Proposed Acsa tariff cuts ‘too steep’

DORINE REINSTEIN
AND DARISE FOSTER

PROPOSED sharp cuts in new Acsa tariffs would do more harm than good, industry experts say. While decreases would be welcomed by airlines and passengers, a sharp drop could impact negatively on important projects and create uncertainty in the market.

Acsa could be facing a 42% decrease in airport tariffs if the gazetted draft tariffs are accepted. This decrease could have serious implications for the airports company and could prove too steep, South Africa’s airline associations Aasa and Barsa say.

The Department of Transport recently gazetted new draft tariffs proposed by the Regulating Committee of the Cape Town runway, such as the realignment of the Cape Town runway, which the industry had agreed on. They cut the agreed capital expenditure amount on which the Acsa tariff application was finalised, this would have a significant impact on Acsa as the decrease would need to be paid back, says Chris Zweigenthal, ceo of Aasa.

In effect, this would mean that Acsa would be facing a significant 84% decrease in tariffs.

Acsa cfo Maureen Manyama told TNW this “claw-back” concept is the Regulating Committee’s way of incentivising the industry by reducing the tariff. She says there are various ways this can be done without resulting in a big reduction. “What we are advocating is the smoothing of tariffs so that, firstly, there is a little bit of predictability for the organisation and secondly, so that there aren’t major spikes in tariffs, which will be resisted by the industry,” she says.

A decrease in tariffs will not necessarily boost traffic to South Africa as there are a lot of other influencing factors when airlines consider a route, says June Crawford, ceo of Barsa. “Any reduction in the passenger service charge is obviously a good thing for tourism,” she says, but also points out it is important not to have too many spikes when it comes to tariffs, as this creates uncertainty in the market.

Acsa submitted to the Regulating Committee a 7.5% tariff decrease for years one and two, and expected the tariffs to remain flat for the remaining three years of the five-year period. Maureen said. Acsa is currently operating under a zero tariff increase regime.

The airports company consulted extensively with industry associations such as Barsa, Aasa and Iata over the past two years about which capital expenditure projects the industry requires as well as what the passenger forecasts are for the coming five years. “Associations signed off together with Acsa and agreed on no increases. It was a very cordial and transparent process,” says June.

However, for the first time in history the Regulating Committee chose to disallow some projects, such as the realignment of the Cape Town runway, which the industry had agreed on. They cut the agreed capital expenditure amount on which the Acsa tariff application was based,” says June,

Outbound travel – the unrecognised casualty

The weak rand, the cost of fuel, airline fuel surcharges, airport taxes, lack of demand – South African travellers have become used to the myriad of reasons for the high cost of international airfares. Unfortunately, they need to add one more: the government.

While South Africa’s new immigration regulations have – deservedly – drawn fierce criticism because of the effect they are having on inbound tourism, there is another unrecognised casualty: outbound travel.

There is the very real possibility that with fewer people flying into the country, airlines will soon begin to
Thai capital rocked by explosion

Monday smile: Let me spell that for you...

Mango launches new route

TNW6003SD

Printed by Juka Printing (Pty) Ltd
Travel & Trade Publishing (Pty) Ltd
Published by

2116, South Africa.
PO Box 55251, Northlands,
Illovo, Johannesburg.
Address: Now Media Centre,
Web: www.nowmedia.co.za
Fax: (011) 327-4094
Phone: (011) 327-4062

Top web stories

Better connections, cheaper flights to India in the pipeline

DOIIR connections between South Africa and India are set to improve, following the signing of a new codeshare agreement between SAA and Jet Airways. The agreement will also see more affordable fare combinations in the market. The new codeshare agreement supports SAA's trunk route between Johannesburg and Abu Dhabi, and Jet Airways' connections from Abu Dhabi on to five major points in India. SAA now shares Jet Airways' services from Abu Dhabi to Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai. In turn, Jet Airways has put its code on SAA's flights between Abu Dhabi and Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. Both airlines already have codeshare agreements with Etihad Airways in place on routes to and from the Abu Dhabi hub. "With this new partnership, SAA will be able to offer additional daily connections to India all via Abu Dhabi on top of the Etihad-operated flights on which our code is already applied," says Sylvain Bosc, SAA chief commercial officer. "This is going to multiply the connection opportunities available to travellers between both countries and therefore enable more access to more combinations of affordable fares." Sylvain admits that SAA's first weeks of operations via Abu Dhabi were made difficult by the closure of the Yemeni airspace due to ongoing military operations, which made the flight time between Johannesburg and the Middle East longer and therefore led to many onward connections being missed, in particular to India. "This constraint, which is obviously beyond our control, has now been lifted," he says. Travel agents have criticised the codeshare between SAA and Etihad, saying connections are bad and that some airlines contracted to carry passengers beyond Abu Dhabi are "below par". "On two occasions passengers booked with good connections, paying higher fares, ended up travelling from Abu Dhabi to Phuket return, on another airline, with old aircraft, unfriendly crew, and bad food. They ended up sitting in Abu Dhabi for over eight hours in a congested terminal with insufficient facilities. No compensation was offered by Etihad," Cape Gulf Travel's Yvonne Horak commented on eTNW. "I now insist that passengers sign an indemnity form if they are continuing after Abu Dhabi to the East, as I cannot guarantee their flights will depart as per the scheduled times."

Geraldine Boshoff, contract and marketing manager of Sure Travel, agrees that sometimes codeshare agreements can be a challenge as the airline can't guarantee the same service. "The challenge already starts at check-in. Most clients have not been informed that they must check-in online on the carrying airline's website," she says.

Tariff cuts ‘too steep’

From page 1 explaining that this is significant because they haven’t considered the industry’s recommendations about capex and projects. Acnca announced a R1,4bn profit after taxes for the financial year ending March 2014. Although down from the previous year’s R1,7bn profit, it marks the second highest profit recorded in the company’s history. In what was described by Acsa ceo Bongani Maseko as a “successful year all-round”, the airports company’s revenue grew to R7,8bn. The number of departing passengers grew 2,4% from 17,4m to 17,8m.

Courtney Canham selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- Mozambique GSA. Four nights at Flamingo Bay in Mozambique from R10 480pp sharing. Offer includes flights ex-JNB to Inhambane, all airport taxes, return airport-hotel transfers, accommodation in a water chalet with breakfast and dinner daily. Honeymooners receive additional value adds. Offer valid for travel until September 30.
- World Stays & Events. Four nights at the Park Inn Radisson Berlin Alexander Platz Hotel in Germany from R2 480pp sharing, Rate includes accommodation in a standard double room and breakfast. Special is valid until December 15.
- Beachcomber Tours. Early-bird Seychelles packages are from R24 990pp sharing. Offer includes return flights ex-JNB, return airport-hotel transfers, five nights’ accommodation in a Garden Villa, breakfast and dinner daily and land and water sports as per brochure. Excludes airport taxes of approximately R3 100. A 30-day advance purchase applies. Offer is valid for travel until October 31.
- Dream Kist Tours. Prague, Vienna and Budapest combo package from R7 939pp. Rate includes three nights at the residence Leon D’Oro in Prague, three nights at Papageno in Vienna, four nights in Agape Apart Hotel in Budapest, return airport-hotel transfers and a hop-on, hop-off bus ticket in each city. Special is valid for travel from December 21-31.
- Kenya Airways. Fares to Hanoi (Vietnam) are from R2 378 ex-JNB. Price includes taxes. Special is valid for travel until December 31.
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NEWS

City of Cape Town takes Sanral to court

DORINE REINSTEIN

SOUTH African National Roads Agency (Sanral) has defended plans to implement the controversial N1/N2 Winelands Toll Project, which will see motorists paying 72c/km – three times that of Gauteng’s tolls.

“The reality is that an improved road network is urgently needed to further unlock the economic potential of the Western Cape. It will bring major benefits for the agricultural sector, the tourism industry, the movement of goods and products and job creation,” Vusi Mona, gm of communications, told TNW.

The City of Cape Town has taken Sanral to court in an attempt to have the proposed N1/N2 Winelands Toll Project scrapped. Councillor Brett Herron says the outcome of the case will have “far-reaching consequences for the future” of the city.

Brett says the projected cost of the Winelands Toll Project escalated from R1.6bn in March 2000 to R44.9bn in March 2010. This is an increase of 2 620% over a period of 10 years and was never presented to or considered by the decision-makers, he says.

However, according to Vusi, the cost of the upgrade of 175km on the Winelands network is estimated at R11.9bn. He says, if given the go-ahead, Sanral will be able to complete the initial construction of the upgrades within three years.

Tourism industry players in the Cape argue that tourism in the Cape Winelands will be negatively affected if the tolls go ahead. “The cost of day trips and travel packages will increase, which is always a concern,” says Annareth Bolton, ceo of Stellenbosch Wine Routes. She says the wine tourism industry is working extremely hard at promoting the destination locally and internationally and the tolls would be a major obstacle. “We should be making it easier for visitors to explore our country, not harder.”

Rickety Bridge Winery’s Andrew Harris agrees: “With tourism numbers already under pressure from the ridiculous new visa laws, a Winelands toll would be another step towards cutting off the livelihood of so many rural families who rely heavily on the employment provided by tourism in the Winelands.”

Lyndsay Jackson, gm of the Guest House Accommodation of South Africa (GHASA), adds that regular commuters, such as accommodation establishment staff and suppliers to the industry, will also be adversely affected. “The knock-on effect would result in higher costs of operating tourism businesses. The tourism sector can ill afford more economic stress!”

Bag-free travel now at Gatwick

LONDON Gatwick airport has implemented the AirPortr luggage transfer, meaning passengers now have same-day, on-demand luggage services that provide bag-free travel to and from their workplace or holiday destination within London, Gatwick and the surrounding and connecting London corridor.

AirPortr’s team of concierges and drivers collect and deliver passengers’ baggage between their location and the airport within hours and at a convenient time. Passengers can offload their bags with the AirPortr team when they land, and travel straight to their destination, thus avoiding carrying luggage around with them all day.

Etihad opens premium lounge in Abu Dhabi

ETIHAD Airways has opened its newly refurbished premium class lounge at Abu Dhabi Airport’s Terminal 1. The lounge is open to Etihad Airways first and business class guests, qualifying Platinum Etihad Guest members and the equivalent tier loyalty programme members of Etihad Airways Partner airlines flying from Abu Dhabi. The upgraded facility has seating for 134 guests, it is open 24 hours a day, and offers a range of facilities.

Emirates partners with Bangkok

EMIRATES has announced a new codeshare agreement with Thailand-based Bangkok Airways. The Emirates code will be added to 19 Bangkok Airways routes across a number of south-east Asian cities, adding a total of 14 new destinations to Emirates’ network, connecting customers to destinations such as Bangkok, Koh Samui, Chiang Mai, Siem Reap, Yangon and Mandalay.

City of Cape Town takes Sanral to court
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Venture into new territory. A wealth of opportunity awaits.
The City of Johannesburg’s executive mayor, Parks Tau, explains how October’s car-free month will work in the popular office and shopping suburb of Sandton.

Sandton shutdown: what you need to know

Streets across Sandton will be closed off for the entire month of October, while the City of Johannesburg hosts the world’s second ever ‘EcoMobility World Festival and Exhibition’ – a month-long car-free district event.

The City of Johannesburg has been working with the Sandton Management District over the last two years to implement a new Sandton Transport Master Plan, which will introduce the bus rapid transit system (BRT), cycle lanes and improved public transport to the Sandton CBD. Road closures in Sandton will take place in October during the EcoMobility World Festival and Exhibition. “For members of the public, this will make public transport more accessible and reduce the need to use a car to come into the Sandton CBD,” says Tau.

An integrated operational plan has been developed that identifies the most appropriate routes for BRT, Metrotubus, Putco, minibus taxis, and metered taxis. In addition to existing services, the city is recapitalising Metrotubus with 150 new buses.

“For members of the public, this will make public transport more accessible and reduce the need to use a car to come into the Sandton CBD.”

The city is discussing with owners of various shopping malls to host park-and-ride facilities for Gautrain buses, Rea Vaya or Metrotubus. These include: Brightwater Commons, Montecasino, Waterfall, Nicolway, and Morningside Glen. Most park and rides will cost R10.

For people who finish work late, there will be drop off services, such as electric tuk tuks and minibuses, that will be available to transport them to their cars.

To make walking easier, sidewalks along the Sandton Gautrain Station will be redone and widened and a bike lane will be added along the route.

Alternative transport will include:

- Park and rides in nearby areas and transport with tuk tuks, pedicabs and electric vehicles.
- Additional public transport including new Metrotubuses
- Newly constructed and pop up cycle lanes.
- Arrangements will be made for deliveries, waste removal, emergency vehicles, the elderly and the disabled.

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The festival road closure plan

Maude Street (between Rivonia and Fifth)
- Closed for private vehicles (with arrangements for deliveries, etc.)
- Cycle lane is being constructed between Rivonia and West (coming from Alexandra, via Linden)

West Street (between Rivonia and Fredman)
- Closed for private vehicles (with arrangements for deliveries, etc.)
- Will be reconstructed with increased sidewalks, cycle lanes, and street furniture

Rivonia, Fredman, Fifth
- Temporary public transport loop
- Lanes to be removed according to how many pedestrians need to be accommodated
- Remainder of road will be open for vehicular traffic
- Pop-up landscaping, bus stops and shelters for public transport users

Alice Lane
- Closed for private vehicles (with arrangements for deliveries, etc.)
- To be used as test track for exhibition

Gwen Lane
- Closed for private vehicles (with arrangements for deliveries, etc.)
- To be used for food festival and other street activities.

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OUR Story

REMEMBERING AN EXCEPTIONAL LEGACY

What better way to salute the man... the legacy... the icon who made it all possible... than by remembering and visiting a place of historical significance...

On 5 August 1962, on the road known as the R103 near Howick, former President, Nelson Mandela was captured and arrested by the South African apartheid police, in his struggle for freedom. Today, this site is marked by an impressive sculpture of Madiba and a memorial site.

The construction of the exhibition centre is at an advanced stage and is due for completion in August 2015. The exhibition being curated will examine the story of the struggle against apartheid, specifically related to the historical event that took place in Kwazulu-Natal, the people involved, and the footsteps of Mandela walking through this turbulent landscape.

The original plaque, along with the newly developed Nelson Mandela Capture Site, makes for a fascinating attraction, giving any visitor a unique cultural experience to remember.

For more information on the Nelson Mandela Capture Site visit www.thecapturesite.co.za

South Africa
KWAZULU-NATAL
Zulu Kingdom, Exceptional
North West to get mega convention centre

Lesl Venter

FOR the most part, Rustenburg resembles a typical small South African town with none of the frenzy associated with a city. However, the town has big plans under way. The local municipality will build an International Convention Centre (ICC) following in the footsteps of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, says executive mayor Mpho Khunou.

The R983 million project will be funded through municipal infrastructure grants. In conjunction with two hotels as well as retail outlets and a possible residential development nearby (all excluded from the estimated cost), the convention centre will go a long way to establishing the town as a serious conference destination, especially in the mining sector.

Rei Engels, owner of Sparkling Waters Hotel and Spa in Rustenburg, says the town and surrounds has great potential as a conference and meetings destination. “I don’t foresee any challenges apart from a lack of marketing. Our proximity to Gauteng makes Rustenburg the ideal out-of-town venue,” Rei says.

Willim Bierman, acting gm of the Orion Group’s Safari Lodge, agrees, saying there is a great deal of potential. “There are already a wide range of facilities that cater for any budget,” he adds. “Rustenburg is mostly known for its mining activities but there are many businesses in the area and mining should not be the only consideration.”

Rustenburg also has a strong government presence. “Many of the North West provincial government offices, such as social development, arts, sports and culture and traditional affairs are located here,” says Willim.

The town’s leadership believes an ICC will give the town a much-needed boost to expose it to the corporate world. With expressions of interest set to be invited in the next financial year, the project, however, is still a long way off.

Abu Dhabi hits the road

The Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) will host its first road show in SA, bringing 20 exhibitors to meet with the trade in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town this September.

Travel industry stakeholders will be exposed to Abu Dhabi’s diversity as a stopover, cruising, cultural, sports, family, wellness, shopping and Halal tourism destination, showcasing attractions such as the Jumeirah at Etihad Towers, the Yas Marina Circuit, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Emirates Palace, Capital Gate Tower and the Saadiyat Cultural District.

“Expect a veritable feast of the senses as we take you on a destination journey that will have you hopping on the next plane to experience it first hand. There are also great prizes that can be won and a bit of fun networking for good measure,” says TCA Abu Dhabi South Africa country manager, Jean Martins.

The road show will take place in Johannesburg on September 15 at The Maslow in Sandton, from 09h00 to 13h00. On September 16, it will take place at the Coastlands Hotel in Umhlanga, KZN, from 09h00 to 13h00 and on September 17 at The Mount Nelson in Cape Town from 09h00 to 13h00.

Agents who are interested in attending can RSVP to jholiard@tcaabudhabi ae.

UK scraps visas for SA diplomats

THE UK has lifted all visa requirements for SA diplomatic passport holders travelling to the UK.

The South African Department of Home Affairs called the UK’s decision “a step in the right direction”, but said in a statement that first prize would be the elimination of visa requirements for all SA citizens travelling to the UK, just as UK citizens don’t require visas when visiting South Africa.

The Department added that South Africa had made progressive changes to its visa regime to beef up security and to improve immigration management while ensuring economic interests are fulfilled.

Major refurbs for Shamwari

SHAWMARI Group will refurbish a number of its properties throughout this year.

Three lodges will be refurbished at Shamwari Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape.

Three new tents will be constructed at Bayethe Tented Lodge and all existing luxury tents will be upgraded. The dining room, lounges and the boma area will also be completely revamped.

The dining room, lounges and all nine suites will be refurbished at Eagles Crag Lodge. These refurbishments will be complete by September.

A new dining tent and larger tents with en-suite bathrooms will be constructed at Shamwari Explorer.

Two lodges will be refurbished at Sanbona Wildlife Reserve near Cape Town.

All common room areas will be revamped at Gondwana Family Lodge following its recent upgrades to the children’s play area. Six suites will also be refurbished at Tilney Lodge.

Two lodges will be refurbished at Jock Safari Lodge in the Kruger National Park.

The two lounges, bar area and boma will be completely refurbished at Jock Main Camp by the end of this month.

Twelve of the lodge’s rooms will also be upgraded in the next few months.

The Family Lodge, Fitzpatrick’s at Jock, recently renovated the outside dining areas and landscaping.

For more information call your ASATA Travel Agent or a Dream Maker on +27 11 217 5555 or email dreams@scddreams.com

NEWS
BA introduces ‘Height Cuisine’

ID you know most people lose 30% of their ability to taste when flying in a pressurised cabin at 35 000 feet? This may explain why airline food often seems so unexciting. And if you’re wondering why you never get piping hot tea or coffee onboard, it’s because water boils at 91 degrees rather than 100 at reduced atmospheric pressure.

Effects of altitude, lower humidity and sensory inhibitors are just some of the challenges airlines face when designing and presenting onboard menus that must ensure their service has the competitive edge. It’s serious business!

No wonder catering forms part of British Airways’ five year £5bn (R95bn) investment in products and customer services.

Gone are the days of bland “chicken or beef”! BA has coined “Height Cuisine”, which involves constant innovation and improvement of its onboard food and wine offering, says Chris Cole, the airline’s food and beverage product change manager.

Countering dulled palates and senses at high altitude, Height Cuisine uses ingredients rich in umami (a savoury flavour known as the “fifth taste”) found naturally in foods such as seaweed, tomatoes, mackerel and parmesan cheese. As colours tend to fade onboard, attention is given to presenting colourful and appetising dishes. Keeping abreast of trends is also part of the recipe, with Middle Eastern food being strong on trend internationally at present.

Cabin service is another important part of the experience. Crew members in premium cabins are trained to provide a top restaurant-like service.

Wine pairing is a tricky affair when wines taste different onboard than on the ground. Wine Master, Keith Isaac, who selects BA’s wines in Club World, says Club World passengers consume about 82 000 bottles a month or almost one million a year! Changes are made monthly and choices always include wines from destinations served.

First Hilton to open in Botswana

Hilton Worldwide has signed a management agreement to open the mid-market Hilton Garden Inn Gaborone in 2017.

The hotel will be 13km from Sir Seretse Khama International Airport. The hotel will feature 150 guest rooms, a healthclub, an outdoor swimming pool, and an all-day dining restaurant, bar and 24-hour pavilion pantry. Guests will also have access to a 24-hour business centre, complimentary WiFi and benefit from more than 400 sqm of meeting space.

“With 13 Hilton Garden Inn locations now confirmed across Africa, I am delighted that we have agreed our first hotel in Botswana,” says Patrick Fitzgibbon, senior vp of development, Europe and Africa for Hilton Worldwide.
Ireland’s diverse landscape and offering makes it tricky for travellers to match area to experience, creating an opportunity for agents to demonstrate value. Carina Borrinho reports.

How to package the Emerald Isle

The misty and mysterious Emerald Isle boasts a culturally rich and diverse offering. The destination’s vast natural beauty and growing list of attractions provide agents with much to entice potential travellers.

Tourism Ireland pr manager, Katharyn Williams-Jaftha, says South Africans tend to favour visiting the Republic of Ireland, particularly Dublin. “There is easy access to Dublin, with many flights entering the Irish city daily. No visas are required for the Republic of Ireland, particularly Dublin.”

Africans tend to favour visiting the Republic of Ireland, making it a more attractive place to visit.”

Republic of Ireland, particularly Dublin.

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Katharyn Williams-Jaftha

Tourism Ireland pr manager,

Up and coming

Belfast, capital of Northern Ireland, is an up-and-coming city with a unique and interesting offering that is surrounded by a myriad of other attractions, recommends Tourism Ireland.

A popular attraction is the Titanic Museum, which has the original life-sized ship that tried to save the Titanic. “For museums and movie-related scenery, Belfast is a must-see for tourists,” Katharyn says. A walking tour of the Titanic Studios, which comprise artefacts from other movies and series as well as Titanic, will show tourists some of the most memorable scenes from the historical drama.

Meanwhile, a new area called Queen’s Quarter is a bustling cosmopolitan area in Belfast. Shops and is one of the most charming villages to visit. “The picturesque drive along the Ring of Kerry is on most South African travellers’ itineraries.”

Besides renting a car for a self-drive experience, travellers can also enjoy getting around by bicycle – a popular way to view the country’s natural beauty.

Northern Ireland is known for its quiet country roads, forest trails and coastal paths. In the Republic, Dublin has a self-service bike rental system with 44 bike stations throughout the city.

Thompson’s offers a dance talent. For a night on the town, Thompson’s offers a dance

The Metropolitan Arts Centre showcases local and international talent. For a night on the town, Thompson’s offers a dance

Thompson’s offers a dance

Thompson’s offers a dance

Thompson’s offers a dance

Thompson’s offers a dance

When in Ireland

What are some of the must-see tourist spots for South Africans visiting Ireland? Trafalgar has put together this list of top attractions.

• The Titanic Belfast Centre, Northern Ireland

• Giant’s Causeway, Northern Ireland

• The Guinness Storehouse visit in Dublin

• Waterford Crystal showroom in Waterford

• Kissing the Blarney Stone

• The scenic Ring of Kerry

• Belleek Pottery, Northern Ireland

• Trinity College and the Book of Kells, Dublin

• Ashford Castle, County Mayo (newly renovated and restored to its former glory)

“Guests who would like to explore the Republic and Northern Ireland at a leisurely pace can opt for the Trafalgar At Leisure travel style, which is represented on our Amazing Ireland trip,” says Trafalgar md, Theresa Szejwaillo. This 14-day guided holiday offers later starts, longer stays and more free time.

Trafalgar also recommends its Hidden Journeys style of travel for agents with clients who wish to travel in small groups. “We have an eight-day Secret of Ireland trip that circles the whole of Ireland, and includes fairy-tale castle stays, beautiful landscapes and cityscapes. This package offers a myriad of wonderful Insider Experiences, such as authentic accommodation, local specialists and cultural insights,” says Theresa.

Thompsons is offering first-time visitors its Best of Ireland self-drive tour. The package includes flights, taxes, three-star accommodation for seven nights, full Irish breakfast and car hire. The package is R13 165 per person sharing, and the highlights include Dublin, the Guinness Store House, Kylemore Abbey, The Burren, the Cliffs of Moher, the scenic Ring of Kerry, Kilkenny, a visit to the Blarney Stone and more. The offer is valid from October 1-30.

书 it!

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Know your customer!

IRELAND is most popular amongst South Africans in the 40-plus market, who typically enjoy a B&B type of accommodation, says Tourism Ireland. Katharyn Williams-Jaftha says many South African visitors are retired or are visiting family in Ireland. “They therefore prefer accommodation that is affordable and has a homely feel, making B&Bs the common choice,” she says, noting that some travellers, however, book castle stays as part of the uniquely Irish experience, but this becomes pricey.

However, the country is also expanding the number of attractions it has for the younger generation, says Katharyn. It has become a hub for interesting world-class cuisine as well as music festivals.

What’s new? Ireland is known for its superior quality meat including beef and pork, which is a pull-factor for the meat-conscious South African. Food tours can be found throughout the country, which is one way for agents to up-sell trips. Another attraction that would be of interest to South Africans is the popular pub-hopping culture, which sees locals and tourists alike explore a variety of pubs to taste unique Irish beers and whiskeys. Tourism Ireland recommends the Dublin Literary Pub Crawl. The ‘show’ includes performances by actors who join travellers from pub to pub and re-enact the works of Dublin’s most famous writers (James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Oscar Wilde and many more).

“Further to bar hopping, which is a must-do in Ireland, entertainment such as Irish dancing and Irish festivals are a major attraction at many local hangouts,” says Katharyn.

One of the most popular festivals is St Patrick’s Day on March 17. “During this period, the entire country comes to life,” says Katharyn.

A major attraction for many South Africans is the variety of golf courses that Ireland offers. Katharyn says the country boasts over 300 golf courses with some of the most spectacular views. Agents looking for golf fanatics as well as couples travelling to Ireland, should also note that a growing number of golf spa facilities are available.

Visas – what agents need to know

While South African passport holders do not require a visa to enter the Republic of Ireland, they do require a UK visa for entering Northern Ireland. “Obtaining a visa can take anywhere from five days during a quiet season and 20 days in peak season,” says Katharyn. Visas cost around R1 500 and are valid for six months.

Book it!

Trafalgar’s Irish Wonder allows travellers to visit cities such as Dublin, Limerick, Galway and more, viewing majestic castles and exquisite cathedrals. Travellers can see Trinity College, kiss the Blarney Stone and gaze at the dramatic Cliffs of Moher and spectacular Dingle Peninsula. This package is priced from R11 950 per person twin share on the Preview special. It lasts for eight days and includes accommodation with breakfast daily, three dinners, all transport, services of a professional travel director, free WiFi and more. The Preview special also offers travellers the chance to book their 2016 accommodation with breakfast daily, three dinners, all transport, services of a professional travel director, free WiFi and more.

The Bison Bar in Dublin. Photo: Gareth Byrne

Isle of myth and motion picture

IRELAND offers a growing number of fantasy attractions, particularly relating to movies and series, such as the popular Game of Thrones.

“Ireland has a rich offering when it comes to movie tourism,” says Katharyn Williams-Jaftha, who highlights that, besides Game of Thrones, movies such as Titanic, PS. I love You, Leap Year and the new Star Wars were all shot in various parts of the country.

The main headquarters for the production of Game of Thrones is the Paint Hall studios in Belfast. The majority of on-location shooting also occurs in Northern Ireland, at locations such as Castle Black, which was built as a set in an abandoned quarry a few minutes’ drive north of Belfast. Tourism Ireland suggests a four-day trip, including a visit to the Tollymore Forest Park, which is home to hidden caves and gothic-style bridges, as well as Belfast and a visit to the Inch Abbey, which is the location of some of the show’s most compelling moments. Travellers are even able to visit Castle Ward (home of the character Stark), and aim live arrows on the castle grounds.

Agents should inform travellers that they can meet the real-life wolf-like dogs Odin and Thor at Castle Ward. These pets, which belong to Stark in the series, are Northern Inuit dogs, and are happy to interact with Game of Thrones fans. They can also arrange a guided car tour on behalf of their clients that covers around 240km of private land, taking travellers through dark hedges and mystical forests that lead to Dunluce Castle. The castle was once owned by Winston Churchill, and was the set for the Kingdom of Westeros.
For travellers unaccustomed to train travel, navigating Europe’s various stations with their individual differences can be a daunting task. With the assistance of Terri Wright, manager of World Travel, Michelle Colman puts together a basic guideline.

**A guide to Europe by rail**

EUROPE’S major train stations link destinations just about anywhere on the continent. They are generally located in the heart of cities, their networks offer connections from the busiest of airports to rural villages, and they are points at which all public transportation converges – buses, taxis and underground networks.

Coming from a country with a comparatively confined train travel culture, South Africans tend to under-appreciate intercity train travel and, with large distances to cover, it doesn’t feature in local corporate travel. But in Europe, comprehensive networks, high-schedule frequencies, speed, reliability and punctuality, make trains a worthwhile option.

Johannesburg-based World Travel has long been synonymous with the marketing of European rail travel. Manager, Terri Wright, is a mine of information, and believes that, for journeys of up to four hours, rail is the way to go. She points out that station check-ins are also easier to negotiate than airports – in most cases travellers need only arrive 10-30 minutes ahead of departure.

**Amsterdam Schiphol Airport**

(17km southwest of Amsterdam)

The Schiphol station, directly beneath the airport under Schiphol Plaza, offers connections to Amsterdam Centraal Station every 10 minutes, with an average journey time of 15-20 minutes. The station offers the use of business-class lounges.

**Popular connections:**
- From Schiphol, high-speed services travel across the Netherlands and through Europe, connecting with the Thalys for France and Belgium, or ICE International for Germany.
- Amsterdam Centraal to Paris: Duration – 3h18 with up to 11 daily return departures
- Paris to Brussels: Duration – 1h22 with up to 24 daily return departures
- Amsterdam to Brussels: Duration – 1h48 with up to 12 daily return departures

**Schiphol railway station**

12 daily return departures

**Thalys need to know:**
- Thalys’ business class, branded Comfort 1, offers large, comfortable seats with electric sockets to recharge electronic devices, and free WiFi.
- Free international newspapers in various languages are available and on journeys longer than 50 minutes, a full or a light meal is served.

**Frankfurt Airport**

(12km southwest of Frankfurt)

Frankfurt Airport train station offers connections to any destination on Germany’s Deutsche Bahn network. The station is next to Terminal 1 and has both a regional train station (platforms 1-3, from where S-Bahn services depart) and a long-distance train station (platforms 4-7, mostly for ICE high-speed services). The connection between terminals 1 and 2 is provided by Skyline, an automatic train. Frankfurt’s Hauptbahnhof (Central Station) is reachable in 10 to 12 minutes by S-Bahn commuter trains, located beneath Terminal 1.

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Europe by Train, which has been the GSA for Trenitalia in South Africa for some years, has recently been given the same point of sale system as Trenitalia. This means that agents are able to instantly price and book groups on Italian rail, as well as book services on the train.

**TRAIN TRAVEL**

**Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport**

(23km north of Paris)

SNCF French Rail operates direct TGV high-speed trains to and from Charles de Gaulle Airport and major French cities such as Strasbourg, Aix-en-Provence, Avignon, Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Marseille and Montpellier, with average journey times of under four hours. The TGV also provides regular services to European capital cities. Charles de Gaulle TGV station is located underneath Terminal 2. Passengers arriving at Terminals 1 or 3 cannot access the station by walking and need to take the CDGVAl shuttle. The RER B line is a local train that travels to Gare du Nord in Paris in 30-60 minutes. The Eurostar departures from Gare du Nord to London, with a journey time of 2h15.

**Popular connections:**
- Paris to Stuttgart: Duration – 3h40
- Paris to Luxembourg: Duration – 2h05
- Paris to Avignon: Duration – 2h40
- Paris to Strasbourg:

**London Heathrow Airport**

(22km west of London)

Public transport operator, National Express, operates high-speed, commuter and regional train services from Heathrow to more than 500 destinations throughout England. The Piccadilly Underground line travels to St Pancras Station in London for connections to European cities such as Brussels, Paris and Lille using the Eurostar. The high-speed Heathrow Express trains stop at certain terminals at Heathrow Central and travel into London’s Paddington Station in 15-20 minutes, every 15 minutes.

**Eurostar need to know:**
- The Eurostar operates from St Pancras Station. This is the only fast train in Europe that requires a check-in time of 30 minutes (most others require just 10 minutes).
- It crosses to France in the Channel Tunnel at speeds of up to 300km.
- The journey from London to Paris takes 2h15, reaching Brussels 1h51 minutes later.
- The Eurostar also travels to Euro Disney five times a week in under three hours.
- There are three classes of travel – business premier class, standard premier and standard class for those on a budget. Travellers in the first two classes can make use of two ‘quiet’ coaches in which to work and read. Business premier offers a dedicated, fast lane check-in, which closes 10 minutes before departure, as well as the use of business premier lounges. On board, carriages are air-conditioned and feature reclining seats with generous leg-room, tables and power sockets. ‘At seat’ catering includes a choice of complimentary reading material and wheelchair space.

**5 great rail adventures**

**Pass through Peru**

‘Footsteps of the Incas’ is a 10-day Country Explorer by Trafalgar by rail and coach, which showcases Peru. Guests visit Cusco before heading toward Machu Picchu on board the Vistadome train. Priced from R50 950 per person twin share, it includes nine nights’ accommodation with breakfast daily, four lunches and five dinners plus all transport, including the rail trip and internal flights. Book and pay by November 27 to save up to 10% with Trafalgar’s Early Payment Discount. 2016 travel dates include January 26-February 4, February 10-25, March 1-10, March 15-24, March 29-April 7, plus departures in May, June, July, August, September, October, November and December.

**Eastern magic**

This year TravelVision is offering the new G Adventures Trans-Siberian tour connecting Beijing with St Petersburg via Mongolia. In the Arctic Circle, passengers can witness the Northern Lights in the 13th century. Packages are valid at any time, throughout the year.

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**Indian adventures**

The Royal Rajasthan on Wheels is an eight-day adventure, offered by TravelVision?, that explores Indian destinations including Delhi; Jodhpur; Udaipur; Chittorgarh; Sawai Madhopur; Jaipur; Khajuraho; Varanasi; Agra and Delhi. The special starts from R51 180 per person sharing, departing on November 29 (prices for other Sunday departures, on request). The package includes on-board accommodation, all meals, sightseeing, entrance fees and taxes.

**Polish highlights**

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**Polish highlights**

Austria Connection's Poland tour offered by Austria Connection covers Prague, Vienna and Budapest. The package is priced from €542 (R11 420) per person sharing in three-star hotels. On the third day, passengers will explore Prague or take an excursion outside the city to the Kutná Hora UNESCO Heritage Site, an important town in Bohemia whose origins can be traced back to the 13th century. Packages are valid at any time, throughout the year.
JOBS

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Appointments

- BON Hotels International West Africa has appointed Bernard Cassar executive director. He has over 35 years’ experience in the hotel industry. Semi-retired since 2008, Bernard continues to consult part-time. He was gm of Mabula Lodge, Protea Hotel Hapzeref, Piggs Peak & Casino and the Ritz, before he became director of Protea Hotels Africa. Bernard grew up in Cape Town and holds a diploma in hotel management from the School of Tourism and Hospitality at the University of Johannesburg.

- Franco Rienzo has been appointed as the new gm of Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort & Spa. Franco joins the hotel from the Swiss Hotel Management School in Switzerland, where he was programme leader. Prior to this, he held management positions at the Zuri White Sands Goa Resort & Casino in India, and at Silverstar Cruises.

Tsogo Sun has appointed Ravi Nadasen as its operations director for northern central regions. Ravi was previously operations director for the Gauteng east region. He holds a masters of business administration from the University of Stellenbosch, a BTech management and a national diploma in hotel management from the Durban Institute of Technology, and has almost 20 years’ experience in the industry.

- Radisson Blu Le Vendome Hotel has appointed Clinton Thom as its new gm. Clinton has 16 years’ experience in the hospitality industry and he studied business management at UNISA.

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Mango will launch flights between Lanseria and Durban on October 15. The service will operate twice-daily, with special launch fares starting from R379 including taxes. The airline will also increase flights from Lanseria to Cape Town, with an additional early morning flight, bringing the total number of flights between the destinations to four. The twice-daily service to Durban out of Lanseria will depart at 08h55 and 18h20, while flights to Lanseria will depart Durban at 07h50 and 16h30 respectively. The new flight to Cape Town from Lanseria will depart at 06h10. The carrier has also revealed plans to add aircraft to its fleet later this year, with further growth and additions expected over the next two years. “While trading conditions remain tough and some competitors have had to adopt a flexible schedule as a consequence, our average load factors have shown that there remains opportunity for business development, in particular our expansions out of Lanseria,” says Mango spokesperson, Hein Kaiser.

Outbound travel – a casualty

From page 1

Assess whether they are making profits on this route. And if they are not, they will start cutting capacity. This will drive up airfares, increasing the cost of doing business internationally for companies and the government. Something that South Africa cannot afford in the precarious economic climate. A lack of seats to and from South Africa will also threaten the country’s global standing, especially as “the gateway to Africa”, which is already under threat. Experts believe the engine driving African markets has already shifted from the south, with investors now seeking new entry points and direct access to Africa’s high-growth markets. A report by Grant Thornton, commissioned by the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, suggests South Africa could lose 1 600 tourists – or four jumbo jets – a day year on year as a result of the new regulations. Stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry are not whiners who are reacting in a knee-jerk fashion. We have serious, proven concerns. While we must protect our children and prioritise national security, the government needs to engage with the industry and construct a better solution that will not drive away tourism and belabour South Africa’s consumers and business with more rising costs in the form of prohibitive international travel.

Andrew Stark
MD, Flight Centre

A drive through the countryside

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