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Here's how

# RADISSON HOTELS

Growing its African footprint



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## Radisson Hotel Group

It's been another good year in Africa for the Radisson Hotel Group, with 14 new hotel deals signed and another four in the short-term pipeline, whilst the group was also able to break ground on its second Radisson RED property – in Johannesburg – and celebrate the presence of a new majority shareholder, in the form of Jin Jiang.



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**Y**ou know I'm a sucker for a good study with an eye-catching list, so when 'Tech to Change the World: Lux Research Releases Annual List of Transformational Technologies' popped up in my inbox, I was naturally intrigued, particularly as tech that has a profound impact on how we lead our lives always interests me.

The fact that this study wasn't travel-specific is irrelevant – some of these themes and general concepts can be applied across the board and across multiple sectors and industries.

Lux Research is a provider of tech-enabled research and advisory services and this is an annual report on the tech innovations that are likely to have the greatest impact over the next 10 years. The new report "combines the power of insights from technology experts with proprietary data science tools to better guide innovation decision-making."

Lux's '20 for 2020' identifies and ranks 20 technologies that will re-shape the world, based on innovation interest scores from the Lux Intelligence Engine, along with input from Lux's analysts.

According to Lux, the top five technologies are:

- 1. 5G Networks** - From robotic surgery to self-driving cars, 5G will be critical to advances in the internet of things. 5G has officially left the realm of research and entered reality, with more than 2,200 patents being filed this year
- 2. Shared Mobility** - With more than \$10 billion in funding every year for the past three years, shared mobility – like car-sharing services – are reinventing urban transportation
- 3. Advanced Plastic Recycling** - Mission-critical for companies from CPGs to chemicals, China has invested in recycling technology in a big way, with 55% of all patents coming from that country
- 4. Solid-State Batteries** - Incumbent Li-ion batteries are hitting a performance plateau, and with more than 500 patents filed last year, solid-state battery production is quickly becoming less theoretical
- 5. Protein Production** - Next-generation protein are needed to feed a population of almost 10 billion and received five times the investment of the previous year, landing at more than \$200 million

Interestingly, 11 of the 20 technologies on this list did not even appear on the previous year's list, and six of the nine returning technologies moved up in ranking. Further, nine technologies that made the cut in 2019, but were absent from this year's list, are listed below. They can be broken down into three categories:

- 1. Went Mainstream** - Machine Learning, Cybersecurity, Microbiome
- 2. Changed Form** - Wearable Technology, Genome Editing, Precision Medicine
- 3. Fell, in Relative Terms** - AR/VR, Drones, Perovskite Solar, Generative Design

The thing that strikes me is just how quickly tech and its development moves.

Best you hang on tight and make sure you're prepared for the ride.

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## Airlink Re-Introduces Early Flight to Windhoek

Airlink has re-introduced its early morning flight between Cape Town and Windhoek from 18 November. The additional morning flight operates Monday to Friday, departing Cape Town International Airport at 05h55, arriving at Windhoek's Hosea Kutako International Airport at 08h00. The return flight departs Windhoek at 08h50, arriving at Cape Town International at 10h55. The service is operated by an Embraer 135 regional jet. The flight has been timed to maximize connection opportunities for guests travelling onward to destinations in Namibia by road and air.



## ACSA Launches EV Charging Stations

Airports Company South Africa has installed BMW ChargeNow electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at O.R. Tambo International Airport, Cape Town International Airport and King Shaka International Airport. EVs accessing the BMW ChargeNow stations will enjoy exclusive parking bays at the three airports. ORTIA and CTIA will each have two ChargeNow stations that accommodate up to four cars at a time, while King Shaka International Airport has one ChargeNow station able to charge two cars at a time. ACSA will cover all electricity costs associated with the charging stations for a period of 12 months. Additionally, BMW EV drivers will enjoy free parking, for a maximum of four days at a time, at the three airports during the month of November.

## SAA Takes Delivery of First New Airbus

South African Airways recently took delivery of the first of four new Airbus A350-900s. The aircraft will operate on one of SAA's ultra-long haul routes between Johannesburg and New York's John F Kennedy International Airport (JFK), replacing the Airbus A340-600 on this route, and will still be operated on a non-stop basis. The Airbus A350-900 is configured with a maximum of 339 seats, of which 30 are business class seats and 309 are economy class seats, with the first six rows in economy class offering extra legroom to provide a more comfortable experience, especially on longer flights. The business class cabin has lie-flat beds. SAA is set to receive four Airbus A350-900s over a period of six weeks, and all four are expected to operate commercially by mid-December following regulatory approvals and training. SAA will operate the aircraft for three years.

## SWISS Opens New Lounge in Zurich

SWISS International Air Lines opened a new lounge at its Zurich hub recently. The 500m<sup>2</sup> SWISS Alpine Lounge occupies the former location of the First Class Lounge in the airport's Terminal A, and can accommodate up to 100 travellers. The lounge blends all the charm of a rustic yet contemporary mountain hut with the comforts and the style features of the familiar SWISS lounges. SWISS has taken a new direction with the lounge's food concept, too; the centrepiece of the new SWISS Alpine Lounge is a rustic oven in which seasonal dishes are prepared. Guests are additionally offered a range of further ingredients to tailor their food to their particular taste. The new SWISS Alpine Lounge is open Monday to Friday from 05h30 to 18h30, and is available to Miles & More Senators, Star Alliance Gold Members and business class travellers on SWISS and other Lufthansa Group airlines.



## BA's ORTIA Lounge Upgraded

British Airways has opened its refurbished Johannesburg lounge at O.R. Tambo International Airport. The lounge, situated on the first floor in international departures, has undergone a significant refurbishment, with the 880m<sup>2</sup> floor space having been converted into one spacious lounge, with a dedicated boutique dining area for first class customers. The lounge follows a new design concept, which debuted in 2018 and incorporates local design features with the 'best of British'. The new design means the lounge can comfortably host 247 customers. It offers a modern lobby bar area for socialising, a brasserie dining area and office space with ample work stations and power outlets. Zoned areas enable guests to select their preferred area depending on their mood and requirements. The lighting is specifically tailored for each zone and adjusted to be appropriate for the time of day. The lobby bar offers an extensive display of spirits, beers and soft drinks and a selection of South African wines. Catering in the onsite kitchen is provided by Food Directions, the same caterer that serves the award-winning SLOW lounges. The newly-introduced First Boutique Dining pairs a pre-flight a la carte menu, designed by the in-house chef, with an extensive wine list featuring selections from some of South Africa's leading estates.



## City Lodge Founder Dies

Hans Enderle, the founder and past chairperson of the City Lodge Hotel Group, has passed away at the age of 77. "We are deeply saddened by the passing of our founder, leader, mentor and friend Hans Enderle," said City Lodge Hotel Group CEO Andrew Widegger. "His passion for the hospitality industry and ability to revolutionise with new accommodation concepts in an ever-changing marketplace was

extraordinary. He embraced the challenges and marked the celebrations with his signature cheerful, can-do attitude. We have all benefited enormously from his guidance and wisdom over the years, and he will be sorely missed." In 1985, when Rennies sold Holiday Inn to the Southern Sun Group, Enderle bought a property together with the Mines Pension Fund and on 1 August 1985 the City Lodge Hotel Group was launched. It was during a trip to the USA in the 1980s, when he came across select services hotels, that Enderle had the idea of developing this concept in South Africa. Previously, local hotels were all about opulence and luxury, not making it accessible to those who needed to travel for business or wanted to take the family somewhere affordable. Enderle developed his idea for a practical, 'home-away-from-home' style of accommodation offering in the group's first hotel, the City Lodge Hotel Bryanston (then called City Lodge Randburg). Guests instantly took to the concept of a hotel that lived by the principle of TLC (tip top, loving, clean). City Lodge Hotel remains the group's three-star brand today.

## Controversial New Unabridged Birth Certificate Requirements

South Africa's travel industry, represented by the Association of Southern African Travel Agents (ASATA), has reacted with outrage following the announcement that the removal of the onerous requirement to present an Unabridged Birth Certificate (UBC) when travelling with minors will not be extended to South African citizens. The Department of Home Affairs announced recently that foreign minors visiting South Africa will no longer be required to present the UBC when travelling to the destination, unless these are unaccompanied. South African citizens, however, will still be required to do so when travelling across borders. This, says ASATA CEO Otto de Vries, is blatant discrimination. "The requirement to produce an Unabridged Birth Certificate, unless the child's passport includes the details of both parents of the child and both parents are travelling with the child, is discriminatory not only against South African families, but also against those that do not meet the form of a traditional two-parent household," says de Vries. ASATA has, for several years, called for a thorough consultation process with industry to develop requirements that balance the need for security with economic growth delivered through travel and tourism.





## CemAir Resumes Flights

CemAir has resumed flights from Johannesburg to Margate and Plettenberg Bay. The Margate flights were relaunched on 8 November after a nine-month absence, and the 90-minute flight is currently available on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. For the December/January festive season, flights will operate daily, starting from 4 December. The Plettenberg Bay service resumed on 28 November and includes flights from Cape Town. Flying time between Cape Town and Plett is one hour and 20 minutes, and between Johannesburg and Plett, two hours and 40 minutes. The launch schedule will operate on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays and for the December/January festive season, flights will operate daily starting from 4 December. Both routes will be operated by CemAir's Dash-8 Q300 aircraft – a 50-seat turbo-prop offering a full-service flight.



## Radisson Blu Opens in Casablanca

Radisson Blu has opened its first hotel in Casablanca – the Radisson Hotel Group's second hotel in Morocco. Radisson Blu Hotel, Casablanca City Center is situated in the middle of Mohammed V Boulevard, close to the Old Medina and other tourist attractions, and is just five minutes away from the Marina Casablanca, the business district and the Habous Quarter. The 120 rooms include 16 suites which overlook various Art Deco buildings and the Atlantic Ocean. The hotel has two restaurants – la Collection and YUZU – and the Caprice Sky Bar on the 14th floor, which offers panoramic views of the city and sea. Leisure facilities include the Cinq Mondes Spa, an indoor pool and a jacuzzi. The event space spans a total of 450m<sup>2</sup>, including a 180m<sup>2</sup> ballroom.

## Lufthansa SA Partners With BMW

The Lufthansa Group has partnered with BMW in South Africa to offer first and business class guests and HON Circle members a complimentary chauffeur drive in a luxury BMW, operated by Avis Point 2 Point. Ensuring a premium experience begins even before arriving at Johannesburg's O.R. Tambo International Airport and Cape Town International Airport, travellers can request the chauffeur drive to take them directly from their home or office to the airport, as well as for the return journey from the airport. The offer is available on a complimentary basis to passengers who are flying exclusively on Lufthansa, SWISS and Austrian Airlines-operated flights departing from South Africa. The offer is being made available to passengers residing in South Africa for a trial period that ends on 31 December. To book your chauffeur drive, visit [www.lufthansa-bmw-transfer.co.za](http://www.lufthansa-bmw-transfer.co.za)





## The Rockefeller Set to Launch Mid-2021

The Rockefeller – which will be managed by Newmark Hotels, Reserves, Lodges and Residences – is expected to open in Cape Town in 2021. It'll be a 300-room hotel with a rooftop pool with views of the city and Table Mountain. Full-scale amenities and services will be offered, including a laundry service, all-day dining, a coffee bar, deli, bike room, conference facility, resident DJ, spa and a fully-equipped gym.

## Courtyard Sandton Sports New-Look Lounge

The Courtyard Hotel Sandton has revamped its Club Lounge, bar and patio. This commercial area is now bookable and features a new look and feel, contemporary lighting and artwork, and the latest fittings and fixtures. Various seating arrangements make this the ideal spot for guests and day visitors to hold meetings, host exclusive events, celebrate special occasions, or simply enjoy a meal from the new a la carte menu. The recently-launched a la carte offering for lunch and dinner is now available at all five Courtyard Hotels in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Port Elizabeth.



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**Wayne Troughton**  
CEO: HTI Consulting

# 2020 and beyond – African Hospitality Trends

**T**he African hospitality industry has undergone tremendous changes and disruptions over the last two decades, many due to factors such as economic and political uncertainty, currency or oil price fluctuations, and safety and security concerns.

However, other key global trends have also steadily reshaped the industry and impacted on the African business traveller. As we near the end of 2019, here are some trends that are likely to transform the industry well into the future.

## Digital technology

It's no surprise that the future of the African hospitality industry will be increasingly powered by digital technology. Mobile will continue to influence the industry, along with other disruptive technologies that hotel brands will be driven to incorporate into guest offerings.

Digitised experiences and apps are increasing ways in which hoteliers manage the services they provide to their customers, and will continue to help control many aspects of the guest cycle and experience and address issues in more efficient, proactive ways.

Greater mobile penetration and easy-to-use-and-navigate online experiences will also mean that African travellers, and millennials, will increasingly communicate with brands through social media.

## Virtual communities

With ever-increasing smartphone adoption in Africa, social networks such as TripAdvisor will continue to have a profound impact on travellers. The continued growth of social media – with 191 million active social media users across the continent (172 million of whom access social media through their mobile) – has meant that peer reviews and online referrals also carry more weight than traditional advertising; peer-written content is also millennials' most trusted source of information.

## Sharing economy

Whilst the sharing economy is set to experience further growth in the future, it is unlikely to destabilise traditional hotels or ever completely take over the hospitality industry. The corporate hospitality segment provides a more extensive list of services and facilities better suited to, and more recognised by, short-term travellers.

Despite the disruptions caused by the shared economy, the African hotel sector is enjoying a period of sustained growth. Average daily rate (ADR), occupancy, and revenue per available room (RevPAR) are showing strength. Furthermore, the hotel market share of advanced reservations has grown year on year. There will be room for players in the shared economy and hotels into the future. However, a good lesson to be learnt from the sharing economy is how to use distribution channels to increase bookings and occupancy.

## Online Travel Agents (OTAs)

In the past 20 years the emergence of online travel

agencies as distribution partners has had a profound effect on the hotel industry. That relationship continues to grow and change.

Over the years, the OTA sector has expanded, consolidated and changed some of its strategies. Other intermediaries and disruptors such as Google, Facebook, TripAdvisor, metasearch sites and Airbnb have further complicated the hotel industry distribution landscape.

Whilst there certainly are real pluses and real minuses to the OTAs, I do believe the pluses outweigh the minuses. For one, they have a tremendous grasp of what's coming down the pipe in terms of social media marketing, channel management and use of the internet, understanding this space sometimes better than any hotelier does.

## Responsive, resilient business models

Tourism is bound to become riskier and more prone to crises as the number of global travellers steadily continues to grow. This will be accompanied by increased regulation as a response to a disproportional increase in tourist flows in many places.

The performance of hotel companies is strongly dependent on the conditions and the macroeconomic environment into which they're inserted. Thus, the state of the economy will affect the performance of hotel organisations, and these companies will have to organise themselves in function of market dynamics far beyond the national context, strategically prepared for the constant changes that come from an increasingly globalised context.

## Experience economy

Travellers, and millennial business travellers in particular, request extreme personalisation, unique experiences, and so on. By 2022, the experiential market is estimated to account for nearly two thirds of the global luxury hotel market. The rise of experiential travel is a drive for hoteliers to reconstruct and develop their product offering to be more engaged and personalised, immersive and adventurous, and more adjusted to local culture.

## Sustainability

Sustainability will continue to be an ever-growing key factor in successful brand management. Hotels will need to advance their sustainability missions to fuel their corporate social responsibility efforts and establish trust.

Green campaigns that hotels will consider are global carbon emission compliance, waste reduction, reducing plastic usage, and saving water. Smart buildings that will digitise hotel facilities will also result in lower energy costs.

One thing is sure, the African hotel industry will need to continue to evolve and reinvent itself in order to exploit the opportunities and cope with the challenges it faces. The only question remaining is to what extent this transformation will have to take place. ■



## Travel agents a safety net for business travellers

**M**issed your connection? Need to change your travel plans to attend a last-minute meeting? What about someone to call when things don't go quite as expected?

If ASATA's 21st Century Travel Agent Study is any indication of what business travellers want, it's to have someone on call when things go awry. And that someone, is your travel agent.

The preliminary results of ASATA's updated study indicate that travel agents add the most value to business travellers when travel plans need to change, but it doesn't end there. Travellers believe their travel agent should offer them the best prices and deals, ensure they have as safe a trip as possible, and also help them to accumulate their loyalty points.

The revised study has also given us further insight into the specific needs of travellers, with stark differences between

the different generations.

Every business traveller demographic involved in the study regarded a travel agent as a safety net when something goes wrong. However, Baby Boomers expected their corporate consultant to have excellent product knowledge and destination information and wanted a personalised experience. They use a travel agent for complex itineraries, professional expertise, and to save time. Gen Xers, meanwhile, want an even more customised experience. They expect their travel agent to get to know them on a personal level to meet their specific needs.

Overall, mobile technology, digital payment systems and internal communications were identified as the most critical services a travel management company can offer business travellers.

When it comes to sourcing advice or recommendations, helping to change travel plans and offering advice when something goes wrong, business travellers turn to their TMCs for assistance.

The value your TMC brings comes from their ability to pre-empt potential pain points along your journey and to stop these in their tracks to ensure you have a pleasant travel experience. With their specialist knowledge, supplier relationships and genuine care for your personal preferences, your TMC is on hand to catch you when travel mishaps happen, as they often do.

Rely on your TMC. There's no smart reason to manage your travel requirements alone. ■

**Otto de Vries**  
ASATA CEO



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# RADISSON HOTEL GROUP Growing African Presence

*As the Radisson Hotel Group continues to expand its footprint on the African continent, Andrew McLachlan, the group's Senior Vice-President for Development, responds to some questions regarding this rapid expansion.*



Andrew McLachlan



**Q: WITH 2019 COMING TO A CLOSE, WHAT HAS BEEN SOME OF RADISSON HOTEL GROUP'S HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE YEAR IN AFRICA?**

**A:** We have had a busy year in development, concluding 14 new hotel deals, and we hope to conclude another four before Christmas. Highlights include the ground-breaking of the second Radisson RED hotel in South Africa, in Rosebank, Johannesburg; the introduction of our fourth hotel brand to South Africa, "Radisson", an upscale full-service brand (four-

star); entering a new country, Madagascar with a portfolio of three hotels in the capital city Antananarivo; opening the Radisson Blu Hotel & Conference Center Niamey in Niger in record-breaking time – from ground breaking to the hotel opening was a mere 11 months, including the construction of a 15-storey five-star hotel tower with 189 rooms and a 2600m<sup>2</sup> conference centre.

**Q: SINCE THE LAUNCH OF AFRICA'S FIRST RADISSON RED TWO YEARS AGO, WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE**

**FOR THE BRAND ON THE CONTINENT?**

**A:** Our first Radisson RED opened in Cape Town and it's been a huge success. The performance of the hotel and its restaurants and bars has been very good. Our customers simply love it, so this hotel has been a great RED

brand builder for us, considering the hotel brand is so new. Over the two years of trading we have been able to improve the offering and, as the product keeps improving, we too have improved the brand offering, making the Rosebank property RED 'Version 2'. In September we broke ground in Rosebank and will open our doors on 1 February 2021. We have a third Radisson RED under development in Abidjan, Ivory Coast and we are negotiating a few more hotel deals across markets such as Dakar, Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. RED as a brand has great legs to enter the trendy neighbourhoods of gateway cities across Africa and our target is to have at least five Radisson REDs in Africa by the end of 2022.

**Q: TELL US ABOUT THE TWO NEW BRANDS INTRODUCED TO AFRICA LAST YEAR, RADISSON COLLECTION AND RADISSON.**

**A:** We have big ambitions to grow our portfolio in the four-star segment in Africa with Radisson. Positioned as 'upscale', Radisson is perfectly positioned in-between Radisson Blu and Park Inn by Radisson in quality of product, cost to build, room rates and facilities. The brand's essence is "Scandinavian design and culture at heart" and is underpinned by the natural Scandinavian way of life. The brand and product at Radisson enable our guests to find balance in their hotel experience, with relaxing spaces, thoughtfully considered details and unexpected delights. With a style of timeless designs with clean lines, soft textures and contemporary materials, we are confident the brand will become very popular across Africa. Our first Radisson to open in Africa was in Dakar, followed soon after in Lagos. We expect that 50% of our future hotel openings will be Radisson in at least 30 cities across Africa.

**Q: AND RADISSON COLLECTION?**

**A:** Radisson Collection is a premium lifestyle collection of iconic properties located in unique locations. The character of each Radisson Collection hotel

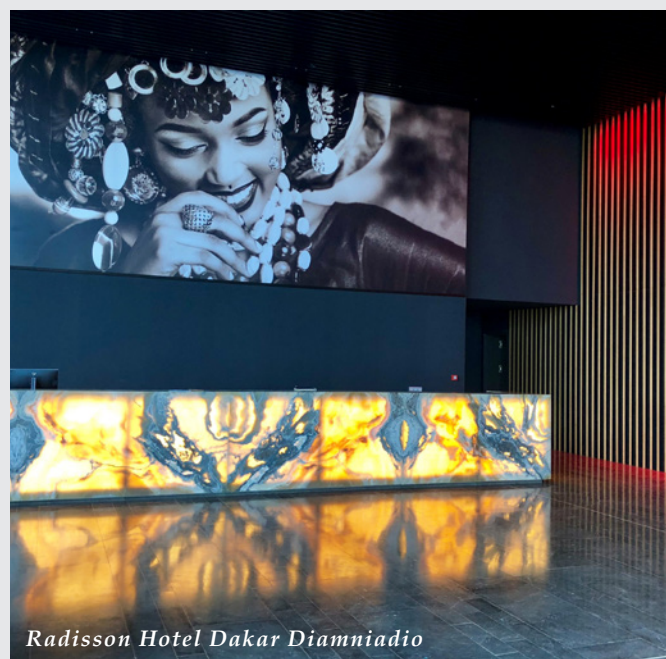
feels authentic to its location and offers the ultimate template for contemporary living, united by the modern design of exceptional experiences across dining, fitness, wellness and sustainability. Designed for guests and locals alike, each Radisson Collection hotel is defined by the people who visit them. Since the launch of Radisson Collection in March 2018, the brand has launched hotels in Scandinavia, the Middle East and UK. The first new-build Radisson Collection in the world will open in Africa in 2020 in Lagos. The brand is positioned above Radisson Blu in a segment we call 'Affordable Luxury'. The brand can grow across Africa, but not on the same scale as Radisson. We aim to debut this brand within a lifestyle safari space, in addition to hotels and resorts in the future.

**Q: RADISSON HOTEL GROUP CURRENTLY HAS 13 HOTELS IN OPERATION AND UNDER DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA. WHAT'S NEXT IN THIS COUNTRY?**

**A:** We expect to grow to 15 hotels by the new year. South Africa is a market that offers scale, is more sophisticated and offers different opportunities to the rest of Africa. Park Inn by Radisson is a cost-effective brand with lower capital investment and true scalability. With a strategic partner, we plan to take this brand across the nine provinces of South Africa over the next five years. Radisson and Radisson Collection are good conversion brands, which we can use to take over existing hotels, rebrand and reposition for hotel owners, improving returns. Our future growth will be a combination of new-build hotels and takeovers in South Africa. Lastly, Durban is missing a RED.

**Q: WHICH MARKETS WILL RADISSON HOTEL GROUP BE FOCUSING ON IN 2020?**

**A:** Our focus for growth is city (vs) country, where we can create multiple hotels in the same city, positioned in different market segments. In 2020 my team and I will continue to focus our growth on the gateway cities of Cape



*Radisson Hotel Dakar Diamniadio*

Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Lagos, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Abidjan and Dakar. We are hopefully breaking into new cities and countries such as Dar es Salaam, Pretoria, Seychelles and Kinshasa. In addition, we see a growing demand for hotel apartments. Our reaction to this demand is to offer a brand extension. With vibrant and distinctive designs, our serviced apartment concepts are an extension of our Radisson Collection, Radisson Blu, Radisson and Park Inn by Radisson brands. These properties offer long-stay guests contemporary design, beautiful living areas and magnetic social spaces.

**Q: WHERE IS THE GROUP IN ITS FIVE-YEAR PLAN, 'DESTINATION 2022'?**

**A:** The group is one month away from completing its second year of Destination 2022 (our five-year strategic plan) and after the company recorded record profitability in 2018, it looks like 2019 is going to be even better. From a development point of view, we are ahead of target. During 2019 we had a change in shareholder. Our new majority shareholder Jin Jiang is committed to growth, so the future for the Radisson Hotel Group looks bright. There are plenty of opportunities in Africa, but it is getting competitive, so we need to work harder to see the angle and do the right deals. Well-located, well-positioned and correctly-branded hotel products with good concepts will beat economic and supply cycles. ■





# Come on in

*From budget to luxury, hotel brands are transforming their lobbies into social hubs where guests and locals alike can relax, dine, meet and work. Business Traveller UK's Tom Otley takes a look at this emerging trend.*





*Hilton's Canopy in Zagreb*

**W**e've all hung around in hotel lobbies and the chances are it has been pretty boring. We might have been waiting for a taxi or using it as a meeting point before going off somewhere else. But it's unlikely that we would have spent a portion of our working day in one, or looked forward to an evening's entertainment there. And yet that's what the hotel brands now want us to contemplate. In fact, they see it as the future.

"Whether you call it the lobby or a lobby lounge, there are smarter ways of using a hotel's public spaces," says Jay Stein, Chief Executive of Dream Hotel Group. "It's the concept of: 'Is your hotel there for the community or just for the hotel guests?'"

Dream Hotel Group prides itself on making the lobby a place of excitement and events.

"You want the hotel guest and the local community to see that energy, so you need fun things throughout the public spaces," says Stein.

"We'll have a mixture of permanent features, like a hipster hair salon that celebrities get their hair cut in, and pop-up ones. We'll bring an artist in and have a wall where they can do their thing and we'll time-lapse it on social media. So, we had James Goldcrown [[jgoldcrown.com](http://jgoldcrown.com)] doing his graffiti art in one hotel – he painted the whole wall on Valentine's Day – and then we got a famous tattoo artist who sat in the lobby that day and did free tattoos, but only of hearts."

Stein admits that he "had to get a lot of approvals from his legal team for that one", but adds: "The amount of social media we got off that was insane."

It's more than getting millennials to post on their Instagram accounts, though – there's hard business reality behind what Dream is doing.

"If I am just going to rely on hotel guests for my revenue then I have a problem," he says. "Instead, we have rooftop bars taking \$20 million a year, and 90% of that is from beverage, so it's very profitable. If I was just focused on the hotel guest, I could only do a 20th of that."





## GATHERING PLACE

It's this philosophy that many, if not most, hotel brands are beginning to subscribe to, and if you need an example of how it will hit the mainstream, consider the reinvention of Sheraton. As Business Traveller UK wrote in its online feature, "The future of Sheraton", new owner Marriott International sees its task as "dusting off an icon", as Scott McCoy, Vice-President of Global Operations for Marriott, Sheraton and Delta Hotels, puts it. Sheraton will "recapture" its reputation as "the world's gathering place", taking advantage of the prime location it occupies in many cities.

"The DNA that we want to keep is the sense of community," says McCoy. "Sheraton is the gathering place, the community square for so many of these locations, and where appropriate we want to amplify that."

It will do this by completely redesigning its lobbies, incorporating elements to encourage people to linger, eat, hold meetings and then, finally, in the evening, spend money at new bars that will be created.

As Matthew Boettcher, Senior

Director of Global Operations, Experience Design and Brand Operations, says of their guests: "We were watching them leave. We'd ask them where they were going and they'd say: 'I have to meet a client,' and if we asked them why they were meeting them somewhere else, they wouldn't want to say."

Boettcher is quick to point out that there are many fine examples of Sheratons around the world, but says the brand "kind of lost its way



in certain parts of the world, the US being one of them. Europe is split; we have some amazing ones and some that are struggling a little."

Several new features are therefore being introduced. These will first be tested out in 12 hotels globally, including a 1,000-room Sheraton Grand in Phoenix, before being rolled out around the world, although the timeline for completing all 450 properties in both city and resort locations will



be several years.

They include “community” tables – first seen at Ace Hotels, although adapted with lockable drawers if you want to leave for a while – and soundproofed phone booths allowing you to make calls without being overheard. There will also be small glass meeting booths – called Studios – with capacity for between two and perhaps eight attendees. All of the technology you might need, including Bluetooth speakers for conference calls, is included in the Studio booking fee. These then become private social spaces in the evening, which might be given to elite members of the Marriott Bonvoy programme as a perk (as you can tell, Marriott executives are still exploring lots of options).

### CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Thought has also gone into the food offering, since Boettcher points out that “it’s difficult to eat a bowl of ramen while trying to work”. Dishes that can be eaten “one-handed”, or “eyes-up”, “maintaining a connection with the community”, will be served from the bizarrely named “coffee bar bar”, which is licensed to serve alcohol and will offer everything

from grab-and-go to counter and table service.

Lastly, the “veiled bar” is the description for the lobby’s destination bar.

“It’s not a speakeasy or behind a red door,” he explains. “You can see it through frosted glass perhaps, but during the day it is closed and the space dark, with the bottles illuminated. That concentrates the activity in the lobby during the day, shrinking the space and creating a co-working feeling. Then, when it opens, it allows guests to go to a new environment, but still be in the hotel.”

Boettcher says that by focusing on the public space, they can



change the perception of the Sheraton brand “not just for guests, but also for locals. The inspiration for the world’s gathering place is town squares, and those were purpose-built, so we wanted to do that same exact thing.”

The town square concept is also the inspiration behind changes IHG is making this year to some of its Crowne Plaza hotels.

A spokesperson says: “In Europe we are redefining the traditional lobby and guest room in partnership with Conran and Partners at flagship Crowne Plaza properties in Paris, Hamburg and London Heathrow. The new public space, known as the Plaza Workspace, is a flexible collection of agile working spaces modelled on a public square, where guests and local businesses can switch effortlessly between work and downtime. It combines co-working areas with food and drink options, ‘huddle spots’ and pods with built-in touchscreens to help guests share files and show presentations.”

In the US, the Workspace concept will be in place in more than 35 hotels, including its four flagship properties in New York, Atlanta, Denver and Seattle, by the end of the year.

### THINK LOCAL

John Rogers, Senior Vice-President of Brands and Franchise Operations at Hilton, says that a number of factors are driving lobby redevelopment in hotels.

“Customers increasingly want unique experiences and more localised food and beverage,” he says, “and there is also a trend towards informality in dining and meeting spaces. We’ve seen a massive change in people’s comfort in being in social spaces on their own.”

At the same time, advances in technology are changing how the lobby is used.

“The traditional function of the lobby space is becoming redundant as we allow you to choose your room online and use mobile check-in,” Rogers says. “No one arrives excited about checking in; we want to reimagine that so it becomes more seamless.”







*Dream New York Midtown*

Hilton has 17 brands and each is responding in different ways, Rogers says, but for many it involves “redesigning that social space, particularly around the bar and coffee experience, making sure they move fluidly into one another. People don’t want to sit in formal restaurants – they want a variety of options rather than being corralled into a specific space for a specific purpose.”

In Hilton’s Canopy hotels in Reykjavik and Zagreb, there is a “strong connectivity to the local experience and the local market,” he says. They are “a place to hang out and to use as a base, a space that reflects the neighbourhood; we have evening tastings of food and drink and locally-made welcome treats, and the design is in keeping with the locale.”

It’s something that budget brands such as ibis have also woken up to. Its parent group, Accor, has already experimented with various ways to bring in the local community, not least with the trial of Accorlocal, an initiative allowing locals to use the services in their neighbouring hotel, from dry cleaning to picking up packages. As Accor Chief Executive Sébastien Bazin told us, the aim is

to engage those people who “know our brands and walk past the hotel, but they don’t enter because they are afraid someone will ask them: ‘What’s your room number?’ And they don’t have one because they live next door.”

Ibis, which has more than 1,100 hotels, is revamping its lobbies to include mobile check-in, a transformed bar area and a live music programme (rooms are also being redesigned). The idea is that technology will take over from reception desks, so that guests will be able to check in more quickly (an employee will approach them with a tablet or mobile as they arrive) and staff, now known as the “Smile Team”, will be freed up to turn the space into a place where guests want to linger. Expect to see this in an ibis hotel close to you this year.

In this, Accor is certainly backed by the research. An Ipsos study conducted on behalf of ibis revealed that 61% of respondents would rather be greeted by an individual than by a technology solution during check-in and check-out, indicating the challenge for brands as they give people the option of seamless check-in, but also with a human face. According

“The traditional function of the lobby space is becoming redundant as we allow you to choose your room online and use mobile check-in.”

to Ipsos, 80% of respondents also want hotels to be social venues that accommodate both hotel and non-hotel guests.

New food and drink options will also be introduced. The brand has trialled this by replacing the traditional lobby of the ibis Cambridge Central Station with coffee shop Chill#2, of which 80% of revenue is sourced from non-hotel guests. Ibis has also teamed up with Sony Music, Spotify and the Sziget Festival in Hungary for its new music programme.

At the luxury end, hotels are attempting the same. Radha Arora, President of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, says: “We have amazing DNA in all of our properties, such as the Carlyle [in New York], which is a local institution. Our



*Crowne Plaza Paris République*

guests want to have an authentic experience and enjoy that local sensibility. Affluence and materials can only take you so far. It's experiences that are irreplaceable. So, in Paris we have created a Parisian living room, where you'll find local fashionistas and community artists. The place is articulated, in a way, as a journey between the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, and when clients walk in, no matter where they are from, they say: "This is Paris."

### RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Behind all of this, there is, of course, the business of making money. Peter Fulton, Hyatt Hotels' Group President for Europe, the Middle East, Africa and South-West Asia, says: "As hoteliers, lobby space is some of the most expensive space we build, with street frontage and vast areas of concrete and maybe marble generating very little return. People are using spaces in a different way from how they used to. They are more informal and we need to take down the barriers that they find oppressive, such as reception desks, and activate these spaces."

Hilton's Rogers says there is an "ever-increasing desire to maximise

the returns on the space, which Hilton shares with our owners. The consumer is moving far too quickly to work on the basis that you're going to do something [to revamp it] every 10 years. It needs to be a continuous process, constantly innovating that product and the way you deploy it."

### REFLECTING THE LOCATION

Can the big chains really succeed in this?

Eric Jafari, Managing Director of serviced apartment specialist Saco Property Group, doubts it.

"Hotels are stuck in the eighties," he says. "When they say they want to glimpse local living, their response is, if in Berlin, to put up a bunch of pictures of Berlin, or have some exposed brick and call it local living."

Jafari is a co-founder of Saco's Locke aparthotel brand, which aims "to reflect the local neighbourhood's culture, taking inspiration from the area to connect guests with like-minded locals and other travellers." He says: "We will hire an up-and-coming designer who wants to make a name for themselves, and who's not from that city, and get them to take their time walking

around the city and then interpret it."

Jafari adds: "Hoteliers go to see an Ace or Hoxton hotel and then get a long table and call it co-working, but it doesn't work... If Sydell Hotels, which runs the Nomad [in New York] and the Ned [in London], does something like a mixology class or a DJ set then they have the authority to do that, or if Soho House does a poetry set then they have a credibility that resonates with me. But when you have decision makers who are not the consumer, and they are seeing what other people are doing and copying it, then it very rarely works. They shouldn't be opining on it, because they don't understand the soul and the essence of why it works."

Stein of Dream Hotel Group agrees.

"If the big brands can pull it off, then great, but to bring a formula into every Sheraton and get it to work, that's where it's more difficult," he says. "We look at what will work in the local market. Hotels aren't like airlines. The Dream hotel in Bangkok isn't going to be like the one in Seattle or Nashville."

As Stein says, the holy grail for hotels is being the "hot" place for locals. But then there's the potential conflict of satisfying hotel guests at the same time. "It's difficult for the big brands to get their arms around the fact that you're not worrying about the hotel guests first," he says, "but until you do that, you're not going to do it well."

So, what if guests don't like a lobby crowded with locals sipping flat whites and having free tattoos?

"The reality is, if I do all these fun things, very few guests come down to the lobby or bar and say to themselves: 'Who are all these good-looking locals having fun? I'm going to complain.'"

It's possible, though, surely? "Right, but those are problems I want to have. I want too many locals wanting to use it and guests complaining. And then let me figure out a solution. If I have no problems, then I have no business." ■



# How to minimise JET LAG

*Frequent travellers will have experienced jet lag at one time or another. Our circadian rhythms (otherwise known as our body's internal clock) are slow to adjust to new time zones, so we end up snoozing mid-afternoon or wide awake throughout the night. This leads to fatigue, indigestion and concentration loss, among other side effects, which makes getting on with work a tough endeavour.*

**T**here's no cure as such, as it affects people in different ways, but here are some ways, courtesy of Business Traveller UK, to minimise its impact on your wellbeing and productivity.

## BEFORE TRAVELLING

### West is best, east is a beast

As a business traveller, it's likely that you won't have control over your destination, but it's worth bearing in mind that going east will take its toll – there's less time in the day to adjust to the new time zone. Plan ahead and make sure you get enough sleep in the days leading up to travel.

### Choose a flight with a daytime arrival

One way to adjust to a different time zone is to expose yourself to as much daylight as possible. Circadian rhythms are shaped by light and darkness, and can

help you to push through the drowsiness.

### Prepare by altering your habits

If you know you are travelling to the US, for instance, try staying up a little later than normal the week before. That way the change won't be such a shock.

## WHILE TRAVELLING

### Set your watch to the destination's time zone

It's simple, but it tends to do the trick, adjusting your body to the new clock before you touch down.

### Abstain from caffeine and alcohol

Both alcohol and caffeine are stimulants, so don't be tempted to consume them when you are flying, as they will dehydrate you and interrupt your sleep. Instead, drink plenty of water and use hydrating creams and moisturisers.

### Steer clear of the screen

While it's tough to cut back on screen time, you need to switch off (in every sense). Many phones have a "night mode" feature, which shifts the display to the warmer end of the colour spectrum, but nothing is better than the "off" button.

## ONCE YOU ARRIVE

### Get on to local time when you arrive

Don't give in to the temptation of a quick nap when you arrive. Push on through, make the most of any daylight there is – go for a walk and explore the local area. Even going shopping is better than an afternoon siesta. Then try to stay up until late evening to minimise the chances of waking up in the middle of the night.

### Be flexible

Eat meals in line with the new time zone and pick foods that are rich in tryptophan – for example, oily fish, eggs and spinach – as this helps to stimulate melatonin, which is involved in regulating your body clock.

### Exercise

Working out during the day will make you physically tired by the evening and help to improve your sleeping patterns. ■



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DELTA



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# European Cool



*Being a European city with banking and diplomacy at its core has given Geneva a rather staid reputation. But scratch the surface and you will find a vibrant, cosmopolitan city with an alternative side, replete with bohemian neighbourhoods, flea markets, live music clubs, contemporary art, and independent design. According to Business Traveller India, here's how and where to uncover Geneva's 'cool factor'.*

## VILLAGE VIBE

A short tram ride away from the city centre, on the other side of the River Arve (one of the two rivers that flow through the city along with Rhône) is Carouge, Geneva's West Village. This is where indie shops, cafés and artisans come together in the

striking Italianate setting of pastel walls, painted shutters, and stone archways.

Don't miss the baked delights at Boulangerie Wolfisberg or the unusual flavours at Chocolat Pascoet – try coriander or sage if you're adventurous or passion fruit to play it safe. Go on

Saturdays or Wednesdays when Carouge's bi-weekly farmers' market is in full swing at Place du Marché (market place). Pick up some fresh bread, local cheese and honey, fruits, and wine and have a picnic, or just soak in the vibe and then head to the nearest restaurant for refreshments. Try the relaxed bistro Café du Marché or the classy French brasserie Café des Négociants by Swiss celebrity Chef Philippe Chevrier. Carouge also hosts a Thursday evening market, perfect for a pre-dinner wander, followed by a drink at one of the lively bars in the area – for









example, the live music club Chat Noir is a local favourite, as is the funky Le Cheval Blanc, which hosts local rock bands and improv nights at its basement venue, Le Box.

#### BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

Just behind the main train station and in close proximity to downtown Geneva is the decidedly bohemian neighbourhood of Les Grottes. This formerly gritty area, which attracted immigrants and squatters, has been cleaned up (a bit) and gentrified. It's a multicultural neighbourhood that teems with artist studios, vintage shops, cafés, bars, and farmers' markets. Admire the colourful building façades and turn-of-the-century apartment buildings as you walk its narrow streets and explore its leafy squares. Check out the funky Schtrumpfs Building on 23-29, Rue Louis-Favre, a

1980s Gaudi-esque apartment complex with a hodgepodge of styles and clashing colours. Every Thursday, the Place des Grottes comes alive with a lively evening market where local vendors sell vegetables, bread, cheese, wine, and beer. Wind up at one of many bars and restaurants in the Grottes – Les Trois Phéniciens, Le Quai Des Grottes, and Nomades are popular spots. The Parc des Crottes (a garden) hosts a contemporary jazz festival every March.

#### ART AFFAIR

MAMCO (Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art), Switzerland's largest contemporary art museum, is a must-visit for any art enthusiast. Opened in 1994, the museum is housed in a cavernous four-storey factory building. Drop in for a rotating programme of experimental modern art or check

out the evocative installations from well-known artists (mamco.ch). MAMCO is part of Geneva's Quartier des Bains, an association of 17 cultural entities including art galleries, museums, and cultural institutions. Three times a year, the Quartier hosts La Nuit des Bains, an evening of art appreciation when MAMCO and the art galleries in the area stay open until 21h00. It's a great way to discover new local and international artists as you weave in and out of galleries, a glass of wine or beer in hand. In 2020, La Nuit des Bains will be held on March 19, May 14, and September 17. [quartierdesbains.ch](http://quartierdesbains.ch)

#### SHOP SHOOTER

While you should surely splurge on fine watches and luxe chocolates in Geneva (and rightly so), you must also make time to scour the flea markets in the





neighbourhood of Plainpalais for antiques, vintage clothes, second-hand furniture, and other bric-a-brac. This is one of Switzerland's biggest flea markets and is held at the Plaine de Plainpalais every Wednesday and Saturday, and also on the first Sunday of every month. The square also hosts a huge farmers' market every Sunday from early morning until 17h00.

For more upscale retail, head to Rue du Rhône, the city's most glamorous shopping street, which is home to designer flagship boutiques like Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Prada, Gucci, and more. Major watch brands like Omega, Piaget, Patek Philippe, Bucherer, and Hublot also house their boutiques on this street. For trendy high street brands like Bershka, Mango, and Jack and Jones, stop by at Rue du Marché.

On the other side of the Rhône

River, Rue du Mont-Blanc has independent Swiss boutiques as well as the famous department store Manor. You cannot visit Geneva and not come back with hoards of Swiss chocolates. The city is home to several historic boutiques that are known for their handmade chocolates - try Auer Chocolatier, Du Rhône Chocolatier, Favarger, and Teuscher.

#### DRINK AND DINE

There's no dearth of dining options in Geneva, from casual cafés to fine dine restaurants. A popular spot is Cottage Café, a charming restaurant in a former gardener's cottage located in the heart of Brunswick Park near Lake Geneva.

For a more traditional experience, drop in at Café Papon in the heart of Vieille Ville (Old Town); the restaurant dates to

1808 and is located in a historic building with a sun-washed terrace.

But to truly get a pulse of the city, turn your attention to Geneva's burgeoning cocktail-club scene. L'Apothicaire cocktail-club and L'Atelier cocktail club serve imaginative craft cocktails in relaxed lounge settings. You can also try the lively Barbershop with a colourful, Cuban flair or the shabby-chic speakeasy La Verre à Monique. Nearby is Bleu Nuit, a hip restaurant that has a hidden bar Le Frigo, which is accessible through a vintage refrigerator door. End the night in the Pâquis neighbourhood, Geneva's red light district that has seen a surge of cool bars and restaurants popping up with some regularity. Here, try Kampai for upscale Peruvian-meets-Japanese Nikkei cuisine accompanied by a mean yuzu-infused pisco sour. ■





VICTORIA FALLS, ZAMBIA



## Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara

**BACKGROUND:** Previously a Sun International-owned and operated property, the Royal Livingstone fell under the Thailand-based Minor Hotel Group's management in 2015 when MHG bought the majority of Sun International's African assets, including a stake in this hotel. But it wasn't until 2016 that Minor acquired full ownership of the property and rebranded.

**WHERE IS IT?:** On the banks of the Zambezi River, with the hotel's lawns extending onto a deck that looks over the river. From there, it's a walk of approximately five minutes to get your first sight of the falls. The town of Livingstone has the closest airport, roughly a 20-minute drive away, or you can fly into Vic Falls, as we did, although this entails a slightly longer drive and going through the border post, which, to be fair, was pretty quick and seamless on both occasions.

**ROOMS:** The hotel has 173 rooms, divvied up into Deluxe and Deluxe Corner rooms, Livingstone suites, and the Presidential suite. At 30m<sup>2</sup>, the two 'standard' room options are not the biggest, but the comfort levels are high and there aren't too many reasons to stay cooped up in your room, anyway, particularly due to the heat. Fortunately, there is good air-con and a fan in each room, with my wife and I accommodated in a Deluxe room situated about 50 metres from the Zambezi, with a balcony looking over the lawns and onto the river. Besides the air-con, there were all the 'mod-cons' you might expect from a five-star hotel room: king-size bed with fluffy pillows; large TV with DSTv satellite channels; complimentary tea and coffee-making facilities; mini-bar; good wi-fi; cupboard

with hanging space, ironing board and safe; hair dryer; desk with stationery; and a bathroom with separate bath and shower, and single vanity. Oh, and there's a butler on call, should you need him.

**FOOD & DRINK:** The Old Drift Restaurant is the hotel's main dining option, but you can also enjoy lunch and dinner at Kubu, which is the deck overlooking the Zambezi. That's where we enjoyed sundowners on our first night, before heading for a scheduled boma dinner, which was due to take place between the hotel and its sister property, the adjacent AVANI Victoria Falls Resort. Unfortunately, a big storm forced us indoors, but we still enjoyed a delicious buffet round the large pool at the AVANI property. Think loads of different meat options, crunchy veggies, and malva pudding, all washed down with the local beer, Mosi Lager. Back at the The Old Drift the next morning, the breakfast spread was extensive, but I opted for fruit, yoghurt, and some salmon on fresh bread, along with pretty strong – and fairly bitter, I'll be honest – coffee. But that certainly fortified me for the day ahead! We were back at The Old Drift for dinner that evening and on this occasion I opted for the Carpaccio Zambian Beef with Grilled Artichoke and Mexican Salsa, followed by a main of Seared Duck Breast with Apple Tart au tan and a glass of the house Sauvignon Blanc. All delicious, with little or no space for dessert. Additional dining and drinking options are the hotel's lounge and the Travellers Bar, whilst there's also in-room dining and a daily afternoon tea, served between 15h00 and 17h00.

**BUSINESS FACILITIES:** As an attractive MICE destination, it's no surprise to

see the Royal Livingstone has plenty of meeting options that range from the Banquet Hall that can accommodate 450 delegates, theatre-style, down to the 12-seater Royal Livingstone Boardroom. All in all, there are eight venues, whilst the hotel also offers standard business facility support, in the form of projectors, screens, speakers etc. A good MICE option is dining on the Royal Livingstone Express, a restored steam locomotive offering fine-dining journeys across Victoria Falls.

**LEISURE:** Well, firstly, there's a good chance you'll see a giraffe or zebra grazing a few metres from your hotel room door. That happened to us. Otherwise, you can book game drives, helicopter flips, white water rafting, bungee jumping, and canoeing safaris. However, my recommendations are the sunset cruise and the Livingstone Island experience, which culminates in you swimming in Devil's Pool on the edge of the falls. A real bucket list experience. There's also the hotel spa, situated just metres from the Zambezi, and an outdoor swimming pool between the hotel and the river.

**VERDICT:** Luxurious, colonial, indulgent, and with five-star service, along with a setting to remember. ■

Dylan Rogers

### FACT FILE

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JOHANNESBURG-VICTORIA FALLS



## British Airways B737-800 Business Class

**BACKGROUND:** British Airways is operated in southern Africa by Comair and flies daily between Johannesburg and Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. The outbound flight leaves O.R. Tambo International Airport at 11h25, arriving at Vic Falls Airport at 13h05, whilst the return flight departs Zimbabwe at 13h55 and arrives in Johannesburg at 15h35. Comair uses a Boeing 737-800 on this route.

**CHECK-IN:** We flew the first day of the SAA strike, so no surprise that our flight was full and there was a long queue at check-in. I had, however, checked in online, which you can do 24 hours in advance, so all we needed to do was drop bags. However, that queue was also long and I look forward to the day airlines can come up with a quick and seamless solution for simple bag drop. Incidentally, check-in was at Terminal B (domestic), after which you make your way to immigration and International Departures.

**LOUNGE & BOARDING:** Comair's SLOW lounges have built an impressive reputation and for good reason. They are well-run, comfortable, are stocked with good food and coffee, the wi-fi is speedy, and there is enough reading material, if you're not buried in your laptop. This experience was no different, despite the lounge being full. My only regret was missing out on the delicious-looking quiche, although my waistline thanked me later! The lounge doesn't call flights, so we kept an eye on time and made the 10-minute walk to gate A22, with plenty

to spare. When we got there, our flight was already boarding, early, so we took advantage of priority boarding, which didn't really count for much, ultimately, as we needed a bus to get to the aircraft and were soon joined on it by economy class passengers. After a short trip, we all boarded and were quickly offered a drink and hot towel in business class.

**THE SEAT:** The business class cabin consisted of 24 seats. Seats were in a 2-3 configuration, although in the first row the configuration was just 2-2. I changed our allocated seats when I checked in online, as my wife wanted a window seat and me an aisle, so the best options were the two seats in row 4 on the left flank, if you're facing the front of the aircraft.

**BEST SEAT:** I was pretty happy with our seats, as they were roughly in the middle of business class, away from the galley and the transition to economy. That being said, on our return leg, we were allocated row 1 seats in the front right corner of business class, which offered even more legroom (useful for tall people, like me), as long as you don't mind being close to the galley.

**THE FLIGHT:** We boarded on time, but only took off roughly half an hour late, after spending some time on the tarmac, which I don't recall being explained. We were quickly offered a drink and, after initially opting for water, I decided to treat myself to what proved to be a glass of delightful Chenin Blanc, which was followed by a snack of peanuts. Thereafter, I had one of the

most delicious vegetarian pastas I've had for some time – and I'm no vegetarian! It just looked more appetising than the meat option and I didn't regret my choice, which was followed up by cheese and biscuits and a small chocolate bite of sorts. It's not often you'll catch me raving about airline food, but this was the exception and a nice change. Our tray tables were cleared away rather quickly and we were offered a top-up, which I gladly accepted, before settling into my book.

**ARRIVAL:** Despite taking off nearly half an hour late, we landed only five minutes after the scheduled time, which I thought was pretty impressive. The benefit of being in business class meant we could beat the queue at immigration, which took shape soon after we were speedily through. I had a little bit of a wait for my luggage, but it allowed me some time to cast an eye over the shiny and relatively-new Vic Falls Airport, which opened four years ago.

**VERDICT:** Despite the longish wait on the tarmac before take-off, a fairly seamless experience, which was no mean feat, considering the full flight and the knock-on effects of the SAA strike, and flying BA also means you get to take advantage of the SLOW lounge, which is always a treat. ■

Dylan Rogers

### FACT FILE

W: britishairways.com





# Leaving a legacy

*Legacy Hotels is set to open its latest project – The Leonardo – in February 2020. This new-concept building will include hotel, office, residential and retail space at a single address in the heart of Sandton. Paddy Brearley, Legacy's MD, sheds some light on this project and other pertinent hotel issues.*

## Paddy Brearley

MD: Legacy Hotels & Resorts

**Q: Can you summarise where you are with the Leonardo development? What has been done and what is still to be completed?**

**A:** We are weeks away from opening our doors, and currently in the final stages of snagging. We have our sights set on an official launch date on 1 February 2020. Completed thus far is: all our basement parking floors, ground floor retail floors, level 5 reception, Leo's Lounge, and the Leonardo conference and event centre (seating around 300 delegates). Moving to level 7, we have completed the Nurture to Nature Preschool, Leonardo Legacy Balance Spa, Leonardo Gym, Octo Bar, and Aurum Restaurant. Prime office space is available on floors 9 to 13, and some 200 residences on level 14 and up. Yet to be completed are floors 42 to 51, which will one day become our luxury hotel. Floors 52, 53, and 54 will house our top penthouse – The Leonardo Suite, which is still under construction. However, the exterior of the building and magnificent Alto234 bar at the pinnacle are ready to go!

**Q: What will be the USP of the hotel within the development?**

**A:** A combination of many things. The vision and the reason for building this development, is to be the beacon of hope and faith, not only for the future of South Africa, but for the continent. We believe in the development and growth and we are putting our faith in this by making the statement that is the Leonardo. The art in the building is in a league of its own. The Leonardo is a journey through art, and the building was designed, engineered and built around ideas of art. This is not a building that features art. It is the story of art moulded into a building. The food is no different. All natural ingredients are organically grown

or purchased locally, and Aurum Restaurant serves perfectly-curated cuisine for any palate.

**Q: You're not concerned that Sandton is already over-traded from a high-end hotel point of view?**

**A:** The Leonardo is not a just a high-end hotel/residence building, it is a complete lifestyle in one. So, this isn't really adding hotel rooms to a market, it is adding a unique lifestyle option into the market.

**Q: What type of corporate travel business are you expecting to receive at the hotel?**

**A:** High-end accommodation business – global leaders in all industries, residential business for business leaders relocating, corporate business that commutes to Johannesburg weekly – who need the convenience of home and hotel, and lastly residential conferences.

**Q: And you're not concerned this might cannibalise your existing Sandton offerings, in the form of the likes of the Michelangelo?**

**A:** Guests have a tendency to try a new product, so some may try and stay, others may try and return to their preferred hotel. However, we don't think Leonardo will affect our hotels in Sandton, but it may have a greater effect on some boutique operations.

**Q: Does Legacy have any other new developments or acquisitions in the works?**

**A:** Elephant Point Lodge bordering the Kruger National Park is in its final stages of the completion of the Residence Lodges. They are incredible two, three, four and five-bedroom lodges, all with uninterrupted views over the Sabie River and Big Five territory. In 2020 we will break ground on the 60-bedroom lodge on the same site.

**Q: Can you explain what happened with your African Sun Zimbabwe partnership?**

**A:** Unfortunately, we are not at liberty to discuss as this matter is still an active legal discussion. What we will say is that the five Legacy Hotels & Resorts-managed properties in Zimbabwe added a wonderful footprint for our guests and we are very sad to not be able to continue to offer this to them after the great success and standards achieved over the three-and-a-half years of running them.

**Q: What are your general views on the African hotel development space?**

**A:** Africa is not for the meek or mild. You need to be bold and committed. There are many countries, cities and areas of development for hospitality, you just need to find the right partners, location and product; be fully committed and find ways to overcome the obstacles. We believe it is still the continent with lots of opportunities.

**Q: Where do you believe the next African hotel development hot spots will be?**

**A:** Rwanda, Uganda, and Mozambique. Having said that, South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana continue to be hot spots.

**Q: Where would you like to see Legacy Hotels & Resorts in 10 years' time?**

**A:** Our future expansion into Africa in key in corporate destinations, partnering with new developments or looking at existing hotels and multi-faceted properties where the economies are solid and with good governance principles. Resort-type properties in exquisite locations where we feel our development and management background can add value would be considered too. ■





# Staying Relevant

*It's a challenging time for the car rental industry, but Avis is confident it will remain relevant and of value to the travel sector, even as it evolves. That's according to Avis Executive: Sales, **Lance Smith**, as he answers questions put to him by Business Traveller Africa.*

**Lance Smith:**  
Executive: Sales –  
Avis Southern Africa

**Q: What is the state of the car rental industry in South Africa?**

**A:** The measured car rental industry has a fleet in excess of 70 000 vehicles that facilitate 2,7 million rental transactions and in excess of 17 million rental days. The revenue generated by the industry, before taking into consideration the value of vehicles sold when they reach the end of their rental life, is in excess of R6 billion. Like the South African economy, the car rental industry has not grown in real terms in 2019, and this after contracting in 2018.

**Q: What is the future of the car rental industry in South Africa?**

**A:** The industry will continue to grow as the domestic economy recovers and both domestic and foreign tourism doubles to 21 million by 2030. Corporate and leisure travellers will continue to need vehicles, as we are a vast country with an underdeveloped public transport system. There will be competing transport solutions available to travellers, such as ride-hailing, but this will remain a service that meets short period and distance movements.

**Q: Can you talk through the most recent technological innovation Avis has rolled out?**

**A:** In December we are launching self-service at O.R. Tambo International and Cape Town International for all Avis Preferred customers who have downloaded the Avis app. The app will enable customers to skip the queue, bypass the traditional rental kiosk, go straight to their vehicle, choose their exact vehicle - subject to availability - and add the extras they want and when they want them.

**Q: How has the Zipcar acquisition by Avis six years ago**

**impacted on the overall Avis business globally?**

**A:** Zipcar still is a very small part of our global business and has given our group great learnings on future business models for transport. This will be known as a transport solution (TaaS). TaaS will fundamentally change our business model, as this service will not only meet the needs of customers when they travel away from home, but also replace car ownership as we know it today. TaaS will be a massive disruption to the motor and related industries. In fact, we can go back more than a century to see a similar disruption in the mode of transport, when the internal combustion engine replaced the horse!

**Q: Is Avis – particularly locally – looking at any other similar partnerships or acquisitions that would change its offering materially?**

**A:** Globally, we are co-operating with Amazon, Google (Waymo), Uber, Lyft and even cities such as Los Angeles, and locally we will take our lead from our principal. Working with cities on the future of TaaS is critical, as it is predicted that by 2030, 95% of all driven miles in major cities will be by TaaS. This could lead to an 80% reduction in vehicles on the road, freeing up more than 30% of inner-city space previously used for parking vehicles, along with a significant reduction in carbon emissions. There are so many other opportunities and impacts on life as we know it.

**Q: As always, we need your current thoughts on the ride-sharing industry, generally, and its impact on your business?**

**A:** No measurable impact on our car rental industry, but I have no doubt that customers that need

to travel for a day or less will consider this option.

**Q: In terms of 'in-car' experience, what are the latest developments in the global car rental industry?**

**A:** JD Powers' recent survey found that rental car satisfaction scores were highest when vehicles had 21 or more features, such as cruise control, GPS, USB ports, and premium sound systems, but those scores plummeted 140 points when renters indicated that vehicle features were difficult to use.

**Q: How long before we will see self-drive vehicles in South Africa?**

**A:** Within the next 10 years, subject to the required legislation being passed.

**Q: What keeps you up at night, from an Avis business point of view?**

**A:** Ensuring that our service continually improves to ensure that we connect our customers in moments that matter to them.

**Q: Where would you like to see Avis in 10 years' time?**

**A:** The leader in car rental as we know it now, and a significant provider of the new business model of transport as a service (TaaS). ■





#### Chairperson

The Southern African Association for the Conference Industry has elected **Kim Roberts** as its new Chairperson. Roberts has been a member of

SAACI for 10 years. She has served as Head of SAACI's Advisory Board and as Venues Representative for the board. She is a director of Cape-based Mise-en-place Solutions. Roberts trained as a chef and spent four years in the USA working at a catering company. When she returned to SA she opened two restaurants before partnering in a hotel in the KZN Midlands.



#### Deputy Chairperson

The Southern African Association for the Conference Industry has elected **Jaques Fouché** as its new Deputy Chairperson. Fouché has been a

member of SAACI for eight years and is the association's former Western Cape Branch Chair. He is General Manager at stage and production design company Formative. Fouché holds a BCom in Management Sciences and Marketing.



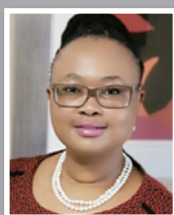
#### Country Manager

Travelport has appointed **Adrian Roodt** as Country Manager, Southern Africa. Roodt joins Travelport from Computicket, where

he spent 18 years split over two tenures. During his time with the company he held several leadership roles, including, most recently, Head of Travel, Sales and New Business Development. Roodt has also held roles including Chief Operating Officer at RealTime Travel Connections and founded a consultancy called 7 Pillars Business Consulting. At Travelport, Roodt will be responsible for leading the company's operations across South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho and Swaziland.

#### General Manager

Tsogo Sun has appointed **Retabile Radebe** as the new General Manager



for Garden Court Morningside. She joined the group in 2010 as Guest Services Manager at Garden Court Umhlanga before transferring to Southern Sun

Newlands in the same position. In 2012 Radebe was appointed as Guest Services Manager at Southern Sun Elangeni and in 2014 was appointed as Rooms Division Manager at Southern Sun Hemingways. Two years later she was appointed as the hotel's General Manager. Radebe studied Hospitality Management through the International Hotel School.



#### General Manager

Destiny Hotel & Convention Centre has appointed **Rabelayni Moyo** as its new General Manager.

Moyo's career in the hospitality industry started as a guest relations officer. He obtained a Higher National Diploma in Sales and Marketing and a Diploma in Hotel Management which, coupled with his excellent communication skills, have seen him develop a successful career in the industry spanning over 20 years at top hotels across the African continent.



#### Executive Chef

Tsogo Sun has appointed **Kieran Conway** as the new Executive Chef at Punchinello's based at the Southern Sun Montecasino hotel.

Conway gained his extensive experience in a wide range of hotels and restaurants, including Gold Reef City, De Waal Hotel in Cape Town, and the Pretoria and Sandton Crowne Plazas. He was Regional Chef for Southern Sun in Victoria Falls for six years, during which time he did stints in Bangkok, Australia, and London, where he was part of the catering team for Nelson Mandela's Freedom Party in Trafalgar Square. Back in South Africa in 1992, Conway was appointed Southern Sun's Regional Executive Chef for Gauteng and Mpumalanga, and then Group Development Chef for the group's offshore properties.



#### Executive Chef

The Maslow Sandton has appointed **Hector Mnyayiza** as its new Executive Chef. Mnyayiza joined Sun International in 2001 as an Executive

Sous Chef. Since then, he has worked at Sibaya Casino and Entertainment Kingdom and the Windmill Casino in Bloemfontein. He obtained a qualification in hospitality from the International Hotel School and completed his in-service training at the Royal Hotel in Durban.



#### Sous Chef

Home\* Suite Hotels has appointed **Irene Baloyi** as its Sous Chef. Baloyi was trained at Roodepoort College and started her career at the

Sandwich Bar at Gold Reef City. Her mantra is that if you turn your career into your hobby, then you will love every minute of it, which shows in her cooking and energy. She knows her way around a kitchen and her experience gained at the likes of Emperors Palace and Mount Grace Hotel has seen her rise through the ranks.



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# On his way



**Dr André Schulz**  
**GM Southern**  
**Africa:**  
**LUFTHANSA GROUP**

*After nearly five years in the job, Lufthansa's André Schulz has taken up a new position within the group and been appointed General Manager: Sales - East Africa, based in Nairobi, with 1 February his start date, giving him the opportunity to reflect on his time in South Africa, over coffee in Johannesburg.*

**B**y his own admission, it was a pretty rocky start for Schulz in South Africa in mid-2015, as the local face of Lufthansa's controversial decision to add a surcharge to GDS bookings and drive customers directly to their channels.

But, nearly five years later he's a popular member of the South African travel industry and proud of what the Lufthansa Group – covering Lufthansa, SWISS, Austrian Airlines, Edelweiss and Eurowings – has achieved on his watch.

That includes, according to Schulz, daily Lufthansa flights from Frankfurt to Johannesburg – now using the more efficient Boeing 747-8, as opposed to the A380.

"The passenger mix on the 747-8 is much better and better suited to the South African market than it was on the A380," says Schulz. "We had high seat load factors on the A380 and it was incredibly popular, but the yield is better on the 747-8, due to a greater focus on the premium classes. Getting an aircraft full is the easy job, but getting it full with a proper commercially-viable yield, well, that's the magic. That obviously works better on the 747-8 than the A380."

This takes our conversation in a different direction, as I push Schulz on the complexities of running an airline – or multiple airlines in the case of the Lufthansa Group – taking into account fuel costs, aircraft efficiency, staff count, distribution, technology etc.

A topical subject, if one takes into account the troubles at SAA.

"Travel is a sexy industry, but if you look at the commercial side of things and the margins for airlines, and the billions of euros in assets that we are flying all round the world, every day, what ends up in your cash box at the end of the day is quite disappointing, actually, from a pure financial point of view," says Schulz. "It's a difficult environment and there aren't too many cost factors you can influence, like airport fees and taxes, where you are negotiating with monopolies."

By way of example, he cites the recent attacks in Saudi Arabia and its influence on the global oil price.

"You're talking a three-digit million euro effect," says Schulz.

Nonetheless, airlines plough on, with a close eye on where the opportunity is at any given time, with regards new routes and products.

In that regard, the past few years have also seen the Lufthansa Group launch a new SWISS product on the A340 out of Johannesburg and double its Cape Town capacity, including launching a year-round direct Lufthansa Frankfurt service, increasing the frequency of the Edelweiss service, and launching Austrian Airlines as a completely new brand.

"We've seen a nice growth story in the last four years and we are now very well established in the South African market," says Schulz. "As a result, we are pretty close to maximum, in terms of the South Africa-Germany bilateral air

service agreement."

Looking at the rest of southern Africa, the Lufthansa Group has also produced a Frankfurt-Windhoek route for Eurowings and launched Mauritius flights for Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines, Edelweiss and Eurowings.

So, Schulz believes it's a good time for him to take up a new challenge, but not before I push him on SAA and the issue of national airlines, which he is obviously well-versed in.

Lufthansa is a long-standing codeshare partner of SAA, stretching back to 1996, so Schulz is a little hamstrung, in terms of leeway to comment, but he does have some interesting thoughts on the issue of national airlines in general.

"The airline industry is a very emotional industry – you're carrying the pride of your nation to the world," he says. "So, it's not always rational, and it's a tough industry, with a lot of pressure on the cost side of things. There's this emotional component that doesn't always allow for a commercially-rational scenario."

And with that, he's off to East Africa, where he believes he will be going into a less developed, but more dynamic, environment.

"It's a good time to go," says Schulz, "and it'll be a great challenge."

Wishing him well. ■

**Dylan Rogers**



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