

Outside influences and other phenomena

By Luyton Driman

In this month's Africalog, I'm going to discuss issues around your travel planning, airlines and what the implications are where festivities and other phenomena are concerned.

This is important because if you don't plan ahead and coordinate your business trip properly, you could find yourself arriving at a destination only to find businesses closed for public or religious holidays, or as in some countries, businesses closed for a couple of hours of every work-day afternoon, only to reopen again later in the afternoon, remaining open sometimes late into the evening.

I learned this lesson myself in the 90s when I was on a trip to Yemen, where every afternoon had a mandatory siesta of three to four hours. Consequently, I found myself having meetings long into most evenings. One Saturday evening I distinctly remember glancing at my watch at around 22:00, and I was still in a meeting!

Also remember Yemen is an Islamic country; therefore their "weekend" is Thursday and Friday; as is the case in Dubai (UAE), Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries.

Important to remember is that the October and November periods of each year are dominated by the three religious festivals/celebrations; Ramadan, Diwali and the Jewish New Year.

Collectively, these celebrations and festivities encapsulate a large proportion of the world's population and a large amount of the greater African continent's population as well.

The reason I am mentioning this is, for those of you trading and travelling in our continent, that you must take cognisance of these holidays as they will influence the timing of your trips and the actual timing of your appointments as well.

Another general point to take into consideration before planning and going on a trip is to plan properly.

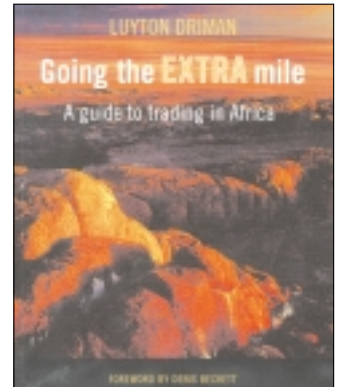
I make mention of this issue in quite a lot of detail in my book ("Going the extra mile"). The issue here is to not only plan your trip and your appointments properly, but to make sure you are flying the most economical route(s) possible. Unfortunately, many travel agents in this country are not too au fait with the intricacies of how to manipulate the "best value for money" out of a trip into this continent of ours and tend to book the standard routes first. Perhaps this is due to ignorance, as not too many South Africans travel into Africa on holiday (their loss!), so links etc en route could be rolled out into longer, more expensive "around routes".

So if you want to fly to Luanda (Angola) from Johannesburg, the flights are generally jammed, especially on SAA, which flies alternate days to TAAG (the Angolan national carrier) because there are perceptions that TAAG is perhaps a tad suspect and hence the second and/or last resort.

This is rubbish !

I have flown TAAG many times, I have never had a problem with them, and their freight rates are cheaper too.

The second point is that you can fly via Windhoek on Air Namibia to Luanda as well. I did this a couple of weeks ago and



Luyton Driman, author of "Going the EXTRA mile: A guide to trading in Africa" will be writing a monthly column for Export SA for the next few months

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