

Go2Africa platform to disrupt local travel industry

[Go2Africa](#), niche inbound travel specialists, is developing a new platform which is set to disrupt the local travel industry in 2017 by providing a full-service and scalable wholesale offering to independent agents and SMEs, allowing them to create bespoke holidays for their clients to logistically complex destinations in sub-Saharan Africa. This Cloud-based service - which has been named Bazaruto after the idyllic and charmed Mozambican island - is the brainchild of Go2Africa chairman and tech visionary Mark Preyer, who founded the company in 1998.



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The Bazaruto platform falls under the leadership of the new MD of Go2Africa, Maija de Rijk-Uys. Maija is ideally placed for the role due to her combined experience in both corporate and SME settings. Her most recent online travel stint was as head of international markets at Travelstart between 2011 and 2014, where she set up six of Travelstart's international markets. Previously, she was at PwC South Africa and UK, and Virgin Travel.

Digital breakthrough as enabler of business for SMEs and new entrants

Maija sees Bazaruto as an exciting breakthrough in the digital travel industry. "It can be overwhelming for SMEs or new entrants into the market to develop relationships with suppliers, take on content management and make headway with rates negotiations, all of which are critical to success. Bazaruto has the capability to seamlessly check both price and accommodation availability, logistically manage and deliver a responsive itinerary to the end-user, and also handle the full responsive supplier interface."

"Bazaruto will supply all the components needed to put together an appealing, comprehensive and responsive itinerary with a few clicks. Agents, no matter where they are in the world, will be able offer their clients the same high-quality vacations as a long-standing agency with entrenched supplier relationships and full support teams."

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's latest report, 56 million ITAs (international travel arrivals) came to Africa in 2014, and spent USD36-billion in ITRs (international tourist receipts). Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 71% share of that business and has experienced an average annual growth of 6.2% since 1990, with growth of 3 – 5% projected for 2017.

"The weak rand means that South Africa is in a sweet spot for inbound travellers, and Bazaruto could give travel entrepreneurs the edge in capturing the lucrative foreign market. It has been populated with beautiful images and copy by Africa specialists at Go2Africa, and is ultimately a very empowering business tool for retailers."

Bazaruto is set to launch in early 2017 and has been built using Ruby on Rails (also used by Airbnb and Shopify) and ReactJS.

Other exciting developments

There have been further exciting developments at Go2Africa. In November 2015, Targe Capital, a private equity firm headed by Gary Macdonald (ex RMB Corvest) and Greg Fury (ex Allan Gray), purchased a 40% stake in the company. Targe have brought a critical investment perspective as well as access to capital that will allow Bazaruto to be a game-changer in the industry.

January and February 2016 have seen the company break its own records for the highest enquiries and best sales ever, setting the scene for solid June-August 2016 and December-January 2017 peak seasons. In addition, several high-profile candidates are being considered for the key roles of head of sales and head of marketing.

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