

**High steaks USA**

US beef consumption fell from 12.6 billion kilos in 2002 to 11.5 billion in 2013, meaning the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board will soon launch a new campaign encouraging Americans to dig in to a steak.

**Election watch**  
Anguilla



February 2015

Date: February

Type: Parliamentary

**Candidates:** Anguilla's House of Assembly can expect another closely fought contest between Victor Banks' Anguilla United Front (AUF) and Dr Ellis Webster's Anguilla United Movement (AUM).

**Issues:** Unemployment and finding ways to stop young citizens from leaving the island are high on the agenda. There is also talk of a referendum on independence from the UK.

**Monocle comment:** Not for the first time in recent years, a suspicion lurks that discussion of independence is something of a populist distraction. — AM

FLIGHT PATH NO.16  
**Turbulent relations**

*Caribbean* [CUBANA DE AVIACIÓN]

**Route:** Toronto to Havana  
**Airline:** Cubana de Aviación  
**Plane:** Airbus A320  
**Frequency:** Eight flights a week

Life hasn't been easy for US citizens wanting to travel to Cuba since an embargo was imposed during the Cold War in 1962. But then a breakthrough in mid-December: a prisoner swap of three Cubans held in Florida in exchange for an alleged US spy long imprisoned on the socialist island and US contractor Alan Gross, held captive in Cuba for the past five years.

Barack Obama has made calls to normalise diplomatic relations between the US and its old ideological foe but until Congress approves a change in the law, US passport-holders are still forbidden from making the dash south – from their homeland, anyway.

The easiest way around this restriction remains flying north to Canada first. Toronto to Havana is among the most popular routes; other ways include going via Latin America. Two operators run flights from Toronto: Air Canada and Cubana de Aviación. US citizens travelling from Canada have to fill in tourist cards but can ask not to have their passports stamped.

Few American politicians have been willing to end the embargo and Cuba remains on the



US State Department's "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list – but at the time of going to press, US secretary of state John Kerry was under instructions from Obama to review it.

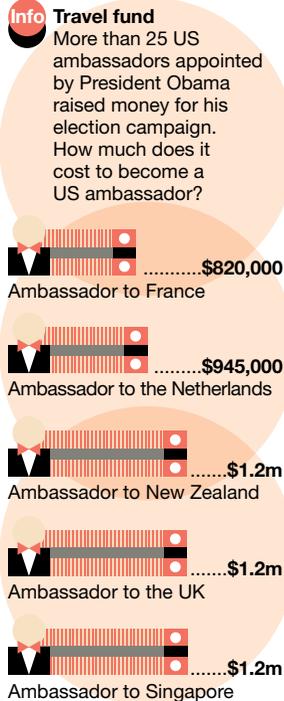
Cuban-Americans, artists, religious groups and universities had been able to obtain a general licence to travel to the island prior to mid-December. Now with the promise of loosened restrictions, those travelling back to the US from Cuba can bring up to \$400 (€325) of Cuban goods with them. The nearby Dominican Republic may be eyeing its rum and cigar-export industries with concern. — EJS

**The high life**

*Brazil* [INFRASTRUCTURE]

The World Cup may have been a divisive issue in Brazil but the country does have one thing everyone can cheer about: people are living longer.

Brazilian life expectancy has risen sharply in recent years, a reflection of the Latin American nation's efforts to improve sanitation, medical access and education. The average life span is now 74.9 years – higher than the global average – and more than 12 years above what it was in 1980. There has also been a reduction in infant mortality over the same period. Despite the progress there is still a sharp divide between the poorer northern states and the agriculturally rich south. — EJS



**Q&A**  
**Hamzah Wald Maqbul**

*Co-founder, Halal Advocates of America*



The halal market is now worth \$20bn (€16bn) in the US but there have been difficulties in certifying whether meat is genuinely halal or not. Halal Advocates of America is trying to make the standard consistent.

**Q What is the meaning of halal?**  
**A** Halal is something that is permissible in the sacred law of Islam. In terms of food it applies to hand-slaughtering an animal while reciting a prayer.

**Q Has the meaning's interpretation changed with evolving farming practices?**  
**A** The word halal has different meanings depending on context. An animal that is hand-slaughtered and eaten is lawful but the way that an

animal might live – such as suffering in tight cages or being fed genetically modified ingredients – is unsanctioned by Muslim law.

**Q Where does Halal Advocates of America come in?**

**A** We advocate for holistic promotion of a sacred law for the meat and the quality of life of the animals. There should be an emphasis on transparency. We want to educate people to think about how the animal on your plate lived, how it died and how was it raised.

**Q How did you decide on criteria for halal certification?**

**A** Muslim tradition is diverse but we worked with a group of scholars to devise standards that reach across sectarian and philosophical lines. Muslims form about 3 per cent of the US population but make up 7 to 10 per cent of its meat consumers. — SK