here, she says, is the 8,2km underground river boat ride at the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park – one of the New7Wonders of Nature."

Also offering good value and romance are the Greek islands of Kos and Corfu, popular with the wedding and honeymoon market.

Janine Pienaar of Perfect Destinations, says Phuket and Bali entice those on a budget because of the wide array of superior entry-level accommodation and the affordability once there.



MSC's *Musica* will visit Pomene in Mozambique in November. Photo: MSC

Book it!

Thompsons Holidays is offering seven-night package to Bali, from R19 703pps, valid until March 31, 2019 (high-season supplements apply). The package includes return economy-class flights from Johannesburg to Bali, airline levies and transfers, four nights at the Melia Bali, three nights at Kamandalu Ubud, and breakfast daily.



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Surroundings of beach, forests, lakes and sea make aha The Rex Hotel in Knysna ideal for a romantic escape. A winter offer, available until the end of this month, cuts 25% off the best available rate for a standard room. Real Rewards members receive an additional 5% discount for a minimum two-night stay.

ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

Highly recommended

Members of the trade offer some ideas for romantic travel

Caron Crocker, Club Travel ITC, says Venice is the most romantic destination she's booked for clients. "The most romantic experience in Venice is a gondola trip, especially when serenaded by a gondolier."

She has a few other suggestions too. "In Paris, enjoying a private tour in a vintage open-top Citroën with a driver in typical French attire is the latest trend. Day and night tours are available."

In New York, Caron recommends a horse-drawn carriage ride through Central Park and in Tuscany in Italy, exploring the little villages with a hired car and stopping for wine tastings. "Turkey also has an air of romance, especially beautiful Istanbul. I recommend a Bosphorus cruise and a hot-air balloon ride in Cappadocia, complete with champagne." Lastly, she throws in Maldives' beach and water villas that offer secluded private holidays.

Alexis Bekker, LUX* Resorts & Hotels head of sales and marketing: South Africa and Africa, supports this last suggestion. She says the Maldives is "super popular with honeymooners and adventure seekers." Also popular, she advises, is Réunion Island, while demand for Turkey, in particular Bodrum, is also on the increase.

Requests for Greece and island-hopping packages have increased this year, says Travel Vision's **Annemarie Lexow**. "Travellers are wanting to combine beach and cultural elements. They love Greece's perfect balance between activities and relaxation and moving between islands."

Mozambique's uninhabited Portuguese Island embodies romance, says **Ross Volk**, md of MSC Cruises. "It's one of the destinations our MSC Musica cruise ship will be sailing to from the middle of



Venetian gondola trips score big on romance.

November. Its secluded bays are perfect for couples seeking alone time. Couples can sail around the island in a traditional dhow, while more active couples can take the six-kilometre walk around the entire island for a memorable experience."

He says MSC Cruises' new ship, MSC Seaview, which will

cruise the Mediterranean over the next few months, is worth consideration by couples seeking to experience this beautiful region.

A fantastic new product ideal for romance, says **Penny Bannerman** of Curious Traveller, is Ponant's new cruise ship, *Le Lapérouse*, which undertook its maiden

voyage out of Iceland on July 10. In a world-first for a cruise ship, *Le Lapérouse* is equipped with a multi-sensory underwater lounge called Blue Eye, from which guests can watch the sea life swim by while immersed in a unique sensory listening experience.

Did you know?

MSC Cruises' Special Moments Packages are available to book on every cruise and will make any celebration special. Guests can surprise their loved one with a bottle of sparkling wine delivered to their cabins with a selection of canapés, chocolate-covered strawberries or a fruit basket and even a birthday cake. MSC Cruises also has special packages for ceremonies and important occasions as well as for wellness and relaxation.

Book it!

- Thompsons Holidays' three-night package to Dubai from R18 745pp, valid until January 10, 2019 (high-season supplements may apply), includes return flights from Johannesburg to Dubai including airline levies, return airport-hotel transfers, three nights' accommodation at the three-star Rove Downtown hotel with breakfast daily; one-night desert safari with transfers and all meals and beverages.
- Also from Thompsons Holidays is two nights' accommodation with breakfast in the Kagga Kamma Nature Reserve in the Cederberg for R4 025pps with breakfast. Guests can also upgrade to full board and enjoy two guided excursions for an additional R2 537pp or spend an extra night under the stars for R835pp.

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ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

Getting to 'yes'

JOHN Ridler of Thompsons Holidays says Victoria Falls is a great spot to pop the question. "Imagine standing on the bridge at one of the natural wonders of the world and proposing while facing the Falls, followed by a dinner on the Royal Livingstone Express train."

"Discover the lights of Dubai and then head out into the desert for a night of glamping in the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve."

He also recommends Dubai. "Discover the lights of Dubai and then head out into the desert for a night of glamping (glamorous camping) in the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve."

In South Africa, he suggests a visit to the beautiful Kagga Kamma Nature Reserve in the Cederberg, 250km from Cape Town. Activities include hiking, nature drives, a rock

art tour and stargazing. "Couples can then slip away from the main lodge and spend the night under the stars at the exclusive Star Suite with supper and drinks by lamplight – another perfect place to pop the question."

Then there's Bali. "After a relaxing beach stay, travellers can head into the mountains with its rainforests and verdant stepped rice paddies. Take a taxi to the Gates of Heaven at Oyra Lemuyang." This iconic site with majestic Mount Agung make a memorable background to a proposal.

Cape Town Tourism's **Kimala Ross** recommends Tintswalo Atlantic's private beach at the foot of Chapman's Peak. And for the more adventurous, a helicopter proposal on City Helicopter's Two Oceans flight over Camps Bay, Clifton, Hout Bay and the Constantia Winelands. One can also fly to the winelands for lunch at a wine farm, she suggests.



The Oyster Box, ideal for a romantic sunset dinner.

KZN sets the scene

Phindile Makwakwa, acting ceo of Tourism KZN, says the province presents a whole clutch of proposal ideas. These are her suggestions, the first two set against the beauty of the Midlands Meander.

• **Picnic at Culamoya Chimes:** What's more romantic than popping the question to the sounds of wind chimes? Culamoya Chimes in Lidgetton boasts the largest variety of chimes in the country, in a range of sizes and materials. Chime sounds range from the bells of Big Ben or St Paul's to raindrops, dreams and streams.

• **Top of the Moses Mabhida Stadium:** Suggest that your clients discover Durban from a 106m-high vantage point with spectacular views over the Indian Ocean and city. Just the place to get down on one knee.

• **Hot-air ballooning:** Floating on air in a hot-air balloon trip over the beautiful landscapes of Nottingham Road is undoubtedly a romantic way to pop the question. Celebrate thereafter with a traditional Champagne breakfast.

• **Horseback riding on the beach:** There is something magical about

riding into the sunset with a loved one. Beach rides at sunset are offered by Horse Beach Rides on the beautiful Reunion beach in the south of Durban.

• **Sunset dinner by the beach:** Suggest that your clients take a sunset walk on the promenade in Umhlanga, a romantic must-do in the Durban area. A great idea for romantics is to get a partner's name written in sand on the beautiful sand art sculptures on the beach. End the evening with a sunset dinner at The Oyster Box hotel.



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ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

Canonnier for couples



From Beachcomber comes a five-night couples' special discount of 25% at Canonnier Beachcomber Golf Resort & Spa, valid for departures from December 1-6 in a standard garden-facing room from R17 250pps. Rates include return Air Mauritius Travel Smart Programme airfare ex-JNB, airport taxes, return transfers, breakfast and dinner daily, and free land and motorised water sports as per brochure. Guests can enjoy a host of other Beachcomber Plus Factor savings including 15% off massages and a 10%-20% saving on selected excursions. Photo: Beachcomber Resorts and Hotels

Lapland interlude

CURIOUS Traveller is offering a six-night Lapland Winter Break Levi from R35 250 (minimum two pax), valid from December 12, 2018 to April 14, 2019. The package includes five nights in a spa hotel, one night in a Levi glass igloo and dinner at Kammi restaurant. Excursions include a visit to a husky farm with sled ride, snowmobile excursions, a reindeer safari and visit to a reindeer farm. Rates do not apply over the Christmas week and New Year.



Glass igloos are a highlight of a stay in Levi.

Book it!

- Beachcomber is offering 30% discount for honeymooners and wedding anniversary guests on the land portion of their package. This is combinable with Beachcomber's Repeat Guest Offer. The offers are valid for travel until October 31 and for villa accommodation until September 30. The anniversary offer is applicable to every fifth wedding anniversary.
- Thompsons Holidays has a three-night package to the four-star David Livingstone Safari Lodge & Spa, with breakfast daily and two dinners from R13 475pps, valid until December 19. The package includes return economy-class flights from Johannesburg to Livingstone, including airline levies, return transfers from the airport to the lodge, a sunset cruise on the *Lady Livingstone*, and dinner on the Royal Livingstone Express – a restored steam train with an elegant vintage dining car.
- Thompsons Holidays' three-night package to Dubai from R18 745pp, valid until January 10, 2019 (high-season supplements may apply), includes return flights from Johannesburg to Dubai plus airline levies, return airport-hotel transfers, three nights' accommodation at the three-star Rove Downtown hotel with breakfast daily; one night desert safari with transfers and all meals and beverages. ■

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Travel Counsellors recently ran an agent sales and social media marketing incentive where teams competed to win an educational trip to Mauritius. The 'Nwabisa' team won, which included Travel Counsellors Karin Livingstone and Lize Joubert. Pictured are (from left): Elinda van der Merwe, sales executive at World Leisure Holidays, who escorted the Travel Counsellors, with Karin and Lize.

The spoils of success



Tracy-Ann Brits from Lloyds Travel and her husband, Roedi, enjoy a tuk-tuk experience in Thailand on Thompsons' University of Thailand educational. The initiative allowed agents to share their Thailand travel experience with their spouses.

We love Thailand

Appointments

■ GBTA Southern Africa has appointed a new board, along with a new chair and vice-chair. **Maureen Masuku**, head of travel and marketing sourcing at Rand Merchant Bank, has been appointed chair and **Fikile Nkala**, group travel co-ordinator for SuperGroup, has been appointed vice-chair. The remainder of the new board members include **Phale Naake**, deputy director for strategic sourcing for National Treasury; **Robyn Christie** owner of Just Saying and ex-country manager of Travelport; **Sue-Ann Tredoux**, travel manager at Sanlam; and **Leanne Margo**, regional sales manager for Gauteng First Car Rental.

■ **Sasha-Lee Bronkhorst** has joined Pentravel as a travel planner.



Carla da Silva, regional manager of Air Mauritius Southern Africa and Latin America, won Business Person of the Year 2018 at the fifth annual gala dinner of the South African Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Standard Bank Business Excellence Awards. The dinner was hosted at Wanderers Club in Illovo, Johannesburg, on July 28.

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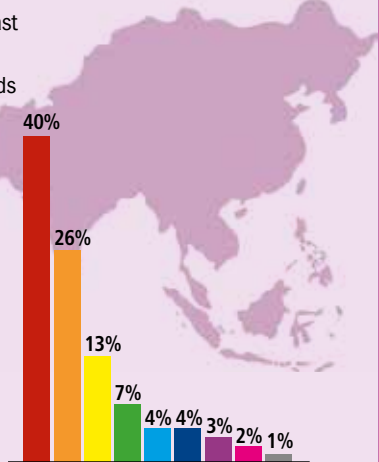
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Asia and Far East are tops

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- Europe
- Indian Ocean islands
- North America
- South America
- West Africa
- East Africa
- UK
- Southern Africa



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SQ adds US flights



Singapore Airlines will operate non-stop, daily flights between Singapore and Los Angeles using the Airbus A350-900ULR, from November 9. It will then add a further three services per week on the route from December 7. The non-stop flights will replace the airline's existing Los Angeles flight which operates via Seoul, from November 30. SQ will also increase the frequency on its daily non-stop Singapore-San Francisco services from seven times a week to 10 from November 28. Pictured: Sally George, market development manager, Singapore Airlines. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Contiki goes on safari

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

AFTER 57 years packaging Europe for the youth market, Contiki will for the first time offer itineraries for Southern and East Africa aimed at 18- to 35-year-olds. Contiki already offers itineraries that include Morocco and Egypt.

This move follows hot on the heels of fellow Travel Corporation (TTC) brand, Trafalgar, which introduced African tours last month.

The new packages include tours in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Kenya that range from seven to 13 days. Prices start from R21 825pp to R51 962pp, including accommodation, transfers, entry fees for game reserves and the majority of the meals. Flights are excluded, apart from the Cape Town to Johannesburg and Johannesburg to Victoria Falls flights included in the Southern African itinerary.

The tours cater for small groups (about 20 passengers per tour).

Clients will travel in seven-seat pop-top safari vehicles across Eastern Africa and luxury minibuses in Southern Africa, rather than in large coaches. In Chobe, clients will switch from minibuses to open safari vehicles.

Clients will be accommodated in hotels, safari lodges or permanent luxury safari tents, and can expect en-suites, patios, lounges and swimming pools. Available departures start May 12, 2019 and end January 5, 2020.

Yvonne Lekalakala, a Pentravel consultant, told TNW that while she was excited about the new offering, the majority of leisure clients in the 18-35 age group travelling into Africa at present were solo travellers booking Airbnbs, or 'off the grid' accommodation. "They often come in with a set idea of what they want to do and just ask us to book their flights. They aren't looking for group tours from the outset."

She added that the type of traveller purchasing Contiki was looking for a 'party experience' and they were less likely to experience this in East Africa. However, Yvonne suggested that the new Contiki packages may present an opportunity to tap into a new market.

Commenting on the packages specifically, she suggested some may be a hard sell because of the price point. For example, she said for the same price as the 13-day East Africa Safari Tour, clients could spend 25-45 days on Contiki in Europe. "The 18- to 35-year-old market can be quite price sensitive. It will be important to educate the client on the value provided by the Contiki offering."

However, she said the Cape, Safari and Falls tour exposed travellers to a few different regions and is good value for money and would therefore be an easier sell.

At present, TTC does not have plans in place for any of its other brands to expand into Africa. ■

Tour op closes shop

TESSA REED

ACCESS to Africa has stopped trading.

The company was a DMC with offices in Johannesburg and Nairobi offering corporate and leisure travel arrangements throughout Africa, including accommodation, transfers, meet and greets, excursions as well as conferencing and meetings.

Company ceo, **Stephen Jordan**, told TNW that after 17 years in travel, he was calling it quits. He cited tough trading conditions that saw volumes decline until the business was no longer viable.

The operator updated its Travelinfo page with the following message: "Please note that we are no longer operating. For any queries please email:

info@access-to-africa.com."

Annemarie Lexow, sales and marketing manager for Travel Vision, told TNW that while Access to Africa was one of Travel Vision's suppliers, the company channelled most of its corporate travel into Africa through its online booking platform. She added that the company's closure would not impact Travel Vision's operations. ■