

# TNW

TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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## lata promises 'intense support' from new HQ

TRAVEL agents can breathe a sigh of relief – soon they will not have to deal with the lata office in Amman. The association is restructuring its operations and, as a result, issues involving the passenger agency programme will be handled by its headquarters in Madrid.

Strained communication between the Amman office and the trade over the past few years led to lata claiming that agencies had defaulted on payments and sometimes even blacklisting them for minor administrative hiccups. Travel agents cited language barriers with Amman and restricted business hours as the main stumbling blocks.

eTravel's fd, **Shaun Stober**, says the Amman office's closure on a Friday affected agencies with urgent queries. "They would open on a Sunday, which doesn't really help non-Middle East countries," he says, adding that the unsynchronised office hours were also not ideal.

Spokesperson for lata, **Katherine Kaczynska** told TNW that lata was restructuring the operations of its Financial Settlement Systems in preparation for major product and service enhancements with the introduction of New Generation lata Settlement Systems

(NewGen ISS). According to lata, NewGen ISS will deliver faster, safer and more cost-effective and relevant financial settlement services and solutions to airlines and travel agents.

Katherine says the new Global Delivery Centres (GDC) in Madrid, Singapore and Montreal will offer more intense customer support than could be achieved within the current structure. SA agents' queries will be handled by the GDC in Madrid.

**"The new structure will eventually offer 24/7 support and ensure that all time zones are covered. It is expected to be fully functional by next year."**

The new structure will eventually offer 24/7 support and ensure that all time zones are covered. It is expected to be fully functional by next year. In the interim, lata says existing service levels will be maintained and progressively enhanced.

Whether the move will make South African travel agents' lives easier remains to be seen.

"It's difficult to pass judgement on how successful

the decision to move the agency programme will be as we need to give lata the opportunity to execute it. But on paper it sounds encouraging and we hope it will improve the communications and the relations with agents on the ground and lata in general," says **Otto de Vries**, ceo of Asata.

**Lidia Folli**, ceo of BidTravel, says the main benefit of an office in Madrid is that it is in the same time zone as South Africa.

Shaun agrees and says the synchronisation of office hours is advantageous from an efficiency perspective. He warns that there might be a possible language conflict with both verbal and written communication.

"It depends on how they set up the support structure in Madrid, as the location is less important than the quality of the communications and support structure," says **Ben Langner**, md of CWT.

**Rachael Penaluna**, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel, agrees and says some travel agents currently communicate with lata through its online portal. "It's been very effective for our agency in the last eight months or so. The lata ICE facility also

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### Escape to Europe

Globus Tours is offering a range of guided tours to Europe – the British Escape from London to Edinburgh from R10 943pps, the Spanish Escape from Madrid to Barcelona from R15 326pps, the Italian Escape from Rome to Venice from R16 787pps and the European Escape from Rome to Paris from R20 878pps. Packages include sightseeing, hotels, meals and WiFi. Departure dates are in November and December. Pictured is **Justine Choveaux**, sales executive, Gauteng, of Perfect Destinations, which represents Globus in SA. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## DIP bags third of market

TESSA REED

SIXTEEN months after the roll-out of the Default Insurance Programme (DIP), about a third of the market has chosen to join the scheme instead of posting bank guarantees.

**Charmaine Brogden** of

Jack and Seach Insurance Brokers, the appointed agent to administer the DIP on behalf of insurer, Lloyd's of London, says the company has secured 33% of the market. This is according to figures provided by lata Johannesburg, she says, and

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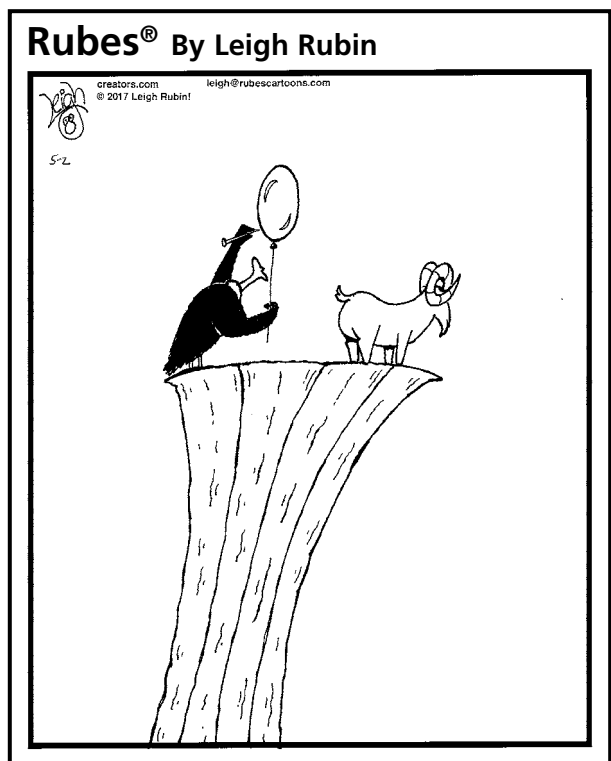
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# New process for passports

KRISTIAN MEIJER

**P**ASSPORT applications made in person can now only be made at DHA live capture offices.

This comes as the Minister of Home Affairs, Professor **Hlengiwe Mkhize**, recently announced the discontinuation of manual processing of passports as part of efforts to dramatically improve turnaround times.

Currently, there are 179 live capture offices across the country. Not all DHA offices are live capture offices.

A live capture office captures applicants' details, including the verification of fingerprints and signatures digitally. Smart ID cards can also be applied for at live capture offices. A list of all the available live capture offices is available on the DHA website.

**Thabo Mokgola**, spokesperson for the DHA, says the change aims to modernise the department and the services it offers. "The main objective is to introduce a paperless environment at all our offices that issue enabling documents," he says.

Passport applications can also be made online via the eHomeAffairs website, though these can only be collected at participating Home Affairs-enabled banks (FNB, Absa, Standard Bank and Nedbank). There are 11 participating Home Affairs-enabled bank offices across Gauteng and one in Cape Town. Online applicants need to visit a Home Affairs live capture office to capture their biometric data. A list of the available banks that offer passport collections is available on the DHA website. ■

## lata promises 'intense support'

From page 1

enables us to check if our payment has been received and allocated correctly."

Although Shaun agrees that the portal works well, he says a fast-track option would assist in escalating issues that require urgent responses and real-time solutions. "Common practice with multinational helpdesk set-ups is to have two or three help-

desk offices servicing different time zones during operating hours, ensuring availability to other time zones after hours."

Ben adds: "When a travel company is faced with the crisis of ticketing rights being suspended, it's a business-critical matter. A telephone call to a competent lata staff member with appropriate authority to deal promptly and effectively with the matter

would provide the immediacy of communication required when managing such a serious event."

While the Financial Settlement Systems functions of the Amman office are being transferred to the new GDC in Madrid, lata says it will continue to have a regional presence in Johannesburg, Nairobi, Lagos, Dakar, Cairo and Casablanca. ■

## DIP bags third of market

From page 1

is up from around 22% in May last year.

Some of the medium to large South African agencies on the scheme include Serendipity, XL, HWT, Duma and Flight Specials.

Charmaine says the travel industry has been asking for a DIP-type product for more than 10 years. She says under lata's Local Financial Criteria, which was put in place in March last year, massive bank guarantees imposed on agents were a particular concern for smaller individually owned agencies as these would encumber their balance sheets and leave them cash strapped.

While, initially, there were some agencies that had joined

the scheme and also posted a guarantee, Charmaine says all these guarantees have since been released back to agents.

**Dinesh Naidoo**, group operations director of Serendipity, says while he had a guarantee in place when the DIP was rolled out, he opted into the scheme instead of maintaining a guarantee. He explains that he no longer has to pay a yearly fee on a bank guarantee and has also freed up his cash flow.

Agents opting into the scheme do not have to post a guarantee, provided the required guarantee does not exceed R5m.

"In the case where the bank guarantee value exceeds the

R5m DIP cover, lata will request the balance to be carried in the form of bank guarantees," says Charmaine, adding that she would like to see some of the bigger agencies come on board.

However, larger agencies that are able to manage their cash flow while posting the required guarantee aren't sold on the scheme.

**Garth Wolff**, ceo of eTravel, says he would rather post the guarantee than join the scheme, which requires agents to pay per ticket. Neither absorbing the cost into already tight margins nor passing the cost on to the consumer is preferable to posting a guarantee, he says. ■

## Nikita Tavlet selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Wandering Free.** Enjoy the best of Croatia from R15 515pp sharing. Offer includes seven nights' accommodation with breakfast daily, transport and a tour leader. Travel to Dubrovnik and visit the national parks of Paklenica and Krka. Valid for selected departures between July and September.
- **Thompsons Holidays.** Self-drive from R2 362pp sharing. Offer includes two nights' accommodation at Entabeni Wildside Safari Camp, Limpopo, with breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Bonus: two game drives daily and complimentary WiFi in public areas. Offer is available to SADC residents only. Valid until August 31.
- **Cruise Inc.** AmaWaterways seven-night wine cruise from Amsterdam to Basel. Rates from US\$1 749pps (R22 086). Book by July 31. Set departures between March and April, 2018.



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# BA increases capacity to LHR

BRITISH Airways will up capacity to London over the summer period with more flights from Cape Town and will operate another A380 on the Johannesburg route.

From October, the airline will up its daily schedule between Cape Town and Heathrow to a double-daily service using a B747. From November, it will again also offer three weekly Boeing 777 services between Cape Town and Gatwick.

BA will also offer extra flights from Cape Town to Heathrow. The additional flight, BA44, will depart from Cape Town on

January 6 and 8; February 10, 17 and 24; March 26, 26 and 31 and April 2, 4 and 7. The return flight, BA45, will depart Heathrow for Cape Town on January 5 and 8; February 9, 16 and 23; March 25, 27 and 30; and April 1, 3 and 6.

From October, the airline will offer a double-daily A380 service on its JNB-LHR route. The route will revert to the daily A380 and B747 services in March 2018, after the peak summer season. The A380s will be configured with First, Club World, World Traveller Plus, and World Traveller. ■

## FCTG gets training accreditation

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group is now an accredited travel training provider.

The group recently received accreditation from the Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority as an official provider of the General Certificate in Travel qualification. FCTG can now train new talent by improving their skill set and employability, and strengthen the skills of employees already in the industry.

FCTG was expecting a two-year roll-out due to the complexities of certain government regulations yet, after only eight months, already has seven of its internal trainers qualify as assessors, and three as moderators. The first set of

10 students started their training on July 3, which includes both theoretical and practical aspects so that these students can enter the industry and start straight away.

This accreditation, says FCTG, can help address the skills shortage within the industry. **Sam van Gool**, Flight Centre Peopleworks gm, says: "Considering that the travel and tourism sub-sector makes a substantial contribution to the SA economy, it is critical to ensure that we as industry players actively contribute towards growing and maintaining a thriving and vibrant travel and tourism industry."

FCTG is also developing a leadership qualification with a specific tourism industry slant. ■

## Lux for less



LUX\* Resorts and Hotels is offering a special at its new property on Turkey's Riviera, LUX\* Bodrum Resort and Residences. Travellers who book by August 31 get a 25% discount. Valid for stays until October 31. Pictured here are (from left): **Glen Taylor**, sales manager, South Africa; **Alexis Bekker**, head of sales and marketing, South Africa and Africa; and **Evi Moller**, senior sales manager. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## SA hotel chain to expand into Africa

DARISE FOSTER

THE Capital Hotel Group will open its first hotels outside South Africa in the next two years.

**Marc Wachsberger**, group md, is looking at countries in southern and East Africa. "The ones I'm looking at currently are countries we can access easily, like Namibia and Botswana, but we're also looking at Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa and hopefully North Africa further down the line," he said.

The group also aims to open two hotels in South Africa every year.

"We are the fastest growing

hotel group for good reason," Marc told TNW. "We're opening three hotels this year – Capital Menlyn Maine in Pretoria, which has officially opened, then the Capital on Park in Sandton later this year and another planned for Umhlanga."

Marc kept mum on the exact location of the Umhlanga hotel. "All I can say is it will be in the best location on the beach," he said.

Capital Hotel Group will open one hotel in the Melrose Arch vicinity in 2018 and another elsewhere in SA. "I can't say at this stage where our second hotel for 2018 will be," said Marc,

hinting that the group needed to fill gaps in some of the smaller cities.

MICE is proving to be a key sector for The Capital Menlyn Maine, with conference-goers constituting most of its customers in the first three months of operation. The property has two boardrooms that can accommodate up to eight people each; a conference room that can accommodate between 190 and 350 people; two meeting rooms and an events area on the deck.

The Capital on Park in Sandton and the new hotel in Umhlanga would both offer conference facilities, Marc added. ■

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## A snapshot of the week's airline news

### Ethiopian Airlines adds Seychelles flights

ETHIOPIAN Airlines will add a sixth weekly flight to Seychelles, effective December 6. Flight ET 0879 will depart Addis Ababa at 09h30 to arrive in Seychelles at 14h20 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Flight ET 0878 will depart Seychelles at 18h00 and arrive in Addis Ababa at 20h30 on the same days.

The flight will be operated by a Boeing 787-800 with 24 seats in business class and 246 in economy. The carrier has placed an order for ten more Airbus A350-900s, which will be deployed on long-haul routes from Addis Ababa to destinations in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The A350-900s are configured in a two-class layout, with 30 seats in business class and 313 in economy.

### RwandAir to begin flights to Brussels

RWANDAIR will launch flights from Johannesburg via Kigali to Brussels in July. All return flights from Brussels to Johannesburg will be via London and Kigali. There will be three flights a week between Brussels and Kigali operated by the airline's Airbus A330 fleet. "Adding Brussels to our fast-growing network, reaffirms our commitment to create new opportunities for both continents with smooth connections from cities with high demand and will go a long way to boost trade and tourism", said **Chance Ndagano**, acting ceo of RwandAir.

### Regional carrier suspends operations

DRC airline flyCAA has suspended the majority of its operations. Currently, the airline only has one Fokker 50 operating regional routes in the DRC. **Rod Murphy**, commercial project manager of flyCAA, says the suspension is temporary, though no date has been set for the airline to resume services. "We are currently sourcing new aircraft and are suspending operations while this takes place," says Rod. He says the airline is withdrawing from BSP at the end of September.

### HM, EY expand Beijing codeshare

AIR Seychelles has expanded its codeshare agreement with Etihad Airways to offer one-stop connections to Beijing. The agreement came into effect on June 14. Air Seychelles' HM code is placed on Etihad's service between Abu Dhabi and Beijing and Air Seychelles passengers can now travel to Beijing on the daily flight from Abu Dhabi.

**Roy Kinnear**, ceo of Air Seychelles, said: "Our new codeshare route with Etihad Airways provides guests with convenient travel options to Beijing and reinforces the strong political and economic relations between Seychelles and China."

Flight EY888 (HM5372) departs Abu Dhabi at 21h45 and arrives in Beijing at 08h50. The return flight, EY889 (HM5373) departs Beijing at 01h10 and arrives in Abu Dhabi at 06h30.

### Biometric self-service bag drop from Delta

DELTA Air Lines has introduced four self-service bag drop machines at Minneapolis St Paul International Airport. The \$600 000 (R7m) machines allow customers to quickly, securely and easily check their own luggage and can potentially process twice as many customers per hour. In addition to the self-service bag drop trial, Delta is launching other customer solutions such as RFID baggage handling, real-time bag tracking via the Fly Delta mobile app and more automated screening lanes.

### Lagos airport to install safety scanner

THE Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) plans to install an upgraded baggage scanner that can detect explosives, narcotics and other prohibited items at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos.

The airport authority said in a statement that the machine would boost the safety and security at the country's airports. **Saleh Dunoma**, md and ceo of FAAN says: "Our intention is to deploy these scanners to our international airports but this depends on the outcome of its performance in Lagos."

## UK ups visa enquiry charges

UK VISA enquiries submitted to UK Visas and Immigration will now cost £5,48 (R90) per enquiry.

The change came into effect on June 1 after a new contractor, Sitel UK, was appointed to handle all visa

enquiries outside the UK.

Telephonic enquiries are still charged at £1,37 (R22) per minute on top of the standard network charges.

**Isabel Potgieter**, spokesperson of the British High Commission in Pretoria,

says: "This service is offered not only in English but in many other languages [including Arabic and Cantonese]. This means the service needs to be charged for to keep it running," says Isabel. ■

## EU to tackle unfair airline competition

EARLIER this month the European Union said it would focus on tackling alleged unfair competitive practices by foreign airlines.

The proposal, which still needs to be approved by the European Parliament, will streamline the process for EU airlines and governments to submit complaints about alleged discriminatory practices they face in non-EU countries or illegal subsidies benefiting non-EU airlines.

Non-EU carriers risk being fined if the EC finds their practices cause 'injury or threat of injury' to European airlines. Foreign carriers would

not be able to be grounded because of these complaints and the new rules would not interfere with bilateral air services agreements. The proposal aims to replace Regulation 868/2004 which provides protection against subsidisation and unfair pricing practices in the supply of air services from non-EU countries.

European carriers, including, among others, Air France, KLM, Lufthansa and TAP, have welcomed the new proposal. The airlines issued a common statement saying: "European airlines operate in a highly competitive environment. We

stand for 'fair competition' making sure that the same rules apply to all carriers having access to the EU aviation market."

According to the airlines, this new proposal will 'rightly limit and sanction discriminatory practices such as subsidies to third-country carriers. However, they also feel there is potential to improve the proposal, especially with respect to the delay for implementing the measures by the Commission. "In certain cases, the envisaged time span of more than two years is far too long and prompt action is needed," the statement reads. ■

## To the point

SAA has not yet resumed its Johannesburg-Abuja route. The airline was expected to resume the service on June 16. SAA spokesperson, **Tlali Tlali**, has since told *TNW*: "The service between Johannesburg and Abuja remains suspended due to operational reasons." The route was first suspended on March 6 due to upgrades and repair work at Abuja's Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport but also due to 'operational reasons'. SAA did not resume flights to the Nigerian capital even after the airport reopened.



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## Flexibility is what agents love most

This week's report by Candice May is the seventh in a series of eight on the TNW survey that explores agents' work conditions. From pay to educational, from after-hours duty to what agents love and what they hate - it's all in the survey.

### 67% of respondents said flexibility was the thing most important to them.

**T**HE Industry Employment Conditions Survey undertaken by TNW in March asked participants what they loved most about their agency.

Of the 981 respondents, 882 answered this question. 67% of total respondents said the thing they loved most about the agency they worked for was that it offered them flexibility in terms of the hours they worked and where they worked from. More specifically, 67% of ITCs and 48% of agents employed by an agency said flexibility was their favourite thing about their place of work.

Earning potential was most important according to 14% of agents - 12% of ITCs and 8% of agents employed by an agency. Some consultants said they were driven by

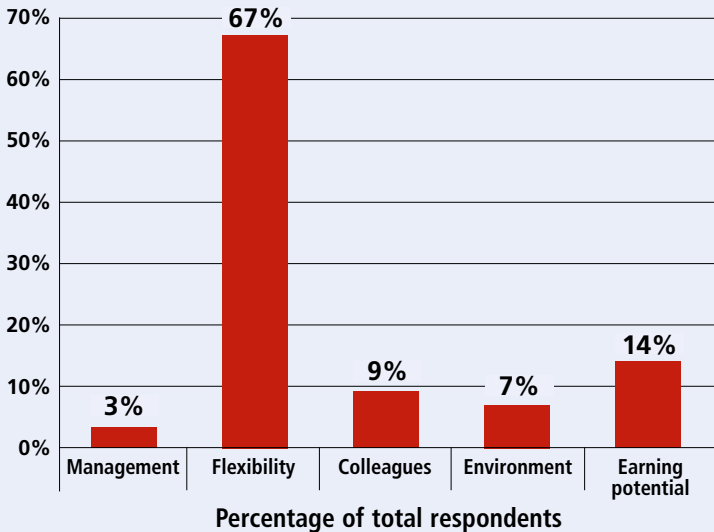
the fact that their earning potential was uncapped, while others said they enjoyed the perks that came with hitting their targets.

Other things respondents said came first were their colleagues and the environment in which they worked.

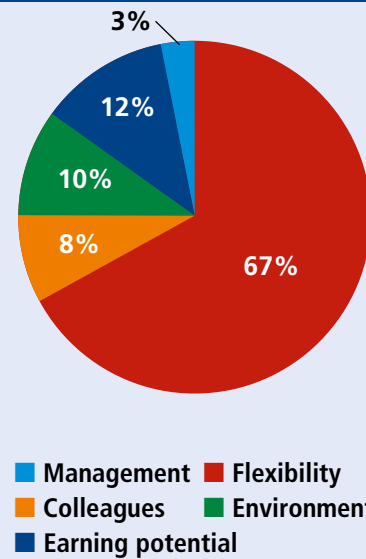
Overall, 9% said their colleagues - 8% of the ITCs and 24% of the agents employed by agencies - and 7% said their environment - 10% of ITCs and 20% of those working in agencies.

Surprisingly, management was the most important factor for only 3% of agents. Some said they liked the fact that their manager did not micro-manage them, while others said it was because their manager handled emergencies well.

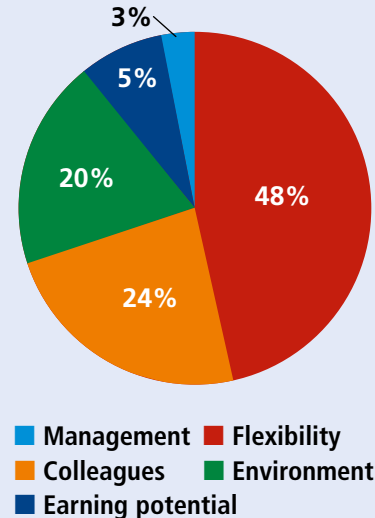
### What do you love most about who you work for?



### What ITCs love most



### What consultants who work for agencies love most



### What you said about...

#### Management

- My manager handles emergencies well!
- My managers have faith in my abilities and allow me to make decisions.

#### Flexibility

- I love being able to work from home a few days a week - it promotes a good work-life balance.
- I am fortunate enough to work at the office until 13h30 and then from home thereafter. This gives me time with my children.

#### Colleagues

- I have great colleagues to bounce ideas off and give me moral support when I need it.
- I love the interaction with my colleagues - they feel like family and we all share information with one another.

#### Environment

- I don't feel stressed in the working environment at all.
- I work in a small, friendly office - it is very easy to work in this environment.

#### Earning potential

- I am driven by the fact that my earning potential is uncapped.
- I like the perks that come with hitting my targets.

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What agents don't like about their agency

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# Thailand travellers steer clear of Qatar Airways

CANDICE MAY

CLIENTS booking travel to Thailand are avoiding Qatar Airways, assuming the airline is undependable, industry players report. This follows several Arab countries' decision to ban the airline from using their airspace from June 6.

Industry players are surprised by the move, especially as Qatar Airways has been a popular choice to fly to Thailand as it offers the most affordable fares coupled with minimum connection times.

"Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways and Emirates all offer affordable flights to Thailand but Qatar Airways generally offers the best deals, which is why it is included in 80% to 90% of our packages," explains **Giles Clinton**, director of Checkout Tours.

**Ross Peach**, travel consultant of STA Travel Morningside, says up to 5% of his clients who have booked travel to Thailand have opted to fly on Etihad Airways

**"Clients enquire about penalty fees and refunds for flights booked to Thailand on Qatar Airways post ban. Some of these travellers have even enquired about refunds for cancelling their entire holiday to Thailand."**

or Emirates over Qatar Airways since the ban was announced. "Some clients now believe Qatar Airways is unreliable, when this is not the case."

**Maggie Du Toit**, travel

consultant of Travel Counsellors, says Thailand remains an extremely popular holiday destination but that travellers are now choosing to fly Emirates.

**Chantal Kliche**, Cape region retail manager of Thompsons Travel, has had clients enquire about penalty fees and refunds for flights booked to Thailand on Qatar Airways post ban.

She says some of these travellers have even enquired about refunds for cancelling their entire holiday to Thailand.

In response to these comments, a spokesperson for Qatar Airways told *TNW* that flights were operating normally to the three cities it serves in Thailand – Bangkok, Phuket and Krabi – for now. Etihad Airways and Emirates were unable to comment at the time of publication. ■



## Two for one!

Air Austral is offering a 'Two Islands for the price of one' special on flights to Réunion Island and Seychelles from only R7 178,23. The special includes airport taxes and is open ended, subject to the availability of M-class seats. Pictured here are **Vincent Kgosiencho**, reservations consultant, and **Lynnette Hartsink**, sales executive of Air Austral. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

## To the point

Marriott International has changed its cancellation policy. The hotel group previously allowed guests to cancel at no charge within 24 hours of their reservation but now requires two days' notice or will charge a fee equivalent to a one-night stay. The new policy applies to all Marriott hotels in the US, Canada, Caribbean and Latin America. The company said the change would help reduce the number of unsold rooms due to last-minute cancellations.

## THE RESULTS ARE IN: eTravel ITCs earn MUCH, MUCH more

An ITC with 15-20 years' experience earns the same as a senior consultant at an agency, says Anton Marsh's latest report in the *TNW* survey. **Uh... Not at eTravel.**

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# Maiden and married names on passports – tread carefully

KRISTIAN MEIJER

WHEN a client travels on two passports, assisting them may seem easy, but what happens when each passport shows a different name after the client marries and she needs to use both?

This question was recently posed by an agent on Open Jaw.

**Bronwyn Pienaar**, owner and manager of Travessentials, says she recently booked a client to Italy via Dubai, but the client had a UK passport in her maiden name and a South African passport in her married name.

Although the names differed, the British passport was still valid. **Anneli van den Berg**, spokesperson for Alitalia, says the best solution in such a case is to travel with an original

marriage certificate, to have proof of the change of surname.

In another case, **Fotini Domnakis**, travel director of Icon Travel SA, said she had to book travel to Germany and Norway for a client who

*“If a passenger is travelling with two passports with different names, it is advisable to get the details on the passport updated.”*

had kept her maiden name on her Greek passport, but took her husband’s surname and used that name in her SA passport. The client left South Africa on her SA passport and wanted to use her Greek passport for her European travels.

“I was then advised by an airline to include

both the maiden and married surnames of the passenger, written as MaidennameMarriedname, as well as the passenger’s first name, and advise the passenger to travel with both passports and a marriage certificate, and I haven’t had any problems doing it like that,” says Fotini.

She says she’s had the same client travel on both local and European airlines like Lufthansa the same way, and she’s never had any problems. “I also add her name to the PNR the same way,” adds Fotini.

A spokesperson for Lufthansa has, however, recommended against using a name on a ticket that doesn’t exactly match the passport.

“If there is a spelling mistake on the issued ticket, Lufthansa would not deny carrying the



**A maiden name on one passport and married name on another can cause problems.**

passenger, but would make the passenger aware that there may be problems with immigration authorities. However, in accordance with current regulations, Lufthansa will not accept and carry any passenger whose name on their passport differs from the name on the issued ticket,” the spokesperson said.

Though Fotini says she hasn’t had any problems booking travel with both surnames, **Stuart Cochrane**,

marketing manager for British Airways, has suggested travelling with a marriage certificate.

“If a passenger is travelling with two passports with different names, it is advisable to get the details on the passport updated, or at least travel with both passports and a copy of a marriage certificate. Though travelling with the marriage certificate is not guaranteed to work with all immigration authorities,” he says. ■

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# Tourism Authorities

Tourism associations are often offer more than just roadshows to support agencies and tour operators. Kristian Meijer reports.

## Going beyond the call of duty

**T**OURISM authorities have their hands full. Beyond organising workshops, roadshows and putting together educational trips, they also strive to add as much value as they can for agents on a daily basis – and this often means dealing with all kinds of special requests.

**Lesley Simpson**, SA representative of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, says TAT has formulated key partnerships with tour operators selling the country, whereby they work together to identify suitable joint marketing ventures on an annual basis, to which TAT contributes.

“Usually this will involve a year-long campaign, which is then carefully monitored for its duration. Examples of traditional print and digital campaigns must be submitted each month throughout the venture,

which in turn is reported to TAT’s head office,” she says.

Additionally, the number of travellers from each tour operator are monitored year on year, which, in the long term, contributes to the operator’s invitation and sponsorship of flights and accommodation to annual exhibitions such as TTM+ and the Andaman Travel Trade event, says Lesley.

**“Being available 24/7 is vital. We are totally open to local agents, and we’ll be there to assist them any time of the day or night.”**

### On the road

**Johnathan Hollard**, trade and MICE executive of Development Promotions for Abu Dhabi Tourism, says he spends a lot of time at travel agencies, teaching

agents more about the emerging destination that is Abu Dhabi.

“I do at least four store calls a day, telling agents all about Abu Dhabi as a destination, but also spending the time to listen to what the agents need from us,” he says.

### Around the clock

**David Germain**, director of the Seychelles Tourism Board in Africa and the Americas, says being available to agents at all times of the day is key.

“We do a lot of activities, workshops and destination training, but being available 24/7 is vital. We are totally open to local agents, and we’ll be there to assist them any time of the day or night,” says David.

Though promoting a destination is important, dispelling any previous ideas and assumptions is just as vital – which it has started



**Johnathan Hollard**

to do through its Affordable Seychelles campaign. The campaign aims to dispel the notion that Seychelles is only a playground for the rich. “This has been a great way to help agents sell the destination and, as a result, help them boost their income,” says David.

### Special events

**Philippa Piguet**, spokesperson for the Mauritius Tourism Authority, says interesting and fun events are a great way to offer support and show gratitude to agents.

“We held a trade appreciation event last year that was an educational and fun evening to thank and acknowledge travel agents for their support. The event was based on the game show ‘A minute to win it’, which ensured everyone had a fun time while answering questions about the island. Prizes included trips to Mauritius that could be used to further their familiarisation with the island,” says Philippa.

She says online training workshops held on Travelinfo were a great success. As well as group workshops, they offer one-on-one training for agents who request it.

**SA Representative office for Tourism Authority of Thailand**

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## Tech at the forefront of destination promotion

NEW technologies are often touted as replacements for human interaction. The travel industry is no different, and many disruptors have made a serious dent in agents' bottom lines. But many innovations are being introduced to improve agents' lives and help them do their job better – some of which are being developed by tourism authorities.



*“TAT is very in tune with technology, including online training for agents.”*  
Lesley Simpson

At the forefront of destination promotion and accessibility are smartphone apps. **Johnathan Hollard** of Abu Dhabi Tourism, says the Abu Dhabi app, which is available on the Google Play and Apple App stores, was developed to add more value to clients' trips.

“The app does not take business away from agents. It was developed purely as a way for travellers to learn more about Abu Dhabi, and guide them to where they want to go,” says Johnathan.

Thailand has also focused on utilising technology to assist agents, with Tourism Authority of Thailand launching a number of platforms over the years. “These range from video footage that can be found on YouTube to e-brochures, e-cards, and podcasts. TAT is very in tune with technology, including online training [for agents],” says SA representative, **Lesley Simpson**. **Philippa Piguet**, of the Mauritius Tourism Authority, says social



Smartphone apps are at the forefront of destination promotion.

media engagement is a key driver for traffic. “We are very active on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

“We also engage on a regular basis with travel bloggers and social influencers who in turn create content and

awareness about Mauritius. Our digital team create a range of engaging social content such as videos, GIFS and competitions that highlight all the great aspects and activities of Mauritius outside of just sitting on the beach,” she says.





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## FAM trip experience

**Bronwyn Maule**, team leader at Flight Centre Holidays in Pretoria, recently spent five days in Abu Dhabi on an educational organised by the tourism authority. She used the time to soak up a city she calls a 'one-stop destination'.



Qasr al Sarab resort. Photo: Minor Hotels

### Expectations:

GOING in, I was quite nervous. The UAE is a very strict country and I expected a culture shock on arrival. As this was an educational, I knew we would have quite a busy schedule, which

included inspecting the Qasr al Sarab resort, which is managed by Anantara. Together with this, I was looking forward to spending some time in Abu Dhabi's markets and going to Ferrari World.

### Trip highlights:

Abu Dhabi really is a one-stop destination. It is still developing as a destination and this meant that there was more on offer than I had expected to find. For me, some of the highlights of the trip were definitely the Qasr al Sarab resort, which is in the desert. Driving there, you'd expect nothing but sand, but I was so surprised to see lush greenery that has been cultivated

next to the road to beautify it. I saw that the people of Abu Dhabi have a great respect for plants and animals. The resort is most beautiful at night when you can see thousands of stars light up the sky. Yas Island was another highlight. I loved it and know most South Africans will too. The hotels are vibey and have pubs that offer live entertainment.



Yas Island. Photo: Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority



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The Abu Dhabi educational group.

### Top tips:

Abu Dhabi isn't a cheap destination. Going there, you need to budget, as there are many fantastic markets to shop at. It is a shopper's destination. Be sure to look out for as many free services as you can, like the Yas Express shuttle service, which is offered on a complimentary

basis to all guests on Yas Island. This truly was the best educational I've been on. I am excited to be able to come back and sell a new and exciting destination from first-hand experience – a place that I think all other South Africans will love.

## SA Tourism launches digital asset library

SOUTH African Tourism has built a new digital asset library to create a platform that will help stakeholders with marketing collateral.

The digital asset library will give access to real information – accompanied by image, footage and marketing collateral – that could possibly excite travellers.

“All the work that we do toward growing our industry is a collaborative effort. That is the only way to ensure amplified and inclusive growth. The SAT digital asset library is where all the assets pertaining to our brand will be housed in order to enable us to provide stakeholder engagement tools and collateral that can be used at various points in the travellers' decision-making journey. It is an exciting development and definitely a step in the right direction,” said **Sisa Ntshona**, ceo of SA Tourism.

The platform allows various partners to download digital

elements in high resolution at no cost. The library is a simple, easy-to-use interface, allowing anyone to search based on keywords, themes, locations and experiences. Simply type in a search phrase based on your needs and all related assets will appear.

Once the option is selected, the user may view the relevant technical information including dimensions, formats, resolution, file size, keywords, metadata and keywords.

After the relevant download icon has been selected, the user is ready to go. The library does not require users to create an account.

The library will also give users access to predesigned marketing collateral for partnership support, by allowing cobranding options for various partners. To access the South African Tourism digital asset library, visit <http://digitalassets.southafrica.net>.

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## Promoting affordable Seychelles

IN THE past eight years, the number of South Africans travelling to the Seychelles has more than doubled, with more than 13 000 SA travellers visiting in 2016. In the first six months of 2017, there has been a 21% increase compared with the same time last year.



**David Germain**

an affordable destination, showcasing the great variety of accommodation and activities on offer for every budget,” says David.

But getting the message across has been hard work. From agent training to public exhibitions, the Seychelles Tourism Board is spreading their message far and wide.

Seychelles Tourism Board is spreading their message far and wide.

“We have been promoting the affordability of the Seychelles across the country, and have also focused on smaller cities and provinces to get the message across. This has really paid dividends for us, but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to dispel the false perception of the Seychelles,” he adds.

**David Germain** of the Seychelles Tourism Board attributes this rapid growth to the ‘Affordable Seychelles’ campaign it has been running in South Africa for the past three years.

“In South Africa, there is still a perception that Seychelles is only for the high-end market. This is not true. Therefore, we have been working really hard to promote the Seychelles as



Seychelles will be showcased in the upcoming roadshow.

## You're invited!

THE Seychelles Tourism Board is embarking on a MICE and leisure roadshow and will host a series of workshops in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town.

The roadshow kicks off in Johannesburg on July 18 at the Protea Hotel by Marriott Johannesburg Balalaika Sandton, and

then travels to Durban on July 19 at aha Gateway Hotel, concluding in Cape Town on July 20 at the Southern Sun Cape Sun.

This is the sixth roadshow of this annual event and suppliers from Seychelles are travelling to South Africa to meet with local travel agents and tour operators,

showcasing their products and establishing working relationships.

**David Germain** of the Seychelles Tourism Board, says: “The workshops also serve as a platform and opportunity to update the trade about events, new developments, destination news and product updates.”

## To the point



The Tourism Authority of Thailand has announced that two new public holidays have been instated in Thailand. The first is on July 28 – H.M. King Maha Vajiralongkorn's (Thailand's new king) birthday and the second on October 13 – King Bhumibol Adulyadej Memorial Day, marking the passing away of the late king. Travellers should be advised that certain attractions, restaurants and other facilities may be closed over these days. ■

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## Mauritius with Thompsons



Thompsons recently sent 40 agents for a week's 'University of Mauritius'. They visited a range of three- to five-star hotels, and enjoyed activities that included a catamaran cruise to Ile aux Cerfs, a Port Louis city tour and a day excursion to Ile des Deux Cocos. "It was a great combination of learning more, socialising and experiencing the island. I would like to thank everyone from Thompsons for making us feel so special and so welcome," said Jeanine Robinson, owner of Riverview Travel.



Neil Freimond of Ariel Israeli Tours recently went on his 30th tour to Israel to celebrate the reintroduction of Jacob sheep (a traditional breed of domestic sheep) to Israel after almost 2 500 years. Neil has toured Israel for the past 35 years and, partnering with Harvey World Travel-Highway, on his latest tour he visited the sheep, which had been reintroduced by Gil and Jenna Lewinsky, who run Friends of the Jacob Sheep on a farm in Nes Harim. Neil says: "A visit to the Lewinskys to see the sheep is a must for every group visiting Israel." Pictured with one of the sheep is tour member Kelvin Caldwell, with Jenna and Neil.

## Touring Israel

## Helping SA's youth

TOURISM Minister Tokozile Xasa recently handed over 100 laptops, which will be distributed to various correctional facilities around the country, and opened two computer training facilities. Amadeus and Iberia Airlines donated the laptops and

computers in a partnership that is part of an initiative that seeks to rehabilitate and empower the more than 3 400 South African youths who have been in trouble with the law and need a chance to be reintegrated into society. **Andy Hedley**, gm of

Amadeus Southern Africa, says: "We all have to play a part in uplifting our society. When the Minister called on Amadeus for support, we were happy to oblige as we feel passionate about building a better future for South Africa."

## PHS celebrates graduates

THE Peermont Hotel School (PHS) celebrated its first graduates on June 20 at Emperors Palace. PHS launched a year ago and was funded by the Peermont Community Benefit Trust (PCBT), a CSI initiative of Emperors Palace. The 72 learners are from the Ekurhuleni region and received bursaries to train at PHS. "Many of these learners come from challenging backgrounds and poor communities, and the opportunity to get a foot in the door of a rewarding career is hard to come by," says PCBT

chairperson, **Tshidi Madima**. The students spent the year training with hospitality professionals to gain practical skills and experience. "When I started at the Peermont Hotel School I had no experience in hospitality so I had to work hard to prove myself and show my commitment to the programme," says PHS graduate, **Manelisi Ndllovu**. Manelisi started as a waiter in the Food and Beverage department at PHS and now works at the reception of the five-star D'oreale Grande Hotel in Johannesburg.

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# Full steam ahead for 16-day British Airways strike



## Peermont winter deals

Peermont Winter FunStays is a range of bed and breakfast deals at the group's three-, four- and five-star hotels this winter. The hotels include Emperors Palace in Johannesburg, Umfolozi Resort in Empangeni and The Grand Palm in Gaborone. Partner agents can earn up to 10% commission on these deals. Pictured, comfortable and cosy, is Jean Hanekom, hotel operations manager of Emperors Palace. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

THE 16-DAY strike planned by British Airways' cabin crew from Saturday, July 1, to Sunday, July 16, has been confirmed. The strike comes as a result of a long-running pay dispute.

This follows a catastrophic IT outage at the airline in late May that left nearly 75 000 passengers stranded. However, SA travel agents report that consumer confidence in the airline remains relatively high.

**Ben Langner**, md of CWT, says clients still view BA as a reliable, high-quality airline despite the recent operational challenges. "Reaction to the current strike threat is muted, with most point-to-point travellers still opting to fly BA, while some travellers with journeys requiring connecting flights asking to switch to other airlines."

**Jonathan Gerber**, director of TAG, says, however, that there is no doubt that the IT meltdown hurt the airline.

"I also think the subsequent luggage delays and lack of a definitive answer from BA in terms of exactly what caused the meltdown and what plans are in place to avoid it in future, raised a few eyebrows." He says, however, that the travelling public have short memories

and that if the price is right they will still book BA.

But, **Rachael Penaluna**, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel, says strikes have negative impacts on consumer and agent confidence: "An example is Air France. We deter clients from flying Air France, especially close to August and September, as that is traditionally its 'strike' season. We cannot guarantee that flights out of South Africa will not be affected and the solution is to book another airline."

**"We will publish our contingency plans in the coming days for customers who have bookings on the days of threatened industrial action."**

Rachael says most of her clients are preferring to book another carrier than take a chance on British Airways for the coming weeks.

Spokesperson for the airline in SA, **Stephen Forbes**, told TNW that BA's priority was to fly all customers to their destinations. "We are looking at a range of options and are speaking with a

number of airlines. We will publish our contingency plans in the coming days for customers who have bookings on the days of threatened industrial action."

One of the options being looked at is wet-leasing nine Qatari-registered Airbuses for the duration of the two-week strike. An application filed with the UK Civil Aviation Authority indicates that contracts may be extended beyond July 16 for a maximum of two months.

However Unite, the British union that represents the cabin crew who will strike, has called on the CAA to turn down the application. Unite warned that the lease would be in breach of aviation law if BA was unable to demonstrate that an equivalent standard of safety would be applied to the leased aircraft.

Unite national officer, **Oliver Richardson** said: "British Airways should be focusing its energies on resolving the dispute instead of seeking to lease aircraft from half way around the globe at an estimated cost of £5 000 (R83 218) per hour. It is an entirely avoidable waste of resources on behalf of British Airways and would not have happened, if the bosses had accepted our compromise offer." ■

## Customer pulse poll

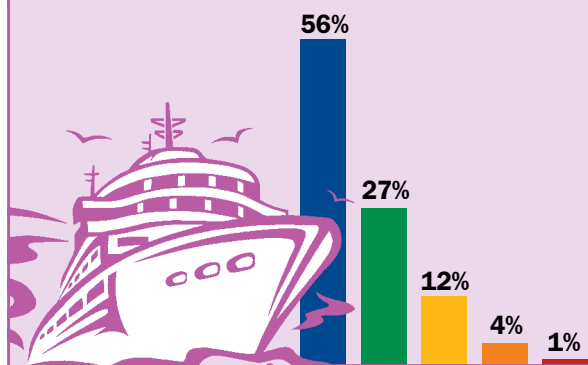
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## Ethiopian pulls the plug on Durban route – for now

ETHIOPIAN Airlines is suspending operations to Durban from August 1. All passengers booked on Durban flights will be rerouted via Johannesburg, to where the airline operates double-daily flights.

The airline cites the 'financial burden incurred on the route due to seasonal demand fluctuation' as the main reason for suspending operations. In a statement, the airline said its planning team was looking at the possibility of seasonal flights to Durban.

**Dinesh Naidoo**, group operations director of SWG, says Ethiopian's decision to suspend

the route will impact heavily on travellers from the region as the airline offers the fastest and most cost-effective flights to Mumbai and Tel Aviv from Durban. Dinesh says travellers will now probably opt for Air Seychelles when travelling to Mumbai.

However, according to **Hamish Erskine**, ceo of Dube Tradeport Corporation, the suspension of Ethiopian Airlines' flights will not affect Durban as a hub. "The three major Gulf carriers, Emirates, Turkish Airlines and Qatar Airways, have traditionally carried the majority of passengers flying directly into Durban.

With that, we expect a slight shift back to the flying patterns seen just before Ethiopian Airlines introduced its service into Durban, where passengers from Europe, North America, the Middle and Far East were serviced by the major Gulf carriers, while passengers from North Africa flew into Durban through Johannesburg."

Hamish adds that the KwaZulu-Natal Route Development Committee continues its work to actively pursue new airlines from a number of key regions that are important to growing both passenger and cargo volumes from the region. ■