



ASSOCIATION OF
SOUTHERN AFRICAN TRAVEL AGENTS

WHAT DOES ASATA DO FOR ITS MEMBERS?

- **ASATA provides recognition of the professional role that our Members play in the travel industry**

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the ASATA logo is very important to the travelling public. Commendation of ASATA Members by ASATA's consumer education programmes and press editorials explain to Consumers the benefit of using an ASATA Member and indicates a level of credibility and assurance that the Travel Agent is compliant with ASATA.

Government also now requires that legitimate membership of ASATA is to be proven when submitting tenders. This initiative was borne out of ASATA lobbying to make this an inherent requirement.

- **Secures the interests of our Members**

The travel industry is highly competitive and red tape can be a real problem. We spend a large portion of our resources in lobbying government and reviewing regulatory and statutory changes. More recently the proposed National Consumer Protection Act (NCPA) was under review as well as the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Tourism Sector Codes. The review process is lengthy and must reflect the interests of the broader industry as well as the Consumer.

A key factor in the deliberations is the blurring of Tourism and Travel. These industries are seen as one and ASATA has gone to extensive lengths to highlight the difference. More recently it has been acknowledged as separate disciplines but operating closely together!

The advertising guidelines as formulated by ASATA form part of the Code of Conduct. They are guidelines and ASATA is not in a position to police or penalise any non adherence, however we do mediate if an objection is raised by one ASATA Member against the other. Unfortunately, our experience has been that when an objection has been tabled to the ASA it was not deliberated by the directorate sufficiently as no representation from the travel or tourism industry was represented at ASA. ASATA was instrumental in securing two seats on key committees at the ASA which will ensure that at future arbitrations ASATA will advise and guide the chair accordingly.

- **Reflect the consensus of our members to other stakeholders in the private and public sectors.**

Representation of the travel industry to Government is primarily achieved through the affiliation ASATA embraces with The Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA). As a Member of the Board of TBCSA, we are able to engage in strategic and ongoing transparent communication with stakeholders, lobbying the relevant public sector stakeholders to help maintain a level playing field in the travel industry.

A close relationship with South African Reserve Bank (SARB) ensures that we are kept abreast on Exchange Control rulings which affect travel companies and their clients. ASATA was instrumental in

securing the SARB ruling allowing the issuance of air tickets which do not touch on South African soil under prescribed circumstances.

We also work closely with industry bodies and major suppliers within the travel industry to ensure that Members' interests are represented. Many of these suppliers show their support for ASATA Members by belonging to the Association.

- **Act on behalf of our Members in deliberations and negotiations with other sectors of the industry**

Participation by ASATA on the World Travel Agents Association Alliance (WTAAA) ensures that this region remains current with global trends and industry issues. Through this affiliation ASATA has a seat on the Passenger Agency Programme Global Joint Council (PAPGJC) which gives us the opportunity to discuss issues raised by our Members regarding the working relationship between airlines and agents.

In addition, the CEO of ASATA sits on the board of the Tourism Business Council of SA (TBCSA) and the SETA for the Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority (THETA). ASATA is able to exert its influence in a number of strategic and key decisions affecting the industry, in particular addressing the critical skills shortage facing this industry.

Very often, the neutrality of ASATA ensures an amicable resolve on issues involving Global Distribution Systems (GDS), Embassies and Consulates and more frequently airline issues. The deliberations surrounding the XP Box with SAA was an example of this resolve which essentially saved the ASATA Members R600,000 in total after receiving an extended payment period. In addition, the team of ASATA Members who were instrumental in negotiating with the national carrier at the time commissions were reduced, included into the deal that for every SAA ticket sold, the agency will receive R11,00 in the form of an ACM every month. The rationale behind this was that ASATA Members collect other charges including fuel surcharges on behalf of the airline and should be compensated accordingly.

- **Consider and promote the highest standards of professionalism and ethics**

The ASATA Professional Programme is an initiative borne out of the need to recognise travel consultants as professionals. To support this need we have launched the ASATA Academy which will include training initiatives, practical guidance and workshops, an annual ASATA Travel Showcase, affiliation to major exhibitions and information surrounding the environment, corporate social responsibility and special needs issues.

- **Information and Advice.**

We receive many calls and emails on a daily basis from both Members and Consumers seeking information or advice. The type of enquiries range from how to start a travel agency to more complex issues about ADM's.

Many ASATA Members work tirelessly in seeking solution to these issues and give up their own time to attend meetings and information sessions. In individual Member matters (such as ADM dispute resolution) where the Member has not had success in resolving issues of supplier violation, ASATA will intervene.

From time to time ASATA will recruit the services of an expert to give opinion on a certain issue but this does become prohibitive owing to the costs related.

We assist both Members and Consumers in the complaint resolution process. The outcome is always more satisfactory when the ASATA Member has adhered to the ASATA Code of Conduct. More than 98%

of the calls of complaint we receive are about a non-ASATA Member which is a clear indication of the value of using an ASATA Member.

- **Networking opportunities**

We recognise the importance of networking and professional development and as such we host a number of different events through the year which provide our members with opportunities to meet colleagues from other ASATA businesses as well as to update the Members on industry issues. Some of these events are highly structured, some are informal, and some – notably our annual Conference are a mixture of the two.

- **Provides expertise**

ASATA is invited to address many forums to discuss industry matters and in particular ASATA's stance. At these forums we grab the opportunity to highlight the benefits of using ASATA Members in procuring travel.