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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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INSIDE

NEWS SALES BOOM
Travellers opt for longer stays
Page 2

FEATURE SPORTS TOURISM
Sector shows massive growth
Page 6



FEATURE SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA
A no-brainer for SA tourists
Page 11



Shop 750 000 hotels on one screen

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

AGENTS can now compare hotel rates across multiple hotel aggregators, chains and representation companies within the same workflow on Amadeus.

This is thanks to Amadeus loading regional and international hotel aggregator content on to Amadeus Hotels Plus, a section of the Amadeus Selling Platform.

Amadeus project manager, **Marisa van der Linde**, says this will reduce the workload that agents face when booking hotels. "Hotel booking processes are rarely

standardised across points of sale. This means that agents have to shop for rates across a variety of channels, both GDS and third-party websites, and even double check with hotels directly. This wastes

"This will reduce the workload that agents face when booking hotels."

both time and money, not just when researching and making bookings, but with paperwork and data consolidation afterwards."

Amadeus's new content also gives agents the ability to compare hotel

rates (by room or day) from 11 aggregators in one place. The aggregators include: Alba Travel, bedsonline, Expedia Affiliate Network, gta, H Corp, HRS Global Hotel Solutions, sunhotels, tbohotels.com, Teldar Travel, totalstay, and yatra.

"Our system provides the rates from these aggregators for 750 000 hotel properties across 310 chains. It then allows the agent to compare these rates with the hotel chains' GDS rate. This will help agents to make sure that they are getting the best price and hotel for their client's requirements,"

To page 16



Hello, Bulawayo!

Fastjet has commenced a twice daily service (except Saturdays) between Harare and Bulawayo. From Sunday to Friday there is a morning and afternoon flight. Fastjet's Embraer ERJ 145 received the customary water salute when it touched down in Bulawayo on July 20. Pictured: Sean Bradley, gm of sales, fastjet. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Government shows double standards on birth certificates

DAVE MARSH AND TESSA REED

SOUTH African minors will not benefit from an intention to change the immigration regulations announced on July 24 by **Derek Hanekom**, SA

Minister of Tourism.

In a video recording broadcast at the Satsa conference on July 24, the Minister said Cabinet had agreed that, in the interests of encouraging families to tour SA,

foreign minors would be treated differently when they crossed SA's borders.

A person close to the Department of Tourism, said that, although there had been mixed

To page 16

Comoros could make a comeback

TESSA REED

COMOROS airline, Air Ylang, is looking to launch flights between Johannesburg and Moroni. The airline currently operates inter-island flights in the Comoros.

A spokesperson told TNW that it was still waiting for authorisation to operate the

route, but hopes to launch the flights within the next few months.

The airline plans to operate a twice-weekly service on Mondays and Fridays, with the possibility of a Sunday flight also being explored.

Airlink's application for a
To page 2

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Increased spend drives sales growth

SARAH ROBERTSON

INDUSTRY players say 2018's sales boom is due to longer stays and increased packaged holiday sales rather than a notable increase in passenger numbers.

Operators say this could be due to a more stable rand or a trend for travellers to make the most of each trip rather than spending money on shorter, more regular holidays.

Jason Veitch, md of TIC, said while the value of TIC's sales had increased this year, the policy count was fairly similar to last year's transactions.

He said the trend of increased premiums for similar passenger volumes indicated that South Africans were travelling abroad for longer periods.

John Ridler, PR and media manager of Thompsons Holidays, agreed, saying that the trend had been to take shorter, more frequent breaks but that Thompsons had recently noted an increase in length of holiday stay, which they believed was related to the improved stability of the rand. Likewise, **Joanne Visagie**, sales and marketing director of Beachcomber Tours, said while Beachcomber's

average stay had remained at seven nights it had noted an increase in eight- and nine-night stays.

Annemarie Lexow, sales and marketing manager of Travel Vision, said it was receiving requests for longer trips of two weeks or more for the US and Latin America but that travel length for other destinations had remained very similar to previous years. She had also noted an increase in requests for clients visiting more than one city or country during one trip.

Annemarie suggested that, due to the ongoing economic slump, people with money were trying to

make the most of each trip rather than splitting it up into shorter regular holidays, while those with less disposable income would seek shorter vacations closer to home.

“People with money are trying to make the most of each trip rather than splitting it up into shorter regular holidays.”

Jason agreed saying that while South Africans had invested in lengthy trips this year, money may not be available to the same

extent in 2019 due to increasing costs such as tax and petrol.

Players that aren't seeing an increase in length of stay report an increase in spend. **Andrew Stark**, md of the Flight Centre Travel Group, said, according to FCTG figures, increases in packaged holiday sales had bumped up the group's revenue for 2018.

Wally Gaynor, founder and md of Club Travel, said while the company had shown growth across the board this year, it had not spotted a particular trend indicating increased travel length. ■

Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



“Lower the drawbridge and raise the gate. Sir Laugh-A-Lot approaches.”

NCL to visit South Africa

TESSA REED

IN MARCH 2020, Norwegian Cruise Line's *Norwegian Spirit* will make calls at South Africa as well as Indian Ocean islands including Mauritius, Seychelles and Maldives.

The ship will undergo a bow-to-stern revitalisation before making its journey from Europe to Asia, where it will be deployed seasonally beginning in summer 2020.

The journey will feature two itineraries with calls at South Africa. The first is a 20-night cruise from Dubai to Cape Town with calls at the UAE, Oman, Seychelles, Madagascar,

Mauritius, Réunion, Richards Bay, Port Elizabeth, and Mossel Bay.

The second is a 24-night cruise from Cape Town to Malaysia, with calls at Mossel Bay, Port Elizabeth, Réunion, Mauritius, Seychelles, Maldives and Thailand.

Sharing the news, **Nick Wilkinson**, NCL vp and md UK & Ireland, the Middle East and Africa, told *TNW* that its South African market had doubled over the past three years, while 2019 was also showing strong growth.

Nick said NCL would increase its fleet sailing Europe next year to six ships, deploying the 2 400-passenger

Norwegian Pearl. This will be the largest NCL ship in European waters and will sail nine-, 11- and 14-night itineraries, including sailings from Amsterdam as well as variety of Mediterranean sailings from Rome (Civitavecchia), Barcelona, and Venice.

He added that the Mediterranean and Baltic cruises were the line's strongest selling cruises out of the Central and Southern African market.

In the fourth quarter of 2019 and the first quarter of 2020, *Norwegian Jade* will home port at Hong Kong and Singapore, from where it will sail itineraries that include Cambodia and Vietnam. ■

Blacky Komani to chair TBCSA board

THE Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) has announced the appointment of **Blacky Komani** as the chairman of its board,

effective from August 1. Blacky is the current deputy ceo of the Tourvest Group. **June Crawford**, Barsa ceo and **Ravi Nadasen**, coo of Tsogo

Sun, have both been elected deputy chair.

Outgoing board chairman, **Tito Mboweni's** term ends on July 31. ■

Comoros could make a comeback

From page 1 licence to operate flights to Moroni has been approved by the South African Air Services Licensing Council and the carrier also has a Foreign Operator Permit to fly to the destination. However, ceo, **Rodger Foster**, said the airline was looking to operate a route that included Mayotte, for which it is still

awaiting a Foreign Operator Permit.

Rodger said leisure tourism to the Comoros was not what it used to be and, while there was potential for this to develop, it would take time. “There are lots of competing destinations. The Comoros has been off the map for a long time and it is going to take a while for it to put itself

back on the map again.”

Zephnie Viljoen, director of Perfect Destinations, told *TNW* that the operator was always excited about new destinations being opened up in the Indian Ocean. “The Comoros used to be quite popular,” she says. “If the flights are released for sale, we would be interested in selling the destination.” ■

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Celebrating freedom

The Johannesburg Virgin Atlantic team joined the founder of Virgin Group, Sir Richard Branson, and members of the travel trade, to walk with The Elders (an independent group of global leaders working together for peace and human rights) around Constitution Hill on Mandela Day (July 18). The airline has named its newest Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner 'Lady Freedom' in honour of global icon, Nelson Mandela. Pictured (from left): Nikki Wheeler, Virgin Atlantic SA partnership development executive; George Argyropoulos, ceo of Cruises International; and Mary Shilleto, ceo of Thompsons Travel. Photo: Savannah Freemantle

No-shows outed on Open Jaw

JASON SIMPSON

ON TUESDAY, July 17, I was named and shamed on social media, after RSVPing for the Seychelles Tourism Board Roadshow then not arriving.

I heard about it and managed to get to the venue just before the event ended. Initially angry and embarrassed, truth be told, I wouldn't have made it to the event if it wasn't for the photo of my name tag on Open Jaw by Travelinfo.

Travel agent, Anton van den Heever, who attended the event and posted the photo on his own initiative, thinks those who have RSVPd and do not attend, without cancelling or giving a valid reason, should be fined. "This should be made clear in the invitation and the follow-up communications from the

organisers." Another option, according to Anton, is to blacklist the no-shows from attending future events.

Rudi van der Vyver, ceo of the South African Association for the Conference Industry, says for free events, approximately 30-40% of people won't attend, with many not stopping to think of the preparation and cost that has gone on in the background.

It costs suppliers dearly. Sales manager for kulula holidays, Rebecca Bryer, says suppliers can pay between R5 500 and R23 000 per table per session, depending on the workshop.

It's worth mentioning that there were names in the Open Jaw post of people who had cancelled, or had not RSVPd to begin with and some felt it was inappropriate of Anton to call people out publicly.

"Technically it wasn't my place and it isn't my battle," says Anton, who handles events and incentives for Travel by Arrangement, and who also organises a MICE industry event. "However, suppliers have told me they are too frightened to address the situation, as travel agents will be very quick to threaten said suppliers with a reduction in support the minute suppliers express their displeasure."

"Regrettably, there were individuals who were unfairly included in the 'naming and shaming'," says Natalia Rosa, director of Big Ambitions, who helped organise the event. "We have taken responsibility for that and personally apologised to everyone affected." She says, however, that the Open Jaw outing highlighted a problem in the industry. ■

AirHeads

A snapshot of the week's airline news

Airlink increases capacity to Walvis Bay

FROM July 30, Airlink has increased capacity on its Johannesburg-Walvis Bay services. The airline is using one of its new 74-seat Embraer 170 E-Jets on the route, with 68 seats in economy and six in business class. The route was previously operated by an Embraer 135 regional jet with a capacity of between 37 and 44 passengers. On October 1, Airlink will suspend its Pietermaritzburg-Cape Town route and will reinstate it if there is an upturn in the economy, and it becomes economically viable to do so.

FlyAfrica to resume operations in August

FLYAFRICA expects to return to the skies on August 15, after its aircraft were temporarily grounded during the transfer from an ACMI (temporary lease) to a permanent lease. The airline will also start operating a Harare-Bulawayo route on August 15. FlyAfrica said an Embraer would service the route Monday to Friday, departing Harare at 09h20 and arriving in Bulawayo at 10h10. The return flight will depart Bulawayo at 10h55 and arrive in Harare at 11h45.

Emirates ups Paris and Lyon frequencies

EMIRATES will introduce two additional flights to Lyon and one to Paris per week starting August 2 and August 7 respectively, serviced by a B777-300ER. The Lyon flights will depart Dubai at 14h35 and arrive in Lyon at 09h30 every Tuesday and Thursday. It will then depart Lyon at 21h55, arriving in Dubai at 06h15 the following day. The additional Paris flight serviced by the A380 will operate every Tuesday. It will depart Dubai at 04h05, arriving in Paris at 09h25. It will then depart Paris at 11h25 and arrive in Dubai at 20h00.

Expedia drops bitcoin as a payment option

SARAH ROBERTSON

EXPEDIA, which introduced a bitcoin payment option on its website in 2014, has now ditched the option.

Cryptocurrency values have also undergone wild fluctuations recently, with analysts predicting that, while this form of currency will continue to go mainstream, it will be as a trading or investment asset rather than as a transaction method.

According to a recent report

from JPMorgan, merchant acceptance of bitcoin, the leading cryptocurrency, is currently at an all-time low, with only three of the leading 500 Internet sellers accepting bitcoin, down from five last year.

Expedia acknowledged that there had been various issues for customers using cryptocurrency to make hotel bookings and said it would continue to evaluate various options to offer travellers flexible payment solutions. ■

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Singapore Airlines topples Qatar as best airline

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

SINGAPORE Airlines has won the 2018 Skytrax award for 'World's Best Airline' in a ceremony at the Langham Hotel in London, knocking Qatar Airways into second place. They were followed by ANA All Nippon Airways (the largest airline in Japan), Emirates, and EVA Air. Ethiopian Airlines has retained its position as the 'Best Airline in Africa' after it pushed SAA out of first place last year for the first time in 14 years. SAA has retained second place. ET has also moved up eight positions in

the Skytrax world rankings, now sitting at number 40 out of 100 airlines, while SAA moved up four places from last year and now sits at number 49.

Mango won 'Best Low-cost Airline in Africa', knocking Fastjet out of first place. Fastjet now holds the second position, followed by kulula.com, Jambojet and fly540.

Mango has also moved up two positions in the 'Best Airline in Africa' rankings, now coming in seventh while TAAG Angola Airlines has fallen three positions, taking tenth place.

According to Skytrax, over 100 customer nationalities participated in the 2017-2018

survey, with 20,36m eligible survey entries counted in the final results.

The Skytrax awards are based on an annual customer satisfaction survey. The survey gives travellers the opportunity to rate their experience both in the air and on the ground and includes more than 320 airlines. It measures customer satisfaction across 41 key performance indicators of airlines' frontline products and service; including check-in, on-board seat comfort, cabin cleanliness, food and beverages, inflight entertainment and staff service. ■

Voice recognition enters the travel industry

SARAH ROBERTSON

VOICE recognition searches are predicted to become the new method of choice for accessing information, according to Travelport's recently released *Transforming your travel management* ebook.

Travel companies applying voice technology to their offering include KLM, FCM and InterContinental Hotels and Resorts.

The technology is of relevance to the travel industry because of the convenience it offers travellers looking for information and who are carrying heavy suitcases.

Earlier this month, InterContinental Hotels and Resorts announced that voice recognition technology handling many of these

functions would be launched in two of its hotels in China within the year. FCM is rolling out chatbot Sam next month and KLM released BB, its Blue Bot service, during 2017. BB offers KLM customers flight booking services in natural language and advice on what to pack for upcoming trips based on trip duration and predicted local weather.

Claudette Thorne, country manager South Africa at Travelport, says the shift to mobile and voice commerce continues to shape the travel industry. She adds that, despite voice technology still being in its infancy, there has been a development surge from airlines and travel brands. According to Travelport's Global Digital Traveller Research in 2017, 54% of surveyed South African

travellers already use voice search when researching a trip.

Claudette highlights Amazon's Alexa for Hospitality as an example of voice recognition technology in the travel industry. The product can be customised and is essentially a voice-activated device. "Hotels can place customised versions of the Echo device in their rooms so that guests can order room service, request housekeeping, raise the thermostat or turn on the lights," says Claudette.

"We predict that by 2020 consumers will start feeling app fatigue and that text or voice-based interfaces will soon be the new norm for communication with the web," says **Euan McNeil**, gm of FCM Travel Solutions South Africa. ■

MSC Cruises to build new cruise terminal
MSC CRUISES has signed Memorandum of Understanding for the construction a new cruise terminal in PortMiami, Florida. Terminal AAA will be able to accommodate MSC Cruises' next generation of ships, which are still under construction and will carry up to 7 000 guests. The terminal is expected to be completed in October, 2022.

Regent announces itineraries for new ship
REGENT Seven Seas Cruises' *Seven Seas Splendor*, will join the company's fleet in February 2020. It is the sister ship of the *Seven Seas Explorer*, which debuted in 2016. Highlights of the new itineraries for 2020 include: the Enchanting Mediterranean: a Venice to Rome sailing departing on May 12, with a stop in Cannes during the film festival; Exquisite Riviera, a Rome to Barcelona sailing departing on May 21, with a visit to Monte Carlo on May 24 during the Monaco Grand Prix; and Grecian Wonders, from Rome to Istanbul, departing October 4.

Club Med Cancun doubles family rooms
CLUB Med Cancun Yucatan in Mexico has doubled the size of its family accommodation. Sixty new ocean-front family rooms have been added to the Agumarina (an area that caters for families) - 30 are club rooms and the remainder are deluxe rooms. A new family-orientated bar area has a snack and beverage menu specifically designed to appeal to children, a family pool that offers water games, a reception area, and concierge to service families.

Majorca limits all-inclusive packages

SARAH ROBERTSON

MAJORCA has limited all-inclusive resort offers in an attempt to curb drunken tourism.

The resort town of Magaluf, a popular British tourist party destination, has introduced measures to ban free alcohol offers and to limit the amount that people on all-inclusive hotel packages can drink. The council has banned two-for-one alcohol offers and has engaged with resorts to limit the daily alcohol amount allowed for all-inclusive resort packages.

Curbing drunken tourism is a priority for the area's local council, who have adopted a five-year regeneration plan.

Locally, **Terry Munro**, md of Beachcomber, says about 70% of its customers take up all-inclusive offers when visiting the Indian Ocean islands. **John Ridler**, PR and media manager of Thompsons Holidays and **Brenda Mitchell**, director of sales for World Leisure Holidays estimate that all-inclusive offers account for 45%-50% of sales.

However, despite the popularity of all-inclusive packages in this region, there does not appear to be any drunken tourism issues, with a spokesperson from the Mauritius Tourism Promotions Authority saying they had not received complaints from guests or hotels. ■



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SPORTS TOURISM

Photo: Beachcomber Resorts and Hotels

Russia has experienced a spike in tourist numbers thanks to the recent 2018 FIFA World Cup. Chana Boucher looks at whether the local travel trade is cashing in on sports tourism.

For the love of the game

SPORTS tourism, once referred to as ‘the sleeping giant of tourism’, has become the fastest growing sector in global tourism, generating around US\$800 billion (R10,77trn) in 2017 worldwide.

The growing interest in sport, the emergence of disciplines such as mountain biking and running, investment in improved sporting facilities, the increasing number of sporting events, and the rise of the health and fitness trend, are all reasons provided for the massive

growth of the sector. South Africans are sports lovers, so if international trends are anything to go by, they should be avid sports tourists too.

According to **Carlos Luis**, Flight Centre Travel Group brand leader, Air, Land and Sea Product, the interest around sports travel is definitely on the rise. Sports tourism is a broad term covering five different reasons for travel, according to UNWTO.

They are: actively participating in a sport or sporting event, individually

or as part of a team; self-development or enhanced training for sport as an individual or team; watching sport as a spectator or supporter; visiting sites and places associated with the history, heritage or culture of a sport or a sporting legend; and improving health and well-being through a sporting activity.

“There are a great number of schools and sporting clubs that participate in sporting events. This number is far greater than individuals looking to attend an event as

a spectator. You might have a handful of people travelling to Wimbledon, for example, but a number of school teams travelling to participate in an event,” says Carlos.

Nicky Bell, ceo of Edusport Travel and Tours, which sells sport-inclusive packages to supporters only, says the spectator segment of the sports tourism market is growing in SA. “People are becoming more aware of sports travel packages and love the idea of travelling to watch their hero participate in an event.” Nicky says motor sports and football hold the most sales potential, with the English Premier League, Moto GP and Grands Prix by far the most popular sporting events with SA travellers.

“Sport will always be an ingredient for South Africans,



Mandy Lerena

even if it is just the resort facilities. South Africans like to know they can water-ski or wakeboard all day free – which they can with Beachcomber – or pedalo, stand-up paddle, windsurf, kayak and play tennis,” says **Joanne Visagie**, sales and marketing

director, Beachcomber Tours, which promotes beach resorts in Mauritius.

Mandy Lerena, commercial manager for Virgin Atlantic in SA, says the airline has certainly seen an increase in passenger numbers and groups travelling either as spectators or participants. The airline’s dedicated groups team is able to assist with bookings of this nature. “We offer a dedicated group sales team, global connections and discounted fares, among other benefits.”

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Sports tourism by numbers

According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, sports tourists spend more than their non-sporting counterparts. Here are some of their interesting findings:

- An estimated 900 000 tourists attend the English Premier League football games every year.
- These tourists spend around £785 (R13 777)

each, compared with the £583 (R10 234) spent by those engaged in other activities.

- Golf tourism is worth around US\$100 billion (R1,35trn) per year.
- Golf tourists spend an estimated 20% more than other travellers.
- Around 10% of the 60 million golfers worldwide travel overseas for holidays.

Selling sports travel no slam dunk

WHILE the global numbers show that travelling for sport, whether to participate or simply spectate, is on the rise, it doesn't necessarily translate into better earning potential for travel agents.



Nicky Bell

Flight Centre Travel Group's **Carlos Luis** believes sports packages are not lucrative for travel agents. "Commission levels are often only around the 5%-7% mark with a number of non-commissionable items not offering an incentive for the sale." Another challenge, he says, is the complexity around which the operator has rights to which sporting events.

This makes it confusing to ascertain who to go to in order to book the packages.

Carlos adds: "The nature of the events also results in sporadic sporting package advertising in the market and sports getaways are often not top of mind."

Nicky Bell, ceo of Edusport Travel and Tours, says it is important to work with credible suppliers. "The biggest challenge is operators claiming to have rights to tickets when they actually don't. This is the most critical aspect of selling a package including tickets," she adds.

Because of how many parties are involved in the process of booking a sporting event package (i.e. a travel agent, a local tour operator, the international destination



Some cruise ships have itineraries that take in the Monte Carlo F1 Grand Prix.

management company and the event organisations) Carlos says there can also be delayed quotes as well as "further delays if something goes wrong and all a travel agent would like to do is resolve even the smallest issue".

Extra time

Carla da Silva, Air Mauritius regional general manager: Africa and Latin America, says sports tours for both spectators and participants are a good opportunity for travel consultants to upsell the package, extending the visit or adding activities for the

traveller to experience more of what a destination has to offer.

"Typically, a sporting event is attended by athletes and their families and friends. We find that friends and family will stay longer and enjoy a holiday in Mauritius. The destination lends itself to be explored and offers much-needed relaxation time after a sporting event," says Carla.

Nicky says she always encourages corporate agents to know what their clients enjoy. "If there is a sporting event taking place that they can add to their

business trip, why not?"

When you think of cruising, you usually think of soaking up the sun, all-you-can-eat buffets and live shows – not an obvious link to sport. But **Seymour Brugger**, product manager: luxury portfolio at Cruises International, points out that certain cruises are ideally suited to sports tourists. "Many of the cruise ships have specific itineraries that stop overnight in the specific city [hosting an event], for instance Monte Carlo for the F1 Grand Prix. [In these situations] the clients do not

To page 8

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SPORTS TOURISM

From page 7

have to pack, go to a hotel and then re-pack – their room is waiting for them back on board,” he says. Depending on what options the traveller chooses, Seymour adds that they could even benefit from extras such as transfers to the sports events, VIP tickets and more. “Everything is taken care of by the cruise ship.”

He says, if the most suitable cruise ship is selected, cruising can be a “fantastic option” for groups. “Should they select a Royal Caribbean ship, they would have a range of bars, restaurants and sporting facilities on board. The group would have endless facilities and activities to choose from.” Another example he provides is golf groups travelling on Crystal Cruises. “On selected sailings they would have a

PGA instructor on board to assist with technique and their swing, plus the clients could sign up to the golf programme and receive various amenities on board,” adds Seymour.

No plain sailing

However, Carlos says upselling is not usually that easy.

“The tickets to the sporting events are generally packaged and sold with flights and accommodation that have been pre-booked, making it hard to make changes to standard itineraries that are on offer. Generally, only 10% of the group bookings are allowed to break away from the group. If an agent is lucky enough to arrange the partial breakaways, then they will be able to add additional travel arrangements that could be more lucrative to sell,” he explains.

Get into the swing of things

Air Mauritius offers free carriage of one golf bag per person as well as a two-piece luggage allowance in economy and business

class, which includes the carriage of sporting equipment, provided that measurements are adhered to.



Mauritius’s Ultra Trail Raidlight Beachcomber race took place in July. Photo: Beachcomber Resorts and Hotels

Mauritius – the ideal sporting destination

WHEN it comes to sports travel, most destinations are chosen because of their association with a particular sport or major event. While South African sports lovers flock to traditional destinations such as the UK for football matches and Wimbledon or Monaco for the Grand Prix, the list of sports hubs is growing.

1. Mauritius

“Mauritius is becoming an increasingly popular sporting destination. We have seen good growth in this sector with various sporting tournaments taking place on the island,”

says Air Mauritius’s **Carla da Silva**. These, she adds, are mostly linked to golf, cycling, kite surfing, rugby and triathlons.

Joanne Visagie of Beachcomber Tours highlights some of the most popular formal sports events hosted in Mauritius. This year, the Paradis Golf Challenge included more than 100 South Africans, many of whom were women and children. It has become so popular that to accommodate numbers, a second one is being held in August/September.

For those seeking a shot

of adrenaline, there’s the Mauritius Tour Beachcomber (held in May this year). It includes four MTB races and a dedicated kids’ race. This year also saw the third Beachcomber World Club 10s, which makes it possible to combine exciting rugby at professional and amateur levels with a beach holiday. There’s also the Ultra Trail Raidlight Beachcomber, which allows trail runners to discover the wild side of Mauritius. It took place in July this year.

Joanne says there are numerous reasons for Mauritius to be the ideal

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SPORTS TOURISM

sporting destination for SA travellers, including the multitude of events on offer, the short flight, no visas required, entertainment and affordable babysitting, safe swimming in the calm ocean sheltered by the coral reef and water sports, to name a few.

2. Singapore

Considered by many as a stopover destination, Singapore is becoming increasingly popular with F1 Grand Prix followers. It is even included as a stop on the Royal Caribbean itinerary. Other major sporting events include the HSBC Women's Championship and the Women's Tennis Association Championships Singapore.

3. The UK and Ireland

Seymour Brugger at Cruises International, says the British Isles is a top region for avid golfers who are keen to experience some of the oldest, most beautiful courses in the world. There are various cruises on offer, most departing from the UK's southern ports and visiting Ireland and Scotland.

4. London/Southampton

Many South Africans support teams in the English Premier League, making England a regular destination for sports travellers. But for something different, why not suggest a cruise with a stop in Southampton, where passengers can disembark and enjoy a game at the St Mary's Stadium. Wimbledon is another reason to visit London during SA's winter months.

5. Cape Town

Cape Town competes with top international destinations, hosting events that attract thousands of locals each year. More than 30 000 South Africans compete in the Cape Town Cycle Tour, while the Two Oceans Ultra

Marathon is a must on long-distance runners' calendars.

6. Boston

On the bucket list of many travellers, whether they're into baseball or not, is a visit to the home grounds of the Boston Red Sox, Fenway Park. A trip to the East Coast just wouldn't be the same without it.

7. Barcelona

The Spanish La Liga is also followed by many South African football fanatics who would love the opportunity to watch a live match at the largest stadium in Europe, Camp Nou, which is home to Barcelona's soccer team. Also in Spain, Valencia is giving Barcelona a good run for its money as a sports hotspot.

8. Bali

Where in the world do you go for prime surfing conditions? There's Bondi Beach in Australia, Kauai in Hawaii, Jeffreys Bay in South Africa and then there's Bali. An affordable option for SA travellers, the beaches are frequented by surfers from around the world.

9. St Moritz

For an adrenaline-fuelled holiday in the snow, send your clients to St Moritz. There's the toboggan Cresta Run, which hits top speeds of up to 140 km/h, as well as polo on snow.

10. Réunion

Closer to home, Réunion has everything an adventure traveller could ask for. There's white-water rafting, paragliding, hang-gliding, skydiving, mountain biking, hiking, quad biking and water sports, all with some of the most breath-taking scenery as a backdrop. Réunion is also one of the world's top-rated big-game fishing venues.



Golf is a perennial favourite with sports tourists.

From beach to burning tyres

Air Mauritius is currently offering a Grand Prix Fare to Singapore from Johannesburg, Cape Town or Durban, via Mauritius.

The economy-class fare starts from R7 950 and business class from

R21 650. A free stopover is provided in Mauritius on all non-connecting flights. Departure dates must fall between September 10 and 13, returning between September 18 and 20.

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So much to see in 2019

NEXT year will be a busy one for sports fans, with two world cups lined up. Edusport has various packages on offer to witness the action first hand.

• **Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens: April 5-7.**

The hotel and ticket packages range from three nights at a four-star hotel from R16 990pps to four nights at a five-star hotel from R24 590pps. They include accommodation with breakfast and a three-day official South Stand ticket to the HSBC Hong Kong Sevens.

• **ICC World Cup in England & Wales: May 30-July 14.**

From R13 100pps, your clients can watch South Africa take on England (May 29-June 1) at The Oval in London or India at the Hampshire Bowl in Southampton (from June 4-7), from R9 600. If they are feeling optimistic about the

Proteas, then they can opt for a package for the final from R14 700pps (from July 13-16) at Lords in London. These prices are for four-star accommodation packages that include breakfast daily, guaranteed official ICC Cricket World Cup 2019 Silver match tickets and a London travel card where applicable.

• **Rugby World Cup in Japan: September 20-November 2.**

Edusport has a number of supporter group packages, based on 20 passengers, on offer. These include a four-night package from September 18-23, to see New Zealand versus South Africa, from R39 300pps; the Bronze and Final matches (October 24-November 4) from R60 300pps or a 19-night Pool B, Follow SA package from R66 750pps. Included are return economy-class flights ex-JNB (excl. taxes), transfers, four-star



South Africa take on England next year.

accommodation with breakfast, Category B match tickets, group travel insurance and tour merchandise.

SPORTS TOURISM

Upcoming sporting events

Find out which sports your clients enjoy and suggest that they make their next

holiday centred on one of these highlights on the sporting calendar.

Italian Grand Prix, Monza: September 2

Ryder Cup, Le Golf National, Paris: September 28-30

New York City Marathon: November 4

Manchester Derby (Man City v Man United), Etihad Stadium: November 10

Telkom 947 Cycle Challenge: November 18

2018/19 HSBC World Sevens Series Cape Town: December 8-9

2019 Absa Cape Epic: March 17-24

2019 ICC Cricket World Cup, England & Wales: May 30-July 15

2019 Rugby World Cup, Japan: September 20-November 2



The Rugby World Cup heads to Japan in 2019.

Did you know?

Air Mauritius has appointed **Grant Lottering**, the well-known South African cyclist, as a sports ambassador for 2018. ■



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The Mauritius Tour Beachcomber (MTB) traditionally held in May targets cycle tourism. Covering mountains, forests and coastal terrain, the event is a real treat for mountain biking enthusiasts

June is rugby month. Beachcomber is the title sponsor of the official **World Club 10s rugby tournament** which attracts fans from around the world. 8 of the world's best rugby clubs competed with the Vodacom Bulls winning in a pulsating final.

The Ultra Trail Raidlight Beachcomber (UTRB), a set of trail runs taking place around July, is geared towards power-sports enthusiasts, enabling them to test their physical endurance whilst exploring breath-taking landscapes.

We also stage the bi-annual **Paradis Golf Challenge**. 4 days of golf included with superb hospitality, food, entertainment, scenery and prizes. It's a popular and idyllic family holiday with golf - more than 50% of the participants are repeat guests.

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South & Central America



Bariloche is famed for its lakes and glaciers.

South Africans have their South American favourites, but there's so much more, reports Michelle Colman.

Rand-friendly and visa free

WITH the rand performing better than the currencies of most South American countries, nine of which are visa-free, the region is a no-brainer destination for South African travellers.

With the exception of Suriname, Colombia and Bolivia, the continent is free of entry restrictions for South Africans, doing away with a lot of pre-trip inconvenience and the substantial expense. In addition, the rand is currently stronger than currencies of all destinations except Brazil, Bolivia, Suriname, Peru and Ecuador.

A South African online travel news service recently punted Brazil, Uruguay and Colombia as the South American destinations easiest on the local purse, and we put this view to tour operators active

in the local market. None of them picked up the baton on the latter two destinations, preferring to focus on Brazil, Argentina and Peru.

Travel Vision, according to sales & marketing manager, **Annemarie Lexow**, specialises in Brazil, where it has a ground-handler assisting with tailor-made requests. Here Rio de Janeiro is an itinerary must for its beaches, Manaus for access to the Amazon, and the spectacular Iguazu Falls, which straddle the border with neighbouring Argentina.

"Argentina is most definitely a favourite," comments Annemarie. "Buenos Aires is not called the Paris of South America for nothing. It has an old-world charm with ultra-modern hotels and amazing restaurants." She further recommends Mendoza in the

wine region and Bariloche for its lake crossings into Chile and magnificent glaciers.

Cosmos Holidays is also recommending a Brazil/Argentina escorted combination – the Best of Brazil & Argentina. **Janine Pienaar**, sales & marketing manager for the Globus Family of Brands, says it includes three nights in Rio de Janeiro, two nights in Iguazu Falls and three in Buenos Aires, from an attractive R27 990pps, including internal airfares and taxes.

Trafalgar's practice of securing rates well ahead of departures, additionally benefits South Africans. Says **Alan Cook**, manager Latin America: "Trafalgar prices and pays in US dollars because it's the most stable of currencies and we get the best value for our money.

We lock in our pricing a year in advance and offer a rand guarantee so no matter what the rand is doing, South Africans are assured of the same pricing in rands for their tour."

The tour operator typically sees South Africans combining several South American countries on a 12-day trip because of the distance to travel. Chile, Argentina and Brazil is a popular mix or, at the minimum, Brazil and Argentina. Alan says pricing on flights is fairly attractive to South Africans and with Brazil declaring open skies, there



Janine Pienaar

are a lot more options to get via São Paulo to the rest of continent.

From a cruising point of view, **Janine Pretorius**, owner of Encore Cruises which represents Regent Seven Seas, reports that the cruise line's most popular South American segments are

Lima in Peru to Buenos Aires, and Buenos Aires to Santiago (San Antonio) in Chile, around the southern tip of the continent.

Here, value is offered in the form of all-inclusive cruise fares, with a wide selection of free and unlimited shore excursions.



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Pre-Colombian Kuelap ruins.

Fortress above the clouds

THE Peruvian fortress of Kuelap, in the Andes at 3 600m, is a fascinating alternative to Machu Piccu and one that Curiosity Travel is marketing in a nine-day Rainforest package from Lima, selling at just under R25 000.

Here are the ruins of a pre-Colombian settlement some 2 500 years old. The location has only recently become accessible by a cable car that takes 35 minutes to travel to the top. Highlights of the package

include a hike from a rainforest lodge to the Gocta Waterfall, one of the highest in the world, a visit to the Leymebamba Mausoleum and Museum with 300 recently excavated mummies, and in Lima, the Larco Gold Museum with its thousands of Inca treasures.

The package includes four-star accommodation, breakfast daily, five lunches and four dinners. The trip involves a considerable amount of hiking.



Machu Picchu, Peru, is best visited in the mornings.

Adventure from hard to soft

IF THERE'S one South American country that should be visited as a 'stand-alone' destination, it's Peru.

Development Promotions represents G Adventures in South Africa, and **Elisna Bergset**, brand ambassador, enthuses: "Peru is custodian of one of the biggest bucket-list attractions on the planet and that is Machu Picchu. Then of course we have the enigmatic Amazon! Peru hosts the second largest part of the Amazon after Brazil. Peru also has the famous and mysterious Nazca Lines, making this country a must-see for anyone who considers themselves a real traveller."

Travel Vision's **Annemarie Lexow** emphasises the importance of booking Inca Trail permits well in advance. "It is becoming more difficult as the Peruvian tourism authority has limited the number of permits issued per day worldwide. Clients can only visit the citadel [of Machu Picchu] either in the morning or afternoon. I would

recommend that clients try and secure morning visits, due to the altitude."

The Lares Trek is an alternative to the Inca Trail, says Annemarie, and although slightly steeper, is equally rewarding and offers beautiful scenery.

For an Inca Empire/Amazon combination with a difference, Avalon Waterways offers a three-night cruise from Iquitos along the mighty river into the jungle aboard the small but luxurious *Delfin III*. There's guided sightseeing each day with a local naturalist in Lima, Sacred Valley, Machu Picchu, Cusco and the Peruvian Amazon.

Trafalgar's **Alan Cook** says the tour operator's programmes in South America tend to be more cultural than adventure-based. "But we do offer, for example, a high-speed boat ride up the river to Iguazu Falls and even go behind the curtain of water. It's dramatic and exciting."

Costa Rica, he says, is a

country dedicated to soft adventure. "We have float trips, zip lining, white-water rafting, horse-back riding and even hanging bridges."

Elisna agrees: "Costa Rica is any adventure traveller's dream – it has hiking trails through dense and somewhat uncharted forests, you can kayak through mangroves, surf exceptional waves, take exclusive night walks to see the jungle in a completely different way, zip line over the forest, river raft and swim underneath waterfalls."

Cosmos offers a programme called Gateway to Costa Rica. Comments **Janine Pienaar**: "Pura Vida, Costa Rica's motto, means 'pure life' or even 'real living' – and that's exactly what you will experience on this trip to paradise found between the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea." Active volcanoes, coffee plantations, rainforests, cloud forests and diverse wildlife and plant life can be discovered on this eight-day holiday from R14 000pps.

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Buenos Aires
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PERU

Reciprocal Peru - 8 Days
Lima - Cusco - Huilloc - Machu Picchu
From R40 176pps
1 August to 21 December 2018
Including: Int. and domestic flights, accommodation in superior rooms, daily breakfast, transfers, train tickets to Machu Picchu.

Less time, better views

FOR departures from January 2019, Trafalgar has reduced the number of days it spends in Rio de Janeiro on all its tours that start in that city.

The same number of experiences and welcome reception on the first

evening continue to be offered, but the four days have been reorganised into three, to give guests more value at the beginning of the programme and less waiting time.

In addition, Trafalgar has secured ocean-view

rooms for its guests at the Windsor Maramar, giving guests the chance to enjoy dramatic, floor-to-ceiling views of Copacabana Beach and beyond to Christ the Redeemer and Sugar Loaf Mountain.

Tag on a Galapagos cruise

AVALON Waterways combines four-night Galapagos cruises with two South American countries – Peru and Ecuador.

The cruise segment is done aboard the recently refurbished *Treasure of Galápagos* with accommodation in an outside stateroom. In the company of

a local naturalist, guests visit the Charles Darwin Research Station and encounter indigenous plants and animals endemic to the islands, such as giant tortoises, Galápagos fur sea lions, and marine iguanas.

Meanwhile, through its use

of the recently remodelled *Galapagos Legend*, Trafalgar has doubled its inventory and departures for expedition cruising in the location. The two itineraries, North-Central and East, are seven days long and offer the same pricing, with different itineraries.

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Patagonia – complex, grand, vast

PATAGONIA may be the most remote South American destination to visit, located at the bottom of the continent, but with mountains, deserts, pampas and grasslands, it's certainly diverse.

Trafalgar's **Alan Cook** speaks of the "grandness" of the region. "The landscape is startling, the national parks are well done and preserved, and there's real diversity in the cities. You walk away from it with an overall realisation that you had no idea of its complexity."

The region is shared by

Argentina and Chile, and the highlights of Trafalgar's Patagonia trip include a city tour of Ushuaia, visits to Bernardo O'Higgins, Torres del Paine, Los Glaciares and Tierra del Fuego national parks, and a glacier cruise.

"Patagonia can be visited throughout the year," says **Annemarie Lexow** at Travel Vision. "The most inexpensive time is between April and August. Distances are vast and travellers will need to fly into destinations."

Much of the attraction of Patagonia is the wildlife, and

she recommends visiting the large colonies of Magellanic penguins at Punta Tombo Penguin Rookery or, between April and August, Punta Loma, to observe sea lions.

"A visit to Valdés Peninsula should be included in the itinerary as it is declared a Natural Heritage Site by Unesco. Puerto Pirámides will give visitors the opportunity to view Southern Right whales (from July-November). In Tierra del Fuego National Park, visit Ensenada Bay and Lapataia Bay, the culminating point of Lake Acigami, characterised by the turquoise colour of the water."

An 11-day tour starting in Buenos Aires, including Puerto Madryn, Ushuaia and El Calafate, three-star accommodation, breakfast daily, transfers, excursions, boat trip and park tickets, goes for around R19 450pps, land only, says Annemarie.

DP's **Elisna Bergset** points out that Chile's phenomenal glacial fjords, Argentina's famous highway passes, Monte Fitz Roy and Perito Moreno Glacier are all found in Patagonia.

"Tours through Patagonia are surprisingly affordable for South Africans, with some under R20 000pp.

"G Adventures has 10 different tours that cover Patagonia."



Grand vistas are representative of Patagonia.



'Yank tanks' and Ché Guevara – symbols of Cuba.

Cuba's back on the radar

THE Central American island of Cuba has been on the South African travel radar for some time and the temporary resumption of diplomatic relations with the United States during the Obama administration seemed to signal easier access.

Previously it was always perceived as a destination with so much red tape to cut through, remarks **Annemarie Lexow** at Travel Vision. "It was not possible to include Cuba when visiting the USA and any other flight option was just too expensive and took too much time to get there," she says.

Unfortunately, the Trump presidency has seen a back-tracking of the US-Cuba relationship, with repercussions for travellers. Illustrating the point, Trafalgar's **Alan Cook** says: "Although there is a Cuba itinerary in the 2018 brochure, Trafalgar has complied with the travel warning issued by the US State Department and cannot, in good conscience, take guests to the destination while this is in force."

But the island is relatively easy to visit and inexpensive, says DP's **Elisna Bergset**. A visa is required by South African passport holders and, as visa rules are ever-changing, she advises doing a fresh search on the rules when application is made.

The destination's lure, says Elisna, is the 1950's bubble that encases it, seen in its

cars, buildings, food and consumer products. "There are a couple of places we consider a must-see and these include Havana, Soroa, Las Terrazas, Vinales, Santa Clara and La Palma. G Adventures has 10 stunning trips to Cuba, each bringing something unique to the traveller," she continues.

Annemarie says Cuba is about the 'Yank tanks', as those oldie vehicles are known, big cigars, rum and Afro-Cuban rhythms. For the romantics, Habana Vieja (old Havana), the watering hole of La Bodeguita Del Medio, where Ernest Hemingway spent many a day, and the beach resorts in Varadero, are the places to include.

She cautions that roads in Cuba are not in the best condition and lack of proper infrastructure can entail much time driving to places like Sancti Spiritus, Trinidad and Santiago de Cuba. Hotels, even in the three-star category, are not cheap. But people are friendly and accommodating. Often if the excursions are not what visitors expect, guides are amenable to tweaking the itinerary.

Regent Seven Seas offers eight cruises including Cuba as of the end of this year. Ports of call are Havana, Cienfuego and Santiago de Cuba. Free and unlimited short excursions are history- and culture-rich and conducted in compliance with strict regulations imposed by the country. ■

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Surprise!

Nicci Hayden, a Cape Town-based Travel Counsellor, was treated to a surprise baby shower when fellow TC, Lynde Opperman, paired up with Marc de Jager, business development coach for Travel Counsellors, to host a celebratory lunch for her. From left: Travel Counsellors Ursula Kroot, Carolyn Coetzee, Nicci, Lana Nel and Lynde.



Smarty Pants

Ella Wilson, FlySafair's GDS specialist (pictured), recently won the airline's internal 'Smarty Pants' award for the work she has done to improve its GDS product offering for the trade.

Welcome home

Angie Cachao has returned to South Africa to join Thompsons Holidays as a product and contract executive after working in London's travel industry for the past ten years.



Appointments

■ **Nadia Haffajee** has joined Thompsons Holidays as a sales executive. Nadia will be based in Durban.

■ **Nicole Coetzee** has been appointed as a travel adviser for Thompsons Holidays in Durban. Nicole was previously a travel adviser at STA Travel.

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Happy birthday Iberia!

Iberia is celebrating the second anniversary of flying to South Africa on August 1. Iberia resumed its operations from Johannesburg in August 2016 with three non-stop flights a week to Madrid. Since then, it has offered nearly 169 000 seats. Pictured: José Emilio García Martínez, business development manager South Africa, Iberia. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

For the record

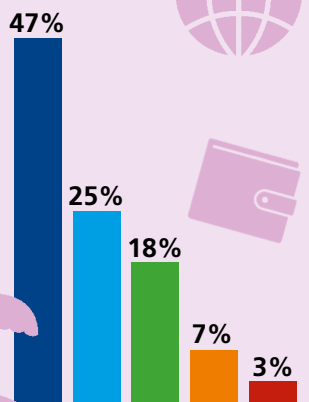
In last week's TNW, we incorrectly referred to Cullinan as the holding company of The Travel Corporation. TTC owns Cullinan Holdings. TNW apologises for the error.

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Agent-airline tension mounts

SARAH ROBERTSON

TENSION between airlines and agents continues to mount with some agents describing relations to be more hostile than ever.

Iata's agency programme was developed in the 1970s at a time when the airline industry was highly regulated and travel agents were remunerated with commission from airline sales. Since commissions were cut, travel agents are no longer 'agents' of the airlines in the true sense of the word and, as such, feel that the autocratic decrees forced on them by Iata's agency programme should be reviewed in favour of a more co-operative approach.

Other ongoing agent concerns include a need to speed up the agent accreditation process and reduce associated costs, to incorporate modern low-cost payment options and to introduce reciprocal risk-management policies that protect clients from both

agent and airline defaults. **Mladen Lukic**, gm of Travel Counsellors SA, said it had become apparent that airlines wanted to change their distribution model strategies and NDC and credit card acceptance policies were a

"Agents currently feel that airlines are actively working against them rather than offering them support."

few of the actions airlines were introducing in this regard. While there is a significant difference of opinion between agent community and airlines on the benefits and validity of these actions, the fact that these actions are executed without agents' input, or any participation in some cases, is causing real harm. This lack of open communication was creating a great deal of anxiety, as agents struggled to maintain a harmonious

relationship with suppliers who continued to implement unilateral decisions affecting their working environment.

Owner of Sure Map Travel, **Melissa Phillips**, said agents currently felt that airlines were actively working against them rather than offering them support.

"They ADM us at the drop of a hat; we can only interpret the dozens of restrictive new rulings that they are implementing as sales obstacles; their website fares are regularly cheaper than those offered to agents and, when we reach out for assistance, inexperienced staff give us the runaround. You don't know where you stand with them from one day to the next," she said.

Otto de Vries, ceo of Asata, agreed saying the Iata agency programme was no longer fit for purpose and encouraged Iata to open a formal conversation about reviewing it to include agents in a more meaningful manner. ■

Shop 750 000 hotels on one screen

From page 1
Marisa added.

Agents will be able to see if they have access to prepaid (requires a deposit), or guaranteed (able to pay with a credit card) agreements for properties with an aggregator, as this will be displayed underneath the rate. The new content can also be filtered to show prepaid or promotional

rates, extra-low rates, facilities, family rooms and location.

"In order to make use of this content, agencies will need to submit their credentials for their existing aggregator relationships to their Amadeus account manager," said Marisa. "They will then receive access to the content relevant to these agreements. Without these

credentials they will not be able to access the aggregator's content."

The platform allows agents to process hotel bookings so that they automatically appear on the same invoice and itinerary as the client's flight and transfer bookings. "This will reduce manual processes and paperwork at all stages of the process," Marisa added. ■

Government shows double standards

From page 1
messages coming out of the Department of Home Affairs, the plan was that foreign minors who were accompanied by both parents would not have to carry birth certificates.

Only in cases of those not accompanied by both parents might the immigration officer require such documentation.

But for South African minors, a new passport system is being introduced where the names of both parents are included in a minor's passport. SA minors without the new passport will need to

continue to carry a birth certificate with the names of both parents.

The new passport was first announced in 2016, but the DHA hasn't made progress in rolling this out.

India, which tried the system of listing both parents' names in children's passports, has responded to women's lobby groups and recently announced that it was discontinuing the practice.

Otto de Vries, ceo of Asata, said that having different rules in place made no sense. "How can you have different

sets of rules that apply to different nationalities?" he asked. "Best practice is best practice, so surely that should be consistent, regardless of whether the children are South African or not."

From an inbound perspective, Otto also cautioned that, as the requirement for minors to travel with UBCs had been in place for three years, any change in regulations would likely only confuse the market and some airlines could continue to require unabridged birth certificates for minors before boarding them. ■