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travel

update

ISSUE 7

SA'S
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FREE
TRAVEL
MAG

The slow life on
BAZARUTO

Eat your way through
MEXICO

Get the most from your
**FREQUENT FLYER
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Growing trends towards
HALAL TOURISM

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EDITOR'S LETTER

As this is the INDABA issue of *Travel Update*, we feature four African destinations – Zimbabwe (our cover story), Mozambique's Bazaruto Island, the South Coast, and Botswana as our Places in Pixels feature.

To foreign travellers on a first visit, Africa often seems to be a continent of contrasts, one that offers among the best luxurious experiences at an affordable price, yet is often associated with poverty rather than opportunity. Let's not forget that Africa is not a country, as the common misperception goes.

Exploring the continent, for the most part, is often cheaper than travelling elsewhere, especially these days with the rand. So, this year, I plan to explore more of Africa, beyond the mere eight countries I've visited thus far.

We're a friendly bunch that's growing to understand the importance of tourism for our economies. I experienced this in Tanzania last year when locals waved to me from across the street and shouted "Karibu, you're welcome here!" or crossed the street to shake my hand and talk.

In this issue, we give tips on how to make the most of frequent flyer programmes (page 12) and how to take advantage of the growing trend of halal travellers to South Africa (page 38).

If you feel in need of a holiday, we've partnered with Hotels.com (page 16) for awesome giveaways. The winners of the Samsonite competition will be announced online in May.

Tweet (@travelupdatersa) or email us (editor@travelupdate.co.za) about where you'll be travelling next and which destinations you want to read about. Let's take to the road!



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Ishay Govender-Ypma

Mexico, page 30

Ishay is a freelance journalist, who wisely abandoned a career in commercial law in the pursuit of cultural immersion and air miles. Selected as a 2014 *Mail & Guardian* Top Young South African, she gathers stories, ingredients and second-hand books that threaten to take over the house.

“When you travel South Africa you realise that it is a village of mothers raising your child, the fiery sun setting on the savannah, the cities harbouring the diaspora from African neighbours near and far. A complex land where pain and ultimately, promise, lie side-by-side.”



Lesley Stones

Features on pages 12 and 38

Lesley is proudly South African with a silly accent because she used to be English. She started her career by reviewing rock bands, then worked for various newspapers before spending four years in Cairo. Then she followed the sun to South Africa.

“I lived in Cairo for four years and said I’d never go back once my Arabic grew rusty and I forgot the bus routes. But Abu Simbel and Luxor will always be worth another visit.”



Carla Lewis-Balden

Bazaruto Island, page 34

This former *Travel Update* editor is now a full-time writer at Media24. When she’s not globetrotting, she’s penning blog posts for reismier.com, an Afrikaans travel blog she co-edits.

“Mozambique’s Bazaruto Island is all about indulgence and relaxation. Come here for a taste of tropical paradise, whether you chose to unwind on a ‘private’ beach or do one of the many exciting activities.”

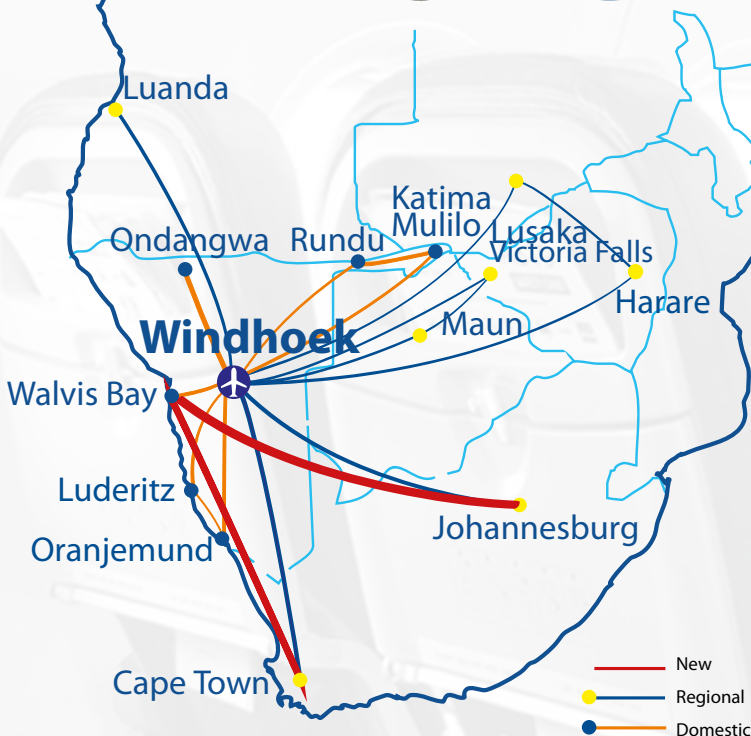
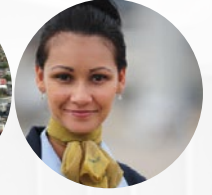
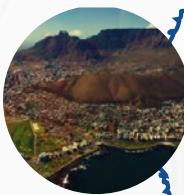


Jo Kromberg

Zimbabwe, page 24

Jo was editor for *African Safaris* and *Family Holidays and Leisure* magazines and is now the Africa Travel editor for *The Beijing Review*, published in China. She is a regular contributor for *Conde Nast Traveller China* and *Conde Nast Traveller India*.

“While Zimbabwe has an unfortunately controversial political reputation, it has some of the friendliest, most educated and hard-working people in Africa and its wildlife is legion. A must visit destination!”



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GO MIRRORLESS

When it comes to mirrorless cameras, the Fujifilm X-T1 is among the best with its 1/32 000 sec. electronic shutter, full HD video recording, numerous manual control dials and the world's fastest Real Time Viewfinder. This Wi-Fi-enabled camera also has an optional battery grip. Visit Fujifilm's online store for more (body plus 10-24mm f/4 lens, **from R22 000**).

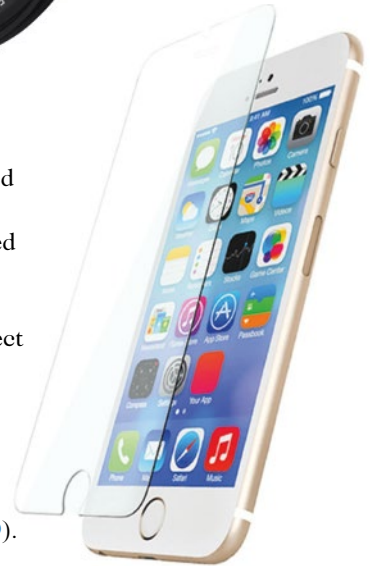


HELPING HAND

Place your favourite Bill Bryson book or your tablet in the spring-loaded mitts of the Hands Stand book holder. This handy helper is useful when on the road or at home and is available in five colours **from R270**.

GLASS OVER

The Smaak Prime Tempered Glass Screen Protector is made from 0.3mm tempered glass, is shock resistant, has rounded edges and an oleophobic coating to protect it from oil and water. It's a great way to protect your screen and fits onto most smartphones. Find it online at Takealot.com or The Gadget Shop **(R199)**.



ON THE ROAD

Stop your smartphone from dying when you're roadripping with Lightning Cables **(R299)** that you can plug into your car charger, computer or power outlet. At the same time, secure your smartphone to your windshield (or desk) with the Smaak U-Hold Mount. It makes using Google Maps or Bluetooth **(R299)** much easier. Available from Game.

POWER HUNGRY

The Minigorilla has a 5V USB output with a range of voltage settings (8.4V, 9.5V, 10.5V, 12V, 16V and 19V), so you can recharge your smartphone, iPod, iPhone, PDA or PlayStation Portable. The HD Lithium Polymer battery has a 9000mAh capacity. It's compact at only 150x83x14mm and 265g. Get yours from The Gadget Shop **(R1 899)**.






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TRAVEL LIGHT

Lipault offers a range of light-weight travel bags and luggage in trendy colours made from hard wearing materials such as nylon or vinyl. These Originale Plume spinners are available in sizes 55cm, 65cm or 72cm from selected House of Samsonite stores (**from R 2 995**).



SKY’S THE LIMIT

Pack *Sky Guide Africa South 2016* on your next trip to the bush. It’s an awesome resource with many photos, diagrams, star charts as well as predicted eclipses and meteor showers. Available at all good book stores (**R120**).



WALK ON

Never underestimate the importance of comfortable shoes when travelling. These Rubi Tia Lace Up Boots will have you looking stylish, too. Grab a pair in either black or wheat from Cotton On (**R599**).



A HOME FOR YOUR PHONE

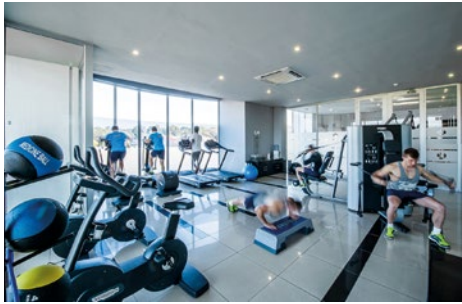
The Bobino cellphone holder hangs between the charger and the power outlet, so your phone never has to hang by the cable. It allows for the winding of long cables, has an anti-slip pad and is foldable for when you travel. Stocked by SG Distributors (**from R100**).





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- Turn down service





MAXIMUM MILEAGE

In the cut-throat airline industry, travellers are benefitting from some overhauls in frequent flyer programmes. **By Lesley Stones (@lesley_stones)**

I almost cried the day I was downgraded from a gold frequent flyer. Until then, cabin crews welcomed me on board with as much enthusiasm as they greeted the pilot – and with a whole lot more bubbly.

By that time, I'd already been fast-tracked through check-in, seen my bag tagged with a priority label and enjoyed a good meal in the lounge, because frequent flyer programmes (FFPs) offer a lot more benefits than just the occasional free flight.

Several airlines have overhauled their FFPs to attract more customers and secure our loyalty. Now you can earn air miles without even leaving the ground, by using an FFP-linked credit card, buying petrol, staying in certain hotels or even by selling your house with a particular estate agent. And you can spend them on free flights, upgrades, car hire, spa treatments, hotel stays or to buy online.

Air miles earned with a credit card are usually only enough to top up the miles earned by flying, unless you're a Kardashian-sized spender. It takes a long time to shop your way to the 100 000 or so air miles needed to reach Europe in business class.

But converting points from Standard Bank's UCount, Pick n Pay's SmartShopper and other partners may be the boost you need if you haven't earned enough miles by actually flying

somewhere. So link your credit card, petrol and supermarket spending to accrue miles every day.

Eye on the ball

Despite the other perks FFPs offer, free flights are still the ultimate goal for 95% of members. Yet the biggest complaint is that too few seats are available for FFP redemption. You may hold a million miles, but if you want to fly anywhere at Christmas, you'd better book 12 months in advance, when FFP seats are released.

Ashraf Hakim Al Sayad, regional general manager of EgyptAir, says 5% of EgyptAir seats are dedicated to FFP flyers, with the flexibility to allocate more if some seats remain unsold. Al Sayad says there isn't much difference between rival FFPs, but says there are plans to enhance

EgyptAir's scheme because they are an important marketing tool to help sway customers into flying with a particular airline.

SAA spokesperson Tlali Tlali says most FFP award seats are capacity controlled, but customer demand saw Voyager introduce a new feature called Dynamic Awards last year. These are based on the going price of

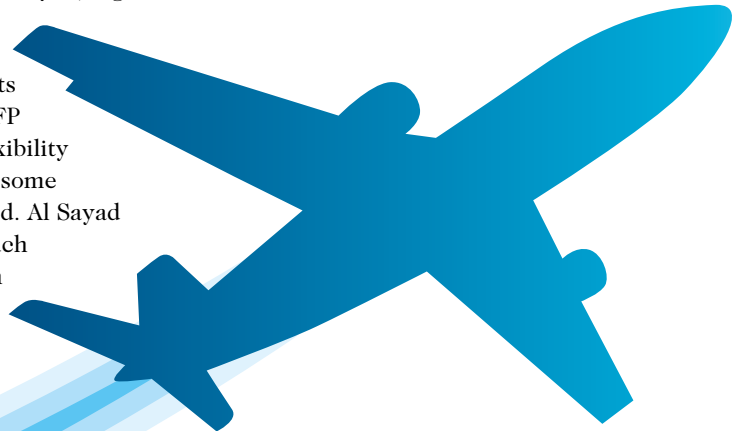
any available seat with no capacity limits, so any seat on SAA and Mango-operated flights can now be bought with air miles. It also runs seasonal JourneyBlitz promotions, where seats are made available for a few days for up to 85% fewer air miles than usual.

SAA also changed how Voyager air miles are earned and now awards them for the amount spent, not the distance flown. You earn 1 mile for every R1.60 spent on the fare and fuel levy. That's a welcome change given the short but expensive flights that characterise airlines in Africa.

Tlali says an FFP's main aim is to retain high-value customers, so switching to a revenue-based model was designed to make Voyager more generous and more effective for customer retention.

FFPs have evolved to let you earn and spend miles with non-airline partners to offer members more choice for their miles and SAA will introduce more redemption partners this year.

The tier system is another vital part of an FFP, bringing benefits like priority check-in, access to lounges, priority waitlisting, a free choice of





seating and extra baggage. You move up the tiers by accruing miles on flights, not in the shops, which directly rewards the most regular flyers.

Higher tiers have an accumulator effect, as you earn more miles than a low-tier member paying the same amount for a seat. So gold or platinum flyers buying business or first class tickets really ratchet up the miles.

It's hugely annoying when they expire just as you amass a decent amount, with unused miles often

award certificate. SAA, for example, lets you hold a certificate for six months before you make a booking.

It's become common to let you book seats using a combination of miles and cash, and while most airlines still require you to pay taxes in cash, others let you pay the full amount in air miles. Another option is buying extra air miles for cash, but do the sums carefully, as it may prove cheaper to just buy a ticket, especially if the 'free' seat carries a fat fee in taxes.

“Air Namibia’s Reward\$ scheme lets you hold air miles for five years after the year in which they were earned, creating longevity.”

annulled after three years. That's a bummer if you're 100 miles off your target and half suddenly disappear.

Air Namibia's Reward\$ scheme lets you hold air miles for five years after the year in which they were earned, creating longevity. And if you don't have enough for a free ticket, you can buy their miles in batches of 1 000, as long as you have at least 50% of the required amount.

Some airlines extend the life of your miles if you take at least one or two flights with them every year. That's influenced which airline I've chosen for short internal flights.

You can also extend your miles' shelf life by redeeming them for an

Don't be a stiff

To really get the most of your miles, flexibility is key. One friend can't get from Johannesburg to London in business class in July with Voyager because no seats are available. So he bought a cheap seat to Cape Town and blew all his miles on a First Class seat to London. He'll come home on a bought seat in economy, but at least he'll have upper-class memories.

I once got around the eternal problem of spending air miles at Christmas by asking the call centre if they could send me anywhere at all. They searched and I had a fabulous time in Jordan. 🍷

Here are other tips for maximising your miles:

- Book as far in advance as possible, as FFP seats are snapped up quickly, especially in peak periods. If no seats are available, check the days before and after if your plans allow.
- If you're entirely flexible, wait for the airlines to offer heavily discounted seats. You might have enormous fun if you say yes to a last-minute special to a destination you didn't plan to visit.
- Before you fly, log on to the 'manage my booking' page to link your FFP number to your flight details.
- Always keep your boarding passes – even if you showed your card at check in. Check your account a few days later and if the miles haven't been credited, submit a claim online. Be dogged – scan and email the details if necessary.
- Link family members to the same account so everyone pools their miles.
- Don't convert points from related schemes like UCount until you need them. They might expire before you use them.
- Upgrading from economy using air miles often requires a disproportionately large amount and a more expensive ticket in the first place, so it's not the best use of your miles. And make sure an upgrade will actually be available before you book.
- Car rental, spa treatments, hotel stays or duty-free goods also usually offer a miserly conversion rate. It's useful for miles that are about to expire, but be careful. I ended up donating Air France miles to charity when I realised the wine I was trading them for online couldn't be delivered to South Africa.

THE HOTTEST

These were the world's most popular cities in 2015,

LOCAL

Cape Town

The Mother City is best known for its laid back attitude. Perhaps it has something to do with the nearby winelands, the sea breeze and being overlooked by Table Mountain. Cape Town International Airport welcomed 4 684 368 arrivals in 2015.

Most popular hotel: AHA Inn on the Square

1



2



Durban

Durban is most likely the home of the spiciest mother-in-law curry you'll try anywhere in the country (stock up at the famed Spice Emporium). The city is gearing up to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games, which will make it the first African host nation for this event.

Most popular hotel: Holiday Inn Express Umhlanga

3



Johannesburg

While South Africa's economic heartland is most often visited on a business trip, make time to see the tourist sites too. Visit the Carlton Centre, dubbed the 'Rooftop of Africa', which remains the continent's highest building at 223 metres. Entrance is only R15.

Most popular hotel: City Lodge O.R Tambo International Airport

4



Pilanesberg

Only two and a half hours from Johannesburg, in the Pilanesberg region, you'll find a wildlife kingdom where time slows down and the Big Five roam. Wake up early and do a hot air balloon ride over the valley followed by a buffet breakfast.

Most popular hotel: The Kingdom Resort

5



Port Elizabeth

Don't underestimate the Eastern Cape or Port Elizabeth. It'll charm you with its hospitality, after all that's why they call it the Friendly City. Walk along the Donkin Heritage Trail and explore the Victorian landmarks of Old Hill neighbourhood.

Most popular hotel: Radisson Blu Port Elizabeth

CITIES OF 2015

based on the most booked properties on Hotels.com.

INTERNATIONAL

Dubai

This UAE city is synonymous with the luxe life and shopping, so treat yourself to a spree at The Dubai Mall (especially during the Dubai shopping festival every January) or ascend the 830-metre-high Burj Khalifa for panoramic views of this burgeoning Middle Eastern city.

Most popular hotel: Atlantis, The Palm

6



7



New York

Frank Sinatra made this metropolis unforgettable. Grab your camera and head to the Empire State Building (once the highest in the world) or take the ferry to visit Liberty Island and its famous statue. And don't leave without trying NYC's pizza!

Most popular hotel: The Waldorf Astoria

London

Home to Shakespeare, iconic red telephone booths and Big Ben, London is a cosmopolitan city that offers old- and new-world experiences. Experience the famed Globe Theatre, before rising above the city in the London Eye.

Most popular hotel: Corinthia Hotel London

8



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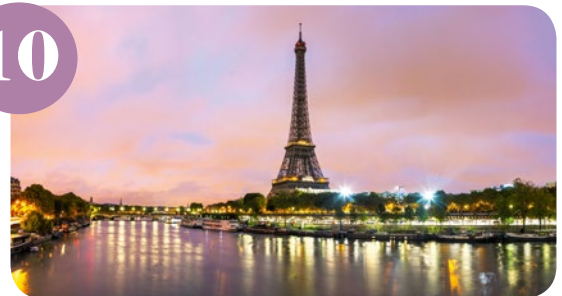


Patong

The crescent-shaped golden beach at Patong in southwestern Thailand is lined with cafes, restaurants and go-go bars. Lounge on the beach by day and save your energy for the nightlife along Bangla Road, then get a foot massage for your aching stompers the next morning, before you repeat.

Most popular hotel: Sunset Beach Resort

10



Paris

It's branded as the 'City of love', but France's capital has much more to offer than romantic strolls. After ascending the Eiffel Tower and visiting The Louvre, take a river cruise along the river Seine before dining in the lively Latin Quarter.

Most popular hotel: Paris Marriott Champs Elysees

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Read the Travel Trends feature on pages 14-15. Choose one of the world's most popular cities in 2015 (based on the most booked properties on Hotels.com). In one sentence tell us why you want to visit that city. Email your answers to: hcomzaaffiliates@expedia.com.



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The winner will receive R1000.00 off the price of their booking at a participating Best Price Guarantee hotel. The winner must book and pay for their stay by 30 July 2016 and travel by 03 December 2016. Winners can't collect or redeem Hotels.com Rewards Nights when using this coupon. Offer is valid for TravelUpdate winner only. The offer is valid for a booking made online through www.za.hotels.com. The offer is not valid in conjunction with any other offer. Offer only valid if the coupon code is successfully entered before purchase. Offer will be deducted from any refunds due if a booking is cancelled in part or full.



SINGAPORE

The small island country of Singapore is made up of 63 islands and islets that float off the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. Get ready for Singapore Slings alongside its national dish of chilli crab.

By Iga Motylska (@igamotylska)

Must see

Singapore may be small at 719 km², but it's culturally diverse, with a population made up of Chinese, Malays, Indians, the ancestors of British colonialists, and expats. Try to experience a little of each culture on a visit to the tropical island.

You could spend a whole day at the **Universal Studios Singapore on Sentosa Island**, otherwise there's much else to do.

While it's early, I head to the **Botanical Gardens**, which were established in the 1850s and have since been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. They're located near the shopping district along **Orchard Road**. I tour the rainforest and orchid garden, walk past heritage trees and rest on the lawns by the swan lake. On my way out, I count the gardens' sculptures and fountains. You could also explore **Gardens by the Bay** at twilight.

Then I wander past malls, fashion stores, gadget shops as well as bars and restaurants that spill out onto the pavement. On the first Saturday of the month, the road between **Scotts Paterson Junction and Bideford Junction** is closed off for 'pedestrian night' for sales and street salsa or yoga.

Just off Orchard Road, I follow in the

footsteps of Sir Stamford Raffles, who established Singapore as a trading post of the British East India Company in 1819. Nearby is the colonial-era **Raffles Hotel**, with its ornate furnishings, antiques and billiards table. I drop by for a Singapore Sling (it has three bars) to ward off the humid heat.

I've arrived a few days after Diwali, the festival of lights. The streets of **Little India** are ablaze with lights and the air is infused with the heavy scent of jasmine. Three Hindu men making floral garlands point me towards a street lined with Indian diners. I eat the curry, served on a banana leaf, with my hands (as the locals do) and it's never tasted better. Here, you can find anything from saris to bracelets and get a henna tattoo, as Bollywood songs float down the streets.

I buy handmade souvenirs from the double-storey shophouses along Bussorah Street in **Kampong Glam** – where men smoke hookah pipes and sip tea at outdoor

restaurants – before visiting **Masjid Sultan** with its golden dome. This national heritage site is also Singapore's largest mosque.

Chinatown will intrigue shopaholics, so don't expect to leave without a t-shirt or fridge magnet. Grab a window seat in a restaurant along the busiest stretch and people watch from above as you sip on a Tiger Beer.

Must do

All roads in Singapore lead to the **Marina Bay Sands**. At 165m, the **Singapore Flyer** is the place from which to photograph it – the promenade, Durian-shaped Esplanade Theatre, the half-fish, half-lion Merlion fountain, the Helix pedestrian bridge and the **Marina Bay Sands Hotel**. Indulge in seafood and sushi at Ce La Vi Restaurant and Skybar. Choose an outside table where you can snap a selfie over the Singapore Strait. 



Avoid the monsoon season (from December to March and June to September). Singapore is always hot and humid, so dress appropriately and bring a parasol for shade.



SOUTH COAST

As far as winter holiday destinations go, KwaZulu-Natal's South Coast is right up there, boasting with the annual Sardine Run and great weather.

By Travel Update Staff Writer (@traveludpatersa)

Must See

Winter is a popular time to visit the South Coast, especially between June and July, when the silver mass of sardines migrates along the coastline, followed by predatory fish and circling birds. The **Sardine Run** is one of the region's most popular attractions and one of the world's great migrations. Although you can witness it all along the South Coast, the sardines have their own schedule, so check South Coast Tourism's website (www.southcoasttourism.co.za) or call them (+27(0)39-682-7944) for information about sightings.

Few people know that the world's smallest desert (only 11ha in size) is found near Port Edward. The **Red Desert** is named so for its red soil. The area is believed to have been heavily overgrazed and desertification followed after the top layer of soil eroded away. It overlooks the Umtamvuna Gorge and Estuary, where oribi, duiker and southern reed buck wander freely. While here, catch an afternoon river cruise.

Visit the family-run **Beaver Creek Coffee Estate** (outside Port Edward) or a brew of artisanal coffee.

It also happens to be the world's southernmost coffee plantation. Join the 'crop to cut' tour through the plantation of 60 000 trees, followed by a coffee sampling. But be warned, you won't leave without a bag of roasted coffee beans!

Must do

When looking for adventure along the South Coast, head to **Oribi Gorge** – you could easily spend two days here, as there's much to do. The luscious canyon in southern KwaZulu-Natal, which lies 21km west of Port Shepstone, is the best breakaway in the region for adventurers, birders and nature lovers.

Strap yourself into a harness before being lowered over the edge of a canyon beside Lehr's Falls. Watch the falls tumble into the valley below as you abseil down 110-metre-high sandstone cliffs. Those looking for an adrenaline injection should jump from the world's highest gorge

swing. Otherwise, zip line across the valley from 160 metres up.

There are a number of self-guided walking and hiking trails, from the walk along the cliff's edge to a mellow 1km stroll or a more challenging 9km hike. Mountain biking trails ribbon around the slopes, while white water rapids (grades 3-5) bubble below. Bird lovers can spot some of the region's 250 bird species. And if you're really lucky, you may see the elusive leopards that roam the canyon.

If you prefer the water, zip up your wet suit and take to the waves for a surfing lesson (suitable for the whole family) with Southbroom Surf School (+27(0)73-536-8728). Then, you can pick from a number of beachside restaurants for a generous serving of freshly-caught fish and chips, followed by sundowners and say cheers to a well-deserved South Coast getaway. 🍷



Given the altitude difference, the weather in the hinterland (Oribi Gorge and Weza-Ngele forest region) may vary from that on the coast. Pack something warm and throw in a waterproof jacket.



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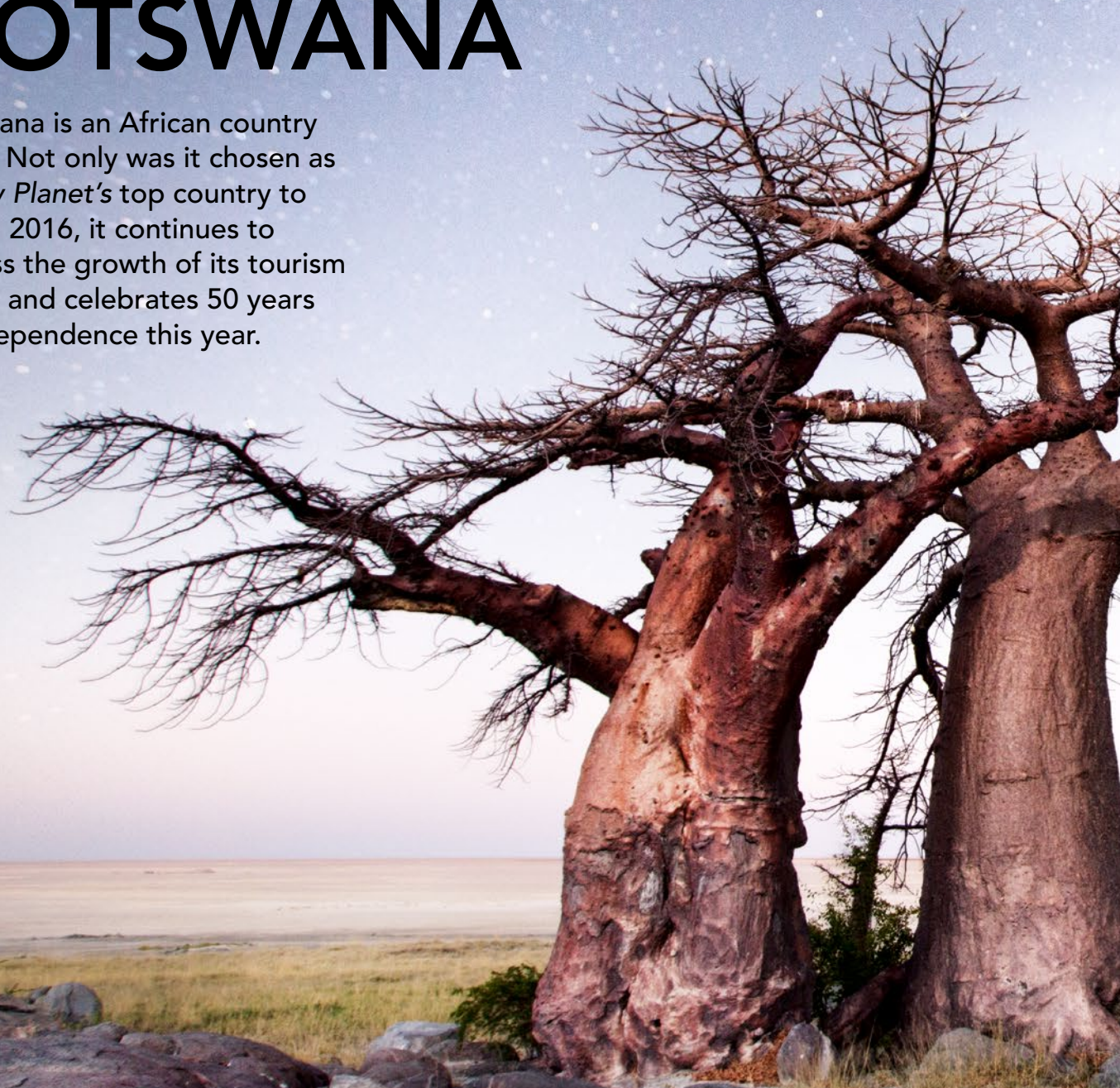
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BOTSWANA

Botswana is an African country rising. Not only was it chosen as *Lonely Planet's* top country to visit in 2016, it continues to witness the growth of its tourism sector and celebrates 50 years of independence this year.

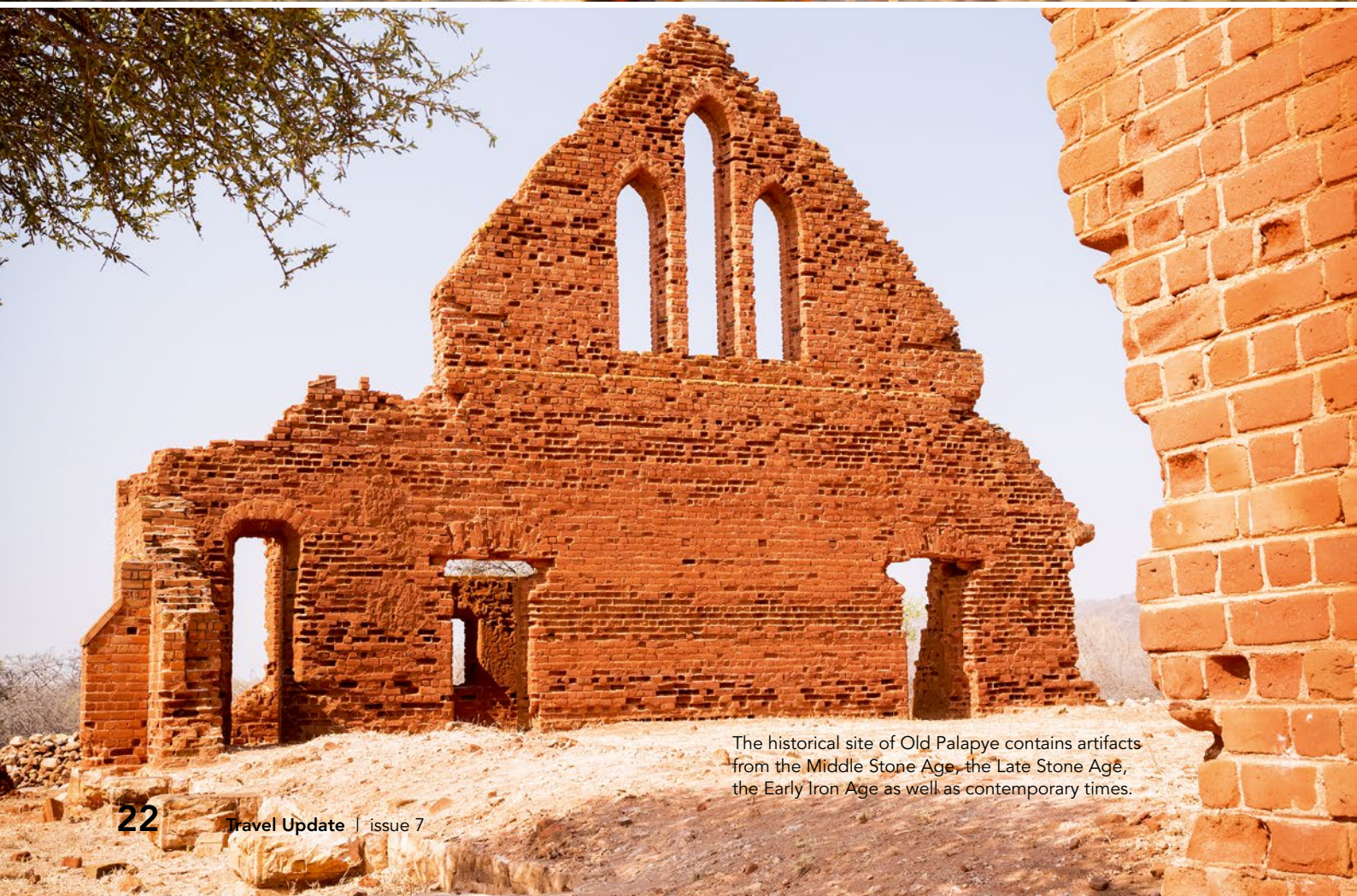




The Kgalagadi is the largest continuous area of sand on earth that touches nine African countries. In Botswana, it also embraces the Makgadikgadi Pans, which were a huge prehistoric lake.



Not only is the Okavango Delta a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it's also one of Africa's Seven Natural Wonders.



The historical site of Old Palapye contains artifacts from the Middle Stone Age, the Late Stone Age, the Early Iron Age as well as contemporary times.

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FALLING FOR ZIMBABWE

Up close with elephants and helicopter flipping over Vic Falls,
Jo Kromberg falls in love with Africa. Again!



“Hello girl!” Our guide, Abie, amiably greets the enormous rear end of the elephant standing about five meters from us.” “This is a big herd,” he says from the front of the game viewing vehicle, flashing us a toothy grin. “You don’t say!” I think to myself as I take in the herd of about 40 elephants around us. Luckily, they look like they’ve just taken their Prozac medication.

And it’s no wonder they look so content. Their home has had a lot of rain in the past couple of months. So much, in fact, that the flooding left the Zambezi Region (formerly the Caprivi Strip) further up almost unrecognisable. The Zambezi River is full and the protein-rich acacia trees provide a veritable cornucopia for the discerning elephant gourmand.

We are about 90 kilometres upstream from the Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, where Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe meet on the Zambezi. It’s one of those dreamy African summer afternoons as we gather for sundowners on a riverboat. To think, you can see a different country every time you turn your head from the river.

The smells and sights of the bush accost my senses, as they do every time I’m in one of the heart chambers of Africa. En route to our accommodation we see hippo, water buck, impala, myriads of birds and butterflies, and of course more elephant. It’s peak breeding season so we see many cute and cuddly versions of these bush giants too.

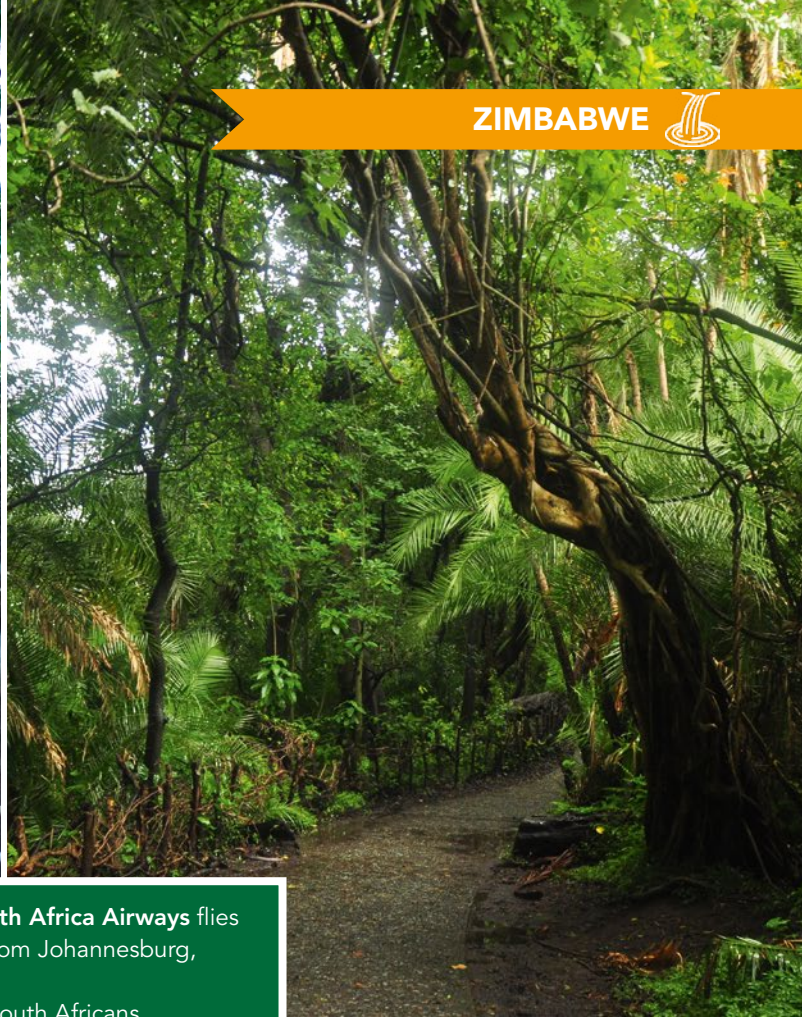
As we head lazily downstream, the gathering clouds colour the water purple as the sun goes down over the Zambezi and we feel like the only people on earth.

Time really does get warped in Africa. After a glass or two of wine by the fire following dinner, we retire to bed. It feels like midnight, but it’s only a smidgen past 10. For the longest time I sit on my verandah, watching a herd of 25 impala on the lawn. It’s their rutting season and I’m treated to dramatic displays of courtship and conflict.

Elephants in the streets

The next morning we leave for the town of Victoria Falls, which comprises around 160 000 people. The trip takes an hour and a half on good roads, but the heat is starting to bite. Just before the turnoff to our lodge, we come face to face with a striding elephant bull. He’s walking straight towards us at a brisk pace down the tarred road. I smile as I think to myself how often I’ve laughed when Europeans or Americans ask about the wild elephants walking the streets where I come from. Turns out they do, just a little north of where I live.

In the afternoon, we take a heart-stopping helicopter flip over Vic Falls. As we take off, I think of that Meatloaf song, “Good girls go to heaven” in which Jim Steinman wrote “every muscle in rebellion, every nerve is on edge”. My heart is beating out of my chest and I see the earth beneath me fall away through the transparent floor next to the pilot. But then I manage to allow the awe of seeing



Getting there: South Africa Airways flies direct to Victoria Falls from Johannesburg, visit: www.flysaa.com.
No visa is required for South Africans.
For more info, visit: www.gotovictoriafalls.com
When to go: May to October
Currency: US dollars and major credit cards





“ ‘Hello girl!’ Our guide, Abie, amiably greets the enormous rear end of the elephant standing about five meters from us. ”

the falls from this vantage point envelop me.


While it is neither the highest nor the widest waterfall in the world, the Victoria Falls (or *Mosi-oa-Tunya*, meaning ‘The smoke that thunders’) is classified as the largest, based on its width of 1 708 metres and height of 108 metres. This results in the world’s largest sheet of falling water. The sense of Man’s insignificance rushes at me in the face of this Natural World Wonder beneath me. The thundering, falling waters go on for miles and it looks like a place where the earth broke open.

I’ve done a tour of the falls on foot and while it’s also spectacular, I highly recommend the airborne option.

We enjoy dinner at the famous Boma Restaurant in town. With plenty of awards under its belt, this authentic African dining experience is something to experience.

The restaurant does cater for vegetarians, but it’s carnivore heaven. You choose your dish – anything from impala to crocodile or ostrich – and it’s cooked right in front of you.

I also have my fortune told for \$1 by a *Sangoma* (a traditional healer) and I learn that I will get married and have two sons. Also that I will live a long life.

As we drive to the airport the next morning with Vangelis playing in the car, I get a familiar feeling, much like a recurring dream. Africa awakens in me inexplicably contrasting emotions – a profound yearning and simultaneously a deep sense of peace. But that’s Africa – eclectic, overwhelming, transcending the mind and defying reason. It takes a permanent hold very deep in the soul of anyone who’s experienced its beauty. 



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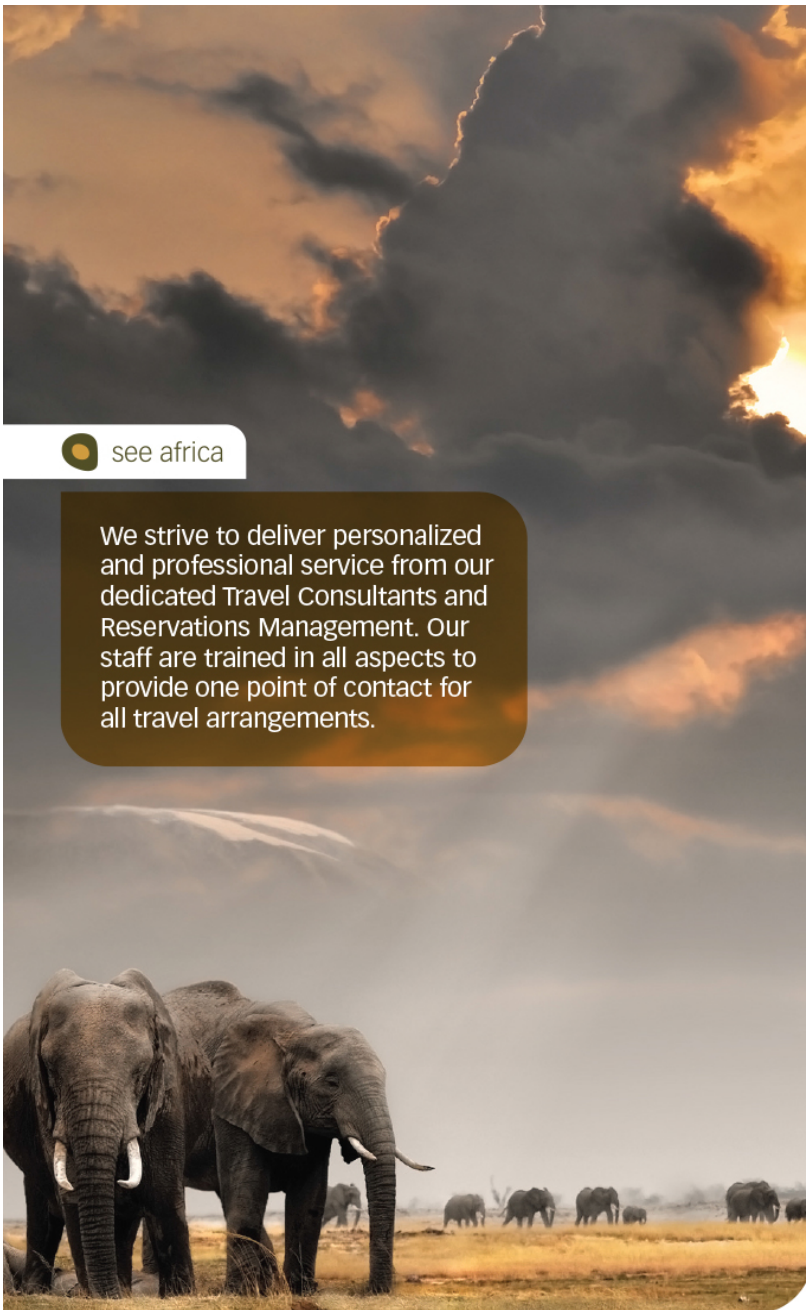
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MEXICO

A FOOD LOVER'S AFFAIR

Mexico City – smoggy, crowded, but scrumptious. Ishay Govender-Ypma (@IshayGovender) explores some of the tastes that reveal so much more of the city than popular television will have you believe.

“You’ve got to use your hands. The best guacamole is handmade.” These are my instructions from cooking duo Jorge Fitz and Alberto Estua who run Casa Jacaranda, a cookery school, from their art-filled home in the still somewhat boho Roma District in Mexico City. After a few hours of making dark-as-molasses, spicy mole poblano sauce from scratch – toasting, roasting, grinding and simmering not one but three types of chillies, tomatillos, onions, garlic, sesame seeds, almonds, cacao and spices – we’re tackling the essential salads and relishes found on every Mexican table. I gently squish the buttery avocado through my fingers for the final mixing of the guacamole. One more splash of fresh lime and we’re ready to eat.

I realised early on, a few weeks prior to my arrival in Mexico City – a mind-fogging megacity of 22 million people across the greater district – that admitting an aversion to avocado would be fatal to my relations with locals. So, I mix the guacamole by hand, eat slices and cubes of the ripe fruit tucked in lard-fried chalupas filled with shredded pork, on crisp tostadas covered with marinated plump prawns and smeared generously on soft tortillas studded with crunchy, fiery chapulines (the local grasshoppers) loved by many. While I don’t develop a sudden and abiding love for avocado, I start to understand its role as a smooth and nutritious mellow-er of foods that are often hot, sour and deeply savoury. Avocados originated in Mexico and the country remains the world’s largest producer.

Mexico still struggles with its image as an unsafe destination in parts, particularly the notorious northern borders with the US. But mention the food and people tend to develop a dreamy look, ready to woo you with street food tales and beach shack taco lore. From hosting Latin America’s 50 Best Restaurant Awards in September last year – a testament to the proliferation of world-class fine dining restaurants across the country – to the enviable street food carts on every corner, Mexico City is undoubtedly a food lover’s dream destination.

Lamb and ancient spirits

Before the mole poblano, chapulines and manhandling the avocados, my morning starts with a stroll through leafy Condesa, lazily wiping the sleep from its eyes and preparing for another day of bar-hopping patrons. Our goal is to get to the Mercado de Medellín in Roma Sur. But Fitz and I are lured by the aromas (and queues) curling out of Restaurante El Hidalguense. The families sitting here have come for the slow-cooked lamb or barbacoa the restaurant is famous for, baked overnight and cloaked in thick maguey leaves. “Wait! You have to try this,” Fitz says spontaneously, guiding me by the arm, and so we sit at a colourful table and start with a trio of pulque.

This 2 000-year-old alcoholic drink is widely considered to be tequila’s ancestor and is made from the fermented sap of the maguey plant. It’s creamy and looks as innocent as full cream milk, flavoured with oats or various in-season fruit and topped with a sprinkling of cinnamon. But that’s how the trouble starts, I’m told later that week by Eat Mexico guide Paco de Santiago as we duck into the oldest pulquería in the city, Pulquería Las Duelistas, where young and old crowd together over jugs of innocence.

El Hidalguense owner Moises Rodríguez Vargas, a tall man with a thin moustache and pristine chef’s whites, is deftly portioning the melt-in-the-mouth barbacoa with a long fork and knife, serving it up on plates the staff places in front of him with conveyor-belt regularity. Like with the quality of the pulque he drinks and serves at the restaurant (only the brew made in Hidalglo, where he lives, will do) Vargas is fastidious about the lamb. The art of barbacoa is one his family has perfected over generations, he says, and a testament to the success of the restaurant over the past 26 years. “The conditions have to be perfect,” Vargas explains in Spanish as Fitz translates. “The lamb can be no older than five months and ideally 45 kilograms, not more, not less.” He tends to the cooking and carefully transports the succulent meat, still wrapped in leaves, to the restaurant that is open thrice a week,

“The people expect something and you have to keep your word. I’ve been doing the same since 1980.

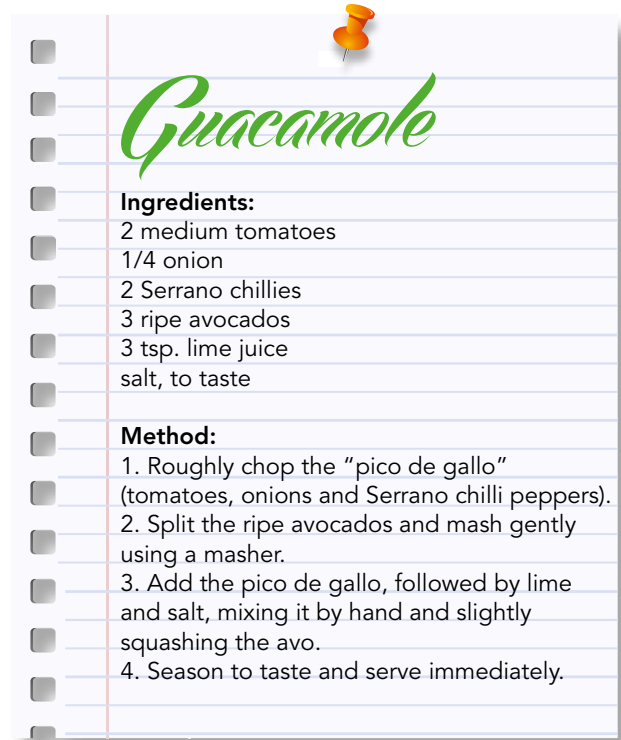
To the market

Like with the all-day street carts and informal diners open through the early hours to cater for night-shift workers, the city’s covered markets usually serve a range of antojitos, which delightfully translate to “a small craving”. This spans the range of tortillas, tacos, tlacoyos, tostadas, flautas, barbacoa and other home-style snacks. The busy shopper can sit down for a quick meal a chat, a sip of freshly squeezed juice or coffee, and be on their way again.

Fitz introduces me to Jorge Lopez Cancino, a shy, award-winning barista, who shows me how to slowly drip-brew one of the blends he selects. Mexico is the world’s eighth largest coffee producer and soon enough I leave Cancino’s stand at Mercado de Medellín with a teeny bag of coffee, parting with R500 for the pleasure.


Fired up on coffee, we strike up a conversation with a quiet vendor from the Yucatan, Don Carlos, who’s been at this market since 1968. I purchase a range of his hot sauces with tamarind and chipotle and spiced achiote paste – the red pigment found in the “lipstick” fruit, and seem to win his affection after that. I’m easily pleased with chilli, so a photo and a hug seem a fair deal to me.

The corn sellers, particularly those with the ancient heirloom, jewel-coloured corn varieties, quickly become my favourite vendors. Maize can be traced back 10 000 years to central Mexico and owes its existence to the ingenious Mayans (and possibly the Olmec), who cultivated it from teosinte grass. The human stomach can’t digest maize, so to make it edible, the Mayans and Aztecs developed a system of nixtamalization – whereby maize is soaked and cooked in an alkaline solution, simply slaked lime and ash, and then processed. Untreated corn meal can’t be made into masa, or dough, unless it’s treated in



this way. And corn is the staple across the country, though wheat is used in parts of Mexico, too. At one of the few remaining family-run tortillerías in Mexico City, Fitz lets me in on the process.

Though mechanised in parts, it’s wholly reliant on human hands at every stage. We buy a pack of still warm tortillas for the chalupas that we prepare later at Casa Jacaranda. Fitz rips the bag open, letting out a whisper of steam. We sprinkle salt on a tortilla, fold it up and eat on our way to the class.

Walking through the tree-lined suburbs and past a community vegetable garden, where children and their parents water the beds of spinach and ripe tomatoes creeping up vines, I can’t help but notice how far from the smoggy, gritty and one-dimensional Mexico portrayed on American TV Mexico City shows herself to be. 

TIP: The rand and Mexican peso are almost 1:1. You can stay and eat affordably in Mexico City.

FLIGHTS: Fly South African Airways from Johannesburg via São Paulo or on Delta Airlines via Atlanta.

VISAS: South Africans require a Mexican visa or a multi-entry US visa, as well as a yellow fever certificate if they’ve recently visited an endemic region. Consult the Mexican embassy for details: www.embamex.sre.gob.mx/sudafrica.

TOURS: Casa Jacaranda – a market and cookery class: www.casajacaranda.mx.

Eat Mexico – a fabulous, lively tour with introductions to local artisans: www.eatmexico.com.

EAT: Street food tip: Follow queues of locals to street food stalls, where food is made freshly on a grill or pan – it’s a sign of quality. Remember, the locals choose to support this stand out of thousands. Trust your instinct, but always drink bottled water.

EL K-Guamo: for seafood tostadas and seafood soup. Corner of Ayuntamiento and Lopez streets.

Pujol: Mexico’s most famous fine dining: www.pujol.com.mx

Nicos: local institution, a must-visit: www.nicosmexico.mx



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SLOW LIFE: THE BAZARUTO WAY

Golden beaches, azure oceans and five-star relaxation. Life could hardly get better than a holiday at Mozambique's Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort.

By Carla Lewis-Balden (@CarlaLewisB)



When flying with Airlink to Vilanculos in central Mozambique, here's a hint: request a window seat. As the plane swoops in to land, the white beaches of Vilanculos and the Bazaruto Archipelago in the distance resemble white peaks of vanilla ice cream floating in Blue Curaçao. On the ocean surface, dhows glide to and fro on the breeze, just like centuries ago when Arabian traders, and Dutch and British ships navigated the same winds along the east coast of Africa.

After a short transfer to the beach at Vilanculos, we hop on a speed boat to Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort. The beach looks like an image out of *National Geographic*: a group of boys are playing soccer just below the tidal line, while an aubergine-purple boat floats in the crystalline shallows.

On our way to Bazaruto we watch the waters for dolphins. They're curious and it's not unusual to see a pod riding in the wake of the speedboat. If you win the Mozambican marine lotto, you may spot a dugong – a saltwater mammal that resembles the love child of a dolphin and a hippo. The Bazaruto Archipelago is one of a few places where these animals still occur in the wild, as they are critically endangered. Even the local fishermen consider themselves lucky if they catch a glimpse of a flipper or whisker of these elusive creatures.

The water is choppy, but as the boat moves closer to the bay where the five-star Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort is located, the water calms to a smooth mirror. We cruise past a long golden beach, dotted with beach umbrellas woven from palm tree fronds. Hammocks sway lazily in the breeze.

Although Anantara Bazaruto is quite a big island resort, you don't get that mass island resort feel. They manage to walk the (very fine) tightrope of catering to both families and couples on a romantic break, while keeping them out of each other's hair. The resort is a hit among South African travellers. During our visit, we chatted to a businessman from Pretoria, who brought his kids and their grandparents for a bit of fun in the sun, as well as a group of career girls looking for downtime.

Rest assured, if you're here on honeymoon, your ears won't be assaulted by a noisy game of Marco Polo at the pool. On the other hand, if your kids are their noisy selves you won't be staring at the pursed lips of a *tannie* trying to get through her beach read. There's a pool for adults (complete with a wet bar that serves bottomless Piña Coladas) and a pool for kids.

The beach bungalows mix influences from the Arab traders that navigated these waters with the colour palettes of Bazaruto. Thick oriental carpets cover the floor, accentuated by off-whites, the shade of sun-bleached dhow sails and faded azure blue. A billowing mosquito net evokes

“As the plane swoops in to land, the white beaches of Vilanculos and the Bazaruto Archipelago in the distance resemble white peaks of vanilla ice cream floating in Blue Curaçao.”



fantasies of Scheherazade’s *1001 Arabian Nights*. There’s also an outdoor shower if you want to go *au naturel* under the African sky.

The *pièce de résistance* for me was the spa, which probably boasts one of the most beautiful views in Africa. The architecture is a fusion of Arabic and African elements and the spa sits on a cliff facing the Indian Ocean. Gigantic, white fluffy salas are the perfect place to unwind after a full body massage or a Rhassoul treatment. You can also reserve the Jacuzzi and a bottle of sparkling wine for sundowners. You’ll search far and wide for a sunset experience to top this.

Fun in the sun

Although the resort is family friendly, I would recommend it for a romantic getaway or a honeymoon. When we

were left alone for a few hours, I conjured several “Fifty Shades of Turquoise: The Island Edition” scenarios of what a honeymoon couple could get up to on this deserted beach, surrounded by calm, azure waters. Our group of girls frolicked in the shallows, glass of white wine in hand. Bathing suits were optional.

Anantara also offers horse riding. I imagine you’ll be galloping along the beach with a sea breeze ruffling your hair in a scene out of a Mills and Boon beach novel.

The food

Included in the rate are three meals per day. Be warned, you’ll need your ‘fat pants’ for the last day. The seafood is delicious – prawns as big as lobsters basted in Portuguese peri-peri sauce, flame-grilled over the fire and juicy lobsters. Luckily, it’s an eat-as-much-as-you-like




buffet, so nobody will give you a nasty eye if you dish too many prawns. Pack Proheps, as the food gets decadent and the bubbles flow.

Couples will love the Dining by Design concept. A table is laid on the beach, secluded from other guests and you

have a private consultation with the chef, after which they prepare you a personalised menu.

The beach picnic is also a must. We were taken to Dolphin Bay, a deserted beach where no humanity was spotted for several kilometres. The staff put up a Bedouin tent on the beach, laid out some beach towels and left us with a cooler of local beer and white wine, as well as a picnic basket filled with lamb kebabs, fresh Portuguese pão, salad and pastéis de nata.

How much does it cost?

Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort offers special tariffs to SADC members, starting at \$315 per person, per night. This includes accommodation, non-alcoholic drinks, non-motorised water sports and medical evacuation, in case of emergency. A flight to Vilanculos costs around R6 000, depending on airport taxes and the time of year you travel. 

Getting there

Airlink: the Regional Feeder Airline, offers an extensive network of regional and domestic flights within southern Africa and operates as a franchisee to SAA.

Route Specific Information: direct flights from Johannesburg or Nelspruit to Vilanculos offer a same-day bush and beach experience.

Connectivity: through their alliance with SAA, travellers connect conveniently with SAA, their partner airlines and other carriers throughout Southern Africa and the world.

Frequent Flyer Programme: Airlink is a member of South African Airways Loyalty programme (Voyager).

Flight Bookings: online (www.flyairlink.com), booking agent or SAA Central Reservations on +27(0)11-978-1111.

HALAL TOURISM ON THE RISE

With Muslims making up 20% of the world's population, here's what South Africa can do to benefit from the rapid growth in halal travel.

By Lesley Stones (@lesley_stones)

One of the fastest growing niches in the travel trade isn't a niche at all – it's catering for one fifth of the world's population. About 1.6 billion people are Muslim, yet halal tourism has only recently been recognised as an important market. It was worth \$145 billion in 2014, or 10% of the travel economy, with 108 million travelling Muslims. It should top \$200 billion by 2020, according to MasterCard and CrescentRating, an authority on Muslim travel.

Muslim travel isn't just about pilgrimages; it's family or business travel too, but it brings new requirements for travel agents and venues looking to win this lucrative trade. More than 1 000 delegates from 50 countries were expected to attend the second international Halal Tourism Conference in Turkey in May, to discuss ways to develop and cater for this business. Conference spokeswoman Tasneem Mahmood says Africa is a key player from an inbound and outbound perspective and contributes billions to the industry.

Although South Africa makes little effort to target Muslim tourists, we ranked as the third most Muslim-friendly destination amongst non-Muslim countries in 2013. That dipped to fourth place in 2015 as other

countries turned up their Muslim-friendly factors.

CrescentRating director Fazal Bahardeen cites KwaZulu-Natal as a prime region to promote. Cape Town will also benefit, as the Halal Trip website rates it as one of the Five Best Global Destinations. Halal Trip offers Muslim-

oriented tours to more than 60 destinations, including several options in South Africa. Its 10-day package covers Cape Town, the Kruger and Johannesburg, with mosque and community visits and the usual attractions.

The South African National Halaal Authority (SANHA) is also keen to attract more international visitors and cites our abundance of mosques and halal restaurants as a promising start. Halal travellers are no different from others in requiring a safe, satisfying and affordable experience, says Ebi Lockhat, SANHA's public relations officer. They also require halal meals and respect for their culture, which makes travelling to Muslim countries an easier choice, to ensure

respect and the affinity of shared religious values.

However, it's not difficult to cater for halal needs, Lockhat says, triggering an explosive growth of services as governments and tourism boards around the world vie to attract this massive market.

In **2014**, the Muslim travel market was worth **\$145 billion** with **108 million** travellers representing **10%** of the travel economy.

By **2020** it's forecast to grow to **\$200 billion** with **150 million** travellers accounting for **11%** of the market.



Source: The Global Muslim Travel Index compiled by MasterCard and CrescentRating.

“South Africa has not even scratched the surface of one of the greatest tourism opportunities,” he says. Our incredible scenery, golden beaches, mountains, flora and fauna, diversity, friendliness and a good tourism infrastructure make South Africa a destination beyond compare, he says.

“Muslim travellers have been subjected to all sorts of harassments and intimidation following 9/11 in the USA, bombings in Paris and Islamophobia worldwide, exacerbated by migrants moving into Europe. In South Africa, travellers are treated with dignity by the rainbow nation, which backs up this value as a constitutional right,” says Lockhat.

SANHA sees opportunities for local Muslim communities and entrepreneurs to develop themed guided-tour experiences. European Muslims, wanting to escape the winter, could enjoy the many religious year-end events held by South African Muslims and sample our attractions.

Most Muslim tourists hail from Saudi Arabia, Iran, the UAE, Indonesia, Kuwait, Turkey and Nigeria, says Prof. Melville Saayman of the North-West University’s Tourism Research in Economic Environs and Society (TREES). Preferred destinations include Malaysia, Turkey, the UAE, Singapore, Russia, China, France and Thailand, because they cater for halal tourism. Saayman believes South Africa is ignoring a massive opportunity.


“South Africa is perfectly geared for halal tourism and

we should start marketing the country as such. Cities like Durban and Cape Town must market and promote themselves accordingly,” he says.

Hotels must know which foods are allowed and how to prepare them, rooms must be alcohol free, adult channels should be blocked on the TV, female staff should observe Islamic dress codes and toilet facilities must conform to Islamic practices. However, Muslim hotelier Abdul Arbee argues that the requirements are less onerous than most people think (See The Halal Hotel below).

South Africans trying to enter this sector face stiff competition as the world wakes up to the opportunity. Last December, Russian tourism authorities opened an office in Dubai and started encouraging hotels and restaurants to meet halal requirements to lure tourists from the Middle East, with an aim of tripling their numbers.

In Australia, Queensland Tourism runs a website dedicated to halal travel. In Japan, many food outlets are adapting their ingredients to achieve halal certification, says the Japan Halal Foundation. Taitō, an area in Tokyo, grants subsidies of ¥820 to help restaurants meet the standards. China has set up halal certification agencies and built manufacturing hubs for suppliers of halal food.

In Turkey, travel agent Fusion Tour will run its first halal cruise in September with a four-night trip to Greece. Everything on board will be in accordance with Islam, including single-sex sports and spa facilities, separate Turkish baths and prayer rooms. 

The Halal Hotel

It’s not too complicated to make a hotel halal, but it’s easier if you’re a Muslim, says Abdul Arbee. He’s the owner of Andaluz and Salsabeel boutique hotels in Durban. “According to CrescentRating the market is really huge, but in South Africa we’ve done almost nothing to accommodate it. But it’s not difficult. The main concern is the kitchen, once that’s sorted you’ll have people from around the world visiting.”

An establishment serving both halal and non-halal foods must keep everything separate and use foods from halal suppliers. As a Muslim, Arbee runs halal-only kitchens in his hotels.

Alcohol is another hurdle, “that’s the biggest drawback if you’re not Muslim yourself because the profit margins on alcohol are ridiculous,” he says.

Arbee has seen other hotels turn halal, but fail, usually because they’re not run by people who share the faith. If a kitchen runs out of meat it’s tempting for non-Muslims to become lax. “It’s difficult to respect someone else’s

beliefs,” acknowledges Arbee.

His bedrooms have stickers on the ceiling pointing towards Mecca for prayers, but most other features are standard. There’s no requirement for female staff to wear a headscarf. The receptionists should look like receptionists. That’s their job,” he says.

Other methods suggested by SANHA are to make the Quran available, list local mosques, provide prayer mats, install hand showers or bidets and have a female-only swimming pool or spa times.

Arbee says it’s not essential to have separate swimming pools and gyms, although women won’t use them if men are present, and the toilets do not need to change. A hotel will earn a higher Muslim rating for those facilities.

There are a few other halal hotels in Durban, but very little competition, and Arbee is ready to capitalise on the opportunity. “With our currency performing the way it is, South Africa is heaven. It’s almost a holiday for free.”

THE VICTORIA FALLS HOTEL: THE EPITOME OF LUXURY

Zimbabwe is making a big comeback among international travellers, and the Victoria Falls region is at the forefront, says General Manager of The Victoria Falls Hotel, **Giulio Togni**.

Built in 1904, the Victoria Falls Hotel is the oldest and grandest luxury hotel at the falls. It offers guests a sense of tradition, as well as a prime location at the UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site, coupled with warm hospitality and premium service.

A sense of place

The energy that comes off the cascading waterfall is almost spiritual. It's something you have to experience in your lifetime. The Victoria Falls Park and rainforest are open year-round, but if you visit during rainy season (December to March) you'll experience the full immensity of the majestic falls – the world's largest sheet of falling water. Nearby must-see destinations include Hwange National Park, only 185km south east, and Mana Pools National Park further north.

Ultimate luxury

The Stables Signature Wing of the hotel was introduced in 2014. We upgraded our services and introduced more product offerings that appeal to high-end guests, including private check-in, personalised attention and staff on hand, complimentary mini bar and massages, as well as high tea and light pre-dinner meals of canapés and sparkling wine. It's aimed at the upmarket, exclusive

traveller and offers a five-star experience of pure grandeur.


Bushtracks Express

In March, we partnered with Bushtracks Zimbabwe to launch the Bushtracks Express train service, which has been remodelled by Rovos Rail. The two-hour luxurious train trip aboard a steam locomotive leaves from our hotel's doorstep and takes you into a bygone era each Tuesday and Friday. Guests are greeted on board with a Pimm's cocktail, served by our immaculately dressed staff, followed by sundowners and canapés.

The train stops on the bridge, which can be seen from our property, where guests can take photographs of the Zambezi River and canyon below, as well as the thundering mist of the Victoria Falls. Guests return in time for dinner at either of the hotel's three restaurants.

Promoting the destination

Many international travellers don't realise that Vic Falls isn't in South Africa or that it's quicker to go from Johannesburg to Vic Falls (on an 80-minute flight) than to Cape Town. With the launch of the upgraded domestic terminal, new international terminal and runway – which accommodates long-haul, wide-bodied aircraft – it'll hopefully sign international airlines to fly to Vic Falls directly, alongside current flight services by Air Zimbabwe, SAA, BA, Fastjet, Air Namibia, Air Botswana and private charters.

We work very closely with Walter Mzembi, Zimbabwe's minister of tourism; he's proactive, progressive and understands tourism. It's a challenge because of certain constraints, but Zimbabwe's opening up and making a big comeback among travellers. 

WHAT IS THE VICTORIA FALLS HOTEL?

The 112-year-old, five-star hotel looks out onto the bridge that connects Zimbabwe and Zambia over the Zambezi River. After a visit, you'll understand why it's not uncommon to meet guests who are the third generation to celebrate their honeymoon at our establishment.

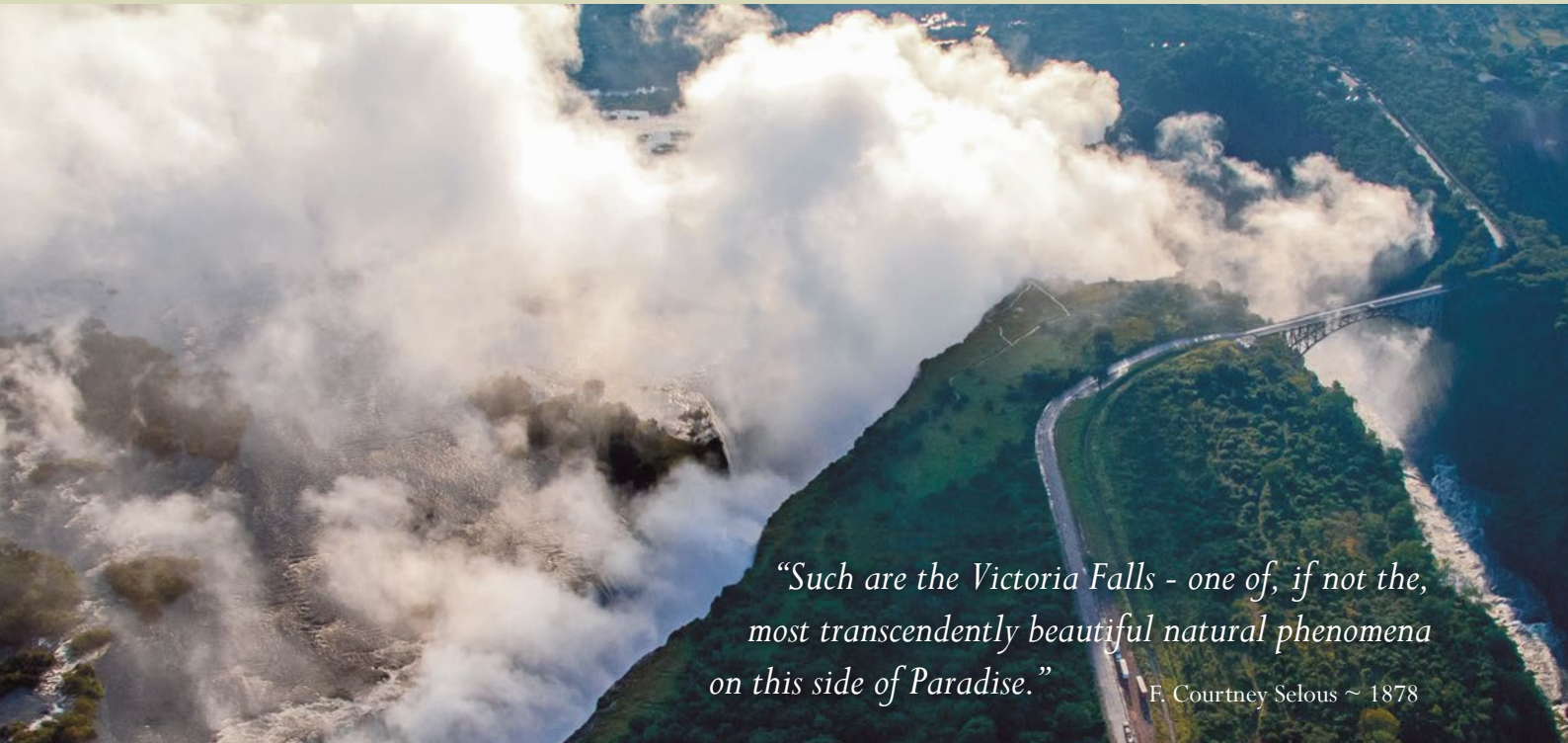
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THE VICTORIA FALLS HOTEL



THE VICTORIA FALLS HOTEL



“Such are the Victoria Falls - one of, if not the, most transcendently beautiful natural phenomena on this side of Paradise.”

F. Courtney Selous ~ 1878

Luxury on the doorstep of the world's grandest waterfall ...



For more than a century, The Victoria Falls Hotel has been the address of choice for Royal Families, statesmen, celebrities and discerning travellers as it occupies a fine location from which to explore the magical wonders of untamed Africa. Steeped in history and evoking a sense of a bygone era, the hotel continues to offer guests true luxury and excellent service.

Contact Us:

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www.victoriafallshotel.com



TRAVEL NEWS

INDABA

The INDABA trade show host, SA Tourism, is working to improve the quality of buyers attending the show and has increased the ratio of buyers to exhibitors.



Acting CEO for South African Tourism (SAT), **Sthembiso Dlamini**, stated that for the upcoming 2016 INDABA there were already over **791** registered exhibitors and **1 111** registered buyers, of which **500** are international buyers. Three hundred international buyers will be hosted by SAT and will participate in pre- and post-INDABA tours that showcase various South African provinces and tourist attractions. Over the past few years, SAT has increased the number of hosted buyers from roughly **230** in 2013. Exhibitors have also asked for an increased ratio of buyers to exhibitors as previously there were around **300** buyers to **1 000** exhibitors, while at the same time, exhibitor numbers are down.

Ahead of the show there was a 31% increase in meetings scheduled via the online diary system compared with last year.

“In order to increase the number of quality international, regional and local buyers, we have sourced buyers from key markets such as the UK, USA, Germany, France, The Netherlands, India, Japan, China, Australia, Canada, Brazil, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa,” said Dlamini.

Three weeks ahead of the show, Chief Marketing Officer **Margie Whitehouse** said over **90%** of INDABA’s floor space had already been sold. SAT will introduce criteria to qualify buyers attending the show. **Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo**, Chief Convention Bureau Officer at the South African National Convention Bureau, runs Meetings Africa with a successful buyer qualification process and will implement this process for INDABA to ensure the trade show remains relevant and is considered

among the best on the continent.

INDABA runs from **7-9 May** at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre and Durban Exhibition Centre in **KwaZulu-Natal**.



SATSA CONFERENCE

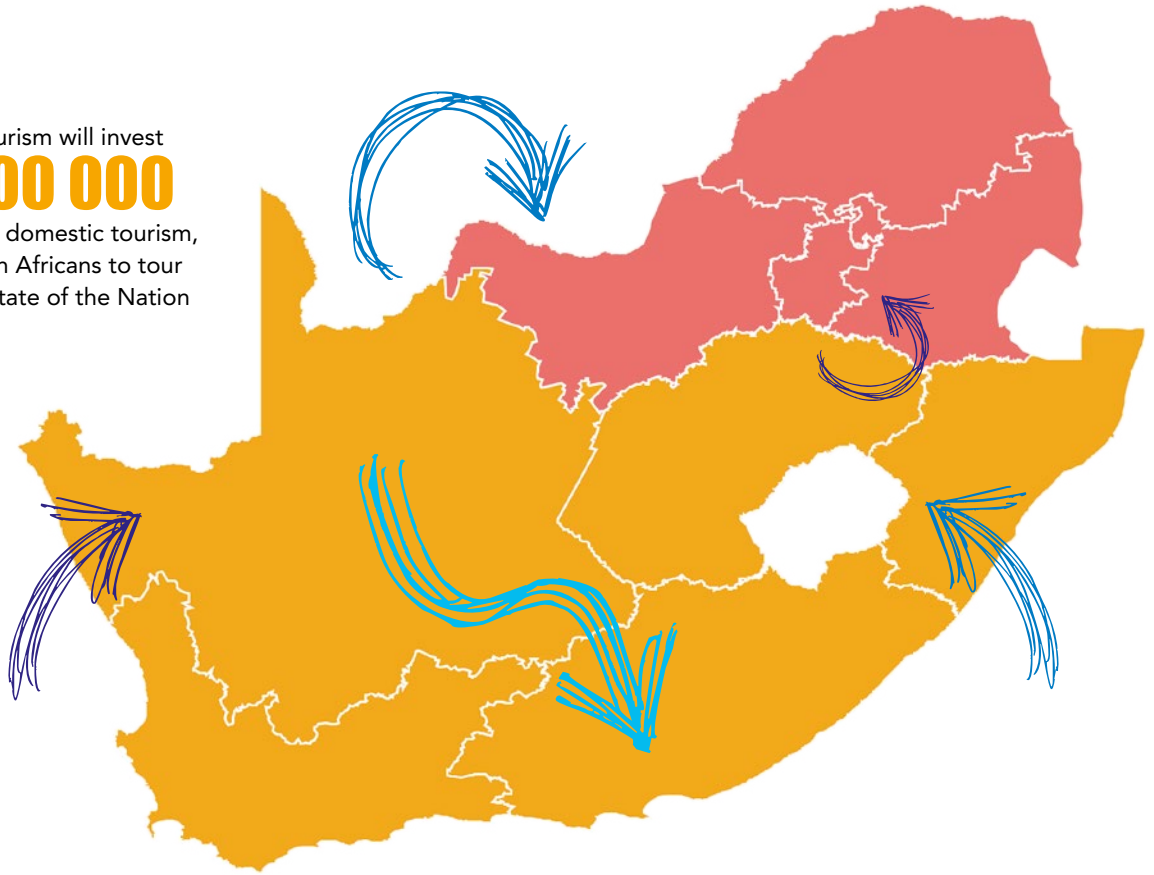
Three hundred delegates are expected at this year’s annual SATSA conference, which will take place at **Pine Lake Inn in White River, Mpumalanga** from **21-23 July**. Bus transfers from Johannesburg will be provided.

A golf day will be hosted on Thursday **21 July** at the **White River Country Club**, as will open-vehicle game drives and tours of the Panorama Route.

SATSA welcomes any conference suggestions, which can be emailed to the CEO, **David Frost**, at david@satsa.co.za.

"South African Tourism will invest
R100 000 000

a year to promote domestic tourism, encouraging South Africans to tour their country." – State of the Nation address 2016.



MINOR HOTEL GROUP TO EXPAND

Minor Hotel Group plans to operate 50 more hotels in Africa within the next five years. This multi-billion rand expansion will treble the group's properties on the continent. Luxurious hotels are planned for Johannesburg and Cape Town (South Africa) as well as Lagos and Abuja (Nigeria), and Ndola (Zambia) among many others.

"At the moment, we have 25 hotels in Africa and we want to grow by 50, adding 10 a year for the next five years," said Sir Richard Hawkins, the Minor Hotel Group's Regional Operations Director for Africa. The group will negotiate management deals with hotels that have around 150 bedrooms, with the possibility of taking equity in them at a later stage.

Minor Hotel Group will establish a presence in business hotels in Johannesburg and Cape Town, but will also focus on leisure hotels in the Western Cape. The hotel group established an office in Johannesburg in 2014 and bought a stake in eight Sun International properties in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland and Zambia.

The hotels were rebranded as Anantara and AVANI properties, two of the six brands that are owned by the company.



BLOGGERS WE ❤️

Vaughan and Lauren Manuel McShane of The Travel Manuel (thetravelmanuel.com) have visited six continents and lived in five countries.

Their award-winning adventure travel blog showcases their tales through engaging articles, photography and videos. It covers the best in outdoor adventure, global cultures and local cuisine, plus expat tips to living in Asia. With their six-month-old son, Caleb, in tow they're expanding into family travel too. You'll usually find them close to the ocean or in search of coffee and Wi-Fi. Also join Lauren on her travel and lifestyle show on Hashtag Radio (www.hashtagradio.co.za) every Wednesday from 12-2pm.



FAIRCITY'S WINNING FORMULA

The Faircity Hotel Group may be the new kid on the block, but it's expanding its footprint across Southern Africa.

The Faircity Hotel Group is a fairly new kid on the block started nine years ago by Lukas van der Westhuizen and Gustav Holtzhausen. The founders don't hail from the hospitality industry, which gave them no deep-set norms to limit their creativity.

Faircity specialises in owning, managing and co-developing hotels across Southern Africa. It has four 4-star hotels and apartments and one 3-star hotel in its portfolio: Faircity Falstaff and Faircity Quatermain in Sandton, Faircity Mapungubwe in downtown Johannesburg, and Faircity Roodevallei and Faircity Grosvenor Gardens in Pretoria. The group also plans to add lodges and resorts to its list of growing properties.

Their primary offering is business and conference hotels, as well as serviced apartments. The group


is growing in three areas: hotel management, acquisitions, and developments. When it comes to hotel management they will select properties based on four criteria, namely location, uniqueness, quality and only establishments over 50 rooms. In terms of acquisitions and developments, the group is looking for hotels with more than 100 rooms.

A new development is the establishment of a hotel fund with founder of the Atterbury Group Louis van der Watt and co-investor Gideon Oosthuizen, both of whom add a wealth of experience, through which Faircity will acquire and develop hotels. The focus will be on business hotels within business nodes, with over 100 rooms.

Service is of utmost importance to Faircity. They call their tailor-made approach to satisfy guests' needs 'Service by Design', whereby they

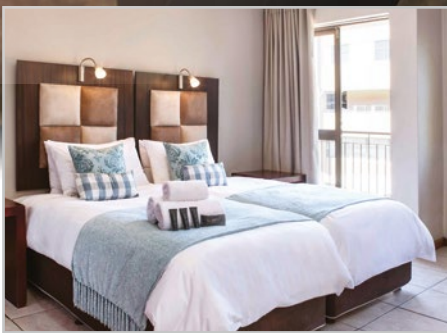
address guests' expectations and constantly changing needs. Creating a dialogue between guests and staff is central to this approach. By evaluating valuable feedback, Faircity designs a personalised experience for their guests.

The group sees itself as big enough to make a significant difference, yet small enough to really care. The executive team is involved in the management of all properties, which they will maintain as long as size allows.

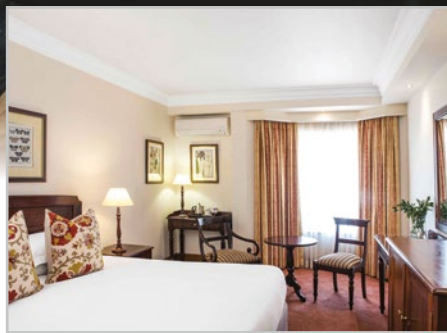
Faircity is a vibrant and progressive hotel group that sees a bright future for the hospitality industry in Southern Africa. "I believe the industry will continue to deliver steady growth over the next five years and we're excited about what the future holds for us," says van der Westhuizen. They are certainly a player to watch in the coming years. 

SERVICE BY DESIGN

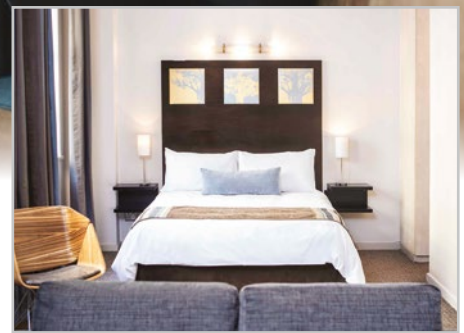
Faircity Hotels offer the busy executive traveller a superior home comfort experience. Outstanding service, stylish rooms, beautifully maintained surroundings and attention-to-detail are the hallmarks of all Faircity Hotels. Catering to both the local and international markets, our reservations team is trained to respond to the queries of Travel and Booking Agents efficiently. Contact us for your booking requirements.



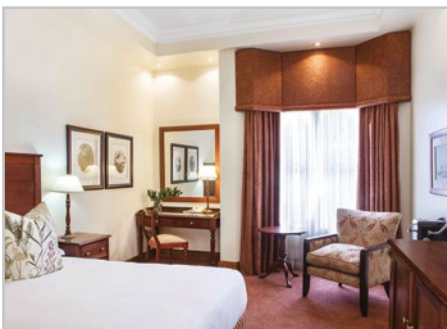
FAIRCITY Grosvenor Gardens Serviced Apartments
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FAIRCITY Falstaff Hotel
Morningside, Sandton - 011 784 8580



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Johannesburg, Marshalltown - 011 429 2600

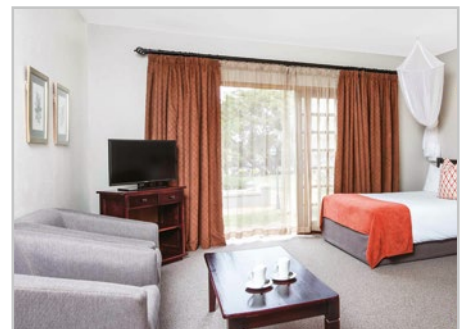


FAIRCITY Quatermain Hotel
Morningside, Sandton - 011 290 0900



**FAIRCITY
HOTELS**

www.faircity.co.za



FAIRCITY Roodevallei Hotel
Pretoria - 012 845 5000



ALPINE HEATH RESORT: THE MOUNTAINS ARE CALLING

Come get the best of the berg in a mountain resort that offers anything you could want for a relaxing family holiday or conference weekend.

The magnificent mountains of the Drakensberg provide the spectacular backdrop for Alpine Heath Resort.

The resort is located midway between Durban and Johannesburg, and offers superb accommodation, fine cuisine, indoor and outdoor activities, and superb conference and wedding facilities.

The resort is a sports enthusiast's dream and will keep the whole family entertained. They can choose from squash, table tennis, gym, board games or a spa treatment. Otherwise there's a range of outdoor activities, including horse riding, tennis, volleyball, fishing, cycling, putt-putt and swimming.

Children will never have a dull moment with the Kid's Entertainment Programme at the Kid's WOW Zone, there's everything from arts and crafts to nature-related activities. A five minutes' drive away is All Out Adventures, which caters for extreme

adrenaline junkies with activities like canopy tours, ziplining and the kingswing.

Alpine Heath Resort has many hiking trails that vary in difficulty. Situated in a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the resort is the perfect base from which to explore some of the country's finest hikes including the Amphitheatre, Tugela Falls (the world's second highest waterfall) and Mont Aux Sources. Trails include: the Chain Ladder Hike, Tugela Gorge, Surprise Ridge, Cannibal Cave, Cascades, Look Out Rock and Tiger Falls.


A trip to the Drakensberg would be incomplete without visiting the Spionkop Battlefields and the history associated with the Anglo-Boer War. Relive the memories of past heroes and walk in the footsteps of three great leaders, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi and General Louis Botha.

Alpine Heath Resort has a few

dining options. Guests can choose to enjoy the culinary delights of La Gruyeres Restaurant, savour scrumptious offerings at The Tavern, Inferno Pizzeria, The Coffee Shop or buy fresh produce at the Village Market and Deli to prepare in their self-catering chalets.

The resort has 100 luxurious, fully-equipped chalets that offer panoramic mountain views from comfortable lounges, a fireplace for those romantic wintery evenings, kitchen, patio, satellite TV and three cosy bedrooms.

We pride ourselves in hosting unforgettable conferences, functions and weddings, tailored to meet your needs. With 11 venues to choose from and a variety of in-house team building activities, in-house MC and DJ and an internal décor company, why go anywhere else?

Alpine Heath Resort is truly a highlight of the Drakensberg and it's what makes this unique berg village so popular all year round. 

aha | ALPINE HEATH RESORT



The magnificent mountains of the Drakensberg provide the spectacular backdrop for Alpine Heath Resort. The resort is located midway between Durban and Johannesburg, and offers superb accommodation, fine cuisine, indoor and outdoor activities, and superb conference and wedding facilities.



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Rates are nett and non-commissionable. Valid from Sunday to Friday. Not valid over long weekends. Limited number of chalets available on this special. Subject to availability. Rates exclude 1% tourism levy.

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www.aha.co.za/alpineheath**

5 REASONS TO STAY



CAPE MILNER

Stay here for views of Table Mountain and Lion's Head, while you sip on a Mountain Sunrise from the pool deck. By Iga Motylska (@igamotylska)

The Glass Lounge

If there's one thing you ought to know about The Cape Milner Hotel, it's that if you have a proclivity for panoramic views you'll most likely spend all your time at the Glass Lounge Bar (with its glass ceiling) sipping on a Mountain Sunrise – apple juice with fresh lime, kiwi puree and pressed mint leaves on crushed ice. Just add your alcohol of choice! You'll also find classics like Cosmo's, Margaritas, Mojitos and Martinis alongside the Spicy Mango Colada and NauTea.

Poolside on the deck

The hotel, which is located in Tamboerskloof, is known for its views of Table Mountain and Lion's Head – from the pool deck they look like bookends on either side of the hotel building. Relax on the poolside loungers or spacious couches while you make use of the Wi-Fi connection (it was better here than in my room on the ground floor). It's also the best place to unwind

after an in-room massage, by one of their contracted spas.

Location and shuttle

The Cape Milner is midway between the Table Mountain Cableway and the V&A Waterfront. It's a leisurely 3km walk to the Waterfront. However, you can book the hotel's free shuttle (Monday to Friday from 8am to 5pm) to any destination within a five kilometre radius, as far as Camps Bay. If you don't use Uber, the hotel can book a ride with their partner taxi company.


Heritage and conferencing

The hotel is built around the conferencing venue, housed in a heritage manor that dates back to the 19th century. The two smaller conference rooms can host up to 30 people in cinema style, while the larger two can host up to 100 people. The courtyard around the back is a

peaceful place to spend your breaks.

Although the hotel doesn't have a business centre, there is one iPad available for use and each guest receives 200MB of complimentary data per device every day.

Decor and ambiance

The hotel's ultra modern decor is kitted out in shades of grey and blue, to complement its surroundings: the grey hues of the mountains in the background as well as the crisp autumn sky. Before leaving I was tempted to ask for the name of their music playlist – a mix of lounge music and laid back beats that made for a relaxing atmosphere. 

Address: 2a Milner Road, Tamboerskloof

Email: reserve@capemilner.com

Web: www.capemilner.com

Tel: +27(0)21-426-1101

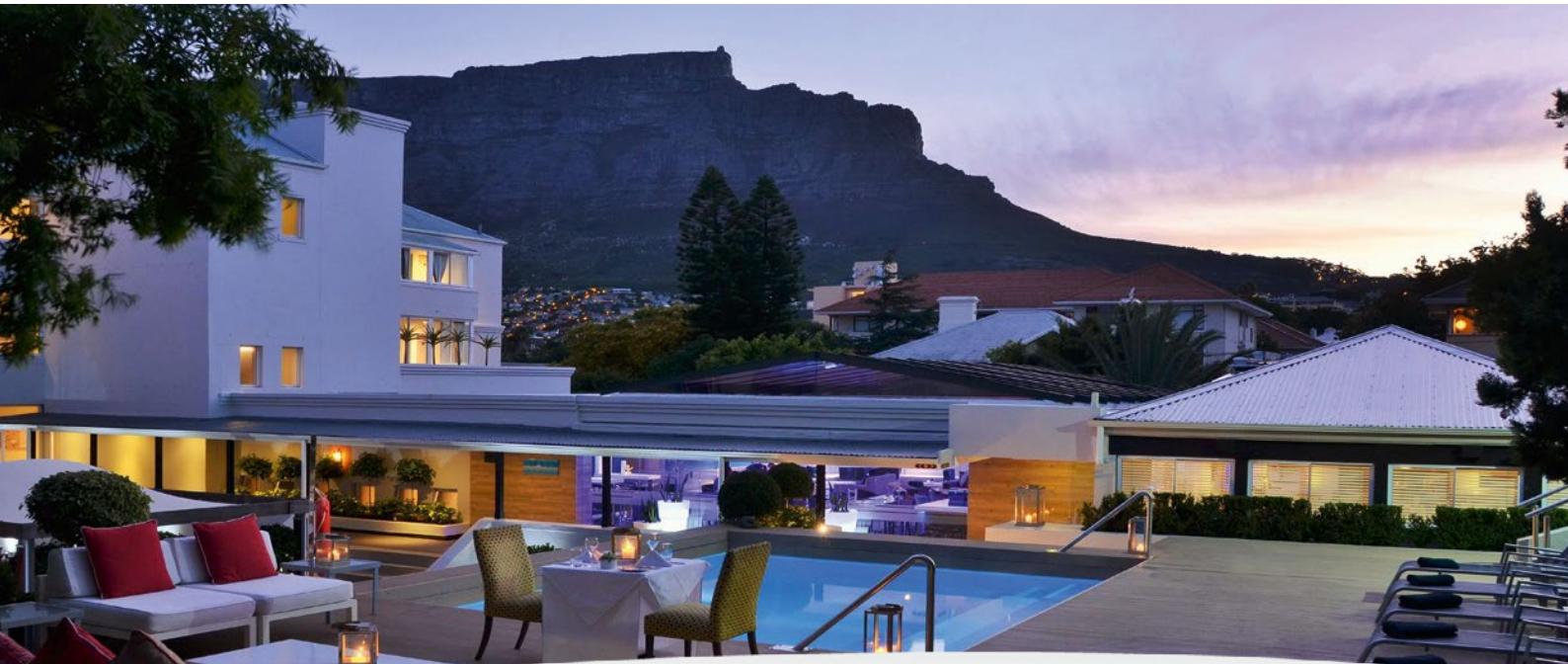
MICE

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YOUR GUIDE
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AVIAREPS AIRLINE MINI FAIR

The 2016 annual AVIAREPS Airline Mini Fair is expanding to include three editions across South Africa that'll talk shop about the aviation industry.

The annual AVIAREPS Airline Mini Fair is a free aviation exhibition that hosts a number of local, regional and international airlines and welcomes the travel trade – tour operators, travel agents, TMCs and those involved in the MICE sector – to talk shop about the aviation industry.

Sessions:

Each of the three editions of the 2016 AVIAREPS Airline Mini Fair – which will be held across three South African cities (Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban) – will have two three-hour sessions. The morning sessions will run from 9am-12pm, while the afternoon session will run from 1pm-4pm. Trade visitors can register for free on a first-come, first-served basis (see details below) for whichever session they will be able to attend. The relaxed atmosphere allows trade visitors to come and go as they please; however, we suggest they attend the speaker's

presentation as well as one session. There are only 350 spaces available per day.

This interactive exhibition offers the opportunity for the trade to

network with industry leaders who are at the forefront of the global aviation industry. They will learn about the expansion of fleets and flight routes, new destinations and developments, frequent flyer programmes as well as rewards programmes.

Food and drinks will be freely available throughout the day for attendees and exhibitors.

AVIAREPS Mini Airline Fair: Cape Town 2015

311


TRAVEL TRADE VISITORS

28
airlines

4

sponsors

The speaker session

AVIAREPS hosts knowledgeable speakers at each event, this is hosted in between the morning and afternoon sessions. The speakers give pertinent presentations relating to the aviation industry, followed by a question and answer session. 

Save the date

Cape Town: July

Johannesburg: September

Durban: October

Entrance to the exhibition is free of charge to the travel trade, however the exhibition does not cater to members of the public.



Website: www.aviareps.com

Email: Charmaine on cthyme@aviareps.com

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Twitter: @AVIAREPS_RSA

Facebook: Find the 'Aviareps South Africa' page on Facebook

The (un)usual business of modern conferencing

By SAACI chairperson Wayne Johnson

Technology has changed the way we operate the conferencing and events industry. But it's up to us, the industry, to embrace it and use it correctly.

The days where conference attendees were herded from one session to the next are long gone. More than ever, people want simplicity and convenience. Organisers should make it easy for attendees to access content, while keeping them connected to the outside world.


Attendees and delegates often need to keep up to date with their offices. Take this into consideration – have a flexible schedule and tailor your conference so it enables attendees to decide when they want to take a tea break, catch up on emails or network. Let them decide which speaker they want to listen to and the days when they want to take their lunch.

Technology like video streaming has made it possible to participate in a conference remotely. Web conferencing and the rise of video may put the industry at risk, or it could simply mean that we need to adjust to a new way of planning and hosting.

We live in the digital age, in a virtual cloud of easily accessible content, where social media channels can be free tools for marketing or reaching sponsors. Use various social media platforms to promote your event. Create a branded hashtag for your conference so that attendees (virtual or physical) can follow it online and join in the conversation. Ask your event speakers to share the details of their session with their online followers for greater reach and to gain followers. These followers could become attendants in future years.

Hire a PR representative or qualified social media strategist to curate your event's online feed and timeline, before, during and after the event – and to aggregate the most popular content from it. Post useful information and quality content to encourage your online followers to share it widely across their online networks. Visual content is particularly popular, as are facts and figures.

Many events are going paperless, using apps rather than paper brochures to communicate floor plans, maps, sessions, delegates, exhibitor information and so on. A good example is that of Meetings Africa, held in late February.

By using these technologies and being prepared to do business in an unusual way, we can keep the sector current and viable. 



FLY BLUE CRANE

Because it's still a fairly new service, travelling with Fly Blue Crane makes you feel as though you're on a private jet. Well, almost. **By Iga Motylska**

As the newest kid on the block, Fly Blue Crane operates two 50-seater single class Embraer regional jets on 16 daily flights, departing from O.R. Tambo International Airport to Bloemfontein, Kimberley and Cape Town (on a connecting flight via either Bloemfontein or Kimberley).

Check-in and boarding


Passengers can check in online 24 hours before departure and pre-select their seats for free. The airline offers one free check-in luggage (max. 20kg), one hand luggage (max. 7kg) and a small handbag or slimline laptop bag. For additional luggage, book online or notify the call centre at least two hours before departure (R200) or pay at the check-in counter (R300). Infants fly free, while kids pay 50% of the original fare.

On the menu

Complimentary snacks, light meals or desserts are served on board. All meals are Halal and there's always a vegetarian option. Non-alcoholic hot and cold beverages are also served.

The flight

I flew both routes from Johannesburg to Cape Town, via Kimberley and back via Bloemfontein. The flight time on both was three hours.

Passengers flying onwards aren't allowed to disembark during a stopover, a security check is conducted after passengers disembark at their connecting stop, and new passengers board quickly. The service was efficient and friendly. Although my return flight was initially delayed by 45 minutes, we were only delayed by 20 minutes in the end. On our return flight, O.R. Tambo allocated one carousel to two flights, but Fly Blue Crane singled out our luggage and put them aside for fast collection. 

Website: www.flybluecrane.com

Email: reservations@flybluecrane.com

Tel: +27(0)87-330-2424

INCENTIVE TRAVEL

The South African chapter of SITE (Society for Incentive Travel Excellence) offers insight into travel incentive trends in and to South Africa.

What is incentive travel?

Incentive travel is a type of business travel that's used by businesses to encourage productivity, motivate employees to reach business objectives or to reward successes. Incentive travel may be in the form of individual travel, whereby an employee travels with their partner, or group travel.

Group incentive travel may also improve employee morale, build team spirit among team members, encourage employee loyalty, and provide quality time in a leisure environment for management to interact with their team or top performers.

Sometimes incentive travel may be coupled with a conference, meeting or event, whereby an incentive tour precedes or follows a business-related event.

The South African incentive sector in the last decade

Incentive travel into South and Southern Africa has been through a tumultuous time over the past 10 years. Up until the crash of Lehman Brothers in September 2008, the inbound incentive travel industry was very healthy. We had a delayed positive impact due to the Soccer World Cup in 2010, but directly after that the inbound incentive industry took a major knock. It slowly started recovering in 2013, but then got hit by the Ebola crisis. Although South Africa was not affected by Ebola at all, the perception took its toll and many businesses suffered, with large groups and conventions cancelling.

Troubled times saw incentive travel reduced to local and regional destinations. Where an American client previously may have travelled to Europe, they were now travelling to Canada or Mexico instead. But South Africa has seen the US market slowly return since 2014 and the UK market has also shown signs of recovery.

Future projections for South Africa's incentive sector

The weakened rand has a very positive effect on South Africa's incentive sector, but in light of the country's current politics, perceptions of Africa in general could be a potential negative. However, Africa is booming and South Africa may very soon face serious competition within east and central Africa. It is critical for South Africa to form partnerships with other African operators and tourism bodies in order to create a synergy. The new Victoria

Falls International Airport, for example, could impact incentive travel coming directly into South Africa.

Average incentive travel spend in South Africa

The average spend per person on an incentive travel package to South Africa is between R18 000 and R24 000. A three-to four-night incentive programme to one Southern African destination costs around R20 000 per person.

“The average spend per person on an incentive travel package to South Africa is between R18 000 and R24 000.”

The top five South African regions for incentive travel

- Cape Town
- Madikwe
- Pilanesberg
- Sun City
- Mpumalanga (Kruger Park and surrounding private game reserves)

Five most popular African countries for incentive travel (besides South Africa)

- Zimbabwe
- Zambia
- Kenya

- Tanzania
- Namibia



unforgettable experiences to ensure the client gets the best ROI possible.

SITE Crystal Award winners:


The SITE Crystal Awards Recognition Programme honours the top tier organisations that excel in designing unique and memorable incentive programmes that deliver measurable business results for their clients.

- Dragonfly Africa
- Green Route
- Walthers DMC
- Crystal Events & Incentives
- Terra Nova

Hosting incentive tours to South Africa

Make sure you have a reliable partner. Often SITE members are your best bet as they have been vetted by the industry. They are there to provide expert local advice – from the hotels best suited to your client profile and budget to restaurants, entertainment and

How to better promote incentive travel to South Africa

Destination Management Companies (DMCs) are responsible for marketing South African as a destination. Road shows in conjunction with South African Tourism are always hugely beneficial for destination marketing, as is attending world travel shows, partnering with the relevant organisations and online advertising. 

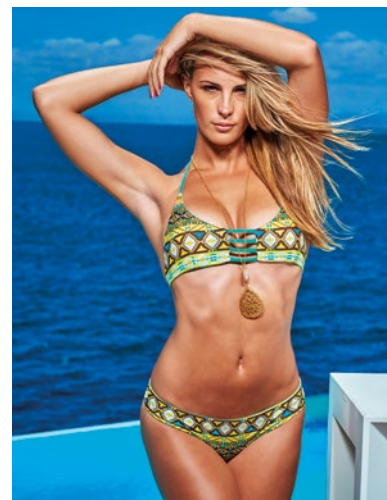
South Africa Chapter of the Society of Incentive and Travel Executives (SITE)
 SITE provides educational seminars and information services to those who work in the field of meetings, incentives, conferences and events (MICE).
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WTM AFRICA 2016 ROUND UP

The third edition of WTM Africa, which was held in Cape Town in early April, experienced significant growth.

Since its launch in 2014, World Travel Market (WTM) Africa – which is part of the WTM portfolio (see sidebar) – has experienced growing interest among international travel professionals. The three-day, business-to-business travel exhibition, which is held in Cape Town each autumn, attracts local and international exhibitors, buyers, sellers, government ministers, the press and travel influencers.

This year's third African edition was the biggest yet and experienced year-on-year growth with a 20% increase in visitors (unaudited figures) and over 600 inbound and outbound exhibiting companies, up from 572 in 2015. "The 2016 show had over 600 exhibitors, showcasing our continuous annual growth. WTM Africa has come of age, and we will


continue striving to meet the needs of our travel and tourism partners to deliver an annual event that is even more relevant, topical and productive. This is the largest

into industry trends and future developments of Africa's travel industry landscape. Exhibitors had the opportunity to expand their brand by launching new products, generating sales leads and networking with their partners and buyers.

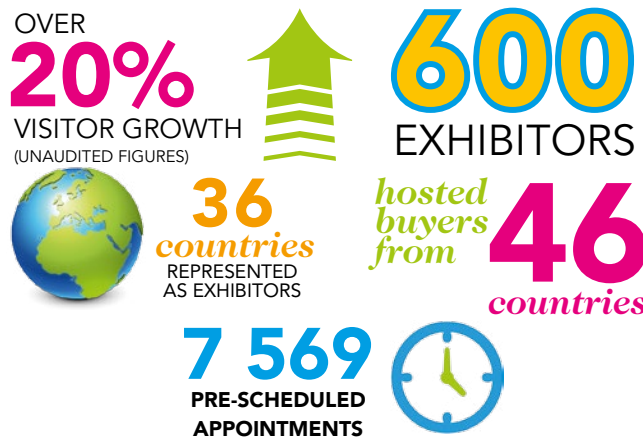
The conference programme included topics about online travel trends and the use of technology to drive business strategies, destination trends, the business of travel blogging, and selling ethical travel products, among others. While leading digital, social, mobile and tech exhibitors showcased their products at the Travel Tech Show.

WTM Africa also hosted the inaugural African Responsible Tourism

Awards Ceremony, which seeks to promote responsible tourism across the continent.

Exhibitor space for next year's event, on 19-21 April 2017, has already started to fill up quickly. 

WTM Africa 2016



show we have had to date," said Chardonney Marchesi, General Manager of Africa Travel Week.

Senior tourism industry executives conducted business deals and gained product knowledge and insights

World Travel Market

WTM Africa is part of Reed Travel Exhibition's WTM portfolio of events, which also includes World Travel Market in London, World Travel Market Latin America in São Paulo and Arabian Travel Market in Dubai. In 2014, the WTM Portfolio facilitated around \$7 billion in industry deals from negotiations between more than 15 000 buyers and 9 500 exhibitors in attendance at its four events.

Africa Travel Week

Africa Travel Week comprises three co-located shows – World Travel Market (WTM) Africa, Incentives, Business Travel & Meetings (IBTM) Africa, and International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM) Africa – all of which encompass Africa's inbound and outbound markets for leisure travel, luxury tourism and the MICE/ business travel sector.



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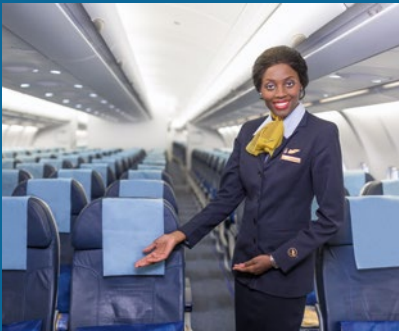


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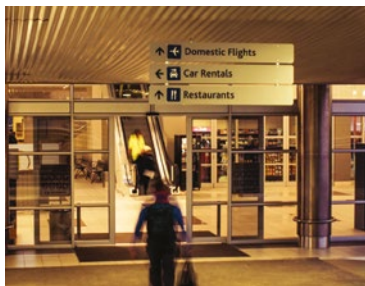
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