



UNLIMITED AFRICA: GROWING AFRICA'S TOURISM ECONOMY



AFRICA'S TOURISM MINISTERS BACK A DIGITAL-FIRST FUTURE FOR THE CONTINENT

From AI-powered visitor experiences and paperless visas to influencer-led destination marketing and regional collaboration, African tourism leaders are increasingly looking to technology as a catalyst for tourism growth, competitiveness, and intra-African travel.

Speaking during the "African Ministers Panel Discussion: A Digital Future Driving Tourism Growth In Africa" at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026, ministers and tourism leaders from across the continent outlined how digital innovation is reshaping the future of African tourism.

Opening the discussion, South African Minister of Tourism Patricia De Lille emphasised that the future traveller is mobile-first, digitally connected, and increasingly seeking personalised experiences.

"The future of tourism is increasingly built on mobile phones, digital ecosystems and data intelligence," she said. "Africa's tourism strategy must therefore be mobile-first, digitally intelligent and deeply personalised."

De Lille highlighted South Africa's growing use of artificial intelligence and digital tourism tools, including an AI-powered travel assistant currently being tested for North American travellers. The platform allows

visitors to receive real-time information and personalised itinerary support based on their travel interests, ranging from safaris and heritage tourism to hiking and gastronomy.

The Ministers also used the platform to advocate for stronger regional collaboration, arguing that African countries should market the continent collectively while still maintaining healthy competition between destinations.

A recurring theme throughout the session was the growing influence of digital creators and online personalities in shaping global travel decisions.

Eswatini Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Jane Mkhonta-Simelane reflected on the impact of global streamer iShowSpeed visiting eSwatini during the country's cultural ceremonies. She noted that the exposure generated significant international attention, especially among younger audiences.

"When you want to reach young people, you go to the digital space," she said. "The views on his platforms were enormous, and immediately we saw increased interest in our country."

Similarly, Motlatsi Maqelepo, Lesotho Minister of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture explained how the mountain nation has leveraged



digital storytelling and content creators to showcase one of its most unique tourism assets, snowfall in the Mountain Kingdom.

By partnering with African and international content creators, Lesotho has seen increased visitor numbers, particularly from neighbouring South Africa, with travellers journeying to experience snow tourism and skiing.

"We are now seeing the power of digital media," Maqelepo said. "Tourism growth is no longer only about physical infrastructure. It is also about how visible and accessible your destination becomes online."

Digital visa systems and seamless travel facilitation also featured prominently during the discussion.

De Lille confirmed that South Africa's Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) system is being rolled out as part of broader visa reform efforts aimed at reducing administrative barriers and improving traveller convenience. The new system allows travellers to apply digitally without visiting embassies or consulates, with applicants receiving the outcome within 24 hours.

Several ministers argued that visa liberalisation remains one of the biggest barriers to tourism growth on the continent.

Maqelepo called for African countries to rethink

restrictive visa systems entirely, noting that travellers to Lesotho often first need South African visas due to regional transit realities.

"Why can't we begin the conversation of removing visas altogether?" he asked. "Other regions have moved beyond these barriers while we are still debating them."

Zimbabwe's Deputy Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Tongai Mafidi Mngangwa, highlighted the success of the KAZA UniVisa between Zimbabwe and Zambia, which allows tourists to move more freely between the two countries and enhances regional travel experiences around Victoria Falls.

Angola's Secretary of State for Tourism, Márcio de Jesus Lopes Daniel, said digital platforms have already significantly boosted Angola's international visibility. He revealed that Angola's recent participation at ITB Berlin generated digital reach estimated at over one billion impressions globally.

The session ultimately reinforced a shared continental message: Africa's tourism future will increasingly depend on digital innovation, regional cooperation, youth participation, and seamless travel systems capable of meeting the expectations of modern global travellers.



 www.shark.co.za

 +27 (0) 31 566 0400

 KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board
Maritime Centre of Excellence

 @kznsb

- Audio & Dissection Show
- Shark Museum
- Curio Shop
- Research
- Early morning Educational Boat Tours
- Operational Boats





Discover spectacular panoramic views of the

BLYDE RIVER CANYON

MPUMALANGA, A PLACE OF THE RISING SUN.

VISIT US AT THE MPUMALANGA VILLAGE: DEC 1G01



www.mpumalanga.com



CULTURE AND DIGITAL INNOVATION AT THE HEART OF DESTINATION MARKETING

Marketing leaders from some of South Africa's provinces gathered at the media centre during Africa's Travel Indaba in Durban to discuss destination branding, cultural tourism, youth engagement and the future of tourism growth in South Africa.

The session, moderated by Thandiwe Mathibela, GM: Global PR & Comms at SA Tourism, brought together some provincial tourism executives and private sector partners to explore how collaboration can strengthen South Africa's position as a globally competitive tourism destination.

Sithembile Ndaba, Chief Marketing Officer at SA Tourism said destination branding had become a critical economic tool for countries competing for international visitors. She stressed the importance of presenting a coordinated South African story that reflects the country's diversity while strengthening civic pride among younger generations.

"In an era where we find ourselves meeting with other destination brands, it is very clear that the notion of destination brand is a game changer. It has become an economic factor, so it is not a nice-to-have,

but an economic policy," said Ndaba.

She added that tourism marketing must evolve to connect with younger audiences through digital platforms and authentic storytelling. "We have to find Gen Alpha and Gen Z where they are at, through the languages and tools they use. Marketing has to resonate and also educate people about the heritage, culture and history of South Africa," she said.

Ndaba also noted that culture remains one of South Africa's strongest tourism assets. She said that South African Tourism is working to unpack the "Come Find Your Joy" campaign through the lens of the country's diverse cultural identities.

Representing the private sector, Moeketsi Mapogo, Head of Peugeot and ProOne said Stellantis aimed to play a meaningful role in the tourism value chain.

"Stellantis is proud to be the exclusive vehicle and transportation partner for business. We are not here just to put our logo on the banner. We view ourselves as fundamental contributors to the tourism value chain," said Mapogo.

He added that the company was focused on supporting tourism entrepreneurs and transport operators through tailored mobility and financing solutions.

Provincial tourism leaders also highlighted their regions' unique offerings. Johann van Schalkwyk, Director for Tourism Development in the Northern Cape, described the Northern Cape as an ideal family destination known for adventure tourism, astro-tourism and cultural heritage experiences.

"The Northern Cape is a very strong family destination. Kids can roam free and safe, while families enjoy mountain biking, canoeing, hiking and cultural experiences," he said.

Van Schalkwyk added that the province's clear night skies and San cultural heritage create unique tourism opportunities anchored in authenticity and simplicity.

Meanwhile, Tshediso Lerumo Acting Chief Marketing Officer at the Free State Gambling, Liquor and Tourism Authority highlighted the Free State's central location, heritage attractions and role as the gateway to Lesotho.

Panelists agreed that stronger collaboration between government, provinces and the private sector would be essential to improving infrastructure, cultural preservation, safety perceptions and accessibility as South Africa works toward attracting 15 million international visitors by 2030.



ETA 'A FUNDAMENTAL GAME-CHANGER' FOR TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) system is a fundamental game-changer for South African tourism, delegates attending a workshop at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 heard.

Tourism Minister Patricia De Lille, who was praised for championing the system globally, told the audience that the rollout of ETA for short-stay visa applications and travel authorisations represents far more than a digital upgrade. She said it marks a fundamental shift in how South Africa welcomes visitors, strengthens its global competitiveness and grows its tourism economy.

"The ETA is already demonstrating its impact. Since going live, we have seen strong uptake, fast processing times and a 94% approval rate for completed applications. And with renewals, family profiles and expanded country coverage

now rolling out – the system is becoming even more powerful and user-friendly."

The minister explained that the ETA workshops have been designed to empower participants to understand how the system works, how to use it and how to integrate it into their businesses.

"The truth is simple. The easier it is to travel to South Africa, the more travellers will

come. And the more travellers come, the more your businesses grow. The more jobs we create, the more communities benefit."

Through the ETA platform, eligible travellers can apply online before departure, submit biometric information digitally and receive a swift response. The system uses artificial intelligence and facial recognition technology for automated application reviews and border checks.

Yusuf Simons, Project Lead from the Department of Home Affairs, said the ETA eliminates travel barriers and invites the world to South Africa's doorstep, offering a 90-day multi-entry stay and a six-month visa validity period.

"ETAs are a gamechanger in the travel and tourism sector, not only for visitors but also for Home Affairs. You no longer have to stand in long queues waiting to enter South Africa after a long flight. Whether you come from a visa-exempted country or visa-required country, the ETA offers many benefits

"By centralising authorisations, functions and compliance – it will reduce fraud and improve operational efficiency because of machine reading. In Phase 1, we replaced paper-based visa processes with facial recognition and passport scanning through AI. It is issued

digitally via e-wallet and can be easily accessible.

"When you get to the airport, there are dedicated ETA lanes. Currently, it is available at OR Tambo International Airport and Cape Town International Airport, as well as Lanseria Airport in Johannesburg. There is an EMCS 2.0 system in Home Affairs that allows for 60-second visa processing at the airports," Simons said.

By year-end, government plans to expand the system across all international airports, with the platform extending to six more airports and three major land ports, including Beitbridge, Lebombo and Maseru.

Over the next six to 12 months, South Africa will further broaden the rollout to additional countries, while also introducing support for family and group applications.

BE PART OF THE SUSTAINABILITY MOVEMENT

South African Tourism's "Sustainability Stories" series has been named a finalist at the International Tourism Film Festival Africa 2026, reinforcing South Africa's position as a leading sustainable tourism destination on the global stage.

This recognition strengthens South African Tourism's ongoing efforts to position the country as a premier business and leisure destination, with sustainability emerging as a key strategic pillar.

As global travel trends continue to shift, travellers are increasingly seeking destinations that align with their values and provide meaningful, authentic experiences rooted in sustainability. With its rich biodiversity, strong conservation ethos, and vibrant cultural heritage, South Africa is uniquely positioned to meet this demand while creating a positive impact for local communities.

Now in its eighth year, the International Tourism Film Festival Africa brings together filmmakers, tourism authorities, broadcasters, investors, and policymakers from across the world to celebrate compelling destination storytelling and promote strategic partnerships across the tourism sector. This year's edition received 438 entries from 47 countries, with only 120 productions selected as finalists.

"With travellers placing greater importance on sustainability and purposeful travel, this

recognition highlights the inspiring work being done across our tourism sector," said Bronwen Auret, Chief Quality Assurance Officer at South African Tourism. "Through the Sustainability Stories series, we are showcasing the people, places, and experiences that are preserving our natural and cultural heritage while driving meaningful economic and community impact."

South African Tourism is now calling on tourism products, establishments, destinations, and experiences across the country to share their own sustainability stories and initiatives. Whether through community upliftment, conservation efforts, cultural preservation, renewable energy adoption, or responsible tourism practices, these stories play a vital role in shaping South Africa's reputation as a sought-after green destination.

Tourism businesses are encouraged to contribute their stories and showcase how they are creating positive change within the tourism ecosystem. By amplifying these authentic narratives, South Africa can continue building a globally competitive tourism sector that is inclusive, resilient, and sustainable for future generations.

Are you a sustainable tourism product or experience with a story to tell?

Share your journey with us at brandexperience@southafrica.net and be part of South Africa's sustainability story.



DAY 3 PROGRAMME

Time	Event	Venue
08h00 - 09h30	Speed Marketing Session 3: . Active Adventure and Coastal Beaches	Meeting Room 21, ICC
10h00 - 17h00	Exhibition Starts / Diary Meetings	Exhibition Areas
10H00 - 11H00	Media Editorial Session: The role of film in promoting Tourism in destinations	Media Centre Presentation Room
BOMA TALKS		
11h00 – 11h30	Shaping Sustainability Session 3: EV and Green Mobility as it relates to Tourism By Stellantis	Butterfly Wall - ICC Outdoor
11h30- 12h30	Africa's Travel Indaba Bid Party Wrap Up	Media Centre Presentation Room
13h00 - 14h00	LUNCH - VENDORS TRADE FROM 12H00	Designated Venues
14h00 - 15h00	The Africa's Travel Indaba Awards	South Foyer, ICC
BOMA Talks		
15h00 – 15h30	Future Forward Session 3: AI, Data & the African Advantage: How Technology is Reshaping Africa's Tourism Economy	Future Wheel - ICC Concourse
17h00	SHOW CLOSES	Exhibition Areas
18h00 - 00h00	City Immersion Experience	Florida Road / Umhlanga

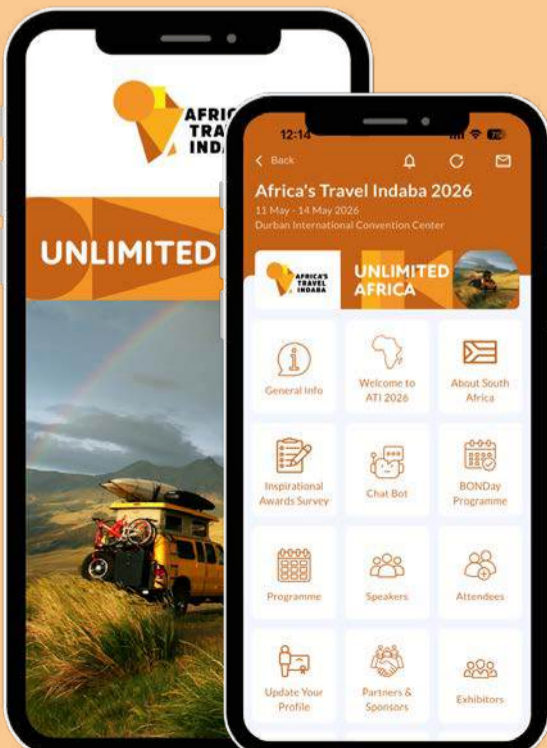
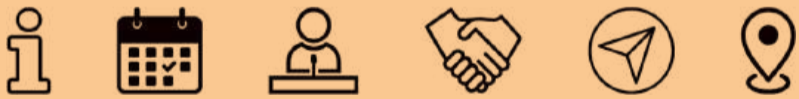
**correct at time of printing*



UNLIMITED AFRICA

DOWNLOAD THE AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA 2026 APP

All event related information in your hands!



SCAN TO DOWNLOAD



Thank You for Sharing Your Stories with The Daily Newspaper!



For Business Inquiries Contact

Redoh Kimmie at
business@solamedia.co.za

Credits

Publisher	Sola Media	Photographer	Mlungisi Mbele
Editor	Riana Andrews	Production Manager	Cindy Jarvis
Writer	MaryAnne Isaac	Distributor	Thobani Mbeje
Writer	Harriet Akinyi	Distributor	Lucky Ntuthuko Mdletshe
Writer	Dominic Naidoo	Business Developer	Redoh Kimmie
Graphic Designer	Talia Adonis	Printer	Pinetown Printers

Contact us: admin@solamedia.co.za

SOUTH AFRICA, MAURITIUS SIGN LANDMARK TOURISM PARTNERSHIP AT INDABA 2026

Tourism Ministers from South Africa and Mauritius have committed to strengthening tourism cooperation between the two countries following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation In The Field Of Tourism at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026.

The agreement, signed by South African Minister of Tourism Patricia de Lille and Mauritian Minister of Tourism, Richard Duval at the Durban ICC, marks a renewed effort to drive regional tourism growth, improve travel connectivity and unlock new opportunities across the tourism value chain.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, De Lille described tourism as "one of the most powerful drivers of economic growth, job creation and regional development", adding that the agreement would create "a framework for us to implement" practical cooperation between the two countries.

"There will be action. There will be measurable action for us to implement this," she said.

The Minister noted that the agreement aligns with broader SADC ambitions to create a more integrated regional visitor experience and encouraged multi-country travel across Southern Africa.

"There's nothing wrong if you come to South Africa, go to Botswana, go to Lesotho and Mauritius. We have now made that public commitment," she said.

De Lille also instructed officials to move quickly toward implementation, calling for technical teams from both countries to begin drafting practical plans immediately.

"By the end of June, we should have the

first draft to be presented to the ministers. Next year when we come back, we're not going to talk about it again; we're going to say this is what we have done," she said.

The MoU outlines cooperation in several strategic tourism areas, including sustainable tourism development, cruise tourism, cultural tourism, medical tourism, adventure tourism, destination management, tourism training and technical cooperation. It also promotes collaboration in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) sector, with a focus on attracting business events, trade exhibitions and international conferences that can drive economic growth and boost destination visibility.

The agreement further seeks to improve travel facilitation and strengthen tourism flows between the two destinations, while creating opportunities for tourism businesses and SMMEs.

Minister Duval said South Africa remains one of Mauritius' most important source markets and described the signing as an important milestone in strengthening bilateral tourism relations.

"South Africa remains a very important market for Mauritius. It is our fifth largest tourism market and one of our most loyal ones," Duval said.

He added that the agreement would help both countries deepen collaboration in tourism planning, destination management and sustainable tourism development.

"In practical terms, the MoU provides stronger collaboration, increases tourism flow between the two countries, promotes sustainable tourism development, develops cultural



tourism, encourages adventure tourism, ecotourism, sport tourism and medical tourism, and facilitates travel procedures," he said.

Duval noted that Mauritius is currently repositioning parts of its tourism offering beyond its traditional beach market, with a stronger focus on inland tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism and authentic visitor experiences.

"In this regard, South Africa has a lot of experience. You have succeeded in developing inland tourism and nature-based tourism in a remarkable way," he said.

He also highlighted the importance of accessibility and regional air connectivity in driving tourism growth across Africa.

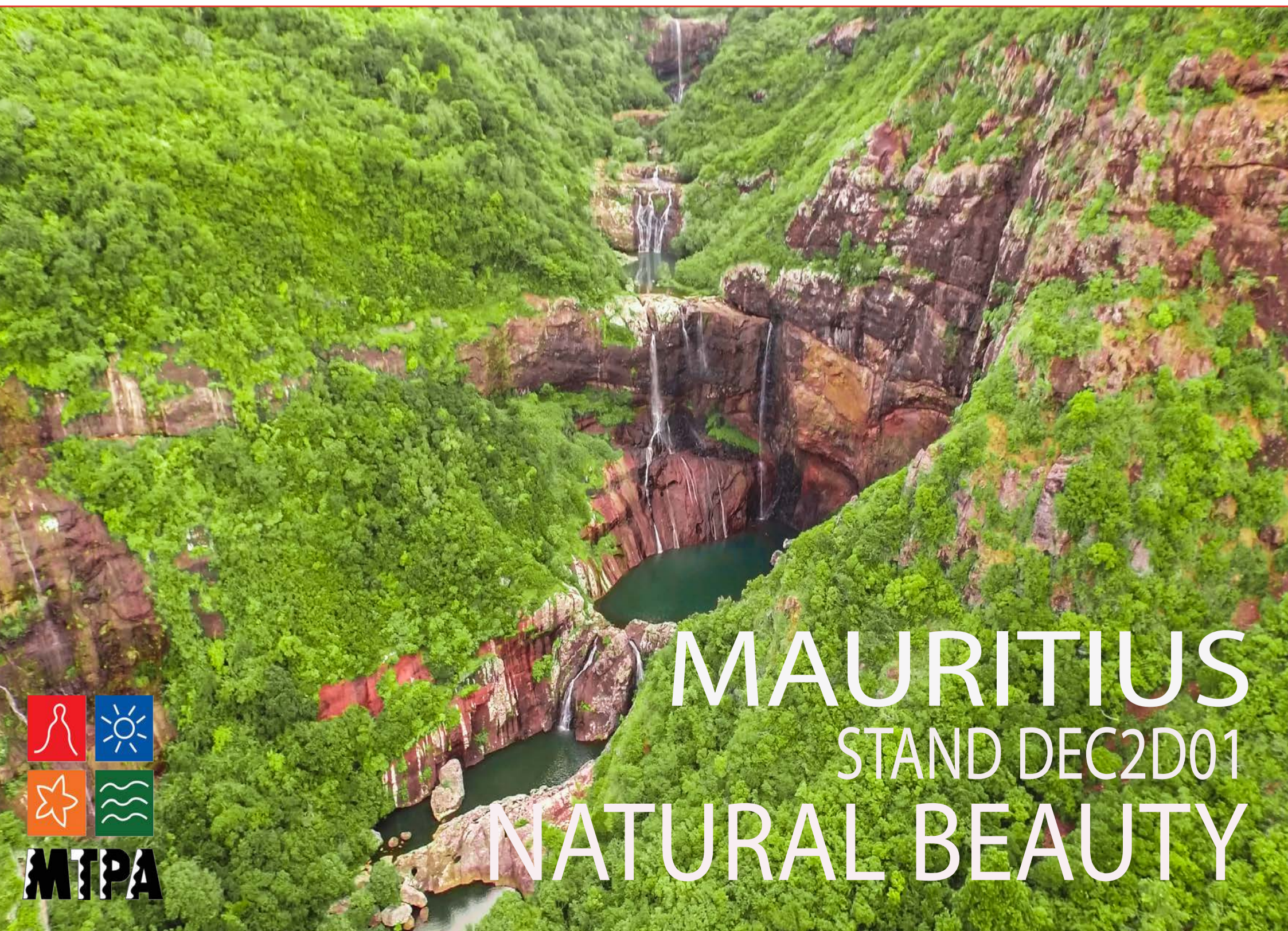
Beyond tourism economics, Duval described Mauritius as a destination strongly connected to

South Africans both culturally and emotionally.

"Mauritius is not just a destination. Mauritius is a feeling of peace, a feeling of belonging, a feeling of safety and serenity," he said.

The agreement comes at a time of growing emphasis on intra-African travel and regional tourism integration; themes strongly echoed throughout Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 under the banner "Unlimited Africa: Growing Africa's Tourism Economy."

For both countries, the partnership signals a broader shift toward collaborative regional tourism development, with tourism leaders increasingly viewing African destinations not as competitors, but as complementary experiences capable of driving shared economic growth across the continent.



MAURITIUS
STAND DEC2D01
NATURAL BEAUTY



EXPLORE LIMPOPO

Start your adventure in Limpopo today!

From ancient sites and cultural experiences to stunning vistas, world-class events and the Big Five, Limpopo has it all. Limpopo offers four great routes to whet your appetite.

WHY DESTINATION LIMPOPO?

Limpopo is the preferred eco-tourism destination with 44 nature reserves, 12 wildlife resorts and two huge transfrontier Parks Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park and Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Park

Iconic baobab trees, sacred lakes and forests complement beautiful unspoilt scenery, landscapes and vistas. Limpopo is the subtropical fruit basket of South Africa.

CONFERENCING, EXHIBITIONS, INCENTIVES AND EVENTS

Limpopo offers unique conference, meetings, incentives and other venues, resources and settings. The meeting and incentive industry within Limpopo has been on a growth trajectory despite the disruptions of Covid-19. Some of Limpopo's Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions (MICE) products are situated a mere 1.5 to three hours from Johannesburg. Most of the venues are served by three airports with direct flights from Johannesburg and Cape Town, including Eastgate Airport in Hoedspruit.

VISIT WWW.GOLIMPOPO.COM

HOW FILM IS DRIVING TOURISM IN KZN

KwaZulu-Natal's growing reputation as a film destination received renewed attention at Africa's Travel Indaba with industry leaders highlighting how television productions filmed in the province are helping position local locations, communities and tourism experiences before national and international audiences.

A panel discussion titled *Filming the Future: Driving Tourism, Distribution and Community Growth through Storytelling* brought together industry leaders from film, television, hospitality and tourism to explore how storytelling and screen productions can position KwaZulu-Natal as a globally competitive tourism and film destination while driving investment, community development and economic growth.

Facilitator of the panel and Head of PR and Communications at KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film Authority, Pinky Radebe, said the province was increasingly recognising film as both a creative and economic driver capable of strengthening

tourism and destination marketing.

"When audiences connect with stories filmed in KwaZulu-Natal, they are also connecting with the province as a destination. That is why the relationship between tourism and film is becoming increasingly important for investment, destination marketing and local economic growth," she said.

One of the strongest examples discussed during the session was the upcoming launch of *Egagasini* – a new telenovela produced by Stained Glass TV, set to premiere on eTV on 29 June.

Head of Production and Series Producer at Stained Glass TV, King David Mukwevho, said the production was extensively filmed in KwaZulu-Natal, including locations in Umlazi, Umhlanga and uShaka Marine World.

"Everything is in close proximity in KZN. You want a village and you find it nearby. It's also cheaper to shoot in KZN. The talent

is also here and it's available. The location and destination that KZN has to offer is also here. You get all in one here," he said.

Mukwevho said the province's diverse locations continued attracting productions because of the convenience and accessibility offered to filmmakers.

"On the top of my head I can name locations like uShaka Marine and Mahatma Gandhi Museum. If we want a location there is not a demand that we pay a cent."

Stained Glass TV has built a strong production footprint in KwaZulu-Natal over the years through productions including *Uzalo*, *eHostela*, *Lingashoni*, *Ifalakhe*, *Ama Langa Awafani*, *Genesis* and *Umjolo*, while also contributing to productions such as *The Wife*.

Mukwevho said the company's long-term presence in the province had translated into local economic opportunities and skills development.

"Since 2014 Stained Glass has been shooting in KZN with their show *Uzalo* – in that cast and team alone everyone is from KZN," he said.

"The company also has a training programme working with KZN Tourism and Film where they train young people. We bring business into the province. We even encouraged a catering company who provide meals to the talent and crew to start a business. Today they are prosperous. We have invested about R100 million each year into the province."

Screenwriter, actor and producer Chris Q. Radebe said authentic KwaZulu-Natal stories continued resonating strongly with audiences, even when productions were forced to recreate

locations elsewhere due to budget constraints.

"There is something so attractive in KZN stories. You can write a KZN-based show, but find a place in Johannesburg to shoot it. Then you send someone who lives in KZN to shoot the establishing shots. We only do that because of the budget – but we find the KZN-based shows are what draws the audiences in," he said.

Durban International Film Festival Director Sakhile Gumede highlighted the role of film festivals in attracting audiences and positioning KwaZulu-Natal within the global film economy.

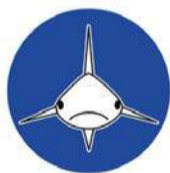
"We use film festivals strategically because the Durban International Film Festival remains the longest-running film festival in the country."

Every July, thousands of filmmakers, producers, creatives and film enthusiasts gather in KwaZulu-Natal, creating an important platform for storytelling, industry networking and showcasing the province to local and international audiences, he added.

"There was a hunger for KZN stories," he said, reflecting on engagements with students and filmmakers he accompanied when visiting Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Hospitality leader Richard Horlock said stronger collaboration was still needed between tourism establishments, hospitality operators and film producers to make the province more film-production friendly.

"Tourism and film have to be adapted to each other. They have to understand how hospitality and film work together. Educate the tourism sector to film and the location organisers to the film sector, and the hospitality sector to all these components," he said.



KWAZULU-NATAL
SHARKS BOARD
Maritime Centre of Excellence

The only organisation on its kind in the world

Curio Shop

Museum

Boat Trip

Audio-Visual

Dissection Show

SHOW TIMES:

Tuesday - Thursday

09h00 - 14h00

Every 1st Sunday of the Month:

14h00 - 16h00

BOAT TRIPS:

Monday - Friday

Contact Number:

(+27) 82 403 9206

FOR BOOKINGS:

CONTACT

(+27)31 566 0436

(Closed on recognised Public Holidays)

Education & Entertainment



ESCAPE TO RED SANDS COUNTRY LODGE AT KURUMAN, NORTHERN CAPE

Experience the beauty and tranquility of the Kalahari at Red Sands Country Lodge. Guests can enjoy their own game drive and watch the sun slip behind the hills, leaving behind a glorious Kalahari crimson sky.

Hike or mountain bike freely through the 1 800-hectare reserve, then cool off in the pool afterwards. Round off the day with dinner at the lodge's à la carte restaurant



and enjoy a drink at the fully licensed bar.

Visitors to nearby Kuruman town can also explore its famous natural fountain, known as The Eye, as well as the legendary Moffat Mission Station.

Contact:

+27 (0)53 712 0033
enquiries@redsands.co.za
www.redsands.co.za



Visit Us at Africa's Travel Indaba

Visit Red Sands Country Lodge at Stand J12 at 12pm on Thursday in the DC Exhibition Area and stand a chance to win a two-night vacation free of charge.

Radisson
SAFARI HOTEL HOEDSPRUIT



Escape to the heart of the Lowveld at Radisson Safari Hotel Hoedspruit. Nestled between the majestic Drakensberg Mountains and world-renowned nature reserves, this stylish sanctuary blends Scandinavian minimalism with South African adventure. Unwind in sophisticated rooms, indulge at the Amani Spa, or savour local flavours at our three on-site restaurants. Whether you're splashing in the infinity pools or exploring the wild on a nearby safari, experience the perfect balance of rugged exploration and refined luxury in South Africa's safari capital.

Stand ICC2222, Hall 5

Khanyisa Chauke:
khanyisa.chauke@radisson.com
Nadia Erasmus:
nadia.erasmus@radisson.com

TOURPLAN
We'll Get You There



The leading provider of software for Tour Operators and DMC's to streamline your business from quotes to reporting.

Stand ICC402, Hall 1

Robert Ngcobo
(+27) 11 918 0031 | (+27) 63 680 7671
(Cell & Whatsapp)
www.tourplan.com

MEET RETANG PHAAHLA, A TEA ARTISAN, FROM LIMPOPO

Retang Phaaхла, a Tea Artisan from Limpopo, says her experience at Indaba has been incredible.

Phaaхла is showcasing Setsong African Tea Crafters, which offers a range of different indigenous teas that are great to be placed within the hospitality industry.

"We've got tea offerings that assist with energy boosting, with calming the nerves, helping you sleep at night, detox, all rooted in the indigenous knowledge systems of Limpopo. At Indaba, we've been able to engage with a lot of lodges and resorts that are interested in actually exposing these teas as part of their offerings in the rooms, as well as on their

menus. And because we also offer tea tours and experiences on our own farm, we've also been able to engage with tour operators who are interested in adding our package into their tour offering to local and international guests. So we've been able to really maximize and present both offerings, both the tea range and also our cultural experiences and tea tours."

Phaaхла says Setsong African Tea Crafters started exhibiting at Indaba many years ago, the business has grown significantly. "We've been able to find our way into retailers across the country like the likes of Food Lover's Market, Dis-Chem, and SPAR. I just want to appreciate platforms like Indaba that expose especially small businesses to local and international

markets. I think with these types of events we can definitely contribute to the growth of local businesses and the development of jobs that we so desperately need."

Phaaхла also praised the BONDday programme at Indaba. "Through the panel conversations and the engagements that we had on the first day, there's a lot that we were able to learn and also really able to understand that cultural offerings and gastronomic experiences are vital as an offering for South Africa's tourism, just to attract the international community to learn more about our culture and our heritage. So, you know, this has really created a lot of validation that what we're doing is important for the market."



VOICES FROM THE FLOOR



Darryl Erasmus, Exhibitor, Babanango Game Reserve, South Africa

Indaba 2026 for us has been an opportunity to reconnect with old relationships, remind people that we're still around, but also expose new products to new markets, new buyers, and that's been great so far. We've had an opportunity to meet with plenty of people, plenty of international buyers, plenty of domestic, plenty of regional buyers, and I suppose the main thing now for us is to follow up after the show and try and convert whatever leads we've been able to generate whilst on the floor.

Matumelane Peter, Exhibitor, Milani Guest House - Fingo Village.

My overall experience has been great. It is my first time coming as an SMME business representing my brand. The trade show has given me an opportunity to expand my knowledge on how to grow my business. I was focused on just my guest house and I now realised that this industry has a lot more to offer in terms of growth. Meetings have been fruitful, and through these meetings I found a service provider that I can collaborate with to resolve my current challenges. I love that everyone gets to meet face to face and form lasting business relationships, rather than online meetings and communication.



Wendy Tembe, Exhibitor, Royal Thonga Safari Lodge.

The Indaba has been very fruitful. Yesterday was a slow start but as the day progressed, meetings took place. Today, we attended the Women in Tourism breakfast which was very educational. If it wasn't for the Indaba, I would not have been exposed to such an organisation that inspired and continues to inspire women in business. I met many new agents who showed interest in working in rural spaces we are situated in. This was indeed a blessing to know we are not forgotten and that there is a demand, and space for us. Getting exposure from the Tourism Grading Council has created more opportunities and fruitful exchanges with other establishments.

Denzel Swarts, Exhibitor, Zoetndal Vineyards and River Estate, South Africa

Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 is really wonderful. I think this year for me I saw more people coming through our stand experiencing our wines and it's been really good to ensure that all kinds of hospitality meets in one location, from beverage to accommodation to experiences. And this year it's even bigger than last year. You can see it in the quality and I think that is pretty good.





ICONIC GARDEN ROUTE RESORT SECURES FOUR-STAR GRADING AFTER MAJOR REFURBISHMENT

ANEW Resort Wilderness Garden Route has been awarded a four-star grading by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa. The property has been part of Wilderness since the early 1900s and joined the ANEW Hotels & Resorts portfolio on 1 October 2025. Over the decades, it has welcomed both local and international travellers. The grading follows a focused period of renovations aimed at refreshing the well-known property, with aesthetic improvements alongside key operational upgrades.

Says General Manager Brandon Schafli, "This was not about changing the character of the hotel, but about investing in the right places in this landmark property. Although the rooms have been updated, the biggest change is in the public spaces, especially at reception, the restaurant and bar, and the new modern lounge overlooking the Wilderness Common."

Latest official data shows that South Africa attracted a record 10,5 million international arrivals in 2025, up nearly 18% on 2024 and above pre-pandemic figures, with continued growth from regional and long-haul markets. These figures underline sustained demand, with the Garden Route benefiting from both domestic and international travel patterns across peak and shoulder seasons.

Says Schafli, "The Garden Route has consistently shown its staying power, and this property remains

part of what keeps the region competitive as a travel destination. With these upgrades now in place, it will continue to deliver consistent guest experiences while supporting tourism in Wilderness. For a group like ANEW, investing here reflects confidence in the long-term future of this area."

He concludes, "So far, the feedback has been extremely positive! New visitors are discovering the property and returning guests are recognising the care that has gone into the refurbishment. It now meets all the requirements of a four-star grading, while retaining its character and history."

This 151-room historic property is situated just 15km from George Airport and features a range of amenities including The Loerie Restaurant and Bar, the Hydro Spa & Wellness Centre, two swimming pools, a



bowling green, tennis and squash courts, padel courts, putt-putt, and conference facilities catering for up to 300 delegates.



ANEW
RESORT WILDERNESS
GARDEN ROUTE

For more information, visit www.anewhotels.com or come and see us at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 at stand ICC4 1912.



A Smarter Approach to Hotel Management

Where performance, people, and partnerships meet.

ANEW Hotels & Resorts combines the agility of a growing brand with the expertise of an established management company.

We offer:

- End-to-end hotel and asset management
- Strategic revenue and distribution control
- Operational precision driven by experienced teams
- A personalised, partnership-first approach

Backed by a culture of attention to detail and a commitment to delivering exceptional results, we create value for both guests and owners.

www.anewhotels.com



BEYOND LUXURY: WHY TRAVELLERS ARE SEEKING PURPOSE-DRIVEN SAFARI EXPERIENCES

The African safari industry is undergoing a major transformation as travellers increasingly seek deeper, more meaningful experiences beyond traditional game drives and luxury accommodation. Across the continent, immersive travel, conservation-based tourism, and educational experiences are becoming some of the fastest-growing trends shaping the future of safari travel.

According to Anton Lategan, Managing Director of EcoTraining, modern travellers are searching for authentic connections with nature in a world that has become increasingly digital and disconnected.

“Modern life has become rushed, digital and impersonal, but because of our humanity and biology, we still crave real, sensory interaction with the natural world,” says Lategan. “We are not voyeurs of nature; we are citizens of it.”

Engage more directly

For decades, the luxury safari model focused heavily on comfort, exclusivity, and wildlife viewing from safari vehicles. While that market remains strong, travellers are now increasingly looking for experiences that allow them to engage more directly with landscapes, conservation work, and local communities.

Lategan believes that traditional safari experiences sometimes create a disconnect between travellers and the wilderness itself.

“Often guests are cocooned in layers of man-made comfort, when in fact our physical, intellectual and spiritual selves are looking for

genuine immersion,” he explains. “The best luxury operators bridge both worlds, giving travellers a taste of the wild from a base of comfort and good guiding can take them on a deep journey into the wilderness from there.”

Meaningful and Transformative

This shift is being driven partly by changing consumer behavior. Many international travellers already come from comfortable lifestyles and are no longer motivated purely by luxury accommodation. Instead, they are searching for experiences that feel meaningful, educational, and transformative.

“To some extent, luxury has become generic,” says Lategan. “What travelers are missing — and actively seeking — is the chance to learn, to understand, and to engage in new adventures. Conservation and education offer something more: meaning, perspective, and a deeper connection to place.”

As a result, safari operators are increasingly expanding their offerings beyond standard game drives. Walking safaris, wilderness trails, conservation volunteering, photography expeditions, tracking experiences, birding, and cultural immersion activities are becoming increasingly popular across Southern and East Africa.

Sustainability and Purpose

This evolution is also being strongly influenced by younger travellers, particularly millennials and Gen Z tourists, who are placing greater emphasis on sustainability,

purpose, and experiential travel.

“There is a growth in environmental consciousness, but it needs to be coupled with real knowledge and understanding,” Lategan notes. “This social media generation runs the risk of being misguided by uninformed hype, and we need to combine their well-meaning values with genuine knowledge if they are to shape the future of global leadership.”

Younger travellers are also influencing safari tourism through the types of experiences they prioritise. Rather than spending most of their time inside luxury lodges, many are seeking more active and immersive adventures that place them directly within nature.

“Younger travellers often have smaller budgets, which pushes them toward more immersive experiences,” he explains. “That boosts the popularity of nature-based travel across all generations. Think more hiking and cycling, more time spent in the landscape, and deeper integration with communities.”

This trend is helping diversify safari tourism by creating experiences that appeal to travelers beyond the traditional luxury market. Operators are now designing itineraries focused on wilderness skills, conservation education, rewilding projects, and environmental awareness.

Importantly, purpose-driven tourism is no longer being viewed as a niche market. Across Africa, conservation-based travel is increasingly emerging as one of the continent’s strongest long-term tourism opportunities.

Lategan believes broader societal shifts are also contributing to this rise. In an increasingly stressful and fast-paced world, travelers are searching not only for rest, but also for purpose and personal enrichment.

“In the current global society, people are often exhausted at work and simply need to rest on their holidays, which is understandable,” he says. “But the emergence of sabbaticals and gaps between studies creates more time for immersive conservation-based tourism.”

He adds that as more people achieve material stability, travel motivations are evolving beyond relaxation alone.

“People are seeking material security, as well as purpose and meaning in their lives,” Lategan explains. “First people need to pay their bills, and then more and more people will seek out travel with purpose, such as conservation-based tourism.”

For Africa’s safari industry, this shift presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Operators are increasingly expected to deliver not only exceptional wildlife encounters, but also authentic storytelling, educational value, and visible conservation impact.

As travellers continue moving toward immersive and purpose-driven experiences, the future of safari tourism may no longer be defined solely by luxury lodges or Big Five sightings, but by how deeply visitors are able to connect with the landscapes, wildlife, and communities they encounter.

SUSTAINABLE OFFICERS: THE NEW CAREER TREND RESHAPING SAFARI TOURISM

A new role is quietly reshaping Africa’s safari and hospitality industry. Many lodges and safari camps are now employing sustainability officers — specialists tasked with helping tourism businesses reduce their environmental footprint while strengthening relationships with surrounding communities.

As travellers become more conscious about the environmental impact of tourism, safari lodges are under growing pressure to demonstrate genuine responsibility rather than simply promoting “green” branding. This is where sustainability officers come in.

“Strategically, a sustainability officer ensures that a company is prepared for future regulations by implementing genuine corporate responsibility measures,” explains Cecilia Mueni, Footprint and Sustainability Assistant Director at The Safari Collection.

“I have many functions in my role and one of them is assisting the company build strong relationships with the surrounding communities, making sure that the company is not only successful but making a positive impact in the community,” she says.

Cecilia works for a hospitality company that places strong emphasis on how tourism impacts both the environment and local people. The company is also part of The Long Run, a global initiative promoting sustainable tourism and conservation-focused travel businesses.

Her role stretches far beyond environmental reporting. On a monthly basis, she tracks the lodge’s resource consumption, including water use, energy efficiency, and waste production, helping management measure environmental

impact and identify areas for improvement.

“The impact of my work extends across various departments as it requires input from my colleagues to discuss strategies and progress on how to minimize negative impacts on the environment,” she explains.

Part of her work also involves training staff on eco-conscious operations, from reducing waste and conserving energy to encouraging environmentally responsible practices throughout the business.

“The specifics of my work also depend on the time of year,” Cecilia adds. “In January, I might be in Samburu conducting interviews for our conservation scholarship programme for disadvantaged students from communities around our properties. In April, I could be engaged in fundraising activities to support giraffe conservation. One thing is for sure: there is never a dull day when you are passionate about your work.”

The emergence of sustainability departments is becoming increasingly common among major safari operators. Elewana Collection, Sopa Lodges, Cheli & Peacock Safaris,

and other tourism brands now operate under the Land & Life Foundation, a sustainability and conservation arm focused on ensuring tourism has measurable positive impact.

“As a hospitality group based in critical wildlife areas, we believe in the power of environmental responsibility and bring this mindset to the communities we work with, our teams, and our guests,” says Shalini Tak, Sustainability and Environmental Manager, Land & Life Foundation.

“As a department, we ensure that the company reduces its footprints, invests in conservation, and provides tangible benefits to our local partner communities.”

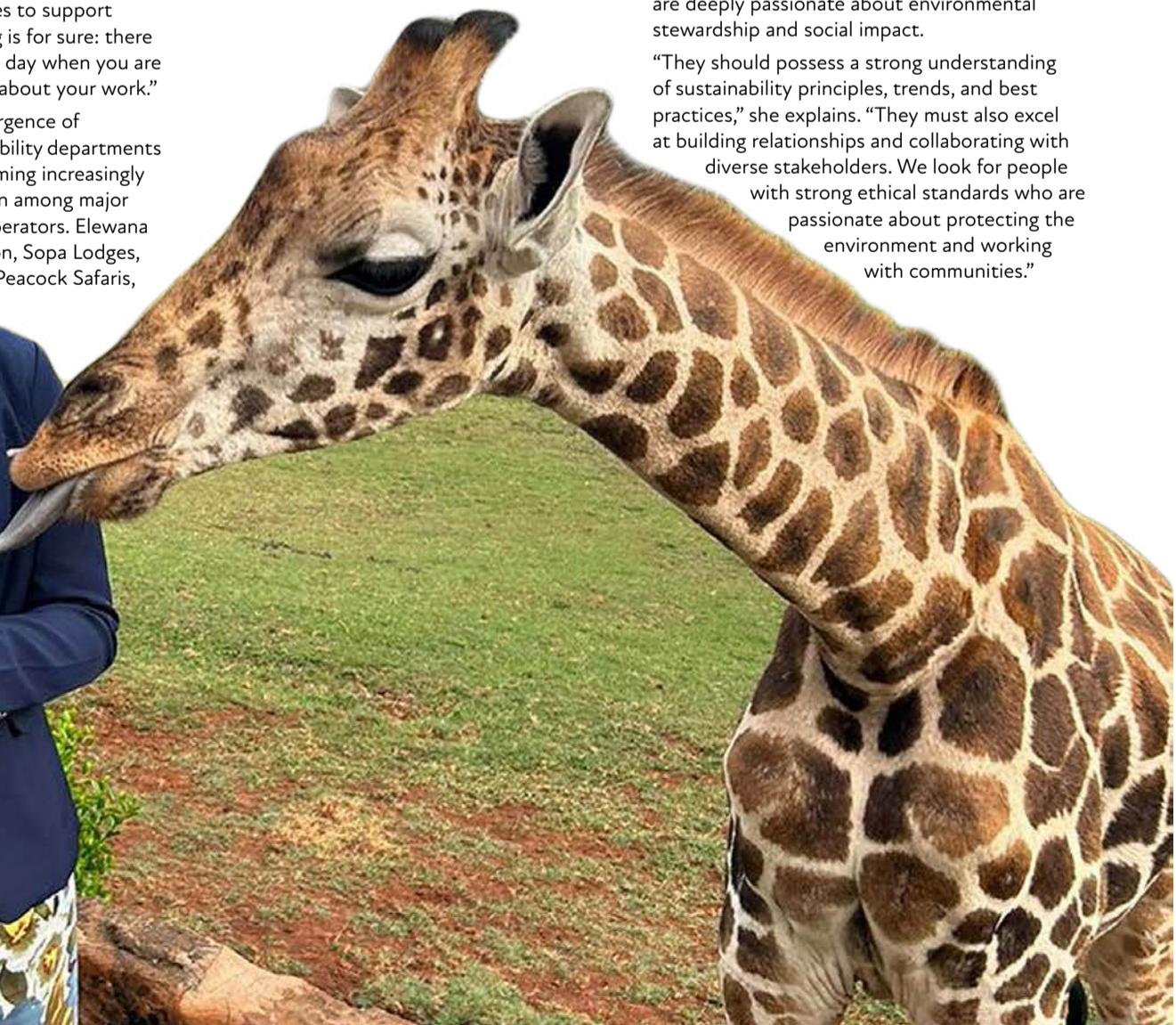
For Shalini, sustainability is no longer optional in tourism, especially for companies operating in ecologically sensitive destinations. “In today’s

age, sustainability cannot be overlooked and should form the core of any business operation as this is what drives long-term growth,” she says. “Staff also need to be trained and committed to building eco-consciousness within their organisations, and it is particularly difficult to do this without someone taking the lead.”

The role requires a combination of environmental knowledge, leadership skills, and community engagement. Sustainability officers are expected to understand conservation practices, climate-related risks, responsible sourcing, and stakeholder management while balancing commercial realities within the tourism industry.

According to Shalini, organisations are increasingly looking for professionals who are deeply passionate about environmental stewardship and social impact.

“They should possess a strong understanding of sustainability principles, trends, and best practices,” she explains. “They must also excel at building relationships and collaborating with diverse stakeholders. We look for people with strong ethical standards who are passionate about protecting the environment and working with communities.”





THE RISE OF MULTI-COUNTRY TRAVEL

Harriet Akinyi explores why Africa Is Becoming the World's Ultimate Regional Tourism Destination.

According to Go2Africa, African travel data is reflecting a clear global shift in how people plan long-haul journeys. Travellers are increasingly choosing multi-country safari circuits and longer itineraries, while at the same time taking shorter breaks elsewhere.

In practical terms, this is why combinations such as Botswana–Namibia–Zambia–Zimbabwe or Kenya–Tanzania–Rwanda are now far more common than single-country safaris.

Across research and booking patterns, four key forces explain this acceleration.

First is experience maximization. Travellers increasingly want to “get more from one long-haul flight,” combining multiple countries into a single immersive journey rather than repeating expensive intercontinental travel.

Second is better regional connectivity, as improved flight routes and border infrastructure reduce friction between destinations.

Third is social media influence, where travellers are constantly exposed to multi-country itineraries and replicate them in their own travel planning.

Fourth is the growing role of travel advisors and destination management companies (DMCs) such as Private Safaris, which are now actively designing multi-country journeys as the default luxury product rather than an exception.

Africa Uniquely Aligned

Africa is uniquely aligned with this global trend. Unlike many regions, safari ecosystems are not confined by political borders. Wildlife corridors stretch across countries, river systems connect landscapes, and cultural diversity shifts seamlessly from one region to another.

As industry data shows, multi-destination trips

already account for over 30% of international travel and are growing at roughly twice the rate of single-country trips. Africa is among the biggest beneficiaries of this shift because of its naturally transboundary tourism ecosystems.

“A Kenya–Tanzania itinerary allows travellers to experience the Maasai Mara and Serengeti—two of the most iconic parks on the continent. Despite sharing the same ecosystem, each offers a unique wildlife and cultural experience. The Mara is known for concentrated game viewing, while the Serengeti offers vast open plains and a more remote feel,” says Bainito Musumbi from Private Safaris.

Uganda adds another dimension to this regional circuit. “The cultural experience in Uganda is raw and authentic gorilla trekking remains unmatched,” he adds.

However, differences between destinations remain important. Kenya’s Maasai Mara is smaller and offers fast, high-density game viewing, while Tanzania’s Serengeti is larger, more expansive and often appeals to luxury travellers seeking space and exclusivity. Uganda, meanwhile, remains niche due to its focus on gorillas and limited Big Five safari infrastructure.

Despite strong demand, cross-border safaris still face structural challenges.

Cost remains a major factor, as park fees are charged separately in each country and itineraries often require multiple flights and visa payments.

Border delays at crossings such as Isebania or Namanga can also reduce valuable safari time. In addition, most safari vehicles cannot cross borders, forcing operators to switch vehicles at checkpoints. Visa fragmentation remains one of the biggest issues.

Improved Connectivity

In Southern Africa, the multi-country trend is equally strong. According to Harriet Sobey, Founder and Managing Director of Chester & Rose, cross-border itineraries have become significantly easier due to improved connectivity.

“Multi-country itineraries are becoming increasingly popular because regional connectivity has improved significantly. With direct routes linking hubs such as Maun, Windhoek, Victoria Falls and Livingstone, it is easier than ever to combine countries within one itinerary,” she explains.

Travellers can now seamlessly combine Botswana’s Okavango Delta, Namibia’s desert landscapes, Zimbabwe’s Victoria Falls and South Africa’s Cape Town within one journey.

Despite improvements, challenges still exist. Visa costs in countries such as Zimbabwe and Namibia can still discourage travellers, even though online visa systems have simplified the process overall.

“There are still some challenges around visas and cross-border logistics, although these have improved considerably over time. The increasing use of efficient online visa systems has made pre-arrival planning much easier,” she notes.

Regional collaboration is increasingly seen as the foundation of future tourism growth.

“Regional collaboration is absolutely essential when selling Southern Africa. The countries complement one another exceptionally well and are naturally suited to combination travel,” Sobey notes.

She adds that collaboration benefits everyone, from operators and suppliers to local economies

and travellers, by encouraging longer stays and more diverse experiences.

At a policy level, Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, CEO of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa and Interim Chair of the SADC Business Council Tourism Alliance, argues that visa reform is critical.

“It is absolutely critical. One of the biggest barriers to tourism growth in Africa remains visa restrictions and inconsistent entry requirements between countries,” he says.

“We would like to see a system similar to the Schengen visa in Europe, where one visa allows access to multiple countries.”

Tshivhengwa also highlights the inefficiency of shared attractions being split by borders: “Why should tourists have to pay separate fees and navigate separate systems when they are visiting one shared natural attraction like Victoria Falls?”

FEDHASA AND FAIR TRADE TOURISM FORMALISE PARTNERSHIP TO ADVANCE RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

The Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (FEDHASA) and Fair Trade Tourism (FTT) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), formalising a strategic partnership aimed at advancing responsible tourism practices across

Southern Africa’s hospitality sector.

The agreement was signed on 22 April 2026 and officially launched at Africa’s Travel Indaba 2026 by Jaya Naidoo, General Manager FEDHASA KZN & Eastern Cape and FTT

General Manager Grace Stead, establishing a framework to promote and advocate for responsible tourism principles and practices among their members and the broader industry.

This includes providing educational opportunities (such as webinars, workshops, and digital learning hubs), networking, capacity-building, and market access, as well as collaborating on policy, research, projects, and events that encourage ethical tourism.

The partnership will also help to advance the tourism industry’s operational standards, with partners agreeing to meet quarterly to share relevant information and updates, review progress, and identify new opportunities.

The timely partnership comes as 45% of international travellers turn to accommodation with certified sustainable credentials, according to Booking.com’s 2024 Sustainable Travel Report. At the same time, the EU Directive on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition (Directive 2024/825), which becomes binding from 27 September 2026, is reshaping the terms on which international markets engage with tourism products. It is evident that, for South African hospitality businesses competing for international visitors,

verified sustainability credentials are fast becoming a prerequisite for market access.

“Responsible tourism, once a niche positioning strategy, is now the direction the global market is moving in, and South African hospitality needs to move with it,” said Naidoo. “Our partnership with FTT gives our members a direct connection to one of Africa’s most credible and established responsible tourism certification frameworks. This is FEDHASA in action: removing barriers, opening doors, and ensuring our members have what they need to compete and lead.”

FTT is a leading African responsible tourism certification body, operating across South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania and Uganda. Its certification standard, which is independently reviewed and confirmed as compliant with Travalyst initiative, encompasses fair wages and working conditions, equitable distribution of benefits, ethical business practices, and environmental stewardship.

“The businesses that will thrive in the next decade are those that can demonstrate, credibly and verifiably, that they are operating in a way that is good for both people and the planet,” noted Stead.



OR TAMBO GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE AND INGQUZA HILL MEMORIAL: HONOURING HEROES



The Nelson Mandela Museum's sites, including the OR Tambo Garden of Remembrance and Ingquza Hill Memorial, pay tribute to South Africa's rich history and its heroes.

OR Tambo Garden of Remembrance

The OR Tambo Garden of Remembrance honors the life and legacy of Oliver Reginald Tambo, a key figure in the fight against apartheid and a co-founder of the African National Congress Youth League. The garden serves as a place of reflection and remembrance, acknowledging Tambo's contributions to South Africa's democracy.

Come and experience the tranquillity and significance of the OR Tambo Garden

of Remembrance. Learn, reflect, and be inspired! Ingquza Hill Memorial

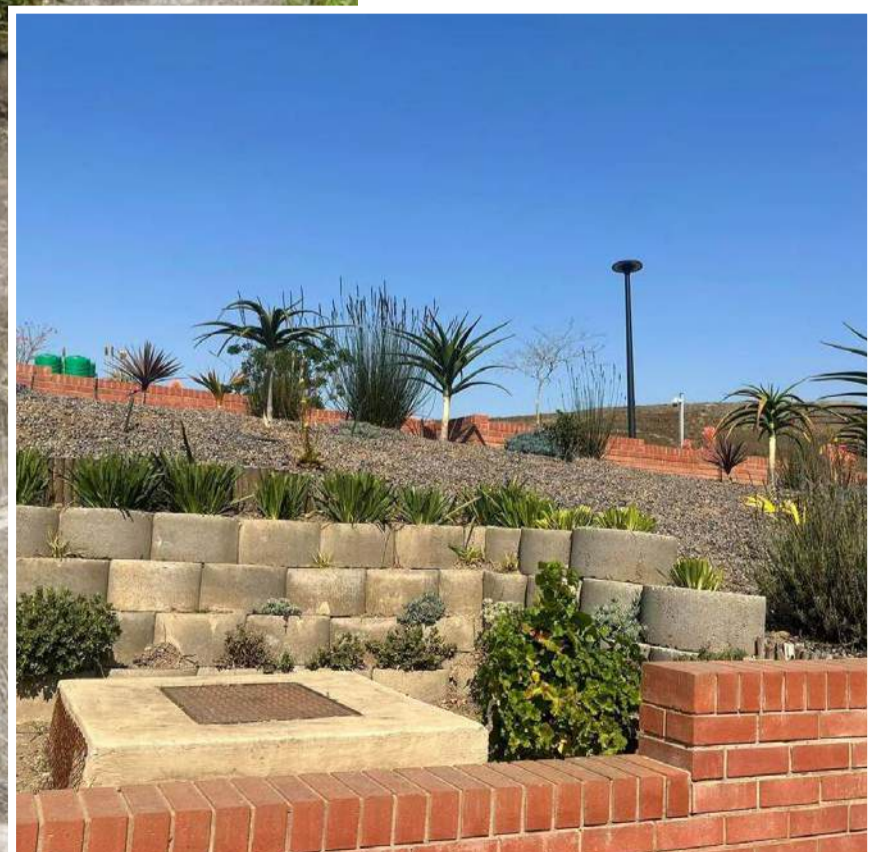
The Ingquza Hill Memorial commemorates the

Mpondombini warriors who fought against colonial rule in the 19th century. This site recognizes the bravery and resilience of those

who resisted oppression, highlighting the region's complex history and cultural heritage.

Both sites offer visitors a deeper understanding of South Africa's past, its struggle for freedom, and the ongoing pursuit of justice and equality. By exploring these memorials, guests can gain insight into the country's history and its people's unwavering spirit.

Come and experience the rich history and culture of the Pondo people. Visit the Ingquza Hill Memorial today!



Plan Your Visit:
 Location: Flagstaff, Eastern Cape
 Contact Us: Ms. Thembakazi Mvitshane
 +27 (0)47 501 9515
 Thembazi@nelsonmandelamuseum.org.za

MANDELA'S "GIFTS OF THE NATION" DECLARED A PROTECTED HERITAGE TREASURE

The gifts voluntarily presented to the late former President Nelson Mandela over decades were never ordinary objects in his eyes. To Madiba, each gift carried a story of solidarity, love, sacrifice, and hope. Today, those treasured items have officially been recognised as part of South Africa's protected heritage.

On 18 May 2026, the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), an entity of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, will formally hand over a declaration certificate recognising the Nelson Mandela Museum's gifted collection as a Specifically Declared Heritage Collection.

The historic ceremony will take place at the Nelson Mandela Museum Bhunga Building in Mthatha, Eastern Cape, where the Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture, Gayton McKenzie, is expected to officiate the occasion.

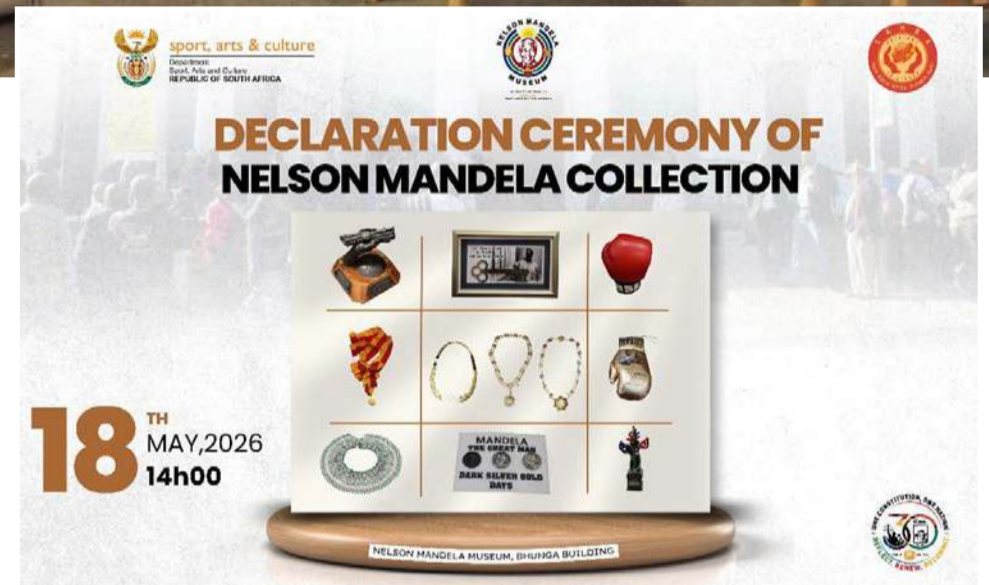
Known affectionately as the "Gifts of the Nation", the collection consists of nearly 3,900 verified objects received by Mandela from across the globe. These include diplomatic gifts, medals, beadwork, textiles, paintings, sculptures, handcrafted items, and heartfelt tokens from children and ordinary citizens worldwide. Together, they tell a powerful story of international



solidarity against apartheid, South Africa's democratic transition, and Mandela's enduring influence as a global moral leader.

The declaration, gazetted under Section 32 of the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999), ensures the collection is permanently protected against sale, loss, damage, or fragmentation. The move also comes as a significant step in preserving Madiba's vision of a living museum that honours the people of the world who stood with South Africa during its struggle for freedom.

The establishment of the Nelson Mandela Museum itself was inspired by Mandela's appreciation of these gifts. In 1998, Cabinet approved several Presidential Legacy Projects, leading to the official establishment of the Museum on 11 February



2000. Its mission was to preserve Mandela's awards and gifts, tell the story of his life, and represent the history and heritage of previously marginalised communities.

Acting CEO Mr Mandisi Msongelwa described the declaration as a defining milestone for the Museum and the region.

"These gifts symbolise international support against apartheid, personal sacrifice, the

dawn of democracy, and global recognition of South Africa," said Msongelwa.

He added that the declaration will further position the Museum as a leading cultural and tourism destination locally and internationally, while also creating opportunities for economic growth within the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality and the OR Tambo District.

Visitors attending the declaration ceremony and travelling to the region are encouraged to explore the Museum's sites, including the Youth and Heritage Centre in Qunu, located near Mandela's residence, which offers accommodation and conferencing facilities.

More than a collection of artefacts, the "Gifts of the Nation" stand as enduring symbols of unity, resilience, and humanity, a reminder that the legacy of Nelson Mandela belongs not only to South Africa, but to the world.



in the footprints ...
an agency of the
Department of Sport, Arts and Culture

KZN SHARKS BOARD'S JAW-DROPPING STAND MAKES WAVES AT INDABA 2026



Africa's Travel Indaba proved to be a major success for the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board Maritime Centre of Excellence (KZNSB), with the organisation using the three-day exhibition to showcase its contribution to marine tourism, public safety, conservation and education to both local and international audiences.

Over the past three days, the KZNSB stand attracted consistent interest from visitors, many of whom were drawn to the striking shark jaw displays featuring species commonly found along the KwaZulu-Natal coastline, including the Great White Shark and Ragged Tooth Shark. The Great White Shark jaws proved to be a major talking point among visitors, with tourists and delegates eager to learn more about the species and its presence along the KZN coast.

Visitors to the stand had the opportunity to engage directly with Sharks Board representatives, who shared information about the organisation's work in shark safety, marine research, ocean conservation and tourism awareness. International delegates and tourists were seen taking photographs of the displays, while many expressed fascination at the size and detail of the shark jaws on exhibition.

One of the highlights during the exhibition was a visit by eThekweni Mayor, Cyril Xaba, who visited the stand and interacted with the Sharks Board team. During the visit, Babalo Mpaka guided the Mayor through the shark jaw exhibition, explaining the various shark species represented in the display and their significance along the KwaZulu-Natal coastline. The Mayor showed great interest in the educational display and engaged in discussions around marine life and coastal safety.

Acting CEO of the KZN Sharks Board, Harry Mbambo, also spent time at the stand engaging

with stakeholders, tourism representatives and visitors from various sectors within the tourism industry. The exhibition created valuable networking opportunities and allowed the organisation to strengthen relationships with tourism role players and international delegates.

Mbambo highlighted the importance of the Sharks Board maintaining visibility on influential tourism platforms such as Africa's Travel Indaba.

"It is important for the Sharks Board to maintain a strong presence at platforms like Tourism Indaba because we are strategically positioned

to contribute meaningfully to KwaZulu-Natal tourism and coastal experiences," said Mbambo.

He further emphasised the organisation's broader role within communities through its educational outreach, research initiatives and public awareness programmes.

"Through our educational initiatives, outreach programmes and ongoing research, we continue to contribute towards various communities and tourism development efforts. This makes the Sharks Board unique and one of its kind in the world," he added.



Mbambo also expressed his passion for positioning the Sharks Board as a recognised tourism and educational attraction in the province.

"Our beaches remain one of KwaZulu-Natal's biggest attractions and the work done by the Sharks Board plays an important role in ensuring that the KZN coastline remains one of the safest coastlines for residents and visitors alike. We want more people to understand the value and contribution of the Sharks Board," he said.

Acting Marketing Manager at the KZN Sharks Board, Nombuso Ngubane, said the exhibition

created a valuable opportunity to engage directly with the public and raise awareness around marine conservation and tourism experiences offered by the organisation.

"Tourism Indaba allows us to connect with visitors from different parts of the world and educate them about the important role played by the Sharks Board. We have seen growing interest in

marine education, shark conservation and the experiences we offer," said Ngubane.

Many visitors also showed keen interest in the Sharks Board's educational shark dissection shows, which are popular among schools, tourists and marine enthusiasts. The demonstrations provide insight into shark anatomy, marine biology and conservation awareness.

The shark dissection shows take place from Tuesday to Thursday and every first Sunday of the month from 14h00 to 16h00, while boat trips are available from Monday to Friday. Informational brochures were distributed throughout the exhibition to visitors wanting to learn more about the Sharks Board's activities and visitor experiences.

The KZNSB team also engaged with current tourism partners and exhibitors, including KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film and Durban Tourism, while networking with representatives from other provinces and international delegates.

The three-day exhibition was regarded as a great success for the Sharks Board, with strong public engagement, meaningful stakeholder interactions and increased awareness around marine tourism and conservation.

Looking ahead to future Tourism Indaba exhibitions, the Sharks Board aims to expand its showcase by placing greater focus on its research initiatives and scientific work. The organisation hopes to use future platforms to highlight research-driven solutions that can assist in addressing some of the operational and environmental challenges currently faced by the Sharks Board, while continuing to strengthen its contribution to tourism, public safety and marine conservation in KwaZulu-Natal.





Mpumalanga, Embrace the Unknown,

LIVE THE ADVENTURE

MPUMALANGA, A PLACE OF THE RISING SUN.

VISIT US AT THE MPUMALANGA VILLAGE: DEC 1601



www.mpumalanga.com



CAPE TOWN, ZIMBABWE AND NAMIBIA FORM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

A strategic partnership has been established between Cape Town, Zimbabwe, and Namibia to strengthen Southern Africa's global tourism position and unlock greater value from international travel.

The agreement formalises collaboration between the three destinations to enhance regional coordination, unify marketing efforts, and facilitate more seamless cross-border travel for long-haul visitors.

At its core, the partnership aims to shift from volume to value - promoting longer stays, increasing per-trip expenditure, and distributing tourism benefits more evenly across the region.

The initiative will roll out joint digital campaigns and multi-country itineraries, supported by shared insights on digital marketing, storytelling, and what drives bookings, helping all partners reach the right audiences and turn interest into travel.

"Cape Town has always been a gateway, but the opportunity now is to be a gateway with intent," says Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Growth, James Vos.

"By strengthening regional ties, we are fostering a more inclusive model of tourism growth, one that encourages higher visitor spending, supports cross-border businesses, and ensures that the benefits of tourism are shared more widely across Southern Africa. This is how we build a sector that is not just larger, but more resilient and balanced."

Enver Duminy, CEO of Cape Town Tourism, says: "This partnership reflects a deliberate shift in how we think about growth. Global travellers are no longer looking for single-stop experiences; they want depth, diversity, and seamless travel. By collaborating with Zimbabwe and Namibia, we are creating richer, multi-faceted journeys and positioning Southern Africa as a connected, high-end destination capable of competing more effectively on the international stage."



Additionally, the agreement places greater emphasis on major events as catalysts for travel.

Sporting, cultural, and business events will serve as anchor points to promote multi-country itineraries, encouraging visitors to extend their trips before and after key events and unlocking broader regional impact.

"This partnership marks a milestone in regional integration," says Sebulon Chicalu, CEO of the Namibia Tourism Board.

"Our collective investment supports the economic resilience of our entire region by removing friction in regional travel and encouraging high-value visitors to stay longer and explore further. Namibia is ready to welcome the world through this new gateway, ensuring that every visitor experiences the immense diversity and high-end value that we have to offer," says Chicalu.

For Zimbabwe, the partnership reflects a broader

shift in how the region positions itself internationally.

"This collaboration signals a new era for how Southern Africa shows up on the global stage. By aligning our efforts, we're making it easier for travellers to experience more of the region in a single journey and unlock greater economic impact across our destinations. It's a smart, future-focused approach that strengthens our collective competitiveness and ensures tourism growth is shared more broadly," says Dr George Manyaya, Chief Executive of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority.

Campaign development will begin in the



coming months, with activity expected to launch ahead of the peak international travel planning period in November.

Ultimately, the partnership signifies a more coordinated regional approach, uniting marketing, shared capabilities, and event-driven opportunities to create a tourism ecosystem that is more competitive, resilient, and prepared for long-term, inclusive growth.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR 8TH ANNUAL AFRICA TOURISM LEADERSHIP FORUM (ATLF) AWARDS

Nominations are officially open for the 8th Africa Tourism Leadership Awards, the premier pan-African honours dedicated to celebrating the visionaries and innovations driving our continent's travel, hospitality, and aviation sectors.

This year's ceremony will be a centerpiece of the 8th Africa Tourism Leadership Forum, hosted in the vibrant city of Polokwane within Limpopo, South Africa's northernmost province. Located just a one-hour flight from Johannesburg, the event will take place from 2-4 September 2026.

With self-nominations and peer recommendations welcomed, this year's categories cover the full spectrum of the industry, recognising excellence in Progressive Policies, Outstanding Entrepreneurship, Africa Tourism Media and Marketing, and Women in Leadership.

ATLF is also seeking entries for the Championing Sustainability Award, the Most Innovative Business Tourism Destination Award, and honours for Outstanding Accommodation Facilities, Tourism Transportation, and the prestigious Destination Africa Lifetime Award.

The winners of the 2026 awards will be officially announced during the 8th Africa Tourism Leadership Forum, hosted by the Limpopo Tourism Organisation under the patronage of the Africa Tourism Partners and its Pan-African stakeholders.

As a premier gathering of industry thought leaders, the ATLF remains dedicated to advancing entrepreneurship, fostering women and youth empowerment, and celebrating the

continent's most impactful change-makers.

This forum serves as a vital platform for African tourism leaders to engage in advocacy, share transformative experiences, and collaborate on the firm, implementable actions necessary to stimulate intra-Africa travel growth and long-term development.

Hosting the 2026 Africa Tourism Leadership Forum (ATLF) & Awards marks a significant milestone for Limpopo. The event will unite policymakers and industry leaders to improve accessibility and strengthen intra-African travel, ensuring Limpopo remains central to the continent's tourism growth.

Hon. Tshitereke Matibe, MEC for LEDET (Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism), has articulated a clear ambition for the province to claim the top spot in national tourism rankings. He noted that while Limpopo currently holds the second-place position, its performance as an inland destination effectively makes it the national leader in its category. The MEC emphasized that the province is no longer content with second place and is strategically positioned to officially become number one.

All African travel and tourism stakeholders, media partners, and industry leaders are cordially invited to join the 2026 Africa Tourism Leadership Forum (ATLF) & Awards in Limpopo. Participation in the event provides an opportunity to engage with Pan-African tourism thought leaders, policy makers, travel trade representatives, destination management companies, and other industry professionals.



SAVE THE DATE

Meropa Casino & Entertainment World
Polokwane City, Limpopo, South Africa

PALESA MOTEKASE

palesa@africatourismpartners.com

+27 (0) 81 700 4163

2-4
Sept. 2026

AFRICA'S UNTAMED TRIO: SAND, SEA, AND SPRAY

The Namibia Tourism stand at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 was a hive of activity for the launch of the Namibia, Zimbabwe and Cape Town strategic partnership to boost regional tourism value.

Minister Indileni Daniel and the strategic partners announced the partnership which formalises collaboration between the three destinations to enhance regional coordination, unify marketing efforts, and facilitate more seamless cross-border travel for long-haul visitors.



12 PLACES TO SEE THE STARS IN THE NORTHERN CAPE

South Africa's Northern Cape province is unanimously regarded as one of Planet Earth's premier stargazing destinations. With unmatched clarity for stargazing, a full gamut of celestial phenomena visible to the naked eye plus vast and dramatic landscapes results in an unmatched astrotourism experience. Story and picture by Jacques Marais.

1) !Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park

The !Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park constitutes a 38,000 km² swathe of the vast Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park stretching across South Africa and Botswana. This proclaimed section of the TFCA is currently the only 'International Dark Sky Sanctuary' in all of Africa and one of only a handful in the world. The designation was awarded in 2019, as a result of !Xaus Lodge's efforts (this establishment is also the only place with permanent lighting in the !Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park).

Winter months generally make for best star visibility, with the expansive horizon allowing 360-degree views of the Milky Way and southern hemisphere constellations.

www.peaceparks.org

2) Augrabies National Park

Right in the heart of the Green Kalahari and 126km from Upington, you can discover an outdoor space where quiver trees and lunar landscapes rear up from plains as old as Africa itself. This is Planet Aukoerebis, or the 'Place of Great Noise', in the Khoi language. The Augrabies Falls National Park unfolds here in all its dramatic splendour, with the eponymous falls at centre stage. The arid environment delivers clear, dark skies and a breathtaking backdrop for astrophotographers, with the bonus that it is safe to walk from the camp site at night.

www.sanparks.org

3) Namaqua National Park

Namaqua National Park is a land of contrasts shaped by vigorous climatic extremes. Myriad life forms have adapted to this rugged landscape edging the icy Atlantic shore between Hondeklip Bay and Groenrivier Mond, and a treasure trove of natural wonders await visitors. Cue stark quiver trees, seemingly endless bossieveld plains, tempestuous seascapes, and incredible star-studded night skies.

Spoeg Rivier creates an amazing foreground for photographers wanting to capture the swirl of the Milky Way.

www.sanparks.org

4) Witsand Kalahari Nature Reserve

Witsand Nature Reserve is a unique place as far as desert ecosystems go, with three major vegetation biomes converging here. The reserve is home to the famed 'Roaring Sands of the Kalahari' dunes, and when disturbed, the sand emits an eerie, roaring sound. Crisp, clear and unpolluted skies, and a lack of any artificial light from nearby towns or settlements mean there are billions of stars lighting up the firmament. And the trees make for great celestial subjects, too.

www.experiencenortherncape.com

5) Sewejaarskop Guest Farm

Sewejaarskop Guest Farm is a tranquil farmstay hidden in the wide-sky landscapes just south of the Namaqua NP. Breathtaking scenes during flower season transforms the grey coastal scrub into a vibrant tapestry of blooms for as far as the eye can see. Far away from city lights, this is the perfect setting for astrophotography and astronomy enthusiasts. Set up a tripod and let the light of the Milky Way flow in through your lens; old trees, prickly pears and sisal plants will work as foreground against a canvas of glittering stars.

www.sewejaarskop.co.za

6) Naries Namaqua Retreat

Naries is way more than just another Northern Cape guest farm. This exceptional outdoor retreat is set within rugged Renosterbos ridges - 15km from Springbok on the road to Kleinsee - and rates as a unique fresh-air escape offering premium comfort. Excellent accommodation options include luxurious Nama reed mountain suites, superb self-catering units and the Manor House, but the real deal is the endless space just beyond your front door. Book into the Namaqua Mountain Suites, which shields some of the lights from the lodge itself, or explore towards the gorge behind Spektakelberg to maximise your star gazing.

www.naries.co.za

7) Kalahari Trails Meerkat Sanctuary

Kalahari Trails (also known as the Meerkat Sanctuary) is just 35km south of Kgalagadi's entrance gate. This offers an alternative to photographers keen to safely shoot the stars at night, but still close enough to visit the park. Discover a 3500ha sanctuary in the heart of Red Dune country, and home to a range of game species as well as 250-plus species of birds. Kalahari Trails is vast, quiet and safe, with minimal external lighting, an unpolluted sky and crisp definition. Unique experiences for astro- and nature photographers, birders, botanists, nature lovers and astronomers alike abound.

www.kalahari-trails.co.za

8) Tankwa-Karoo National Park

The brightest stars are found under the blackest skies, and this is a place of pure air, clear night skies and an utter lack of light pollution. Somewhere north of Ceres, on a vast and empty spot on your map, the national park you will find here is inhabited by scaly lizards, ancient tortoises, busy toktokkies, inquisitive meerkat and regal gemsbok. Named for the Tankwa River, the park incorporates three distinct ecosystems: pure desert in the west, open grasslands in the centre, and the Roggeveld Mountains in the east. It is a place to replenish mind, body and soul.

www.sanparks.org



9) Rooikloof Guest Farm

Sutherland is world famous for the SA Astronomical Observatory, and astronomy enthusiasts from around the world get all 'starry-eyed' when you mention the town. Clear, unpolluted night skies make it the perfect place to marvel at the celestial bounty twinkling on high. Daily tours can be booked to take you into the belly of the observatory. You will find Rooikloof Guest Farm just on 3km from town, at the apex of Rooikloof Pass, and you cannot ask for a better establishment from which to explore the area.

www.discoversutherland.co.za
/ www.rooikloof.co.za

10) Papkuilsfontein

Papkuilsfontein is one of those hidden treasures you will only discover when you head way off the beaten track. It is here on the Bokkeveld Plateau that the Cape Fynbos join onto the Hantam Karoo, Bushmanland and Knersvlakte. Nature lovers flock here in spring to revel in the seasonal floral abandon, but few realise this organic farm offers way more than just a blooming good time.

Papkuilsfontein has hideaway cottages well away from light pollution, often with clear skies, which makes it perfect as an astrophotography or stargazing destination.

www.papkuilsfontein.co.za

11) Goegap Nature Reserve

Goegap is everyman desert, big enough to feel vast, small enough not to be intimidating. Kokerboom trees spike the powder-blue Boesmanland sky, with haphazard rock stacks dotting amber plains. Oryx walk proud within the heat mirage, and you might happen upon Hartmann's mountain zebra or surefooted klipspringer prancing in the granite outcrops. Goegap is 8km from Springbok, and therefore very accessible to the public. The trails from the cottages and campsite make it easy to move into areas where the glow of Springbok's lights can mostly be avoided.

www.experiencenortherncape.com

12) Richtersveld National Park

Those who dig deserts will love the Richtersveld and the stark simplicity of the landscape. This arid space is rampant with runaway mountain ranges, shifting seas of sand, intriguing forests of 'halfmens' trees, and nomadic Nama shepherds, and is undeniably alluring to those in tune with their minimalist side. Bizarre silhouettes shape-shift against the skyline, while the ancient outcrops around you teem with a myriad signs of minimalist life. At night, when a gazillion glimmering stars swoon against the velvet black of the night, seemingly close enough to raise your hand and pluck one from the sky, you will grasp this great mountain desert's incurable attraction.

www.sanparks.org

AVIATION LEADERS PUSH FOR INTEGRATED AFRICAN AIR TRAVEL TO UNLOCK TOURISM GROWTH

Air connectivity, visa reform and stronger collaboration between governments, airlines and tourism stakeholders emerged as critical priorities during a robust panel discussion on aviation and route development at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026.

A panel discussion, themed Route Development, Aviation in Africa, aligned with South Africa's Cabinet-approved 2024 Tourism Route Development Marketing Plan and explored how tourism authorities, airports, airlines and regulators can collectively create sustainable, demand-driven route networks across the continent.

Throughout the discussion, speakers repeatedly returned to one central idea: Africa's tourism potential cannot be fully unlocked without easier, more affordable and more connected travel across the continent.

Ohis Ehimiaghe, Manager for Africa, the Middle East and Indian Ocean Islands at South African Airways, stressed that restrictive visa regimes, fragmented aviation policies and limited intra-African connectivity continue to hold back economic growth and tourism expansion.

"If you remove fiscal restrictions from Africa and allow African trade and movement to flow freely, tourism becomes a catalyst for economic development," he said.

He argued that seamless travel between African countries would not only stimulate tourism but also unlock trade, investment and job creation opportunities across multiple sectors.

"The visa fees countries are collecting today are small compared to the long-term economic value generated when people travel freely, stay in hotels, use transport services, shop and invest," he explained. Ehimiaghe pointed to successful visa waiver agreements between countries such as Ghana and South Africa as examples of how easier travel access can strengthen regional tourism and business ties.

The conversation also highlighted the importance of implementing the Single African Air Transport Market, an African Union initiative aimed at liberalising air transport services across the continent.

"Africa is home to 1.5 billion people," Ehimiaghe



noted. "The potential market is enormous if we create the right enabling environment."

Bisrat Tedla, Country Manager South Africa for Ethiopian Airlines provided insight into how strategic long-term planning and integrated infrastructure development have enabled the airline to become one of Africa's leading aviation success stories.

"Our core mission has always been connecting Africa," he said.

He emphasised that aviation growth cannot happen in isolation and requires alignment between airlines, airport authorities, governments and tourism bodies.

"It is not only the airline's responsibility to grow routes. All stakeholders must work together with one shared objective," he said. Tedla revealed that Ethiopian Airlines is currently developing a major new airport outside Addis Ababa

designed to accommodate up to 100 million passengers annually once fully completed.

The development, he explained, reflects the airline's confidence in the long-term growth potential of African aviation and tourism. He also highlighted the airline's "hub-and-spoke" operational model, where Addis Ababa functions as a central connection point for passengers travelling across Africa and beyond.

The discussion further explored the importance of integrated tourism ecosystems, with Tedla noting that Ethiopian Airlines had invested not only in aviation infrastructure but also in hotels and transit facilities to support passenger movement and improve the traveller experience.

Meanwhile, Mothema addressed the realities facing South Africa's domestic aviation industry and the broader challenges impacting airline sustainability globally.

"You cannot talk about tourism growth or route development without first ensuring aviation resilience," he said. Mothema warned that geopolitical instability, rising fuel prices, aircraft shortages and global supply chain disruptions continue to place enormous pressure on airlines.

He noted that the South African aviation sector is still recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the collapse of several domestic carriers and left the market under-capacitated.

This, he explained, has contributed to reduced competition and higher airfares on certain domestic routes. Mothema called for closer collaboration between regulators, airports, airlines and government departments to create a more sustainable operating environment.

"We need a coordinated approach that protects infrastructure while also supporting route viability and market competitiveness," he said.

EXHIBITOR LISTINGS

MBOTYI RIVER LODGE

Stand No: ICC1424

+27 (0)39 253 7200/1 | +27 (0) 82 674 1064

gm@mbotyi.co.za

www.mbotyi.co.za

HRS HOSPITALITY & RETAIL SYSTEMS

Stand No: ICC2005

www.hrsinternational.com

akleynhans@hrsinternational.com

ACCESS SOUTHERN AFRICA

Stand No: ICC1302

Mobile: +27 (0) 823181894

e-mail: heidi.helm@accsssouthern-africa.com

TOURPLAN AFRICA

Stand No: ICC402

SA (+27) 11 918 0031 | SA (+27) 63 680 7671

www.tourplan.com



TOURISM FILM
KWAZULU-NATAL
Magical Zulu Kingdom.

Thank you for being part of Africa's Travel Indaba 2026.

It has been a pleasure hosting you and sharing a glimpse of the Magic of the Zulu Kingdom. The connections made and conversations exchanged over these past days are just the beginning of what is possible.

As Indaba comes to a close, we invite you to go beyond the exhibition floor, to experience KwaZulu-Natal in its truest form. From its vibrant culture to its moments of quiet escape, this is a place that stays with you long after you leave.

Travel safely, and may the relationships built here continue to grow.

Until next time, we hope you've discovered the unlimited magic of the Zulu Kingdom.



SCAN FOR MORE INFO

LIMPOPO

Wildlife[®]
RESORTS

Experience THE SPECTACLE AT BLOUBERG

• NATURE RESERVE •

Discover the magic of Blouberg Nature Reserve, home to the world-renowned Cape Vulture Colony and unforgettable wilderness adventures in the heart of Limpopo.

A LIFETIME EXPERIENCE

Vultures can be seen at a closer proximity

Get up close and witness these magnificent birds in their natural habitat. Watch Cape Vultures soaring above and perched nearby as they go about their day — a truly unforgettable experience for bird lovers, photographers and nature enthusiasts.



Perfect for bird lovers, photographers, adventure seekers, and nature enthusiasts!

WHAT AWAITS YOU?

- Spectacular Cape Vulture sightings
- Vultures can be seen at a closer proximity
- Scenic mountain landscapes
- Game viewing & birdwatching
- Hiking and nature trails
- Peaceful bush accommodation (Camping)



BOOK YOUR
WILDERNESS
ESCAPE



LIMPOPO WILDLIFE RESORTS –
BLOUBERG NATURE RESERVE

www.lwr.gov.za

Reservations.lwr@ledet.gov.za

WHY SMALL TOURISM BUSINESSES MATTER TO AFRICA'S TOURISM FUTURE

For many small tourism businesses across Africa, participation at Africa's Travel Indaba is far more than a trade exhibition opportunity but a gateway to survival, growth, partnerships, and international market access.

This year's edition places strong emphasis on inclusive tourism growth by showcasing 191 small, micro, and medium enterprises (SMMEs) alongside a diverse range of African tourism products, reinforcing the event's commitment to ensuring tourism benefits reach local communities and emerging businesses across the continent.

For many entrepreneurs, Indaba offers something that is otherwise difficult to access: direct engagement with international buyers, destination management companies, airlines, travel media, and tourism investors.

Shepherd Tourism Tours CEO Mfundo Ngcangca said the platform creates critical exposure opportunities for smaller operators trying to enter global tourism markets.

"The Indaba offers a platform for us to

showcase our offerings to international and local buyers, destination marketing companies, and tourism partners," he explained.

Ngcangca noted that partnerships formed through previous editions of Indaba have already led to collaborations with tourism operators in Kenya and Uganda, while familiarization tours linked to the event are helping expose international buyers to lesser-known South African destinations such as the Free State.

This highlights one of the often-overlooked benefits of tourism trade fairs: they help diversify tourism geographically by directing business beyond traditional tourism hubs.

For many African countries, tourism growth remains concentrated in a handful of iconic destinations. SMMEs help spread tourism benefits into smaller towns, conservation areas, and local communities by creating niche products built around culture, heritage, gastronomy, adventure tourism, and community experiences.

However, despite the opportunities

offered by major trade events, many smaller businesses still struggle to participate fully due to high exhibition costs, travel expenses, and limited financial support.

Corrystroo3 Holdings PTY LTD CEO Gopolang Makgotho described this tension between opportunity and accessibility.

"We see the Indaba as a vital platform to connect with potential partners and gain access to wider markets across Africa," she said. "However, limited financial resources and high participation costs often prevent SMMEs from fully benefiting."

This challenge is not unique to South Africa. Across the continent, many small tourism businesses operate with limited access to affordable financing, marketing budgets, and digital infrastructure. Yet they are often the businesses delivering the most authentic and community-driven tourism experiences increasingly sought by modern travellers.

Hotel247 CEO Khosi Mthlale said Indaba remains essential for attracting international

group travel into secondary tourism destinations around the Kruger region.

"We aim to position Hotel247 as a strong value-for-money option for group travel and international tour series visiting the Kruger region," she explained.

However, she acknowledged that independent hospitality businesses continue to face strong competition from larger hotel brands and often struggle to secure long-term contracts with international operators.

Industry experts argue that supporting tourism SMMEs should become a strategic priority for African tourism development. Beyond job creation, small tourism businesses contribute significantly to preserving local culture, supporting conservation, and ensuring tourism revenues circulate within communities. As Africa works to strengthen intra-African travel and expand its share of the global tourism market, the success of its tourism SMMEs may ultimately determine how inclusive and sustainable that growth becomes.

VOICES FROM THE FLOOR



Neliswa Skosana, Itjhu Project, Mpumalanga

It's my first time at Indaba and so far everything looks perfect to me. I've interacted with potential customers and they've shown interest in our work. We have leads and opportunities for conducting skill workshops for businesses across the country. My work is creating Ndebele beadwork. The Indaba has helped us by exposing us to customers and businesses, who want to collaborate with us to include other culture beadworks. I feel great as this is a sign of growth.

Phumeza Stuurman, KwaStuur Homestay, Nxarhuni, East London

The Indaba has helped me to connect with people and organisations, as a SMME, that I would not have met in my day to day life. It has connected me to a game reserve in my locality that I've always wanted to get in touch with and I was able to do that here. I've had lots of productive meetings, some I've identified as opportunities to collaborate with. Definitely, I'll be coming back next year.



Carmen Spenceley, Exhibitor, Orion Hotels & Resorts, Drakensberg South

I found the Indaba to be very exciting and I've made a lot of contacts. I love the diversity of cultures and the warmth of people here. When I get back to work, I will start contacting my Indaba connections and there's a lot of leads which makes me happy. The Indaba experience was worth attending, it's my first time attending and I'm blown away by the excitement and opportunities.

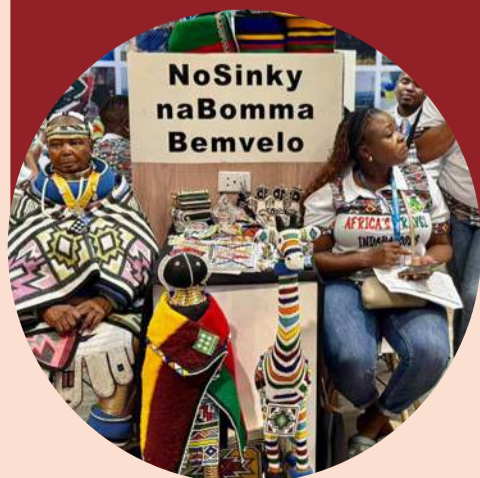
Sixolile Xabanisa, Exhibitor, OR Tambo District

My first time at Indaba was in 2024 and I was very new to the trade show. I did not know how to monetise and use the Indaba to my advantage. This year, I have made business cards and people are connecting to collaborate and form business partnerships. My business is making Xhosa beadwork. MS Levels visited my stand yesterday and said she wants to collaborate and use my work for her music videos. I leave the Indaba feeling great because of the collaboration and opportunities after the Indaba. Hotels have also expressed interest in my work.



Dumisani Mahlangu, Thembisile Hani Local Municipality Exhibitor

People must come to Thembisile Hani Local Municipality. We are just 14km away from OR Tambo International. So, we are just right next to the City of Tshwane. We're on the famous Moloto Road; it's currently being upgraded. Come learn more about the culture of Ndebele people through a cultural village called Kgodwana Cultural Village. We'd greatly appreciate that.



Kirsty Williams, Humboldt Travel Hosted Buyer, UK

This is my second visit at Indaba, and my experience is really good. I think it's a great show, yeah, a really good overall look at African products. For me, it's about catching up with people we already know but a lot of meeting new people and new camps and suppliers. For me, I really like to find some of the smaller camps; we focus a lot on the luxury market, but the ones that are not necessarily the big names, the smaller guys that might not get to every other event.

Busthama Mangara Sinaga, GSM Travel Hosted Buyer, Indonesia

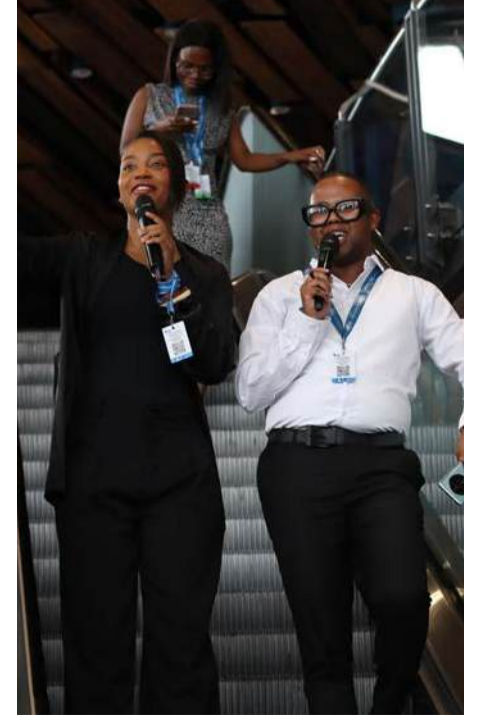
This is not only my first time at Indaba, but also my first time in Africa. So I'm very interested, and I see this travel mart is very huge. And I can see many countries from Africa and I'm very happy because now I know where's the DMC that I want to collaborate with. Then when I get back to my country, we want to sell a package about the Africa safari.

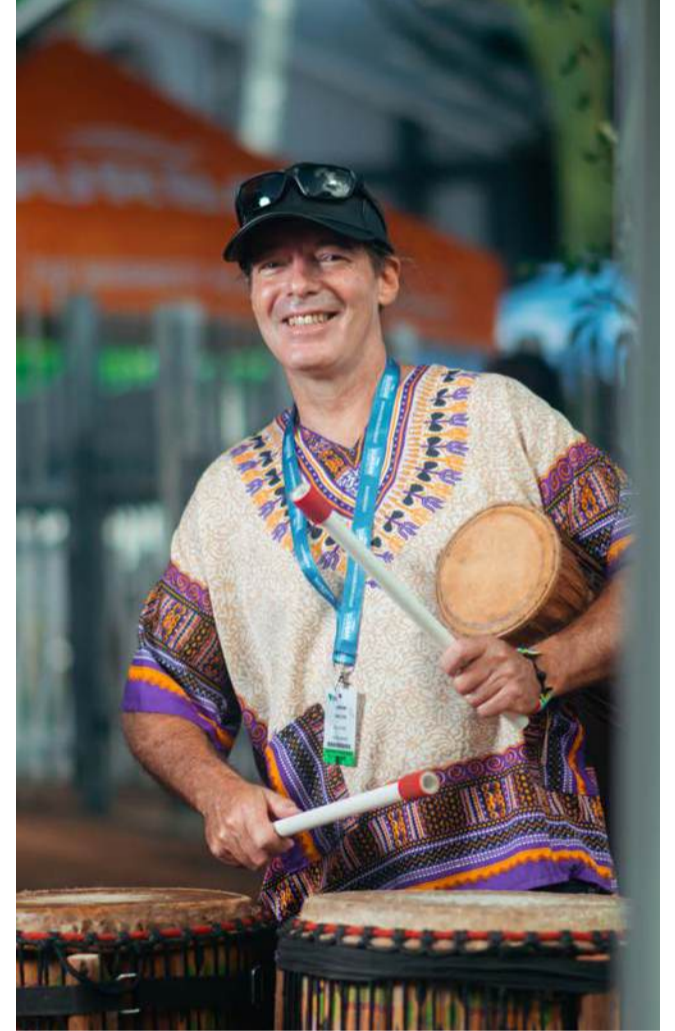


Geertje van Keulen, JorAfrica Hosted Buyer, Netherlands

It's my very first time at Indaba, so I'm really excited to be here and to be in Durban and to be attending the show. I really enjoyed it so far. It's great to meet lots of existing relations and to catch up and to hear about the updates, and also to meet a lot of new people and to create new partnerships. It's almost a luxury to have sort of the whole continent in one place and to hop from the people from Tanzania to the lodges in South Africa and, yeah, spend time with a lot of African entrepreneurs and to learn.

GALLERY





VISIT • WORK • PLAY
JOBURG

Leisure

From township heritage to vibrant nightlife, explore Africa's most dynamic playground.

Investment

Secure your future. Explore high-value tourism opportunities built for growth.

Experience Joburg:
The Heart of the Continent

MICE

Lead from the front. Host your next global event at world-class venues in the hub of African commerce.

visit.joburg





KWAZULU-NATAL
SHARKS BOARD
Maritime Centre of Excellence

Boat Trips

Curio Shop

Museum

Dissection Show

Audio-Visual

SHOW TIMES:

Tuesday - Thursday
09h00 & 14h00

Every 1st Sunday
of the month:
14h00 - 16h00

BOAT TRIPS:

Monday - Friday
Contact Number
+2782 403 9206

FOR BOOKINGS

Contact: +2731 566 0435
(closed on recognised
Public Holidays)

 031 566 0400

 @kznsb

 www.shark.co.za