

Thursday, July 02, 2009

Registration for 2009 HICA opens

Registration has opened for the third annual Hospitality Investment Conference Africa (HICA).

"When we started planning the first HICA conference in 2006, it was because we recognised that people just did not realise how prosperous this industry is, or the opportunities it offers," said Mmatšatši Marobe, CEO of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa which is again hosting the event, to be held in Sandton, Johannesburg, from November 4 – 6.

"At that time we felt that people in the industry were not sharing their experience and knowledge of the sector sufficiently, but thanks to the networks and connections that HICA has created, we have seen a great change. And this year we are certainly providing our delegates with more than enough to be excited about!" Marobe said.

To register for HICA 2009, and take advantage of the early bird discount go to www.hica.co.za and click on "Register Here" link".

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Iata: airlines lose over US\$3bn

AIRLINES globally have lost more than US\$3bn in the first quarter of 2009 according to Iata's latest airline financial monitor.

It says the loss is consistent with its 2009 forecast of a US\$9bn nett loss.

Iata, however, warned that this deterioration was before the recent rise in fuel prices and was due mostly to the fall in revenues.

"Over 60 airlines have now published first-quarter results. Total nett losses remain just over US\$3bn, which is a significant deterioration from last year," Iata said.

Both oil and jet fuel prices rose almost US\$20, or more than 30%, since May this year, and are now 75% higher than their low point at the end of last year.

"In fact airlines have not yet felt the full impact of this oil price rise as low refinery utilisation has compressed the 'crack spread' to around 15%."

Iata also highlighted that the drop in passenger volumes had shown signs of "hitting the floor" during April and May. Airlines continue to reduce capacity with available seat kilometres down 5% in May.

After a brief respite in April, passenger load factors continued to fall at 3%.

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New service at Lufthansa first-class Munich lounge

LUFTHANSA has introduced quiet zones at its first-class lounge at Munich airport.

Quiet zones offer day beds and in addition two more office units have been added to the four existing work rooms, each with a landline connection.

For non-Schengen departures, an extra waiting area has been created on the upper level of the first-class lounge for passengers using the limousine service. If a flight is departing from an apron position, a chauffeur will take passengers directly from the lounge to the aircraft.

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Breaking news: Tiffindell Ski Resort affected by power outages

TIFFINDELL Ski Resort announced that it has been affected by power outages since the adverse weather conditions in the region last week.

The problem is being attended to and is expected to be resolved in the next day or two.

The resort and reservations consultants are available on a temporary number <?XML:NAMESPACE PREFIX = SKYPE />083 896 0578 for any queries or bookings.

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Law bans Casinos in Russia

Legislation has banned casinos and other gambling sites from most of Russia. From July 1 gambling will only be allowed in four isolated areas of the country. All casinos in Moscow and St Petersburg have been closed.

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UK government admits APD passenger threat

THE United Kingdom's government admitted that its planned increases to Air Passenger Duty (APD) could lead to the aviation industry losing 1,5m passengers from Britain.

The admission was made in a written answer from Paul Clark, the UK's new transport minister, who also revealed that the number included a decline of 1,4m passengers on short-haul flights.

Effective November 1, the increased APD will see passengers paying according to the distance and the class travelled, with four tax bands set at intervals of 2 000 miles (3 219km) from London.

The APD on economy-class flights will start at 11 for tickets to places within 3 219km of London, 45 for flights of up to 6 000 miles (9 656km) and 55 over that. This means that by the 2010/2011 tax year the duty on a flight to a destination such as Johannesburg will rise from 40 to 60. Premium travellers pay considerably more.

Further increases are also expected in 2010.

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Four Points by Sheraton opens in Mauritius

STARWOOD Hotels and Resorts has opened its first Four Points by Sheraton – the Four Points by Sheraton Cybercity – in Mauritius on July 1. The hotel is also the island's first international business hotel.

The 108-room Sheraton Cybercity is located in Ebene Business Park between the capital Port Louis and the island's international airport.

"The opening of the Four Points by Sheraton Cybercity is a clear indication of Starwood's support towards developing business travel in Mauritius and is another example of our continued growth in the region," said Roeland Vos, president of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Europe, Africa & the Middle East.

"In the coming years, Starwood aims to develop the presence of the Four Points by Sheraton brand in Africa and the Indian Ocean. The brand has already signed several projects and three of them will open in 2010 in Nigeria, Madagascar and Libya."