

New travel advertising regulations to make fares clearer

The new travel industry advertising guidelines, published by The Association of South African Travel Agents (ASATA) in conjunction with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) of South Africa, are an effort to reduce misleading non-inclusive consumer advertising. The guidelines came into effect on Tuesday, 1 August 2006.

"In a nutshell, the guidelines state that prices advertised for travel products must be all-inclusive," explains Liezl Gericke, marketing manager of STA Travel.

Gericke says, "In the past, consumers paid the advertised fare and perhaps one or two small taxes. However, today the reality of the travel industry is such that the advertised price can be as much as 50% lower than what the consumer pays in the end, thanks to increased local and international taxes, airline fuel surcharges and travel agent fees. These new guidelines should do away with this disparity."

ASATA emphasises that these guidelines in no way change or replace the ASA's own code, but are rather intended to assist both ASATA members and non-members to make the transition to all-inclusive advertising.

At the same time, they should assist in clarifying certain types of advertising that may be deemed misleading, such as so-called 'free' tickets and advertisements of airfares 'on sale'.

According to the new guidelines, all advertising must now state the fully inclusive price of the package or the total cost of the air ticket including:

- The base cost of the air ticket
- VAT
- Fuel levies
- Airport taxes
- Aviation and security taxes
- Government imposed taxes
- Agent service fees
- Any other cost that the consumer is required to bear in order to purchase the product advertised
- Any port taxes or forced gratuities in the case of cruise packages