

# Business Traveller

AFRICA

MAY 2020

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**POST-CORONAVIRUS  
REALITY**

*Airline industry must adapt*

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**WORK FROM HOME**

*5 tips to remaining productive*

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**KEEPING YOUR DISTANCE**

*It's not easy on a plane*

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**PLUS**

*ASTA Column; HTI Column,  
BA Review, A word from  
Proflight Zambia*



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I'm not sure about you, but I'm ready for this whole lockdown situation to end. Which is strange, since I generally eschew socialising in favour of time spent alone at home. But, I'd like the option to socialise.

The things I miss most aren't the restaurants, bars and cafes, but rather the book and stationery shops, garden centres and diy/craft suppliers, all of which I really enjoy visiting and browsing (I try to keep my purchases to a minimum). While I've been stuck at home, spending time in the house, I've found a number of spots that could do with a few shelves to store and/or display things that I've had time to rearrange. I've had some inspiration for new soft furnishings that I could whip up, if only I had access to the right materials. And I now have a number of half-finished projects that require more materials to complete.

I am lucky enough to still be working – I've been based at a home office for a few years already – which definitely offers distraction from the isolation, even if I occasionally have to fight for motivation to remain productive. To help keep my motivation going, I'm following the tips on page 10, which will hopefully help you if you're in the same boat in which I find myself.

But because lockdown had changed very little for me, it sometimes comes as a small shock when I remember that I can't pop out to buy more yarn for my crochet project or pick out a new plant for my garden.

As Level 4 lockdown eases the lives of many South Africans, I'm really looking forward to taking some (socially distant) walks around my neighbourhood and perhaps placing an online order for newly-classified essential items.

It is unfortunate that Level 4 doesn't help the travel sector, with even inter-provincial travel being denied. But there are some companies already innovating to make air travel (whenever that's allowed again) safer for passengers. Check out page 6 to see what Italian design firm Aviointeriors has come up with.

Whether you're working from home, or just staying home, stay safe.

'Til next time

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## THIS IS WHAT ECONOMY CLASS COULD LOOK LIKE POST-COVID-19

Airlines are often trying to come up with innovative ways to cram together as many people on a plane as possible, especially in economy class cabins.

But the Coronavirus crisis is fundamentally changing this long-held tenet as airlines are bringing social distancing to the skies by sometimes even blocking middle seats. This could potentially even change the way seats are designed and arranged on planes post-Covid-19.

Italian design firm Aviointeriors, which specialises in designing aircraft cabin interiors and passenger seats, has proposed two new seat designs for post-COVID-19 travel that attempt to create some social distance between passengers on planes without losing seating capacity.

In one of Aviointeriors' proposed designs, the middle seat is facing backwards and every seat has a plastic shield partially surrounding it. Dubbed Janus, after the two-faced Roman god, passengers on the aisle and window seats in this new s-shaped arrangement will continue to face the direction of travel.



Each seat is surrounded by a high shield that prevents the “breath propagation to occupants of adjacent seats.” The firm said the shield will create a protective barrier for passengers.

“Each passenger has its own space isolated from others, even from people who walk through the aisle,” said the design company.

The new design does raise practical questions about safety, in-flight meal service and whether it will occupy a larger cabin footprint than the standard plane seat arrangement.

According to *The Telegraph*, rear-facing seats could be safer in the event of an accident or emergency landing as they provide better support for the back, neck and head. David Learmount, operations and safety editor at the aviation news website *FlightGlobal.com* told *The Telegraph* last year that airlines would be unlikely to support rear-facing seats due to costs and customer preference.

Aviointeriors has also proposed another seat design for airlines for when travel returns after COVID-19.



The Italian seat-maker unveiled the Glassafe, a shield that can be added to each seat on a plane to create a barrier between passengers. This shield can also be “easily” installed and removed so airlines do not have to drastically change the cabin interior of the aircraft.

The firm said this transparent shield could “reduce the probability of contamination by viruses.”

“Glassafe can be made in an opaque material or with different degrees of transparency,” said Aviointeriors. Each plastic shield has a cut out for the passenger’s shoulders. **BT**

# What will business travel look like post-COVID-19?



**OTTO DE VRIES**  
ASATA CEO

**C** OVID-19 has changed the world as we knew it. We woke up suddenly to a new world where flights are grounded, offices are closed, and where our partners, kids and pets are our new co-workers.

Online work is the new 'normal'. Despite some fails, most people have become well accustomed to meeting virtually and discussing important work matters online.

Where does this leave business travel?

Few industries have been hit as hard as travel, with bookings dropping to zero overnight. Even post-COVID-19, we can expect a shift in demand as the exchange of information will increasingly take place in the virtual realm. However, that doesn't mean people will stop travelling for business altogether.

As an experienced business traveller, what are you finding difficult during this lockdown period? Are you struggling to engage your team? Are you finding it hard to strike that personal note with your client? Are you battling to convert that critical sale?

Although information can be shared online, building and maintaining personal relationships – which is ultimately at the core of any company's future growth – remains difficult to achieve in a virtual world. This is where the real value of business travel lies.

With endless data at their fingertips, TMCs are ideally placed to help companies identify where business travel adds context-specific value. They are an indispensable ally to help streamline and increase the return of investment of any company's travel programme.

Working with a TMC who has both technology and offline support to help travellers and companies in times of need is critical. From providing travellers with expert, human customer service and support to structuring and implementing a managed travel programme, the benefits of enrolling a professional travel team are numerous.

A reliable managed travel programme will not only help a business better manage the disruption to business travel today, but can also help get the business moving again as soon as travel bans begin to ease.

Once business travel resumes, the importance of communication can't be underestimated. A new set of regulations is likely to be implemented – varying per destination, as lockdowns will not be lifted simultaneously across the world. This information needs to be shared in a clear and succinct way as information overload can lead to confusion and anxiety.

More than ever before, companies will need to know where their employees are at all times, while road warriors will need the latest advice on regulations and high-risk destinations. This information needs to

reach the right people in real-time with relevant updates as soon as the situation changes.

Travel consultants have their finger on the pulse and can help companies make sense of the overload of information. They're the experts in helping companies implement practical and reliable duty of care and corporate travel strategies. And once this is all over, you're going to be grateful for that expert guidance.

What will business travel look like post-COVID-19? Nobody has the answer.

However, at ASATA, we believe we will see a more meaningful form of business travel emerge – one that will deliver true return on investment. **BT**

# Hotels – A way of survival during COVID-19



**WAYNE TROUGHTON**  
CEO HTI CONSULTING

**W**ith travel at a virtual standstill due to the global COVID-19 outbreak, it's imperative for hotels to have in place an action plan to address the current state and the future rise in business and leisure travel demand.

Unsurprisingly (according to a special forecast from STR and Tourism Economics,) due to the COVID-19 pandemic the hotel industry is projected to report significant decline across demand, occupancy, ADR and RevPAR in 2020. The positive prognosis is that the global travel industry should regain its footing in the latter half of this year and into 2021.

Remember, travelling is a present-day lifestyle and business activity. Let's stay optimistic that the demand for accommodation services will return to 'normal' (or perhaps 'new normal') levels as soon as the situation improves. Here are some basic survival tips and recommendations for hotel management at this time.

## SHORT TERM

While COVID-19 is still impacting travel, and a hotel is either closed or experiencing a significant drop in bookings, the brand should remain connected to past guests and share valuable content for people to access whilst working from home. This is not the time to cease communication on your website, blog, social media, and email. During a crisis, people will remember how your brand made them feel, and providing the right content can strengthen the brand relationship long-term.

## DO

- Implement an emergency strategy for your property, as well as forecasting and productivity enhancements.
- Build a profit protection plan with your executive team; have a clear revenue management direction to avoid reckless discount actions to reduced demand.

- Consider ways to reposition your business and to prepare for what the market will look like post COVID-19 as it is expected to be vastly different.
- Focus on long-term good that, where possible, should include fair guest cancellation policies that engender feel-good sentiment.
- Focus on employee relations. Help staff and associated employees and partners apply for benefits i.e. debt relief, payment holiday etc.

## DON'T

- Focus unnecessarily on occupancy levels. Unfortunately there is likely nothing you can do to influence more guests to stay at this time.

## MID TERM

As I've stressed, it is important to address cancellation policies and any prevention plans in place if the hotel is open. Your website and critical communication channels and collateral should address:

- ▶ Prevention plans
- ▶ Cancellation policies
- ▶ FAQs around COVID-19 specific to your geographical area
- ▶ How the hotel or brand is assisting the local community
- ▶ Contact information should guests have queries or concerns.

## DO

- Focus on those individuals who may need to continue to travel (essential workers, government officials etc).
- Maintain relationships with service providers to inform each other about epidemic-related issues.
- Promote to locals who understand the environment. Plus look at package deals especially to reduce seasonality. Locals will be more inclined to travel locally first.
- Look to introduce specials for post-COVID times and continue to entice

people and business that are currently in isolation.

## DON'T

- Go overboard with discounting. Attempt to maintain pricing integrity as much as possible!
- Lay off core staff. They can assist in working on your future plans.

## LONG TERM

Think RECOVERY! Downtime, while hotels are closed, can be used as a vital time prepare for the next downturn and improve operational capabilities. Your long-term goal should be to recover and scale back up faster than competitors and adapt to the 'new normal' in terms of customer demand.

How to quickly and accurately capture the change in this demand, how to create a corresponding customer experience, how to turn crisis into opportunity and how to seize the opportunity for development...these are the key challenges for hoteliers to consider.

## DO

- Ascertain which customers are likely to return soonest.
- Maintain a relationship with the individual or company behind every cancelled reservation.
- Look to future group/conference bookings.
- Prepare future marketing and promotional collateral.
- 'Future focus' your sales and marketing teams. Brainstorm ideas, innovation solutions and special approaches.
- Consider staggering the opening of rooms and facilities.
- Reorganise department structures and workflow systems where necessary.
- Continue to emphasise measures you are taking to ensure the safety of guests from COVID-19 as it will take time for panic to die down. **BT**

# Why we need to embrace the new normal in the post-COVID-19 world



**CHITALU KABALIKA**  
PROFLIGHT ZAMBIA CORPORATE DIRECTOR

**A**t the start of the year, no one could have predicted just how much of an impact the Coronavirus would have on our daily lives. A few months into the year, that for many was a starting point into a new decade with a renewed sense of optimism, the economic toll of the outbreak has had an unprecedented effect. But no other industry has been hit as much as the aviation industry and others that depend on it for survival.

The COVID-19 pandemic will definitely leave its mark on the aviation industry forever. The chain of actions or perhaps reactions in the past few months has been quick and sudden, all in a bid to contain the spread of the virus. The world over, airlines have had to ground most of their fleet and, in some instances, their entire fleet. Governments around the world have imposed restrictions on air travel. Some countries have banned international and domestic commercial flights altogether.

Regional airlines have been disproportionately affected by the crisis, because they often have smaller balance sheets and relatively fewer resources to weather the financial storm.

With this backdrop, the industry faces massive pressure on cash flow from extraordinary travel restrictions and a tremendous drop in passenger demand. According to the COVID-19 Airline Tracker, as of the end of March over 117 airlines around the world had grounded 90% or more of their capacity and over 167 had grounded at least 40%.

According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) the global hit to the industry is projected to be \$29 billion this year – a 4.7% industry-wide drop in revenue per

passenger kilometre. By mid-March, African airlines had chalked up a combined \$4.4 billion in losses.

As an industry that does not operate in isolation, its challenges have a direct and indirect bearing on other industries. The tourism and hospitality industry is also hard hit by the COVID-19 crisis; hotels have had to temporarily close down and most tourists cancelled their bookings. To put this into context, Zambia has lost about \$7 million in revenue following the cancellation of tourism packages across the country in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Ministry of Tourism and Arts.

## THE NEW NORMAL

The exact timeline of economic recovery remains unclear, but the impact will eventually pass. Once this is all over, people will travel again. However, we need to understand now that the aviation, tourism and hospitality industries will be facing a new 'Post-COVID-19 reality', where companies are all competing for the hearts and minds of cautious travellers – likely in some form of a sustained economic downturn driven by this crisis.

The new normal will likely include everything from mundane sanitation and hygiene practices to broader topics such as the health of nations, regions or specific destination points, the role of travel insurance, and issues unique to specific modes of travel.

Also, as price-sensitive travellers may be looking to trade down on products and comforts, we are likely to see shorter booking windows, and possibly more trips

with lower budgets and much briefer itineraries. But there may be more; we need to use this time to begin to anticipate what that new normal might look like and prepare for it.

For an airline like Proflight that has been in business for almost three decades, major crises like COVID-19 almost always fundamentally change and evolve the status quo. As such, it's not just a matter of getting our industry's engine restarted. Instead, the collective stakeholder ecosystem (tourism and aviation) must understand what has changed, and what will best position the industry to grow together and become a force once again in the new Post-COVID-19 world.

## SILVER LINING?

The industry's vulnerabilities are multi-faceted, but its ability to deal with impacts associated with these vulnerabilities in the past puts it in a good position to overcome the COVID-19 crisis.

To echo the UN World Tourism Organisation, it is against a backdrop of travel restrictions being introduced, the importance of international dialogue and cooperation has never been more important. The COVID-19 challenge represents an opportunity to show how solidarity can go beyond borders.

As the impact of COVID-19 lessens and demand increases, it is crucial that we act in a proactive manner; we need to stop treating this crisis like business as usual. There are no rules or flight plans for this situation, and the right answer is continuously changing. The industry cannot be limited by the thinking of the past or the tried and true. **BT**



# How to work from home

WORDS HANNAH BRANDLER

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic has shaken up the world, with drastic consequences for the travel industry. This will be new territory for a large portion of the workforce, especially business travellers who are more accustomed to hotel rooms, airport lounges and airplanes as working environments.

While the travelling aspect of the “business traveller” has been put on hold for the time being, the business aspect must adapt. To abide by the government’s guidelines of self-isolation, many companies have requested that employees work from home.

We’re here to offer some tips on how to be productive when working from home, all the while reassuring you that this is by no means the end of the road for travel.

Here’ are five tips for working from home.

## 1. Get dressed

Lazing around in pyjamas might sound inviting but it’s not conducive to productivity. Opt for something comfortable, or continue with business attire, to get you into the right frame of mind for the day ahead. This also means that you will look (and feel) professional should you need to dial in to a video conference call.

## Eat well

Start the day with an energising protein-filled breakfast and make sure to have

regular tea, coffee and snack breaks. Take a proper lunch hour and join a family member, flatmate or video call a friend to get your mind off work. This will help to reset you for the afternoon.

## 2. Maintain a routine

If possible, stick with the same hours as a normal working day so that you can clock on and off. While you will no longer be commuting to/from work, you can use this time to get in some exercise – there are loads of videos online for at-home workouts that you can follow along to, or set your own routine. Jot down a to-do list before you begin work and tick off the tasks once completed. This will help to maintain structure and show you what you have accomplished by the end of the day.

## 3. Set up a workstation

If you can, separate your bedroom and work environment as this will help you to switch off in the evening and get a better night’s sleep. Tidy away any clutter and set up your workstation to make it as comfortable and inviting as possible.

Make sure you have a socket close by and that you are near a strong wi-fi connection. If using a laptop, try fashioning a stand from coffee table books so that your eyebrows are level with the top of the screen. This will prevent you from slouching and enduring back pain. You could also invest in a sit/stand desk and an adjustable office chair.

Don’t forget to back up your work on an external hard drive or in the cloud

– it really isn’t the time for another disaster!

## 4. Stay social

Self-isolating doesn’t mean that we should restrict ourselves from all human interaction, quite the opposite. It’s all the more important to keep in touch with colleagues, friends and family during times of crisis.

Buffer’s State of Remote Work Report 2020 revealed that 20% of remote workers find that collaboration, communication and loneliness are the biggest challenges of working from home. To resolve this, use social media platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Slack and Zoom. Chat to your colleagues regularly on messenger or video calls to keep in the loop and bounce ideas off one another.

Videoconferencing has seen a huge rise in demand already, with Italy seeing a three-fold increase according to the *Financial Times*. Just make sure that your phone is on mute when other people are talking, especially if there’s a lot of background noise at home.

## 5. Give yourself a break

Make sure that you take five minute breaks throughout the day to give your mind and eyes a break after constantly staring at the screen.

Finally, don’t fret if it doesn’t all go to plan to begin with. We’re all adjusting to this new way of working and it will take a few days to work out which practices work best for you. **BT**

# Social distancing on aircraft

WORDS TOM OTLEY

**S**ocial distancing on an aircraft presents unique problems. Whereas in public, at the airport, and even waiting in line at the gate it is possible to keep your distance from your fellow travellers, once on board, the space between you is less than two metres, and in most cases, is far less than one metre.

Yet airlines are determined to give us the choice of flying, while at the same time artificially creating space between passengers, most commonly by blocking off the middle seats in single-aisle aircraft.

But is blocking off the middle seat effective as a form of social distancing? Much depends on other factors, such as the personal hygiene of the passengers

sitting around you – if they keep coughing into the air or into their hand and then touching surfaces, then it will cause potential infection of others. What airlines can do is bring in a range of other measures.

## AIR QUALITY

Airlines are quick to point out that the quality of air on their aircraft is extremely high. Qantas, for instance, says that “Our aircraft have the highest air quality, with HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filters installed in the filtration systems.

“These devices filter 99.999% of dust particles and airborne contaminants such as viruses and bacteria... These are the same type of filters that are used in hospital operating rooms.”

Allegiant, meanwhile, says “The air quality on our planes exceeds HEPA standards thanks to our VOC (volatile organic compound) filters, which remove additional organic compounds. On average, cabin air is changed every three minutes through a continuous flow of fresh and VOC-filtered air.”

The question, though, is whether social distancing is effective on an aircraft.

The answer appears to be that, taken together with the other measures the airlines are taking, the risks have been minimised as much as possible, but are still there. For each passenger it then becomes a matter of how essential the travel is. **BT**



# Home(grown) Affairs

*When the local option is the world-class option*

**L**ocal, as South Africans know, is lekker. More than just lekker though, the choice to support local when it comes to business has far-reaching positive effects for the bottom line, the community and the economy at large.

The approach taken by Latitude Aparthotels is one that opts to source local – from art and design, to meat and fish – as far as possible.

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“It’s about recreating an age-old sense of community, but also about offering our guests the most authentic experience possible, which is a local one,” explains Lesego Majatladi, Managing Director at Latitude Aparthotels, the first of which opened in Sea Point, Cape Town, in November 2019.

A commitment to supporting local is particularly important in light of the current lockdown and the far-reaching economic impact it is certain to have. “We believe that in the coming months and years, it is going to be more essential than ever to support local businesses wherever we can to ensure their survival and, by implication, protect as many local jobs and communities as possible,” Majatladi says.

Reassurance of the relevance of this approach happens all the time. “Not a week goes by (during normal operating times) that a guest doesn’t comment on the uniqueness of the art on the walls, or the distinctive interiors, or enquires about where they can buy similar ornaments to take home with them,” Majatladi notes. In this regard Latitude has built relationships with a number of key suppliers, which they are exceptionally happy with. “We don’t have fancy, complex contracts with our suppliers because we’ve opted to nurture relationships of trust with them instead, and the experience has been nothing but pleasant so far,” Majatladi says.

Opting for the local route is a way that allows Latitude to create opportunities for smaller suppliers to showcase their products and services on a larger scale than they might otherwise have been able to. “The nature of a hotel is such





that a lot of people pass through the space, which means the goods of a service provider can be experienced by many," Majatladi reveals. Underpinning Latitude's approach is the question around what they can do to help the smaller players increase their capacity.

It's about working with people who are passionate about what they do and are motivated to excel at it. "It's the butcher who has a vested interest in where the meat comes from, that understands how each cut is best used," Majatladi explains.

What's more, sourcing local has not been as difficult as they once imagined it might be. "We have people right here in our community who can supply everything we need to offer our guests a world-class experience, albeit in a uniquely South African way," Majatladi shares.

He adds that all too often when people speak of world-class they are not speaking of Sea Point or Cape Town or South Africa. "We believe, and have been able to demonstrate, that we have world-class right here."

The COVID-19 lockdown has disrupted supply chains across all sectors and we're likely to see a subtle but significant shift in our approach to sourcing local. "It may well become a necessity to source locally, a move that has the potential to stimulate the local economy in new and unexpected ways," Majatladi says.

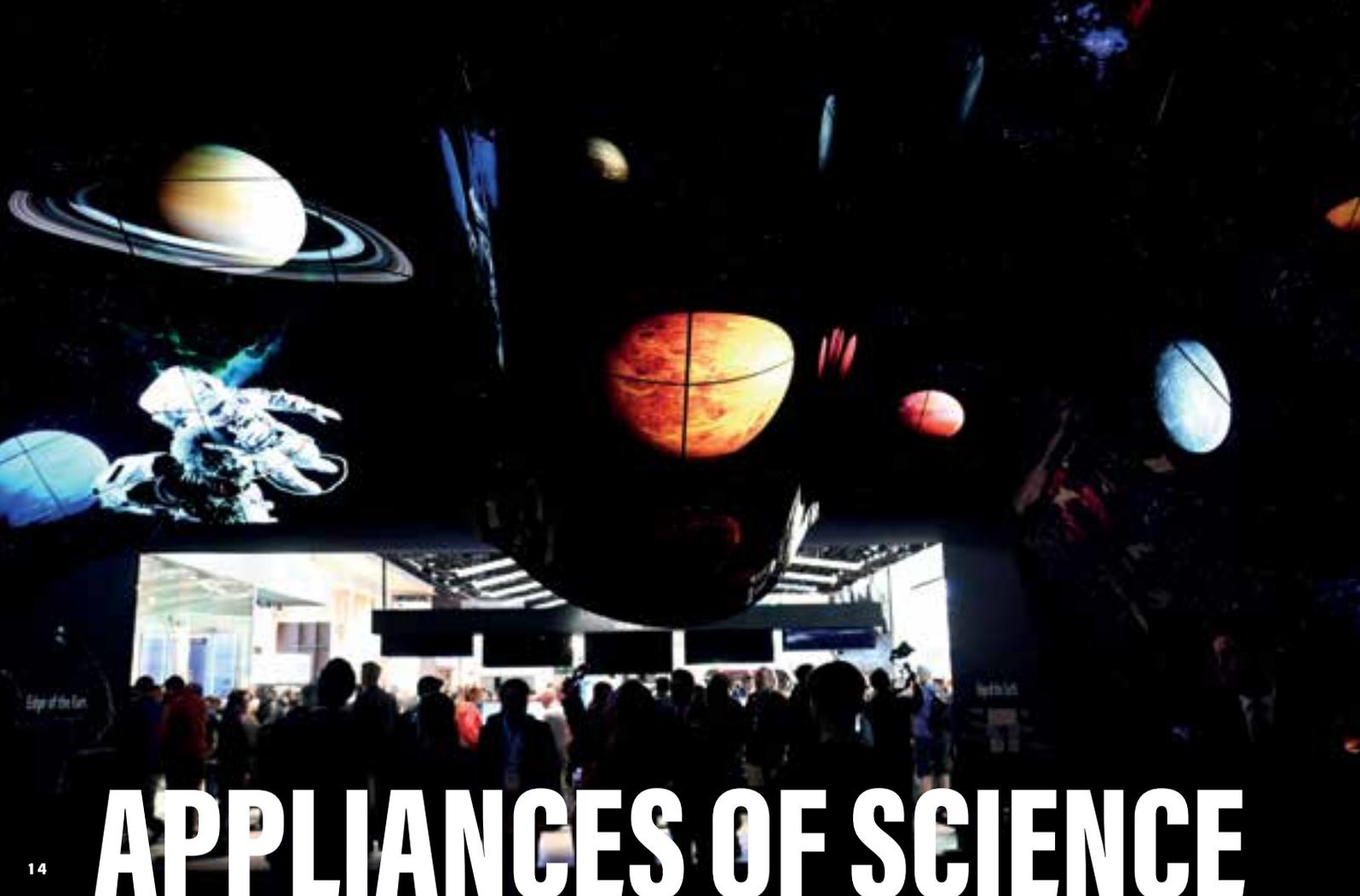
And doing so provides ordinary South Africans with the chance to contribute meaningfully to the country's economic resurgence. Perhaps more importantly, however, it is a chance to play a role in reducing inequality. If South Africans buy more local goods, manufacturers will have more capacity to hire skilled workers. And, where those skills don't exist, they will be incentivised to provide training, resulting in more people in higher-paying jobs. This adds value across the chain

and doesn't just include economic benefits, but will also go a long way towards creating a more socially cohesive, united country.

"Beyond the Rands and Cents of it, we see great value in supporting the community. We will always source locally until it is not feasible to do so and, so far it's been an organic process. We haven't had to go out in search of suppliers with a checklist to verify the authenticity of their local-ness. It's simply been about seeking out a community of people who share the brand's ethos and our commitment to offering guests the best possible experience," Majatladi says.

"For us, there's been nothing but value in supporting the local community and we believe there is potential for this approach to work across the hospitality sector in the country. If we want to make an economic impact, it makes sense to start by supporting local businesses," Majatladi believes. **BT**





# APPLIANCES OF SCIENCE

The gadgets of the future were showcased at the recent Consumer Electronics Show

**E**very year in January, some 175,000 gadget geeks from across the globe descend on Las Vegas for the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), the world's biggest tech gathering. Some 4,500 companies use the exhibition to show off their newest creations - here are some of the best to have been unveiled this year. Some are hitting stores already, but most will arrive in the next few months.

### CLEER MIRAGE SPEAKER

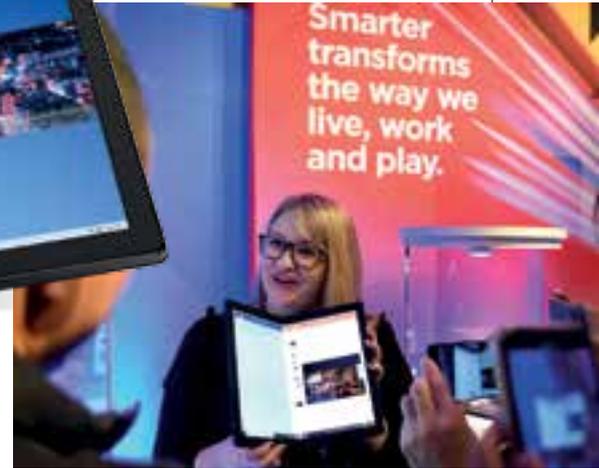
One day, perhaps, there will be a screen on every gadget. This Cleer speaker has an eight-inch one supplied by collaborator Royole, whose skill is in making flexible displays (it beat Samsung and other rivals to create the first foldable phone). Here, the screen wraps around the cylindrical speaker and can be used for video visualisations alongside the music. A camera on board means video calls are possible, and microphones help it to work with Amazon's virtual personal assistant, Alexa. Cleer's audio excellence ensures it should sound great, too.



**WORDS** DAVID PHELAN

**LENOVO THINKPAD X1 FOLD**  
lenovo.com

The flexible display of this 13.3-inch tablet means it can fold in half. You can set the bottom part up as a virtual onscreen keyboard to create a super-portable Windows laptop, but there's also a Bluetooth keyboard accessory with physical keys that can attach magnetically if you value the sensation of keys moving under your fingers rather than the unyielding glass of the tablet. Fold it in half and the keyboard charges automatically. It's not cheap, partly because of the complexity of the design and the leather folio cover.



**JBL CLUB ONE HEADPHONES**  
jbl.com

CES was awash with in-ear headphones, but over-ear pairs such as these were much rarer. The Club One headphones have exceptional noise-cancelling, using a system that monitors outside noise 50,000 times a second and adjusts to the user's chosen level. They're also designed to compensate for sound leakage caused by the user wearing glasses. The Silent Now feature is especially appealing for in-flight use – with one tap of a button, it promises complete isolation, even from music. The battery lasts up to 50 hours.



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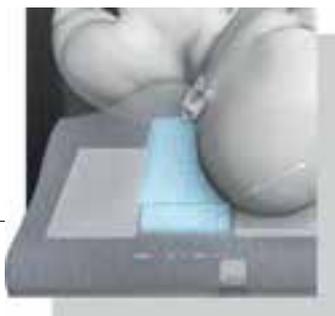


**NIKON D780 DSLR CAMERA**  
nikon.co.uk

The newest digital SLR from Nikon is powerful enough to satisfy professionals as well as amateurs. It has a 24-megapixel sensor – and, yes, smartphones can have more than that, but the difference here is that the sensor is full-frame; that is, the size of a 35mm frame of film, so the pixels are much bigger and more effective. It records video at 4K resolution and has a multi-point autofocus for sharper shots.

**MOTION PILLOW**  
**ANTI-SNORING PILLOW**  
motionpillow.com

You don't snore – of course you don't – but maybe someone close to you does. Enter the Motion Pillow, the second-generation model, which was revealed at CES and aims to restore quiet nights. A small white box, optimistically called the Solution Box, sits next to the bed and connects to the pillow by a cable. Then, when you snore – sorry, when your significant other snores – airbags inside the pillow inflate to move the head, but gently enough so as not to wake you.





**WITHINGS SCANWATCH**  
withings.com

Withings makes a great range of health-related tech and this is its most attractive and advanced wearable gadget. Unlike most smartwatches, it has an analogue face, while a secondary dial monitors your steps and an OLED circle at the top displays further data. The watch can monitor your heart rate to flag up issues, such as an irregular or abnormally fast heart rate. When worn at night, it tracks oxygen saturation levels. It can also record an ECG measurement.



**RELIEFBAND FOR MOTION SICKNESS**  
reliefband.com

The second-generation Reliefband slips on to the wrist and treats motion sickness by emitting programmed pulses at a carefully controlled frequency and intensity.

It aims to stimulate nerves on the underside of the wrist to block the waves of nausea that the stomach produces in response to motion. But its uses aren't just limited to motion sickness, although that's the main appeal to travellers – it also helps with feelings of nausea induced by virtual reality, for instance. The battery lasts up to 17 hours – enough for the longest and bounciest car ride or the most topsy-turvy turbulence.

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**TECHNICS EAH-AZ70W IN-EAR HEADPHONES**  
technics.co.uk

Technics is famous for high-end audio products but hasn't made any true-wireless in-ear headphones until now.

True wireless means that there is no cable to connect the headphones to the music source – Bluetooth handles that – but also that there's no wire between the buds. Their design is neat and attractive, with a case that recharges the buds. Like Apple's AirPods Pro, these have noise-cancellation, whereby an external microphone listens to the

outside world and creates noise that is precisely opposite to it to cancel it out. There's also an internal microphone that listens to the noise inside the ear and cancels that out, too.



**Y-BRUSH TOOTHBRUSH**  
y-brush.com

Brush your teeth effectively in 10 seconds – that's the claim made by Fasteesh, makers of Y-Brush. The device is a U-shaped tray on a handle. You add toothpaste and fit it over your lower teeth. The dental bristles that fill the tray brush your teeth from different angles. Then, after five seconds, you repeat on your upper gnashers. It vibrates to brush all sides of your 16 lower or upper teeth. It's claimed that it brushes each tooth for four times longer than a two-minute session with a regular toothbrush.



*All prices correct at time of going to press, but may change*



## THE PROTOTYPES

CES is always brimming with products that are far from being finished (or that ultimately may never come to market), but give a glimpse of what's coming next, or the direction of travel for an individual company.

### SAMSUNG BALLIE

The Ballie robot is a smart sphere, the size of a large baseball, that has a built-in camera and can recognise you and follow you around the house (if that's not too creepy). It can control your smart home appliances – turning on your robot vacuum cleaner while you're out, for instance. Not so good on stairs, obviously. Samsung wouldn't be drawn on a release date, which suggests it's several years away at least.

### ONE PLUS CONCEPT ONE

Chinese phone manufacturer One Plus has created a concept handset with invisible cameras. What this really means is that the lenses use special particles – organic, One Plus calls them – that can shift from completely clear to opaque black in a moment, so that when not in use the rear panel looks like an unbroken surface for a more elegant design. The particles also work as a polarising filter for the camera, which means it can take better photos in brighter light. One Plus has a close relationship with its community of buyers so expect their feedback to inform whether these electrochromic lenses move from prototype to finished product.



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### PANASONIC BATTERY-POWERED FIRE ENGINE

Panasonic has partnered with Tropos Motors to create a tiny fire prevention vehicle. At two metres tall by 1.4 metres wide, it's so small it can slip into tiny spaces – handy for a narrow alley in Mumbai or Tokyo where regular vehicles can't venture. The one-person vehicle is powered entirely by battery (Panasonic is a world leader in battery design) and has a Panasonic Toughbook laptop at the driver's elbow for relaying emergency information. The 125-gallon water tank dispenses its contents with a gas-powered water pump. Unlike a regular fire truck, which can cost up to \$500,000, this is one is just \$50,000.



### SONY VISION-S DRIVERLESS CAR

In the biggest surprise of CES, Sony unveiled a car to showcase its skill in making auto-friendly sensors. There are 33 in the Vision-S, including entertainment devices inside the car plus cameras and other sensors outside. Sony makes some of the best camera sensors already, so to combine them with other movement sensors

makes for a safer driverless ride, the company has suggested. The electric car, which looks streamlined and sporty, may never see production, but Sony has proved that it can come up with the tech for it – and that it can keep a secret. **BT**

# Africa remains a strategic territory for growth in the hotel industry

**I**n global hotel terms, Africa is the last available frontier for development and expansion, with staggering opportunities for capital growth – for those who recognise that a smooth transition into this new space demands that a brand is both known and trusted.

It's a flourishing market that last year attracted capital as high as \$1.8 billion, says Africa hospitality expert Mark Havercroft, Minor Hotels Regional Director for Africa, which is successfully migrating into Africa, expanding the company's footprint which includes Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Australasia, South America and the United States.

According to an African Development Bank estimate, Africa's population has grown to one billion since 2010, with the continent's middle class now 350-million strong. It is this burgeoning segment of potential travellers for Africa's travel and tourism industry that presents a major expansion opportunity for the sector.

The potential is elevated by a maturing market that is beginning to also embrace business models that cater for all traveller sectors rather than the traditional four- and five-star guests; today many new investors in sub-Saharan Africa are focusing on lower consumer price points in order to accommodate a wider range of leisure as well as business travellers.

If these potential guests won't be drawn by unfamiliar brands, what is the secret to the success of hospitality outfits that have seamlessly crossed over on to the continent to take advantage locally of this new market share?

Minor Hotels, Havercroft explains, achieved a solid footprint on the continent with its 11 hotels in five countries, with a combined total of more than 1,300 rooms plus 17 safari lodges and resorts in East Africa. Continued steady and selective growth such as the new Avani Suites Nairobi opening later this year firmly demonstrates the brand's intentions towards the African hospitality map.

"We have our luxury brand Anantara, with properties in Mauritius, Zambia and Mozambique; our city and resort brand Avani with properties in Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique, Seychelles and Zambia; the Avani Suites Nairobi and the four-star NH Hotels brand in Somerset West in South Africa," he says, adding that they also have an exciting brand, Oaks Hotels & Resorts, which is primarily a serviced apartment/long-stay operation. This is a brand and model he believes has a promising future in Africa's changing accommodation market where, he predicts, the biggest growth potential lies in the mid-market space in both the business and leisure sectors.

Havercroft has a solid pedigree as a hotelier on the continent, including at the helm at Minor Hotels in Africa for the past two years. During his three decades of working in hospitality he has led and managed properties as diverse as island getaways and safari destinations, along with resorts and luxury hotels across the continent.

The identities of his major competition are hardly surprising considering his argument for the importance of brand awareness in the battle to win the war for African guests. According to W Hospitality Group's 2019 Africa Pipeline

Report, the authoritative voice on the growth of the hotel industry in Africa, Marriott led the way with number of rooms and hotels (for hotel groups), followed by Hilton Worldwide and the Radisson Hotel Group. The report says that these chains, which along with Accor represent almost 70% of the total pipeline, have recognised that to develop in Africa, you have to be in Africa. All have development offices on the continent and are growing their local resource base.

Havercroft agrees that there is a need to be on the ground in order to deliver game-changing deals in the sector which, according to the same report, saw 276 hotels under development or construction in sub-Saharan Africa alone in 2019.

"While the challenge is a tough one, we are confident that we have the right recipe, and it is indeed a very exciting time to be at Minor Hotels. Our ongoing strategy has already seen the completion, in only two years, of the N\$13.5 million refurbishment of Avani Windhoek Hotel & Casino in Namibia, and the R25 million rejuvenation of Avani Maseru Hotel in Lesotho, the total refurbishment of the 32 beach villas at Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort, the refurbishment of the executive suites, the Presidential suite, the main restaurant, the development of the Kubu restaurant at The Royal Livingstone Hotel by Anantara in Zambia, and the rebuilding of Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort in northern Mozambique after cyclone Kenneth."

"Next year we'll mark our next expansion into Mauritius with the stylish Avani Bel-Ombre Mauritius Resort & Spa," he reveals. **BT**

# British Airways B737

## JOBURG-CAPE TOWN

**BACKGROUND** Comair operates British Airways' domestic and regional flights for South Africa. However, bookings and check-ins are done on the intentional website and app.

**CHECK-IN** I was able to check in for my Club World (business class) flight 24 hours before take-off with my booking reference and surname. I was given the option to change my assigned seat free of charge, but I was happy with the window seat at the back of the cabin. And after I installed the BA app on my phone I was able to receive a digital boarding pass. Although I could have taken my cabin-sized suitcase onboard, it was an early flight and I wasn't thinking clearly, so I checked my bag into the hold. I was right on the cusp of check-in closing for the flight and grateful that there was no queue at OR Tambo International Airport to drop my bag.

**LOUNGE:** There was also no queue at security and it took a matter of minutes to get airside. The BA SLOW lounge is accessed by means of an elevator to the immediate right of security and after scanning my boarding pass, I was inside. The floor space is impressive and there was ample seating so early in the morning. However, since it was so early, the coffee machines were working hard and I had to wait for the degrader drawers to be emptied before making myself a latte. I took said latte and two slices of quiche and joined my group at the back of the lounge.

**BOARDING:** The first boarding call was made in the lounge and we left shortly thereafter for the boarding gate one level down. The majority of the queue had been dispersed at this stage and I was cleared for boarding in a couple of minutes.

**THE FLIGHT:** Once settled in my seat, I was offered a bottle of water. We pushed back on time and after we reached cruising altitude, the cabin crew began the in-flight service. In Club World, you receive a tasty and filling breakfast (pictured), including birches muesli with blueberries and one of three 'hot' dishes. On this flight, the choice was bacon omelette, vegetarian wrap or fruit salad. I chose the wrap and I wasn't disappointed. It was served with chilli beans and a spicy relish. I washed the meal down with a glass of orange juice. There was a bit of turbulence and the seatbelt sign was switched on during the meal. The pilot climbed to around 38,000 feet in an attempt to stabilise the aircraft, which seemed to work.

**ARRIVAL:** The plane touched down on time and given that I was only five rows from the exit, I was soon making my way to baggage claim. My suitcase got to the carousel almost as soon as I did. I was on my way with the minimum of fuss.

**VERDICT:** I guess nobody really *needs* to fly in a business class cabin for such a short trip, but the extra legroom and wider seat made for a comfortable experience. I was pleasantly surprized at the quality of the food. I definitely recommend this service for your next trip to Cape Town.  
*Kate Kennedy*



**CONTACT**  
W: [britishairways.com](http://britishairways.com)



# New leadership

*Radisson Hotel Group is one of the world's largest hotel groups with seven distinctive hotel brands, and more than 1,400 hotels in operation and under development in 120 countries. Its signature service philosophy is Every Moment Matters. Business Traveller Africa caught up with Ramsay Rankoussi who leads the group's strategic growth across the Middle East, Turkey and Africa with a team based in Dubai and Cape Town. He recently expanded his role as the Head of Development for Africa, further demonstrating the commitment of the company across the continent. Tasked with increasing the group's hotel portfolio and footprint in his assigned markets, the group's largest geographical area, he is an expert dealmaker, leading transactions from sourcing through to execution.*

**Q: What is your new role at Radisson Hotel Group and how has it differed to your previous position?**

**A:** I have been in the group for over six years now with similar functions but with a different mandate. Prior to expanding my responsibility across the entire African continent, I was overseeing our strategic growth across the Middle East, Turkey and French Speaking Africa.

The recent expansion as the new Head of Development for Africa further demonstrates a strong focus and commitment across the continent for Radisson Hotel Group.

**Q: What is unique about Radisson Hotel Group's development team for Africa?**

**A:** Our development team is at the heart of our growth strategy and they all are individually and collectively translating it to execution. We have created a dual approach regarding our growth strategy for Africa. One part concentrates on focus countries while the other centres around creating clusters; both resulting in critical mass and a scale strategy.

Each member of our development team leads through this approach with both the proximity of their geographical zone as well as, and very importantly, their cultural and language understanding, reinforcing our alignment with

each focus market - North Africa, Francophone and Anglophone Africa.

Another significant factor which drives our ability to succeed in establishing long-term partnerships with our investment community, is our responsiveness, always quick to provide answers and support; our pragmatic design approach; our transparency throughout the process in combination with our continuous guidance throughout each phase including construction and financing.

**Q: What does the Radisson Hotel Group's African portfolio consist of to date?**

**A:** From a single property 20 years ago, the group now has 45 hotels in operation and around 30 hotels under construction. We have also set an ambition to have over 100 hotels by 2022 across the continent. Radisson Hotel Group also has the largest representation across the continent, with a brand presence in over 32 countries.

Radisson Blu remains our largest core brand with most of the existing presence and is also the largest and fastest growing hotel brand across the continent. We are also pleased to have established each of our brands in the region, from our midscale Park Inn by Radisson to our luxury Radisson

Collection, as well as our newly launched upscale Radisson brand and lifestyle Radisson RED.

**Q: What are some of Radisson Hotel Group's most notable achievements in Africa since opening its first hotel in Africa, 20 years ago?**

**A:** As briefly mentioned, we have set an ambition to reach 100 hotels by 2022 and we are pleased to witness the rapid and positive growth we have maintained over the last few years across the continent.

We were the first hotel group to establish a dedicated financial vehicle in the past to support our growth and we are still as committed to support our journey in Africa to further materialize openings and accelerate growth.

We hold the record across the continent with the fastest construction timeline achieved with the recently opened Radisson Blu Hotel & Conference Centre, Niamey; Radisson RED Cape Town or Radisson Blu Hotel & Convention Center, Kigali among others, further demonstrating our ability to provide relevant brands and open each hotel in the shortest time.

**Q: What is Radisson Hotel Group's expansion strategy and priorities for Africa?**

**A:** We believe in creating a critical

# at Radisson

**RAMSAY RANKOUSSI**  
VICE-PRESIDENT, DEVELOPMENT, MIDDLE EAST,  
TURKEY & AFRICA RADISSON HOTEL GROUP



mass and city scale development strategy with a focus on key countries and surrounding markets.

Our focus countries which represents the largest individual scale are Morocco, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa.

In addition to those key countries, we have implemented a cluster approach in both development and operations to ensure synergies among neighbouring countries and further create value for our hotels. The targeted clusters where we focus on growing in priority are the Maghreb; West Africa with Senegal and Ivory Coast; Central Africa with Cameroon and Republic of Congo; East Africa with Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania; and finally specific countries within the Southern African Development Community such as Angola, Mauritius, Mozambique and Zambia.

We also want to remain relevant to our owners and that is through all our offerings, in particular our brands and their related development cost.

Our technical team has produced comprehensive brand guidelines allowing us to further accelerate the speed of construction, minimize overall time to build, and we have also considerably reduced the cost of development of each brand, making us

one of the most competitive companies with relevant resources adding value to our investors.

**Q: Going forward, what are some of the key African markets for Radisson Hotel Group?**

**A:** As translated in our strategy and priorities, we are now focusing on creating the right scale across all our brands in our four key focus countries while further expanding in each of the sub-clusters in order to provide sufficient efficiencies and economies of scale.

We have put forward the creation of local support offices in Nigeria, Morocco, Kenya and South Africa to further ensure our ability to respond to local needs and provide proximity and responsiveness.

**Q: What difference will Radisson Hotel Group's new shareholder, Jin Jiang, bring to the Group, specifically for Africa?**

**A:** Now being part of Jin Jiang International, the second largest hotel group in the world in terms of number of rooms, brings us immense opportunities to access the growing Chinese demand but also secure a new source of capital and resources relevant to Africa.

Our new shareholder has brought further synergies and economies of scale and we certainly look at working

closer and establish how we can unlock more value.

Furthermore, our development strategy interlinks itself closely to the wider Silk & Belt road markets established by China and we believe this can certainly accelerate our growth journey across Africa as well as provide key solutions for our partners and investment community.

**Q: What difference do you envision to bring to Radisson Hotel Group as the new head of development for Africa?**

**A:** I think the success of the group has always been on its ability to nurture relationships and provide relevant tools and resources to the investment community. We will continue to leverage on the legacy already established across the continent and continue to provide our owners and future partners with the right guidance across each phase from development to operations, but also on recycling their capital.

Relevance is key and our priority is to ensure not only a clean brand architecture from midscale to luxury, new hotel development solutions such as serviced apartments, compact hotels or resort concepts but also in creating the necessary tools to optimize our performance, maximize returns and grow the value of their assets over time. **BT**

# The price you pay

*Shop around if you want to secure the best room rate*



**DEREK PICOT**

A HOTELIER FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS  
AND AUTHOR OF *HOTEL RESERVATIONS*

**B**usiness travellers experience a wide and perhaps inexplicable range of pricing when booking hotels. My recent trip to Portugal was no exception. I stayed at three properties – the Sheraton in Lisbon, the Troia Design Hotel near Comporta and the Dom Pedro Vilamoura on the Algarve. Booking was like having several spins of the roulette wheel – I wasn't sure where the ball was going to land, I only knew my euros were going to disappear.

First, a note on Picot methodology. When making reservations, I always check the hotel site prices against Booking.com to see the best deals. The Troia Design hotel offered its lowest rate at €116, but the third-party website proposed €103 as I benefit from a 10% Genius travel award. Genius is Booking.com's loyalty scheme for customers who book twice within two years, and is well named because we all like to think of ourselves that way.

Having secured a lower price on this site, I rang the hotel since there was a "never knowingly undersold" banner on its website. I asked the reservationist if she would match the rate. She told me this was not available on her system and that the room on offer via Booking.com would be at the back of the hotel with no view. I ignored her advice and went with Booking.com.

When I checked in, I discovered she was right, but with a twist, since there were no rooms at the front of the hotel as they were all apartments. And when I took the lift to the tenth floor, expecting to have the broom closet next to the staff stairs, in fact I had been given a great room with views over the Sado River Estuary.

## CREATIVE CHARGES

So far, so good; I was €13 ahead of the game. On to the Dom Pedro Vilamoura. Here I paid €81.90 via Booking.com, which offered a 9% saving for early payment, giving me a further €22.11 into the kitty for a three-night stay. There was a tempting offer on the hotel's website for its Club Card, which gave 15% off the rate card, but by my calculation this was still the more expensive option.

At check-in I offered my credit card and was told that instead of a "pre-authorisation" I had to actually deposit funds if I wanted to use any of the outlets. This was contrary to the information on its website, but rather than argue I left a €100 down payment; my room having been prepaid. I had also requested a double bed.

"We noted your request for a double," the receptionist said. "The beds" – there was a pause and a challenging look – "are zipped." So this was going to be three nights with a ridge of zipped mattresses down my spine.

When I got to my room, I found the door didn't close automatically; it simply swung on its hinges. So I felt it essential to use the in-room safe, which was charged at €3.50 per day. My adapter didn't fit their plugs and they charged me €5 for one of theirs. I then had to deposit €10 for the use of two pool towels in case I stole them. I am usually impressed when hoteliers find new and

creative ways of charging guests for services, but my enthusiasm for this form of capitalism was wearing a little thin.

I turned to the coffee maker for comfort, but there was no milk. Perhaps it was considered heathen to add milk to a strong espresso. I hesitated to enquire if I was alone in Portugal in diluting caffeine beverages in this manner. Not so. As part of a morning ritual at the Dom Pedro, a number of guests could be found in the lift carrying small china milk jugs up from the restaurant.

## DIRECT APPROACH

Onward to Lisbon. Marriott's Sheraton Lisboa Hotel and Spa has comfortable beds that didn't double up as twins and an unsurpassable club floor.

**When making reservations, I always check the hotel site prices against Booking.com**

Pricing on Booking.com and the Marriott system was identical, at €251. Marriott calls it "advance purchase" and Booking.com describes it as "nonrefundable". Marriott does not allow changes – but the booking can be cancelled up to three days before, so there is a marginal advantage in using its site. I booked direct and the deal included free parking, breakfast, as much wine as I could drink in the club lounge and a gift of a half-bottle of Port.

The room door shut automatically, the safe was free and milk was supplied.

The lesson is shop around. **BT**

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