

# Business Traveller

AFRICA

APRIL 2020

## HOTEL REVIEW

*Southern Sun The Cullinan*

## TMCS IN AFRICA

*Technology helps retain relevancy*

## Q&AS

*Cathay Pacific and  
Air Mauritius*

## PLUS

*A word from ASATA;  
News, Talewind*

# QATARI APPEAL

*A peaceful marriage of tradition and  
innovation*





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## REGULARS

### 04 MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM

What's the editor ranting about now?

### 05 NEWS

Airline, hotel and other travel news from Africa and beyonds

### 08 HTI CONSULTING COLUMN

CEO Wayne Troughton gives us his views on the African hotel industry

### 09 ASATA COLUMN

The latest from Chief Executive Officer Otto de Vries

### 30 TALEWIND

Airline stories from Richard Tams

## FEATURES

### 10 TMCS IN AFRICA

Often seen as an unnecessary expense, a travel management company is more than just a line entry on the books. Here's how they offer value

## REVIEWS

19 Southern Sun The Cullinan, Cape Town

## Q&A INTERVIEWS

28 Carla da Silva – Air Mauritius

28 Ashish Kapur – Cathay Pacific

## ON THE COVER

### Qatar

Tradition and modern conveniences live in harmony in Qatar's capital city of Doha



14



3

6



7



19





The coronavirus is having a profound effect on the world, and given its rapid and far-reaching spread, this is no surprise. Sporting and cultural events are being cancelled or postponed to minimize the risk of transmission, schools are closing, businesses are shutting their doors and people are stockpiling non-perishable goods (and toilet paper) like they won't shop again for 10 years.

According to Reuters, France and Spain have joined Italy in imposing lockdowns on tens of millions of people, Australia has ordered self-isolation of arriving foreigners, Argentina and El Salvador have extended entry bans, and American Airlines is cutting its international flight schedule by 75%. SAA and Comair (which operates domestic flights for British Airways and kulula.com) have ceased flying.

Business travel is expected to take a global revenue hit of about \$820 billion. Hotels and airlines aren't the only travel businesses that are being affected. I overheard one travel agent say that she started March off R18,000 in the red because of cancelled travel plans.

This virus is only a few months old and new cases are being reported at an alarming rate. If this is what a single business is experiencing in these 'early days', it's not hard to believe the Reuters estimation. I just wonder what the landscape of the travel industry will look like at the end. Doubtless it won't be a pretty sight.

South Africa is now in full lockdown and all businesses are facing an uncertain few weeks. At Future, we have decided to call Corona on the printing of this issue of Business Traveller Africa. As our main distribution channel is airport lounges around South Africa, there is little sense in putting out a magazine that virtually no one is going to see. However, we are still producing the magazine for the digital platforms and you can read it for free on our website – [www.busesstravellerafrica.co.za](http://www.busesstravellerafrica.co.za).

Whatever the status of your travel plans and work environment, maintain personal hygiene – wash your hands often, keep hand sanitiser (if it's not already sold out) in convenient places, and cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough.

But most importantly, don't panic. South Africa, its businesses and citizens, will come out of this pandemic, and we'll be stronger for it.

'Til next time

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# MARRIOTT HOTEL MELROSE ARCH NOW OPEN

The Johannesburg Marriott Hotel Melrose Arch and Marriott Executive Apartments, Melrose Arch opened for business on 1 March. The first purpose-built Marriott Hotel, one of the Marriott group's premium brands, in South Africa, it is being marketed as a premium business hotel providing state-of-the-art business facilities and a sought-after extended-stay destination with fully serviced apartment living. The hotel offers 306 rooms and 84 apartments, two on-site restaurants, a fitness centre and outdoor heated swimming pool. The M Club Lounge is an exclusive area reserved for Elite and Club paying members. It is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week and offers free wi-fi, printing and power supplies to ensure uninterrupted productivity for business travellers. There are seven meeting rooms including a Ballroom that is divisible into four separate venues, totalling over 800m<sup>2</sup>, and a pre-function space totalling 600m<sup>2</sup>. All meeting spaces are designed to adapt to a variety of formats and group sizes, with pivotable walls, moveable partitions, soft seating and modern furniture. **BT**



## Travelport achieves level 4 NDC certification

Travelport, a technology company serving the global travel industry, has achieved level 4 NDC certification as an aggregator from IATA. This certification confirms that Travelport is able to provide full offer and order management and servicing of an NDC booking, complementing the current capabilities of voiding tickets and cancellations with new capabilities to modify and exchange tickets as well as processing refunds. This end-to-end booking management capability is a crucial part of the day-to-day travel management Travelport's customers rely on their technology partner to provide. **BT**

## BA BOOSTS CAPE TOWN FREQUENCIES



British Airways is increasing its services between London and Cape Town by two flights a week from January next year. The additional services will operate from Gatwick using Boeing 777-200 aircraft in a three-cabin configuration with 32 seats in Club World, 52 in World Traveller Plus and 252 in World Traveller. This will bring to five the number of flights BA operates from Gatwick to Cape Town and increases its total number of flights between London and the Mother City to 19 a week. Over the peak South African summer, British Airways also doubles its schedule between Heathrow to Cape Town, offering two daily Boeing 747 services, with four cabins, including First. British Airways is the only airline to offer year-round direct services between London and the Mother City. The additional flights between Gatwick and Cape Town will operate from 10 January 2021 to 24 March 2021. There will also be three new services starting on 30 March and will operate until 19 April. **BT**

5

## Airlink introduces JHB-EL flights

Airlink will launch a mid-morning flight between Johannesburg and East London from 16 March. The key objective of this flight is to provide connections with international and regional flights arriving in the early morning at OR Tambo International. The flights will depart daily from Johannesburg at 10h10, arriving in East London at 11h45. The return flight will depart East London at 12h15, arriving in Johannesburg at 13h45. Airlink's E-jet services will offer an intra-continental style business class service. The cabin layout features expansive business class seats and provides economy class travellers with enhanced comfort by way of a generous seat pitch in a 2-2 seating configuration. The E190 E-jets are configured with six business and 92 economy class seats. Airlink flights will operate under the SA8 flight code until 10 June 2020, after which they will be operated under Airlink's unique 4Z code. 4Z tickets are already available through travel agents, tour operators and online at [www.flyairlink.com](http://www.flyairlink.com). **BT**





## Accor set to expand Ethiopia footprint

Accor is expanding its presence in Ethiopia after signing a management agreement to open a new property under its design-led economy brand, Ibis Styles. In a move that ramps up its ambitious development plans in sub-Saharan Africa, the group has partnered with private conglomerate Yuluch Elyano Trading to operate the 150-key Ibis Styles Addis Ababa, its fifth upcoming property in the capital, with a scheduled opening date of 2023. Conveniently situated in a secluded location just off the city's main thoroughfare, Bole Road, 1km from Addis Ababa Bole International Airport and close to corporate institutions and embassies, the property will offer an all-day dining venue, fitness centre and gym, meeting space options and a car park. **BT**

## SAS FIRST EXCLUSIVE PROCUREMENT TRAVEL SUMMIT



Africa's first independently owned and peer-led event for South African procurement professionals is on track and scheduled to take place in Cape Town on 27 August at The Vineyard Hotel. The event is expected to attract some of the country's most influential procurement leaders who will lead relevant and significant discussion topics, including best practices and insights around their approach to travel sourcing. Summit Director Riana Fouché says these are companies that have a consolidated annual travel expenditure of approximately R1 billion making this one-day event the largest and most significant of its kind on the continent. The event will allow robust conversations, facilitate interactive panel discussions and learnings from peers which will equip buyers with the tools and tactics to take them beyond just cost savings. 2019 was a year of innovation and dynamic change in the business travel sector with technology continuing to disrupt and reshape how business travellers plan and book their trips. Sarie Homan, Head of the Chartered Institute for Procurement and Supply (CIPS SA), says "the event will provide a valuable platform in an African context to encourage collaboration and sharing between procurement practitioners and solution providers." In the face of more stringent corporate financial controls, travel still remains one of the largest and most controllable corporate expenses. **BT**

## Delta commits \$1 billion to carbon neutrality

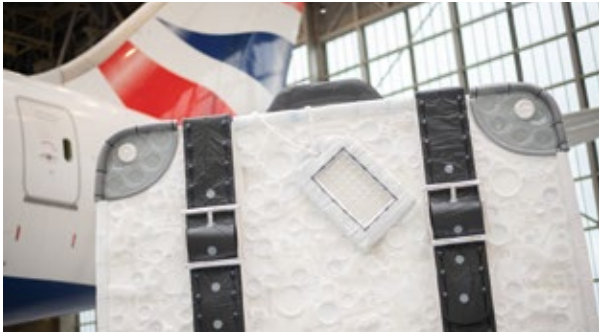
Starting 1 March, Delta Air Lines is committing \$1 billion over the next 10 years on its journey to mitigate all emissions from its global business going forward. The airline will invest in driving innovation, advancing clean air travel technologies, accelerating the reduction of carbon emissions and waste, and establishing new projects to mitigate the balance of emissions. The aviation industry accounts for roughly 2% of global carbon dioxide emissions. Delta's carbon footprint is its largest environmental impact, with 98% of emissions coming from its aircraft. **BT**



## NEW AIRLINE PARTNERSHIP FORMED

Air France, KLM, Delta and Virgin Atlantic have formed a global partnership to benefit travellers around the world. The new partnership provides customers with more convenient flight schedules and a shared goal of ensuring a smooth and consistent travel experience, whichever airline people fly. The partnership also provides the flexibility to book flights on any of the four carriers through their respective mobile apps, websites, or via travel agents. Customers will enjoy award-winning service, top-tier premium cabin products and complimentary food, drink and seat-back in-flight entertainment in all cabins on all trans-Atlantic flights. Enhanced customer benefits (which are now available to access) mean that loyalty programme members will be able to earn and use miles or enjoy elite benefits for flights on any of the four airlines' worldwide operations, including a trans-Atlantic trip, intra-Europe hops, or a domestic US journey, offering more opportunities to quickly move through loyalty tiers and reach a higher status. Eligible Elite loyalty programme members can also enjoy priority boarding and relax in over 100 airport lounges when travelling internationally. **BT**

## SAY GOODBYE TO SINGLE-USE PLASTICS



British Airways wants to remove more than 700 tonnes of single-use plastic on board its flights in 2020, amounting to more than a quarter of a billion individual items of plastic and equivalent to more than 30,000 suitcases full of single-use plastic, even more than the number of bags customers check in with the airline at Heathrow International Airport on an average day.

The airline has already rolled out initiatives to remove 25 million individual items of single-use plastic on board each year, equivalent to 90 tonnes, and has now set itself an ambitious target to increase this by more than 700%.

It has been working closely with its suppliers to identify alternatives to single-use plastic items, and this year it will replace as many as possible with recyclable or re-usable items, or items from sustainable sources.

To date, the airline has achieved the following plastic reductions:

- Swapped plastic stirrers with bamboo alternatives
- Reduced plastic packaging on Club World amenity kits
- Swapped plastic wrapping for all bedding and blankets for paper wrapping (currently being rolled out across all cabins)
- Removed plastic wrapping on headsets and instead placed these inside paper charity envelopes in World Traveller cabins
- Water bottles on board are made from 50% recycled plastic
- Removed inflight retail plastic bags

The target also includes finding alternatives to single-use plastic cutlery, tumblers, cups, toothpicks and butter packaging on board. **BT**



SARAH TURNER CREATED A GIANT SUITCASE MADE FROM 1,000 PIECES OF WASTE PLASTIC, INCLUDING 160 SPOONS, MORE THAN A DOZEN PLASTIC STIRRERS, DRINKS LIDS, PLASTIC WRAP, BUBBLE WRAP, CATERING DISHES AND COVERS AND BOTTLES.

## NEW ETHIOPIAN DESTINATION MANAGEMENT SERVICE



DAWIT LEMMA, KRIMSON CEO, AND HELINA TESHOME, CCO, LAUNCHING KRIMSON KONCIERGE AT AVIATION AFRICA 2020

Krimson Aviation, the Addis Ababa-based flight support, charter and aviation consultancy has introduced a new high-end travel service, Krimson Koncierge. Launched at Aviation Africa 2020, the annual meeting for the African aerospace industry, Krimson Koncierge specialises in creating escorted customised luxury

excursions, tailored itineraries and bespoke destination management services for aviation crew, VIPs and discerning travellers. An airport meet-and-service designed for business class passengers arriving or departing on commercial airlines expedites transfer through the airport and reduces waiting times by more than an hour as Ethiopia's it speeds customers through the immigration and customs queues at busy Bole International Airport. For those concerned about security while travelling, close personal protection can be arranged to mitigate potential risk and ensure safe passage. Meeting venue sourcing, personal shopping, restaurant booking, event planning and destination recommendations are all features of the Koncierge portfolio. **BT**

## ARABELLA JOINS TSOGO SUN

Tsogo Sun Hotels welcomed the Arabella Hotel, Golf & Spa to its luxury portfolio on 01 April. Located in the heart of the Kogelberg Biosphere, the 145-bedroom hotel includes facilities such as a top 10 nationally ranked championship golf course, an award-winning spa and conferencing facilities for up to 350 delegates. The hotel is 70km from Cape Town International Airport and is on the doorsteps of both Kleinmond and Hermanus, ensuring that its peaceful setting is completely accessible. The addition of the Arabella property to Tsogo Sun Hotels' portfolio of over 100 hotels across South Africa, Africa and the Middle East enhances the group's luxury property offering. **BT**





# Five factors impacting business travel as we look ahead



**WAYNE TROUGHTON**  
CEO HTI CONSULTING

**S**adly a tremendous amount has changed since my last article and, whilst many factors affecting business travel will essentially remain once we finally emerge from the devastating global effects of COVID-19, many will be altered considerably by recent world events.

## 1. Coronavirus

8 Of the far-and-wide disruptions caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, the global travel and hospitality industry are undoubtedly amongst the worst affected sectors in the short term. The industry is currently staring down a barrel with little light ahead as the virus has yet to plateau, and we face the likely reality of a serious global recession.

Whilst the outlook appears particularly bleak in heavily affected areas right now (and may have again altered once this feature goes live), the fact is no one can foresee how long Coronavirus will keep the world on its toes!

Looking at similar past events, such as the spread of SARS, can maybe offer some hope in these otherwise dark times, however. Though the impact of the two viruses are not entirely comparable and, not wanting to underestimate the devastating impact of this virus on the hotel industry, it is nevertheless useful to analyse the different phases of a pandemic spread and how it impacts the market: STR reports that after SARS-related travel restrictions eased, the bounce-back period in China and Hong Kong took markets back to pre-SARS levels within three months. This means that six months after the WHO had declared SARS a global threat, hotel markets had all but recovered. This is heartening and we should continue to have hope.

We can expect to see a significant amount of hotel closures, at least in the short term, as hotels struggle to find solutions to curb the significant decline in revenues. This will be an increasingly difficult time for hotels as they grapple to find the best strategies to not only reduce their exposure and negative financial impact in the short term, but ensure that they are able to react to positive market changes once the threat of the virus subsides.

## 2. Consolidation of travel spend

Corporate travel budgets will, without doubt, come under further pressure, and consolidation of spend will become increasingly important for travel managers. Whereas in past years, corporate clients would often utilise the services of two or three travel agencies and have their travel spend split across different agents, they're now more likely to opt to consolidate such spend with just one agent, as well as leveraging off corporate agreements and global buying power. Hoteliers therefore need to manage these relationships more closely than ever.

## 3. Focus on personalisation to remain

Personalised service was set to be a key trend in 2020 and beyond, but will likely be even more so when things 'return to normalcy' and hotels strive to compete and achieve differentiation in a tough global economy.

Corporates will most likely also increasingly look for specialised travel managers who know the business inside and out and who can make personalised recommendations that will help grow the company. Hotels can personalise experiences for business travellers by storing guest data to ensure they allocate rooms as per preferences and potentially

include add-on services such as a free conference room etc.

## 4. 'Bleisure' will flourish once again

The conscious decision by business travellers to add days of leisure travel onto a business trip has resulted in a growing breed of bleisure travellers.

The last few years have proven that the bleisure traveller is real and African hotels need to be taking these travellers into account by marketing both their business and leisure amenities, promoting nearby activities and destinations, offering fast reliable internet in comfortable surrounds, or offering corporate travellers specific bleisure packages which could include discounts on extra nights, along with tickets to local attractions, tours or events.

## 5. Growth in the SMME market

Those SMMEs able to outwit and outlast the negative effects of the global virus outbreak (and we pray they are many) have great potential to drive economic growth and employment in Africa, particularly as more African businesses acquire access to funding instruments and platforms. The challenge for players in the African hotel and travel industry is to ensure they are equipped to meet the demand for flexibility that entrepreneurs and SMMEs need to achieve business success.

The coming months will be challenging for us all, however, sustaining business in the short term and preparing for market resurgence post the pandemic should be a priority for hoteliers navigating the business travel space in the uncertain age of Corona. **BT**



# To travel, or not

*Spread of coronavirus raises questions about 'proactive' travel risk management*



**OTTO DE VRIES**  
ASATA CEO

**I**n corporate travel, we talk a great deal about Duty of Care, and the responsibility that lies with employers and Travel Management Companies (TMCs) to keep their travellers safe.

More often than not, the concept of Duty of Care pertains to travel risk management protocols that roll out when trouble occurs during travel. The focus is on being 'proactive' when a traveller finds themselves in trouble when they're on a business trip.

However, the travel risk management protocol is largely reactive as it's rolled out when things go awry. It places less focus on mitigating risk by avoiding dangerous situations outright.

As the spread of Coronavirus grips all forms of travel, including corporate travel, the question arises as to whether companies should and indeed can expect their business travellers to continue to travel during these uncertain times.

The argument against travel seems to suggest that the employer could be putting the lives of their employees at risk by forcing them to travel for business and that, in this case, travel is not the employee's choice. Whereas, in the leisure space the traveller can decide for themselves whether they wish to continue with their travel plans.

A great deal of resources are poured into monitoring 'dangerous situations' globally so that when the unexpected occurs, the corporate and their TMC are immediately clear on whether any employees are affected and the travel risk management protocol can be rolled out. But what happens in a case like the spread of Coronavirus where

the risk is already known? What proactive training and awareness programmes do you have in your organisation to prepare travellers for known, or even potential risks?

All travellers should be trained and given the resources they need to safeguard themselves when they travel. This is because, at the time, they'll need to think on their feet. They'll be the only one in that particular situation to make an informed decision as they wait for your travel risk management protocol to kick in.

This means that the emphasis on travel risk management should be on training staff to reduce the risks and make informed decisions, rather than support mechanisms after the fact as this may take some time to 'arrive on the scene' and 'save the day'.

Your TMC can assist employers to ensure that their staff are receiving the correct training to mitigate risk. Among others, corporates should ensure that their staff have a good understanding of any risks that arise from their itinerary and destinations to which they are travelling. They should know how to deal with or prevent any long-term impact resulting from the risk.

Duty of Care goes beyond traveller tracking. Rather, it is incumbent on every employer and TMC to ensure that their travelling personnel and customers are fully aware of how to access support on the ground if this is required. But more so, to be equipped to think on the fly and make good decisions to keep them as safe as possible.

Which brings us back to the Coronavirus. No doubt many organisations have put in place travel restrictions, or even bans, to

ensure that their staff are kept out of harm's way. For those that have not, it is essential to equip your employees with the knowledge they need to ensure they do not catch the virus. Perhaps that extends to supplying your travellers with masks, alcohol-based hand sanitiser and even supplements to boost their immune system.

Furthermore, employers should be educating their staff on how to stop the spread of the disease through proper washing of hands, not touching their face and steering clear of someone who shows symptoms of a cold or flu.

At this time, lean on your TMC to ascertain what your options are in terms of deferring or cancelling travel. Ask them which destinations have instituted travel bans and which airlines have reduced their frequencies.

Your TMC can help you to manage your corporate travel proactively and reduce potential risks to those travellers who have decided they wish to continue their business travel regardless of the spread of Coronavirus. This includes ensuring you have the right travel insurance in place.

By providing as much information as possible to your end traveller, you not only improve their security and mitigate risk, you'll also reduce their anxiety and stress associated with travelling.

Finally, you'll be less reliant on those reactive measures we're so good at putting in place as part of our travel risk management protocol because fewer travellers will find themselves in harm's way. That's really what being proactive is all about. **DT**

# Here to stay

## Technology and value keep TMCs relevant



WORDS RICHARD HOLMES

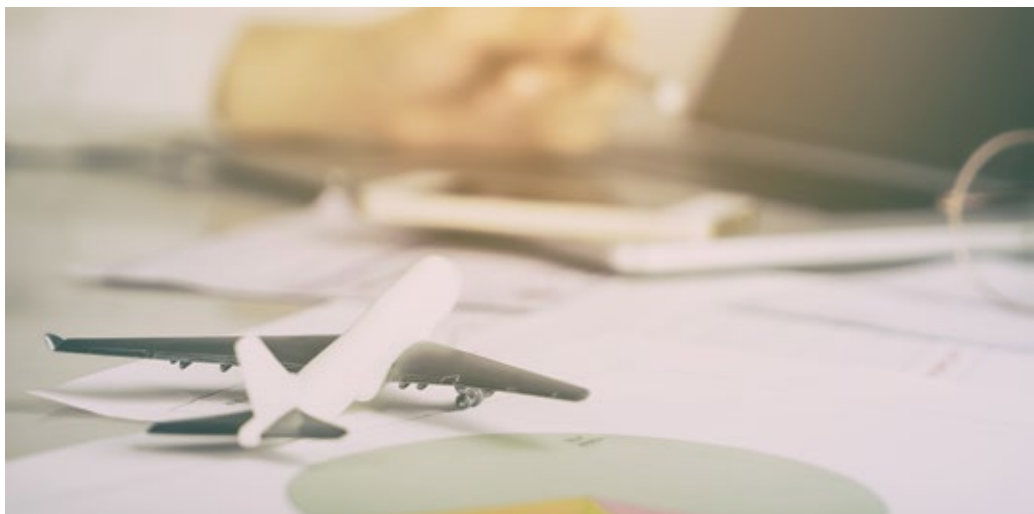
*There was a time, not all that long ago, when a travel management company (TMC) was little more than a booking agent, taking care of the hotel and flight bookings before sending their invoice. But, with the world of corporate travel fast evolving, TMCs have grown to become a valued partner in any business' value-chain ecosystem.*

10 **T**hey will look at their client's 'big picture' objectively, taking into account a business' goals and vision, the common areas of friction within its current process and the supporting data," explains Oz Desai, General Manager of the Flight Centre Travel Group's Corporate Traveller brand. "It will evaluate every step of the travel journey, from planning to reporting."

But it'll cost me more money, is a common grumble from those holding the purse strings. A crucial talking point for travel management companies to communicate to clients – and for corporate travel managers to understand – is that value does not equal price.

"It's not just about the lowest price," says Frank Palapies – CCO for Wings Travel Management. "It's very much about providing full travel management support as cost effectively as possible, without comprising on traveller safety. Our role as a TMC is not just to book a flight or hotel, it's the service we provide in terms of managing travel disruption, expert advice and support if clients are sending travellers to high risk destinations, providing reporting and analytics to understand their travel spend, arranging visas, and emergency out-of-hours travel support around the clock."

"While competitive pricing is important, our value to clients goes beyond that, including working with clients to jointly set travel programme objectives that



support the client's strategy, and helping them achieve and exceed joint targets," says Kananelo Makhetha, Chief Executive Officer of Club Travel Corporate, which operates in over 85 countries through a partnership with GlobalStar.

The notion of what drives value is also changing, say industry insiders.

"The huge value provided by TMC's is not in question," says Vicente Bosque, Commercial Director Business Travel Africa at Amadeus. "However, the way that value is delivered is being redefined and TMC's are adapting or will need to adapt."

Historically, the buying power and negotiating leverage of large travel management companies made for a compelling argument when it came to the simple cost of corporate travel, but "value

is not about the lowest ticket price," says Lloyd Barkhuizen, FCM Travel Solutions' head of sales for the Middle East and Africa, which recently expanded its footprint in Africa with partnership agreements in four additional countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon, the Republic of Congo and Ethiopia. "While most companies focus on bottom-line costs, the easiest to measure and understand, value will determine the health and well-being of a company in the long term."

Every TMC is currently under pressure to showcase its value to clients due to enhanced technology available in the market and disruption from new distribution channels.

"This requires a consistent approach in terms of managing the client's travel spend





11

and demonstrating the true value of a partnership,” says Palapies. “TMCs have a responsibility to constantly improve in line with the new technology which is being made available on an almost daily basis.”

### MAKE BETTER DECISIONS ON SPEND

For an end consumer it is incredibly daunting to navigate through the jungle of travel available content, but this is precisely where TMCs shine.

“By consolidating, providing admin support in terms of reporting and invoicing, we can provide this infrastructure locally and globally,” says Palapies.

“We see value as the benefits and concrete advantages that far exceed the cost of the service to our customers,” says Louis van Zyl, Chief Executive Officer of CWT. “We provide valuable insights and analysis capabilities... which in turn puts them in a position to make more informed and better decisions regarding the management and control over their corporate travel programme.”

While once simply removing the bureaucratic pain-point of completing a booking may have been sufficient to justify using a TMC, with the advancement in booking technology those mundane elements of corporate travel are increasingly accounting for a shrinking slice of the value on offer. Instead, personalisation is a key area for TMCs to create true value for customers.

“Focus on the areas of the corporate travel spend that are really growing and that most TMCs have not yet focused on... maximizing on hotels, transfers, and restaurant bookings, airport parking, visa handling and ancillary services,” says Bosque. “Technology is fundamental for any TMC that wants to succeed, but a personalised customer service is also very important. TMCs need to find the best way to automate the predictable, so they can humanise the exceptional.”

Club Travel Corporate takes a similar approach, with the increased adoption of technology to automate simple processes, while simultaneously enhancing the value of corporate travel programme.

“Frictionless automated travel booking tools are helping us make routine tasks – such as travel requisition and approvals, policy compliance, interactive itineraries and cost management – more efficient,” says Makhetha. “Clients expect transparency and we cater for this with insightful, real-time data analytics and expense management and reporting tools.”

Replacing inefficient travel and expenditure processes with automated systems “creates savings in time and labour, as well as optimised productivity and greater transparency,” adds Barkhuizen. With a suite of products known as FCM Connect, the company offers “custom data analytic dashboards that integrate compliance with historical and up-to-date T&E data. Not only can this dashboard help managers detect programme leakage and missed savings, but it also saves time otherwise spent with manual reporting.”

“Technology solutions are important, but they still need to be balanced with consistent personal service and the expertise of our people,” says Palapies. “We offer





12

booking tools, but not all clients business travel lends itself to being booked via these online tools. Most of our clients need a blended solution of online and offline service.”

To help clients manage their spend, Wings uses a reporting tool called goData – a cloud-based business intelligence solution, powered by WebFOCUS, which aggregates data within seconds. It provides drag-and-drop fields to design bespoke reports on any device with multiple traded currencies; currency conversion in real-time; booking data that is only one hour old; and cost per mile index.

#### A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO TRAVEL

Another key trend is the move towards an all-encompassing ethos when it comes to corporate travellers.

“Companies send employees out to travel because it provides value to their business. To achieve this value, the traveller needs to be in top form. This is where a holistic travel management programme becomes especially valuable,” says Desai. “Not only will a TMC put the measures in place to keep employees safe and find the best pricing strategies for the business, they will also be able to reduce traveller friction and make sure the traveller has a seamless and pleasant travel experience by providing relevant advice.”

After thorough research into the key pain-points for business travellers – from booking classes to flight times, choice of carrier to weekend travel – “we found that, in some instances, changing an element of the policy to give travellers greater allowances resulted in higher traveller satisfaction and created great value for business travellers, while cost increases to the programme were minimal,” says Barkhuizen.

Part of that is recognising that corporate travellers are not – shock, horror! – only thinking about business when they’re on the road. ‘Bleisure’ – combining business travel with leisure time – is key for many globetrotting executives, and TMCs should be aware of the need to allow time for executives to decompress. That could mean partner fares for airlines, hotels with the flexibility to accommodate a family joining at a later stage, or simply suggesting local restaurants that fit the profile of the client on the road.

Sustainability is another touch-point that TMCs will need to keep an eye on in the future, adds Makhetha: “Business travellers are more mindful of their environmental footprint. They are actively seeking out products and establishments that reflect their eco-conscious values and demonstrate an authentic drive to minimise the environmental impact of travel.”

While the European trend of flygskam – or ‘flight shame’ – won’t have as much resonance in Africa, with its lack of land-based alternatives, corporate travellers will increasingly look to properties reducing their carbon footprint in terms of energy, water and plastic.

#### CLICK TAP FLY

Unsurprisingly, technology is continuing to play an increasingly important role in catering for these client needs. Whether it’s artificial intelligence or data mining to improve efficiencies and cost savings, a multi-faceted approach to travel-tech is key to keeping pace with modern-day corporate travel.

Travellers now have access to a range of consolidator platforms where sourcing relevant content has become increasingly easier as well as cost effective.

“Technology dictates new levels of efficiency and delivery of content to clients, and often becomes the most critical aspect of delivering this service,” says Palapies.

“Technology plays a crucial role in enabling us to provide the best service at the most competitive price,” says van Zyl. “CWT’s focus is on a well-integrated and seamless technology platform leveraging online and mobile developments to the best effect to our customers.”

To improve responsiveness to client queries, Corporate Traveller has launched a travel chatbot – Smart Assistant for Mobile, or Sam:] – for its customers across South Africa.

“Sam is programmed to keep travellers updated at all times, from weather updates at the destination to information on the traveller’s departure gate, flight time changes and where to collect baggage,” says Desai. “The app will also suggest which restaurants and attractions to visit, alert travellers about traffic delays and will soon be able to connect travellers with a consultant via a live text or phone chat if the need arises.”

FCM also launched ‘YOUR.CT’, “a technology platform that gives bookers, travellers and managers a single access point, via their customised dashboard, to functionality and information that is relevant to their business travel needs,” says Desai.



For those in the travel management industry, another tech-trend to watch is the emergence of the major online giants launching services in this highly-competitive space.

“These players are ‘not yet’ present in Africa, but they will come, especially into South Africa, which is the 15<sup>th</sup> biggest corporate travel market in the world,” cautions Bosque. “We think TMCs and corporations should respond to this by identifying the self-booking tool that better fits their need and start putting customers into this type of operation to gain expertise and confidence in this operating model.”

It’s a salient point, and a trend to watch, but there’s more to correctly managing corporate travel than sturdy tech in the background. In travel, context is key.

“Tech-focussed companies bring innovation, but legacy travel companies bring years of travel experience,” says Desai. “One of the main advantages of the ‘technologisation’ of the travel industry is that it allows travel companies to drive personalisation for travellers in unprecedented ways.”

And managing corporate travel in Africa isn’t only about finding the best tech solution for maximising that travel budget. As travel managers take their Duty of Care ever more seriously, the safety – and comfort – of their travelling executives is of increasing importance.

That Duty of Care takes on greater significance for corporate travel in Africa, than in many parts of the world, making the services of a qualified travel management supplier all the more important. With the majority of South Africa’s outbound business travel looking north into Africa, working with the right TMC will ensure the correct health and safety recommendations for hotels, security assessments, and assist with

crisis management protocols for when things (inevitably) go wrong.

Many global TMCs rely on local partner agencies in Africa to supply services.

“In our experience, there is very little alignment between the services offered by the global TMC and their partners in Africa. This often results in frustrating inconsistencies with processes, data capture, reporting, service levels, and most importantly, traveller safety and risk management,” says Palapies. “This is why Wings only operates wholly owned and managed offices in Africa. We have our own operations in South Africa, Angola, and Nigeria.”

These are important considerations, but there is also an upside, says Van Zyl. “Although travelling in Africa could bring the element of the unknown into contention, travel options are often more limited than in more developed parts of the world making travel procurement slightly less complex.”

But “the lack of efficient infrastructure in Africa combined with the lack of airlift can be problematic for business travellers as it can lead to long travel times and insecurity,” says Desai. “While Africa is increasingly breaking down the barriers to travel, the region is still renowned for its lack of visa openness. A TMC can be an invaluable partner to help travellers obtain their visas within the required timeframes and offer much-needed information on required documentation.”

While data and lower prices are relatively easy to come by, the key word here is ‘partner’. Whether it’s about maximising value, or keeping staff safe on the road, including a competent travel management company in the fabric of the business is key to getting the best bang for buck from that corporate travel budget. **BT**

## The COVID-19 effect

At the time of going to press the global travel industry was already reeling from the impact of the coronavirus spreading worldwide, and the ongoing crisis is sure to hit corporate travel hard as companies rein in all but essential business travel.

“The COVID-19 outbreak is a global crisis that is testing the resilience not only of the airline industry but of the global economy,” said Alexandre de Juniac, Director General and CEO of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). “Airlines are experiencing double-digit declines in demand, and on many routes traffic has collapsed. Aircraft are being parked and employees are being asked to take unpaid leave.”

With major brands such as Amazon, Facebook and Sony shuttering offices and restricting corporate travel, a similar impact is likely to spread to Africa as companies exercise an abundance of caution in their duty of care to employees.

“We have noticed a reduced demand for travel to the East and some European countries,” notes Kananelo Makhetha, Chief Executive Officer of Club Travel Corporate. “We are hopeful that COVID-19 will be under control soon, as the longer it remains a global problem, the more devastating it will be for the entire travel and tourism industry.”

“We do expect a large impact on corporate travel over time, adds Louis van Zyl, Chief Executive Officer of CWT. “Corporates are starting to mandate travel freezes and a situation of only critical travel. Cancellations are starting to become prominent and we will only see where this is heading once it becomes known how much the continent is actually affected by contractions.”

“It is more important than ever for companies to consolidate all their business travel bookings via one TMC who can provide expert travel risk management and traveller safety support,” says Frank Palapies – CCO for Wings Travel Management.



# The Qatari appeal

*Doha – the confluence of the gleaming skyline, traditional bazaars, Islamic art, rich museums, sophisticated hotels, vibrant neighbourhoods, and a burgeoning culinary scene – has many fans worldwide.*

**WORDS** NISHA SHROFF







**I**ts dichotomy of tradition and modernity is perhaps why the Qatar capital has garnered much attention in the recent past. Doha perfectly blends the old and the new; its rich history and glorious past greatly appeal to cultured travellers. Talking about the new, the region has recently opened the National Museum of Qatar, the Doha Metro and the revamped Doha Port that serves as a waterfront tourist attraction, attracting new-age visitors.

As far as tourism is concerned, Qatar welcomed 1.49 million visitors in the first three quarters of 2019, representing a 12% increase compared to the same period in 2018, that is according to the Qatar National Council's 2019 Tourism Performance Report.

Rightly so, Doha's hospitality industry is upping its game. The city has become a destination of choice for several international hotel chains that are seen setting up base here. A perfect example is the uber-luxe property Mandarin Oriental, Doha that opened its doors last year. The Luxury Collection also made its debut with Al Messila, a Luxury Collection Resort and Spa, Doha.

Looking at all this development, and initiatives like the Qatar National Vision 2030 that aims to "transform Qatar into an advanced society", the time is here for Doha to establish itself as a non-negotiable pick in the business and leisure traveller's list.

#### **CARRIER CHECK**

For any destination to successfully position itself as a key player in the business travel arena, excellent global connectivity is crucial. Taking this factor into consideration, Qatar is constantly evolving its flag carrier Qatar Airways' international and domestic network, and inflight service.

In 2019, the airline launched a range of new destinations on its network including Davao, Philippines; Gaborone, Botswana; Izmir, Turkey; Langkawi, Malaysia; Lisbon, Portugal; →



Mogadishu, Somalia; Rabat, Morocco; and Valletta, Malta. In addition, the airline signed a number of new and extended codeshare agreements with airline partners. The carrier has also added its patented business class, Qsuite, to several Indian routes.

Additionally, high-end corporate travellers can make use of Qatar Executive (QE), the private jet charter subsidiary of Qatar Airways that offers a private and luxurious flying experience.

16

Currently, the airline operates a modern fleet of more than 250 aircraft via its hub, Hamad International Airport (HIA), to more than 160 destinations worldwide.

### MORE THAN A GATEWAY

Speaking of HIA, the first image that comes to your mind is probably that of the Lamp Bear by Urs Fischer that takes centre stage in the grand foyer of the airport.

And this isn't it. HIA is one of the most architecturally significant terminal buildings across the globe, featuring a series of international and local. Its extravagant Passenger Terminal Complex offers attractive first impressions of Qatar.

Overall, the design aesthetics of the airport are reminiscent of Qatar's natural environment and heritage. For instance, the HIA's curve-shaped design is inspired by ocean waves and sand dunes. Inside, the shape of Emiri Terminal resembles that of a sailboat. The departure hall is an artistic glass wonder, featuring glass walls and stunning lights.

Apart from HIA's self-check-in and self-bag-drop kiosks that provide passengers with a faster and smoother check-in process, the airport has also recently introduced 10 automated security gates at the pre-immigration area, so passengers can scan their own boarding cards and proceed to immigration, creating an autonomous travel experience.

In 2019, the airport authorities announced the elaborate expansion plan to further uplift HIA. This features an indoor tropical garden, a 268m<sup>2</sup> water feature, enhanced retail and F&B space, and Al Mourjan lounge spanning.

### TRAVERSING AROUND

Offering diverse attractions, from a tourism standpoint, Doha is a veritable hotbed of action. The city is blessed with abundant natural beauty such as palm-lined sandy beaches, majestic landscapes and a beautiful promenade, the Doha Corniche. In fact, for adventure lovers, the desert offers exciting excursions including dune bashing, safaris, and luxury camping experiences. And for those who wish to learn about the culture and history of the region, the Museum of Islamic Art and the National Museum of Qatar should definitely be a part of the itinerary. While the Museum of Islamic Art houses the largest collection of Islamic art, jewellery, patterns, textiles, and calligraphic items along with artefacts that date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the National Museum of Qatar narrates the story of the evolution of the country from pre-historic times. If you are interested in architectural aspects of the city, make a trip to Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre, a cultural organisation in Doha. Located close to Doha Corniche, it is a prominent landmark in the city and is distinguished by its distinctive minaret.

The city is also renowned for its buzzing local markets and shopping malls. Souq Waqif is a major landmark in Doha, selling everything from everyday household goods, fabrics, spices to artefacts and souvenirs. There are also some other interesting souqs in the vicinity that are specifically dedicated to pets, falcons, camels and Arabian horses. The traditional and historical Qatari vibe at Souq Waqif comes alive during the evenings and keeps visitors entertained and satiated with its thriving food, drink and shisha scenes.

An authentic Qatari meal (that shares influences with the other Middle Eastern and North African regions) must be included on your visit here. Must-try dishes include balaleet (saffron-infused vermicelli rice) served with an egg omelette; khanfarooosh (fried saffron and cardamom cake); khobz regag (a type of thin bread) and harriss, an Emirati porridge.

If you want to experience modern Doha, then The Pearl-Qatar is the place to be. An artificial island, it is supposedly among the most glamorous addresses in the Middle East. The island is constructed on what was once Qatar's major pearl diving site (this also boosted the country's economy in a big way). On the island you will find an array of restaurants, shops, residential buildings; pedestrian-friendly squares and plazas, and a beautiful marina. For travellers, this is a great place to have fun with photography as each part of The Pearl-Qatar is modelled after a different part of the world. The main Porto Arabia area is modelled on Cannes, the Qanat Quartier on Venice and the Medina Centrale on Spain. Even the replica Rialto Bridge is quite an Insta-glory.

This integrated and sustainable island also makes for quite a fancy abode, as it provides residents with a multitude of amenities, lifestyle privileges and an eclectic mix of retail services. Currently, the place boasts more than 750 retail outlets, including over 400 mid- to high-level retail brands, occupying more than 115,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail space.





#### MICE TALK

Doha has long established itself as a preferred MICE destination in the Middle East. Hence, every year, the city experiences a major flow of business tourists. The Qatari capital boasts some extensive convention centres and conference spaces that are in line with international standards. A case in a point is the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC) that is a prominent multi-purpose MICE venue.

Located in West Bay, the hub of Qatar's commercial district, the DECC offers a pillar-less event space, which can be divided into five exhibition halls. To cater to business travellers, the DECC also provides luxurious suites and majlis (council rooms).

The Qatar National Convention Centre was designed by the renowned Japanese architect Arata Isozaki and is one of the largest venues in the Middle East with conference and performance areas, exhibition foyers and VIP lounges.

#### THE BIG GAME

Qatar is gearing up for its massive FIFA World Cup debut in 2022; and Doha is set to play a major role as one of the three host cities — the other two being Al Khor and Al Wakrah. Nearly half a million football fans are expected to visit the country during this period.

Six of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 venues are in Doha. These are Al Rayyan Stadium, Al Thumama Stadium, Education City Stadium, Khalifa International Stadium, Lusail Stadium and Ras Abu Aboud Stadium.

To date, Doha has hosted major championships such as the 15<sup>th</sup> Asian Games Doha 2006 and the 2011 Plan Arab Games, among others.

#### WHERE TO STAY

##### The St. Regis Doha



Situated on West Bay, The St. Regis Doha offers 336 guestrooms and suites with an Arabian-influenced décor and exceptional sea views. Rooms are equipped with an iPod docking station, a refreshment centre stocked with a variety of snacks and beverages and Remède Spa bath amenities. The hotel includes a range of events spaces, which features seven meeting rooms and the Grand Ballroom. Culinary options include the Oyster Bay & Bar; Opal by Gordon Ramsay and Astor Grill among others. [marriott.com](http://marriott.com)

##### Grand Hyatt Doha Hotel & Villas

Located on the shoreline of the West Bay Lagoon district, the property features 249 rooms and suites, ranging from 40m<sup>2</sup> to 205m<sup>2</sup>, and 91 villas. Accommodation categories include one King Bed Club Access, one King Terrace, a four-bedroom villa and a two-bedroom villa. All rooms are spacious, have a balcony or terrace, are equipped with modern amenities, and offer spectacular views of the green gardens or the private beach. [hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com)

##### InterContinental Doha – The City



InterContinental Doha – The City is located in West Bay area, and is a short distance from Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre. Some of the accommodation categories of this property are Standard rooms, Executive rooms, and suites. The ballroom can be divided into three parts, with a capacity of 850 guests. There are also several other meeting venues including a private boardroom. The hotel's event specialists help you with the entire planning. [ihg.com](http://ihg.com)

## Sheraton Grand Doha Resort & Convention Hotel

Featuring a splendid façade, the Sheraton Grand Doha Resort & Convention Hotel offers 371 guestrooms and suites. Its leisure facilities include Sheraton Fitness (centre), an outdoor pool, a jacuzzi and indoor squash courts to name a few. The property is also ideal for hosting weddings as it is home to several event venues and outdoor areas. [marriott.com](http://marriott.com)

## Mandarin Oriental, Doha



Located in the centre of Msheireb Downtown Doha, Mandarin Oriental, Doha combines Qatari heritage with Mandarin Oriental's well-known hospitality. The hotel offers 117 rooms, 41 suites and 91 serviced apartments. Dining outlets include IZU, Mosaic, Liang, Mandarin Lounge, Gelato and Ambar among others. The hotel can host big meetings and social events at its ballroom, which can seat up to 280 guests. The Spa at Mandarin Oriental features six private treatment rooms, a couple's suite, two VIP suites and two indoor pools. [mandarinoriental.com/doha](http://mandarinoriental.com/doha)

## JW Marriott Marquis City Center Doha



This hotel is directly connected to the City Centre Mall, offering a plethora of shopping and entertainment options. Ideal for business and leisure travellers, the property offers elegant rooms and suites providing views of the city and the Gulf. The hotel also features varied culinary experiences from a range of international cuisines including a Greek restaurant, a Chinese restaurant with a club lounge and a Middle Eastern outlet. [marriott.com](http://marriott.com)

## The Ritz-Carlton, Doha



Explore the city's progressive spirit at The Ritz-Carlton, Doha, which is replete with modern accommodation, unique dining offerings and recreational amenities. Choose from one of the 374 well-equipped guestrooms with views of the city or Arabian Gulf. The 61 luxury suites and 42 club rooms are ideal for your leisure and business stay. STK Doha, B-Lounge Doha, Flamingos, Sel & Miel, a French Brasserie and The Lagoon form a part of their varied onsite dining establishments. Two ballrooms and six meeting rooms can be used for meetings and events. This is one of the finest addresses in the Qatar capital. [ritzcarlton.com](http://ritzcarlton.com)

## Dusit Doha Hotel



Situated in the heart of West Bay, Dusit Doha Hotel is a 20-minute drive from Hamad International Airport, and stands adjacent to the Corniche. This upscale, modern establishment offers 357 guest rooms, suites and apartments. Centuries-old Thai heritage and culture can be experienced through four fine dining venues, a rooftop bar and a lounge. Pamper yourself at the Devarana Spa, fitted with 17 treatment rooms and VIP treatment suites for solo and couples. [dusit.com](http://dusit.com) <sup>51</sup>



## Southern Sun - The Cullinan

### CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

**BACKGROUND** Southern Sun hotels and resorts are owned and managed by Tsogo Sun Hotels and include 24 properties.

**WHERE IS IT?** Just 20km from Cape Town International Airport, the hotel is located within easy reach of the V&A Waterfront, the Cape Town International Convention Centre, Long Street and other popular landmarks.

**ROOM FACILITIES:** There are 394 rooms, including suites, with views of Table Mountain, the Table Bay Harbour and Waterfront, or the Cape Town city centre. My corner suite on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor consisted of a living room, guest toilet and large bedroom with en-suite bathroom. There wasn't a work desk, but the dining table was versatile, and once I swapped out the dining chair for the dressing table stool, I was all set. The shower was a little tricky to get working, but I figured it out quickly enough. The marble-topped bar held a Nespresso coffee machine and a fully-stocked mini fridge. There were two flat screen TVs – a large one in the living room and a smaller one in the bedroom – with the standard DsTV hotel bouquet. Suites include a butler (I didn't make use of this), a bath menu and a pillow menu – I think this was my favourite offering. I was able to get a memory foam pillow in addition to the standard feather pillows, which never offer enough support, no matter how I mould and stack them. Plug points were plentiful, but I found just one USB port, in the sitting room, along with a host of ports for complicated technology. However, since I forgot my charging cables at home, this wasn't really an issue. I was just glad that I was able to charge my phone and tablet at the concierge desk – you have to give your room number to make sure that you don't accidentally take someone else's devices.

**RESTAURANTS & BARS:** The Peach Tree restaurant is located on the mezzanine and serves a full daily breakfast buffet and an interactive dinner buffet that serves tantalising Cape Malay fusion dishes. The choices were seemingly endless – cold meat, cheese, cereal, pastries, fruit, eggs, bacon, sausage, mushrooms, tomato and more. I opted for my regular hotel breakfast of muesli, yoghurt and fresh fruit and followed that with a freshly-baked waffle. Stella Café & Bar serves tapas-style dishes and heartier meals around the pool.

**BUSINESS & MEETING FACILITIES:** There are nine flexible spaces on site. Meeting rooms offer private, fully serviced facilities for smaller groups of 12 or less, while reception areas are able to host up to 155 guests with ease.

**LEISURE FACILITIES:** The V&A Waterfront will doubtless satisfy all your shopping and entertainment needs with its wide array of shops, bars, restaurants and activities. However, if this fails to beckon, there is a sparkling outdoor pool, a fully equipped fitness centre and an on-site spa at the hotel.

**VERDICT** A really stunning mid-market hotel that punches above its weight. The combination of classical architecture and modern furnishings creates a distinctive product and the friendly and helpful staff round out the offering for a memorable experience. *Kate Kennedy*



#### CONTACT

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**W:** [tsogosun.com](http://tsogosun.com)

# Aviation in Africa

*Aviation in Africa is very complex and closely related to its macroeconomic underperformance, government regulations and lack of co-ordination across the continent. It is also an economic enabler and in order for growth and prosperity to feature in the African continent, a focused aviation vision for the continent is critical. These comments are from Carla de Silva, Regional General Manager of Southern Africa and Latin America for Air Mauritius. She has an interesting take on the industry, which she shared with Business Traveller Africa.*



**CARLA DA SILVA**  
AIR MAURITIUS REGIONAL GENERAL MANAGER:  
SOUTHERN AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA

**Q: What's your view on the state of aviation in Africa?**

**A:** Africa is still lagging behind the rest of world in the aviation space. The continent of Africa still has the fewest airline seats available; the smallest fleet of narrow-body and wide-body aircrafts, as well as the lowest number of aircraft on orders. The passengers loads are also the weakest compared to other continents. Challenges in terms of safety, security, infrastructure and skill development are still very much alive. Many of the airlines in Africa continue to be state owned which has its challenges. Africa's underperformance is likely to continue and this is also due to the slow implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market. Africa's 2019 airline capacity total of 232 million seats is 42% smaller than that of the next smallest region, the Middle East, which has 397 million seats, in spite of Africa's much larger land size and population. Africa has only 258 aircraft on order, compared with 998 for the next smallest region on this measure, Latin America. In the first eight months of 2019, Africa's passenger load factor was 71.9%, versus a global average of 83.0%.

**Q: Can you estimate of a rough percentage of passengers flying with Air Mauritius for business?**

**A:** It is approximately 30% of our travellers travelling to Mauritius from Southern Africa.

**Q: Where does technology fit into the Air Mauritius strategy?**

**A:** Technology is integral to our business, not only from a safety and security perspective but also from passenger experience. New generation aircraft that are more environmentally friendly, reducing carbon emissions, clean air onboard, wi-fi enablement and enhanced technology features are all part of the technology strategy.

**Q: What changes has Air Mauritius made to its international network in the last two years?**

**A:** Air Mauritius has focused on the developing, emerging markets by establishing the Air Corridor strategy connecting Africa with Asia due to its geography. We continue to fly to Europe via London and Paris with new generation aircraft with seasonal flights to Geneva (Switzerland). We continue to fly to Australia, India, China (suspended currently due to COVID-19) and inter island in the Indian Ocean as well as Africa.

**Q: Have you made any recent changes to your fleet and/or onboard product?**

**A:** We have introduced new generation aircraft and we are the first airline globally to introduce A350-900 XWB and A330-300 neo. All our aircrafts were refurbished with our new onboard product experience. All our aircrafts have new state-of-the-art technology seating,

in-flight entertainment and connectivity. Air Mauritius is proud 4 Star Sky Tracks airline and a member of IATA.

**Q: Are there any international airline trends you feel are currently worth noting?**

**A:** There has been a trend in terms of more joint ventures and strategic partnerships in the aviation arena as the airline industry is extremely volatile and affected, whether positively or negatively, by all world-wide events and developments.

**Q: How is the Coronavirus affecting the airline?**

**A:** [At the time of writing] Mauritius is still a safe zone and has no reported coronavirus cases. Air Mauritius has cancelled flights to China only and implemented travel restrictions to Mauritius from Iran, Italy, China and South Korea.

**Q: What can customers expect from Air Mauritius in the 2020s?**

**A:** From a South Africa perspective, the plan is to increase capacity and schedules to South Africa as an important and strategic region, specifically Johannesburg and Cape Town. The new generation aircraft has also been deployed to South Africa. The Travel Smart Programme, the top leisure value proposition in South Africa, has grown from strength to strength and we looking at enhancements in this regard. ■



# Coronavirus effects

*As the world reels from the effects of Coronavirus, tourism is being hit hard. Ashish Kapur, South African Country Manager for Hong Kong-based airline Cathay Pacific, sheds some light on the situation in China.*



**ASHISH KAPUR**  
COUNTRY MANAGER - SOUTH AFRICA AND  
INDIAN OCEAN AT CATHAY PACIFIC AIRWAYS

**Q: What is the status of flights into Mainland China?**

**A:** Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon reduced the capacity of flights to and from mainland China by 90% until 31 March 2020. Based on the market demand, the airline is still operating flights to Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu and Xiamen. As the situation is very dynamic, passengers are advised to check the status of their flights on the Cathay Pacific website.

**Q: How is the Coronavirus affecting the production and distribution of goods from China?**

**A:** While the movement of shipments on the China Trade lanes have been affected, from Johannesburg we have moved relief material into China. This includes masks and protective clothing. We have also seen movement of cargo to countries like Thailand, Japan and Australia which primarily includes pharmaceuticals, fresh produce and also general cargo.

**Q: What operational effect is the Coronavirus having on flights into South Africa?**

**A:** In light of the coronavirus outbreak as well as the current travel demand, Cathay Pacific has rationalised its flights across the network, including its Johannesburg services. Cathay Pacific operated three flights a week instead of seven to Johannesburg until 28 March 2020. As the situation is evolving rapidly, Cathay

Pacific remains agile to scale up or down depending on the demand. As a premium service brand, Cathay Pacific Group always prioritises the health and safety of passengers and employees. To further combat the spread of the virus, the airline has introduced procedures and initiatives to protect its customers, operating crew and employees. Cathay Pacific Group has been in close contact with the relevant authorities such as the Hong Kong Government, the Port Health Authority, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to safeguard our passengers travelling to, from and through Hong Kong on our flights.

**Q: How have your other routes been affected?**

**A:** COVID-19 is a global concern and in lieu of this challenge Cathay Pacific has rationalised capacity across the network.

**Q: What safety measures has Cathay Pacific put in place to prevent the spread of the virus while travelling?**

**A:** Health and safety are a top priority for Cathay Pacific. For this reason, the airline has introduced the following measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19: Face masks, antiseptic wipes and sanitisers have been made available at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA).

- Temperature checks for all passengers

and crew arriving, departing and transiting through HKIA.

- Health declaration forms distributed on flights from mainland China to Hong Kong.
- Rationalised services to mainland China by 90%, including suspending operations to Wuhan until 31 March 2020.
- Modified inflight meals and duty-free services on mainland China routes.
- Health update broadcasts on board all flights arriving into Hong Kong.
- Thorough cabin disinfection and deep cleaning on all flights as mandated by Hong Kong Port Health Authority and as per Cathay Pacific Group's strict guidelines.
- Regular cleaning of high-use areas and serving pre-prepared meals in our lounges in Hong Kong, Shanghai Pudong and Beijing.
- Cathay Pacific Group and its catering partners adhere to strict food preparation and storage procedures that are in accordance with Hong Kong and the international safety standards.

**Q: What is your advice to people who still want to travel, or have already planned to travel in the midst of the pandemic?**

**A:** The wellbeing of passengers has been always been Cathay Pacific's top most priority. The airline is taking multiple precautionary measures including disinfecting cabins to ensure the safety of its passengers, should they choose to travel with us. **BT**

# Anger management

*If you want to gain a unique perspective on human nature, deal with complaints from frequent flyers*



**RICHARD TAMS**  
AIRLINE CONSULTANT AND EXECUTIVE COACH

**P**ublic relations executive and humourist Franklin P Jones once wrote that “untold suffering seldom is”. Having worked for almost three decades at the customer coalface of a renowned air transport provider, I can heartily echo this sentiment.

My many days managing the relationship between the airline and its top corporate customers were peppered with the receipt of complaints of all shapes and sizes. Most would make me wince, some would make me scream, a few would make me laugh, while others would make me ponder on the importance of retaining some perspective.

Being the willing recipient of complaints from our most frequent flyers gave me a clear line of sight as to what the airline was doing right and, more important, what it was getting wrong. While this was an important and valuable part of my role, very occasionally it also gave me a unique insight into some of the more unusual troubles these warriors of the skies had to endure at our behest and why some of them most definitely needed to get a life.

## FUR WILL FLY

The first bizarre complaint that I remember receiving was from the chief executive of a company who wrote to inform me of a rather distressing occurrence in first class on descent into New York JFK. The captain had alerted passengers to their imminent arrival into the Big Apple and advised cabin crew to prepare for landing. At this point, the crew retrieved the chief executive’s wife’s

coat from the wardrobe and laid it on her knee for landing.

As is often the case, the aircraft was then put into an unexpected holding pattern above the airfield, delaying its arrival by 20 minutes. This chief executive had put pen to paper to severely reprimand the airline for causing his wife the discomfort of almost half an hour with her fur coat on her knee. From this point onwards, I realised that the perspectives of some frequent flyers and those of the rest of the world differed greatly. I once received an angry letter from a regular visitor to one of our business class lounges. The missive came shortly after we had replaced the individually wrapped Scottish shortbread snacks with a wider range of unwrapped cookies served in a large glass jar. The author vigorously criticised the airline for not sparing a thought for all of those mothers who relied on such takeaway goodies to stock their children’s lunchboxes throughout the week. How could we have been so thoughtless?

The airline’s catering department, naively believing a reduction in wasteful packaging would be applauded by our frequent flyers, had not bargained on the wrath of the Mumsnet mafia. Legend has it that a couple of weeks later a man was stopped from walking out of the lounge with a whole jar of the offending snacks under his coat.

## FIRST WORLD PROBLEMS

Other complaints provided even more unfortunate insights into the soul of man. One of the least pleasurable jobs I had to undertake was to occasionally extract a much sought-after loyalty card from its owner. These cards were highly desirable because they could not be earned or bought but were bestowed on our most important flyers from above.

Perhaps not surprisingly, those who had loyalty cards rarely offered to return them when circumstances changed, and it would sometimes fall to me to notify the holder of the cancellation of their card. This process was never pleasant and seldom without incident. After one rather tortuous extraction, I received a letter from

the now ex-cardholder. He told me that as a result of our action, he had been severely diminished socially. “My friends consider me less of a man now that I no longer have this card,” he wrote. Well, with friends like that . . .

Of course, the vast majority of complaints about airports, missed flights and lost luggage are justified and if you are tempted to write about the various shortcomings of your airline of choice, please proceed. It’s the only way they’ll learn. However, just before posting your letter, or pressing “send”, just remember that some of these occurrences are what we call “first world problems.” ■

Some of the complaints would make me ponder on the importance of retaining perspective



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KEEP CLIMBING



DELTA



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third party claims**

from **R50** per day



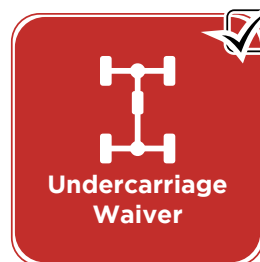
**Reduce liability by 95%**

from **R100** per day



**Reduce liability by 85%**

from **R60** per day



**Be 100% covered**

from **R50** per day

## Additional Extras:



**R60**  
per day



**R30**  
per driver per day

**INCREASE YOUR PROTECTION**