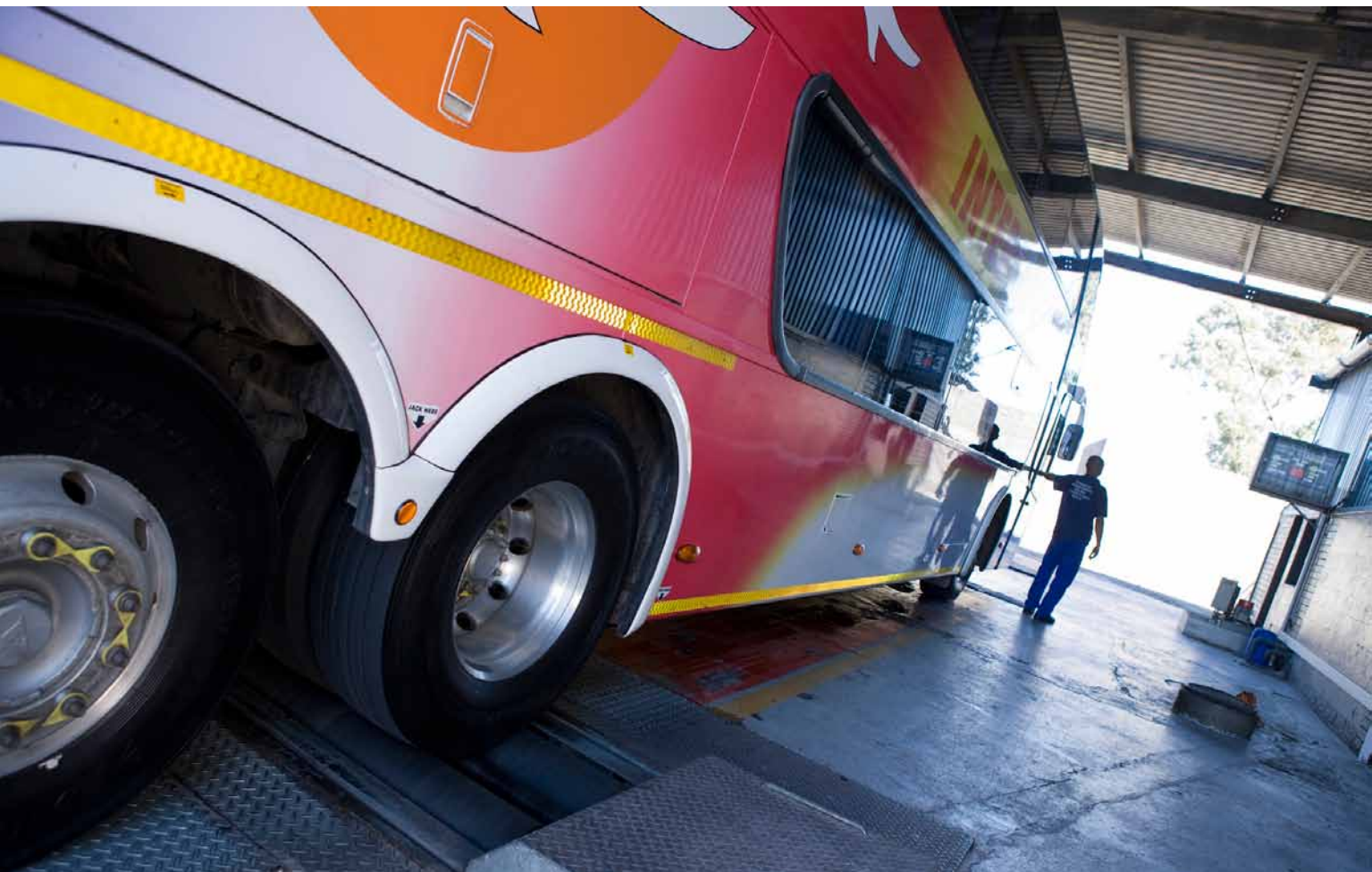


# INTERCAPE

## GROWING NEW ROUTES



# GROWING NEW ROUTES

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*Chief commercial officer Danie du Toit talks about a phase of expansion at South African coach services company Intercap, and the latest luxurious addition to the Sleepliner fleet*

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Just two years ago, travelling from Lilongwe in Malawi to Cape Town in South Africa, a distance of over 4,000 kilometres, would have entailed either an arduous and very lengthy car journey, or an expensive and often unreliable flight that might have included changes in Johannesburg and Harare, Lusaka or even Nairobi. Such journeys notoriously included long delays and interminable airport waiting times with, of course, the always present fear that your baggage will not arrive at your destination with you.

Today, that spectacular and epic journey is possible in comfort. One simple ticket transaction can procure the entire trip on one of the world's most luxurious coach networks, cared for by staff trained and equipped to the highest standards of safety and service. All this has been made possible by the rapid international expansion over the past two years of South African coach operator Intercape.

"There has been a tremendous increase in demand for our services," explained chief commercial officer Danie du Toit. "After two years of expansion, we can connect all major cities within seven countries; South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. And the service we provide is of the same high standard throughout, so our passengers know exactly what they will get. This has been a great differentiator for us."

It's a tough business to be in, particularly in Africa where the road infrastructure and public driving standards pose significant



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**“WE INTRODUCED THE SLEEPLINER COACH IN 2005 AND IT HAS SET THE TREND IN THE MARKET”**

challenges. Many operators have tried it and failed, but Intercape has developed a highly effective operational model over some 30 years. “It’s not easy to get right,” du Toit warned, “but we have maintained a culture of improvement throughout this time, and have improved our service year on year. Ultimately, success is a combination of the type of vehicle you put on the roads, the infrastructure you put in place to ensure the service is always reliable, comfortable and safe, and it’s down to developing business processes to deliver the same standard of service regardless of location.”

Intercape’s model is based on a blueprint of best practice that is rolled out throughout the enterprise. “One element of this is that we have a set of policies and procedures that cover everything from fleet maintenance and ticket sales through to driving standards, HR and finance. Alongside this, we have an integrated IT system which is the backbone by which we run the company.”

Developed in-house and continuously improved and updated, the IT system can be accessed from anywhere in the extended enterprise. That might be staff looking for real-time data and reports,

drivers and mechanics managing the coach fleet, booking staff and external agents using the integrated ticketing processes or the passenger looking for booking information online.

Running a successful transport network the size of Intercape’s requires a very extensive sales and fleet support infrastructure. There are currently 30 Intercape sales offices and hundreds of authorised sales agents selling tickets across southern Africa. Meanwhile, to keep the coaches running reliably and safely, Intercape has a network of six technical depots in South Africa. Significant



Wash bay



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G7 Interior

investment has already gone into creating a similar support network for the cross-border service. There are currently depots in Windhoek, Namibia, and Beira in Mozambique, and the company is exploring the feasibility of opening further depots in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

The expansion programme has undoubtedly been a financial and operational success. In just two years Intercaple has moved from being a purely South African operation, to generating some 30 percent of its business through cross-border services. But this, du Toit believes, is only the beginning. "Our next step is to create connecting services within the borders of our neighbouring countries, creating internal transport networks just as we have

done in South Africa."

The vision is to continue expansion through southern Africa, and to explore other transport-related revenue streams. "We are already hauling large trailers capable of carrying seven tons of luggage and freight behind each of our cross-border coaches," he explained. "And we are looking at ways of increasing freight transportation. We also believe there is a big market for fixed-term people transport contracts with, for example, the mining companies.

We are looking to enter that market."

Intercaple's enviable reputation for comfort, reliability and safety is due to its willingness to invest not only in processes and infrastructure but also in the very latest vehicle

**30%**  
.....  
**Intercaple business  
now generated through  
cross-border services**



Customers can be assured of a pleasant experience

## “WE HAVE A SET OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT COVER EVERYTHING FROM FLEET MAINTENANCE AND TICKET SALES THROUGH TO DRIVING STANDARDS, HR AND FINANCE”

technology. “We introduced the Sleepliner coach in 2005 and it has set the trend in the market, bringing us great success,” du Toit said. Sleepliner is a concept unique to Intercape, and is a blend of style, technology and intelligent design. The chassis and engine come from Volvo in Sweden and the latest models comply with the rigorous Euro 3 Emissions Standards while the double deck coach body is imported from

the coach manufacturer Marco Polo in Brazil. Alongside the double deck coaches, Intercape runs a fleet of single deck coaches that combine a coach body from Irizar of Brazil with a Volvo chassis.

“We are now in the process of updating the Sleepliner with the latest G7 model,” he continued. The first new G7 model Sleepliners are now in service, and are easy to recognise with their modern, sleek and

aesthetically pleasing lines. Yet the real improvements in customer comfort and safety can be found inside. There is ambient LED lighting activated by motion sensors, and memory foam seats that recline to 150 degrees and are positioned to provide more leg room, making long distance journeys a much more comfortable experience. The new coaches also cater for business travellers and those with an active mind. Power sockets are provided for laptops and cell phones, transforming the travel time into a fruitful working opportunity or leisure experience.

There are broader entrance doors, and these are the first coaches in southern Africa to come equipped with a wheelchair to transfer passengers with disabilities

from the entrance to their seats. From the technology perspective, the cab is equipped with the latest in situational awareness for the driver while the engine compartment has been updated to include the most advanced fire detection and suppression systems.

So, as Intercape expands its routes and support network across southern Africa, and equips it with the latest in-vehicle technology, customers can be assured of a pleasant experience on those long scenic journeys. **BE**

For more information about Intercape visit:  
[www.intercape.co.za](http://www.intercape.co.za)



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