

**NEWSFLASH - FEBRUARY 2015**

**Gautrain plans extensions** - The Gautrain network is to be extended to areas including Soweto, Sunninghill, and Fourways. The capacity on the Gautrain would also be boosted in the coming months. The extensions are expected to take more than 24 months.

**Qatar launch first new route for 2015**

Qatar Airways will operate daily non-stop flights to Amsterdam from the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. Amsterdam will become the airline's 34<sup>th</sup> destination in Europe. The new route will be operated by a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, offering 22 fully flat-bed seats in business class and 232 in economy class.

**Thompsons Africa launches Madiba Tour**

Thompsons Africa has launched 'A Life Celebrated Tour', a 10-night guided tour from Johannesburg to Cape Town, that visits some of the places that were part of Nelson Mandela's life. The tour is subject to a minimum of two passengers travelling and is valid for travel in April 2015.

**Virgin Brand adds Virgin Cruises -**

**Sir Richard Branson** plans to add Virgin Cruises to the travel options already available under the Virgin brand. The venture, to be launched with two new ships, will be based in the Miami and Fort Lauderdale area, with Caribbean cruises the initial focus. The launch date for Virgin Cruises has not been confirmed, but it typically takes around two years to build the ships required.

**Scandinavian Airline and Etihad Airways announce codeshare** -. Scandinavian airline, SAS, and Etihad

Airways are set to begin codeshare operations, providing customers with enhanced travel options to Europe. Both airlines will also develop and sign a frequent flyer agreement, which will benefit the members of Etihad Airways' Etihad Guest and SAS's EuroBonus loyalty programmes.

**SAA 'reinvents' Voyager programme**

SAA frequent flyers will, from early 2015, be rewarded for the amount of money they spend with the airline rather than the number of miles they have travelled. This is just one of numerous changes SAA has made to its Voyager loyalty programme in an effort to attract, retain and reward customers fairly.

**Deltas premium pax Check-In Service**

Delta Air Lines is offering a private, drive-through check-in for business-class passengers flying out of Heathrow. Passengers can now be dropped off at Virgin Atlantic's Upper Class Wing, a private terminal. A dedicated, private lane to the security checkpoint in Terminal 3 allows passengers to get from their car to the Virgin Atlantic Clubhouse lounge in ten minutes. Passengers are welcomed kerbside by name and escorted to a check-in desk. The service needs to be reserved within one month of travelling but not less than 14 hours prior to the flight's departure time.

**HOP! takes over AF short-haul flights**

- From the 2015 European summer, all Air France short-haul flights will be operated by HOP! Air France. The airline released a statement saying the objective of the shift

was to recover profitability on the short-haul market within three years.

**Airlink changes fleet, ups capacity**

Airlink will retire its last seven remaining Jetstream 41s fleet, which will gradually be replaced by ERJ-135s resulting in an increase in capacity and reduced flying time to several destinations.

**Additional flights for SA Express**

South African Express Airways has added flights to Walvis Bay, effective February 1.

**Robben Island Museum plagued by claims of mismanagement**

- Complaints have poured in from tour operators who say Robben Island is being mismanaged. Unsafe boats, unprofessional tour guides and services no longer available are some of the issues that are leading tour operators to the point of dissuading their customers from taking the tour. Robben Island Museum has also said that it will not meet the April deadline for the new ferry it sought to acquire.

**Short stay Schengen Visas for South African passport holders**

- Visa applicants holding a South African passport and born in South Africa who apply with all the required documents will now have their short-stay Schengen visa within 48 hours: 2 business days from the time the application is lodged in Cape Town and Johannesburg. For the Durban branch, the 48 hours delay does not include the transfers between Durban and Johannesburg.

**"Passion and strife bow down the mind." - Virgil**



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