



DAILY NEWS BONDAY | MAY 12 2025

# WELCOME TO AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA 2025

Welcome to the 2025 edition of Africa's Travel Indaba — once again hosted in the vibrant and hospitable city of Durban, in KwaZulu-Natal. This landmark event continues to serve as a powerful platform for unlocking Africa's tourism potential, establishing meaningful partnerships and driving sustainable economic growth across the continent.

Over the past year, the global tourism landscape has undergone a few dynamic and progressive shifts. We have witnessed a growing emphasis on sustainability while technology continues to reshape how we travel by streamlining operations and enhancing visitor experiences through innovations such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality.

Yet, with these advancements come new challenges and expectations. Today's traveller, seeks deeper, more authentic connections with local cultures and communities. South Africa with its rich heritage, diversity and welcoming spirit – is well-positioned to meet this demand. But the story doesn't end there. I encourage you to visit the exhibitor stands across Africa's Travel Indaba and experience the full range of travel products and services from across our beloved continent.

I think this growing interest in meaningful, experience-rich travel is reflected in our latest arrival figures. In the first quarter of 2025, South Africa welcomed close to 2.6 million tourists, reflecting a 5.7% growth when compared to the same period in 2024. This steady growth in international arrivals reaffirms South Africa's strong positioning on the global tourism map and proves the sector's important role in our economy. Tourism continues to be a key driver of GDP and job creation, and our efforts remain focused on maximising these benefits while promoting long-term sustainability.

This is why Africa's Travel Indaba is so important.

For more than four decades, Africa's Travel Indaba has stood as one of the world's top three leisure tourism trade shows, connecting Africa's premier tourism offerings with global buyers, investors, and thought leaders. ATI is more than just a trade show — it's a space for connection, collaboration, and co-creation.

This year, we are pleased to welcome a growing number of qualified buyers and exhibitors from across the African continent. The increased interest from key markets, including the United States, United Kingdom, China, and India, highlights the growing global appetite for Africa's unique and immersive travel experiences.

To all the delegates, I extend my warmest welcome and heartfelt gratitude – thank you for joining us for this year's Africa's Travel Indaba and for your unwavering support in advancing Africa's tourism sector. Your commitment and investment are what make this platform a resounding success, year after year.

Durban, with its rich cultural heritage, iconic landmarks, and world-class infrastructure, is the perfect host city for this year's event. The Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre once again provides a strategic venue for impactful dialogues, business exchanges, and meaningful networking. As one of South Africa's key tourism hubs, Durban offers visitors an unforgettable glimpse into the soul of our country – from its deep-rooted Zulu traditions and stunning coastline to its vibrant urban life.

This is the year to rediscover, to reignite our passion for travel, and to celebrate the extraordinary experiences that await on our shores.

In March this year, South African Tourism launched its latest global brand campaign, 'South Africa Awaits — Come Find Your Joy!'. This campaign invites travellers to rediscover their sense of wonder, embracing the joy that travel to South Africa can unlock, while



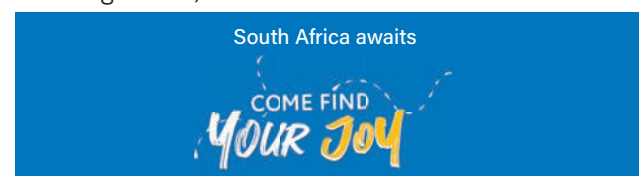
showcasing the country's diverse offering of cultural, scenic, and adventure-driven experiences.

Our efforts to grow domestic and international tourism remain steadfast. Campaigns like 'South Africa Awaits — Come Find Your Joy!' and 'Sho't Left' continue to champion local travel and promote hidden treasures across our provinces.

Africa's Travel Indaba 2025 offers us a moment to reflect on our achievements while boldly shaping the future of our industry. I encourage all delegates to attend the insightful panels throughout the duration of the show. These sessions present a valuable opportunity to learn, share, and be inspired.

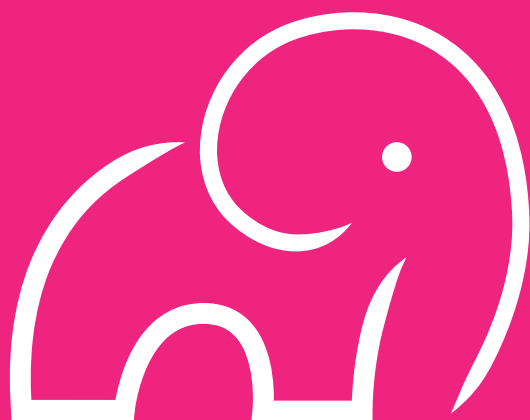
Let's embrace this moment with a shared purpose: to connect, to collaborate, and to co-create the future of African tourism.

The success of our continent's tourism journey starts right here, at Africa's Travel Indaba 2025.



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# BONDAY IGNITES A DAY OF CONNECTION, VISION, AND GROWTH

Africa's Travel Indaba 2025 kicked off with palpable energy and a clear sense of purpose on its Business Opportunity Networking Day (BONDay), on 12 May, setting a visionary tone for the continent's premier leisure tourism trade show.

Hosted by South African Tourism at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, BONDay convened a full house of media, industry stakeholders, and thought leaders under the theme "Unlimited Africa", celebrating the continent's boundless tourism potential and fostering greater collaboration across borders.

## A resounding start focused on collaboration

The day commenced with a vibrant atmosphere, expertly hosted by media personality Carol Ofori. Attendees were immediately immersed in a programme designed to foster knowledge sharing and strategic thinking ahead of the main trade show days. Dynamic hosts Gerry Rantseli Elsdon, Lynette Ntuli, and Nongcebo McKenzie led delegates through three distinct streams – Umlilo/Fire (Discovery), Amanzi/Water (Connection), and Umhlaba/Earth (Growth) – offering a rich menu of sessions tackling critical issues facing African tourism.

Nombulelo Guliwe, CEO of South African Tourism, officially welcomed delegates and positioned BONDay as the "true hub and engine of the Indaba" and underscored the power of convergence, stating that the best minds in the tourism industry had gathered not just to attend, but to create the event's success through collaboration and shared insight.

Adding a powerful, artistic dimension, Captain Londi 'Blaqmermaid' Ngcobo, the first Female Dredge Master and a celebrated young leader, delivered a stirring spoken word piece. Drawing from her unique journey, she challenged the audience to move beyond transactions and connect with their customers. Her message resonated deeply, emphasising that impact, authenticity, and genuine connection are the currencies of modern tourism.

Professor Gregory Davids, Board Chairperson of South African Tourism, echoed the collaborative spirit, invoking the proverb – "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together". He framed Africa's Travel Indaba as more than an event but rather as a catalyst for growth, urging attendees to network and forge partnerships.

## Key themes take centre stage

Throughout the opening keynotes and subsequent stream sessions, several critical themes emerged as focal points for discussion and future action:

**Owning the narrative and authenticity:** A dominant thread was the urgent need for Africa to define and proudly communicate its own story. Speakers like Dr. Vumi Msweli called for clarity on "who we are as a country" and how that message is conveyed globally, particularly to promote intra-African travel. Bronwen Auret, Chief Quality Assurance Officer of South African Tourism, highlighted that while Africa is blessed with natural beauty, "our X-factor is our people", advocating for unique, localised experiences – swapping continental breakfasts for traditional ones, for instance. This sentiment was reinforced by food creator Nick Hamman, who positioned food as a powerful "conduit to culture", turning meals into marketable stories.

**Innovation, technology, and adaptation:** The imperative to embrace modern tools and approaches was clear. Thembisile Sehloho, Chief Marketing Officer of South African Tourism, noted that "people believe people" and declared "TikTok is the new Google", urging the industry to leverage social media and explore novel avenues like Amapiano tours or film tourism partnerships. Stream sessions delved into AI's potential, the importance of data agility, and the need for SMMEs to access workable booking and accounting systems, as highlighted by TBCSA CEO Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa. Customisation

and understanding shifting traveller demands, including the rise of wellness tourism championed by Sharni Quinn, were presented as vital for staying relevant.

**Collaboration, value, and sustainability:** Building on the opening remarks, discussions stressed practical collaboration. Jacqui Mabuza from Cruises International reminded attendees that "South Africa is more than just Cape Town", calling for attention to the entire customer journey and service quality nationwide. Darryl Erasmus, Chief Operations Officer of South African Tourism, emphasised delivering "value for money" and strategically using marketing channels and upselling to enhance product visibility and profitability. The concept of sustainable and responsible tourism was woven throughout, linking economic growth with environmental stewardship and social cohesion.

## Laying the groundwork for growth

BONDay at Africa's Travel Indaba 2025 successfully ignited a day of intense dialogue, shared learning, and strategic networking. It powerfully underscored Africa's vast, untapped potential while candidly addressing the challenges and opportunities ahead. By focusing on authentic storytelling, embracing innovation, fostering collaboration, and championing sustainability, the day laid a robust foundation for the trade interactions to follow. The energy and insights generated promise to fuel meaningful connections and catalyse sustainable growth, truly beginning the work of shaping Africa's tourism tomorrow.



## KZN IS READY TO HOST YOU

Durban and KwaZulu-Natal are welcoming thousands of key members of the global travel industry to the city and the region for the Africa's Travel Indaba (ATI).

At the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre on Monday, Reverend Musa Zondi, MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Ethekezi Mayor Cyril Xaba, Sibusiso Gumbi, interim CEO for KZN Tourism and Film Authority and its board chairperson, Dr Sibusiso Ndebele, carried out a walkabout, inspecting the installation of the exhibition stands, and welcoming delegates and guests.

At least 40 tourism ambassadors also joined in to assist to show the visitors where the various events are and how to get there.



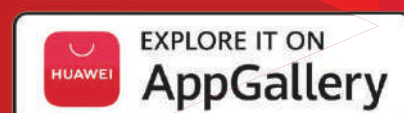
The Zulu Kingdom is ready: Ethekezi Mayor Councillor Cyril Xaba, KZN Tourism and Film's board chair Dr Sibusiso Ndebele, and interim CEO Sibusiso Gumbi with an excited Reverend Musa Zondi, MEC for Economic Development, and tourism ambassadors, outside the ICC where Africa's Travel Indaba is being held.

# BONDAY PROGRAMME

Time	Event	Venue
07H00 - 08H30	TKZN BUYER BREAKFAST	EXHIBITION AREAS ONLINE DIARY SYSTEM / EXHIBITION AREAS
08H00 - 09H30	SPEED MARKETING SESSION 1 - LIMITLESS PURSUITS (ACTIVE ADVENTURE AND COASTAL BEACH PRODUCTS)	ROOM 21, ICC BY INVITATION ONLY
09H00 - 10H00	AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA 2025 TRADE FLOOR OPENING	SOUTH FOYER , ICC ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES
09H00 - 17H00	NATIONAL TOURISM CAREERS EXPO PARTNERS MEETING	ROOM 12, ICC BY INVITATION ONLY
10H00 - 13H00	G20 MOBILE VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE MEETING	ROOM 11 A, ICC BY INVITATION ONLY
10H00 - 18H00	EXHIBITION STARTS / DIARY MEETINGS	EXHIBITION AREAS ONLINE DIARY SYSTEM / EXHIBITION AREAS
10H30 - 12H00	MINISTER'S WALK-ABOUT	DURBAN ICC
11H00 - 11H30	BOMA TALKS: SHAPING SUSTAINABILITY SESSION 1 - REDEFINING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR AFRICA'S FUTURE	ROOM 21, ICC ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES
11H00 - 12H30	TGCSA STAND (25 YEARS)	ICC105 ALL DELEGATES
13H00 - 14H00	LUNCH - VENDORS TRADE FROM 12H00	DESIGNATED VENUES ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES
14H00 - 15H00	BOMA TALKS: MEDIA EDITORIAL SESSION: SPORTS , ARTS & CULTURE	MEDIA CENTRE PRESENTATION ROOM ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES
15H00-15H30	FUTURE FORWARD SESSION 1 - BEYOND RECOVERY: CHARTING AFRICA'S TOURISM GROWTH TRAJECTORY FOR 2030 AND BEYOND	FUTURE WHEEL - ICC CONCOURSE OPEN ENTRY
16H00 - 17H30	BOMA TALKS: A MOMENT OF JOY - GASTRONOMY / FASHION / WINE EXPERIENCE	MEDIA CENTRE OPEN ENTRY

## DOWNLOAD THE AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA 2025 APP

All event related information in your hands!



SCAN TO DOWNLOAD



# TRANSFORMING TRAVEL: A CALL FOR AUTHENTIC, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

South Africa stands at a crossroads in tourism-a moment brimming with potential, where the world's gaze is shifting from the obvious to the authentic. As global travellers seek deeper, more meaningful experiences, our country's true riches-its people, its stories, its food, and its wellness traditions-are ready to take centre stage. But are we bold enough to seize this opportunity and redefine what travel means on our continent?

Gerry Rantseli Elsdon, opening a panel discussion on BOND Day, captured the spirit of this new era: "South Africa has so much to offer. Being in spaces that are serene and welcoming is something that we all need and require at some point in our lives."

She points to the rise of ecotourism, gastronomy, and wellness as "exciting modes of tourism", but insists that it is our authenticity and diversity that set us apart. "The world has now discovered that culinary tourism is something they must experience. People are arriving here not just for our lions now, but our food has been a great attraction to them as well."

Bronwen Auret, Chief Quality Assurance Officer for South African Tourism, believes the future lies in shining a light on the lesser-known corners of our country. "What has become the most exciting programme that we drive is something called basic quality verification, which recognises homesteads and small businesses outside the major city centres."

For Auret, the job is to "expose the rest of the world to the hidden gems we have in South Africa.



They can be found anywhere and everywhere. One just has to venture beyond the obvious."

But what truly distinguishes South African tourism, Auret argues, is our "very, very deep X factor that is our people". She contrasts this with the coldness of international airports, noting, "Our people invite you into their homes to experience South Africa- that is when you really have a truly authentic and sustainable tourist experience."

Food content creator and broadcaster Nick Hamman brings this to life through storytelling. "Food is a conduit to culture," he says. "Everybody's brilliant and has a story that's worth telling." Hamman's journeys-walking from Johannesburg to Mpumalanga, and heritage tours across Africa-have shown him that "so many different foods tell so many different stories." He champions dishes like inyama yenhloko, which "shine incredibly bright in terms of taste... but also in terms of culture and story."

For Hamman, changing the narrative around Africa means celebrating these stories, not just the headlines.

Wellness Tourism Ambassador Sharni Quinn is passionate about integrating wellness into every aspect of travel. "It's not just for luxury tourism. It really is all elements, not only about the tourists coming in, wellness is also about how we can support the local communities, how we can look after the environment." Quinn calls for hotels and facilitators to work together, creating packages that "put Africa, South Africa, but not only, the whole of Africa, onto the stage from a wellness tourism perspective".

The message from all corners is clear: South Africa's tourism future is not just about attracting visitors. It is about inviting the world to experience our true selves - our food, our wellness, our hidden places, and above all, our people.

## PINK ELEPHANT INTERNATIONAL'S CUSTOMISED BOOKING PLATFORM IS INNOVATIVE & INTUITIVE

Travel and tourism in Africa have many moving parts, largely entrusted to Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and tour operators. By combining international travel expertise and a high-tech platform, Pink Elephant International is on a mission to streamline the process and improve speed and efficiency with its intuitive reservation system. Designed to simplify complex booking processes, the software company's system automates calculations for tailor-made and ready-made or dynamic tours, allowing DMCs and tour operators to respond to client inquiries swiftly and focus on creating top-tier tourism experiences rather than logistics.

### Single Platform

Instead of relying on manual calculations, which can be time-consuming and error-prone, the software integrates supplier contracts, rates, and availability into a single platform. "Contracts for transportation, flights, balloons, safaris, excursions, and all the weird and wonderful things that everyone does in Africa, all these rates reside in the database. When a salesperson tries to design a tailor-made or ready-made tour for that client to answer that inquiry, the calculation is done automatically," explains CEO René De Brouwer. "They can switch things around. They can move bookings to other travelling dates, and it automatically recalculates



everything, sending out the re-quote to the client. It also means that the software will contact all the suppliers, and it automatically flows back into the system." The platform also assists clients with operations. "What kind of transfers do I need next week, and which vehicles do I allocate? These kinds of things - you need to know who's coming, who's going, and what they're doing. So it fully supports the ops department. Then naturally, the whole finance aspect is also incorporated. So it's entirely an enterprise system that DMCs can use," says De Brouwer. "Clients using our cloud-based system only need one screen to manage their complete business efficiently. And management teams want figures; they want stats, which we also provide."

### Tailored Solutions

With Pink Elephant firmly rooted in the African market, the company prides itself on having a team of consultants who are well-versed in the

intricacies of the African tourism landscape, offering tailored solutions that address local challenges. Some of the innovative functions that enhance customer satisfaction and incentivizes clients to explore more of what Africa has to offer is Circuit Discounts, which allows clients to automate discounts when booking multiple lodges within a specified circuit. Lookback rates ensure the possibility to quote in the future when no rates are there yet. The Marketplace function is another groundbreaking feature allowing powerful cross selling-and buying. Understanding that effective software is only as good as its users, Pink Elephant places a strong emphasis on training and support. "We are only satisfied that a new client has had enough training when they are able to make a really complicated booking for a fortnight, going cross-border, cross-currency, and cross-language, and quote that client within 10 to 15 minutes at the very most. Completely calculated, nicely laid out, beautiful looking quotes. And that makes a lot of difference." With ongoing innovations and a commitment to service excellence, Pink Elephant International is poised to continue leading the way in travel management solutions.

Visit Pink Elephant International at Africa's Travel Indaba 2025 at their booth **ICC 1806** or schedule drinks and a demo during after hours at their Durban hotel by visiting their website at [www.pinkelephantinternational.com](http://www.pinkelephantinternational.com)



# FALLING IN LOVE WITH KWAZULU-NATAL

**T**ravel content creator and radio broadcaster Ute Hermanus recently fulfilled a long-held dream by visiting KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), a province she describes with genuine admiration. "I've just been saying that it's green, lush, and so beautiful. Honestly, I think I've fallen in love with KZN to the point where I now want to say it's my favourite province."

Her journey began in Durban before heading north to St. Lucia. "Seeing the hippos just casually in the road was just so crazy," Hermanus recalls. "The wildlife in their natural habitat – it's something else." She also experienced a boat cruise through the Isimangaliso Wetland Park, witnessing hippos and crocodiles in their natural environment. "We live in such a beautiful country, and every province has something unique to offer. KZN by far is just stunning."

Hermanus emphasises her trip was about more than just sightseeing. "You have the coast, the wildlife, the greenery – it's just incredible. And then I got to attend the African Travel Indaba in Durban for the first time. Being in a room filled with people from all corners of the travel industry, not just South Africa but across Africa and internationally, was amazing. I learned so much, not only as a creator but as a broadcaster."

She is passionate about showcasing authentic experiences that resonate with a wide audience. "People often come up to me and say, 'I never knew where to go' or 'I didn't even know that was a thing.'"

What I love doing is showing that there's something for everyone, regardless of your budget. Sometimes people get put off by things being super expensive, but there's always a way to enjoy," Hermanus explains.

When asked for her top tip for tourism stakeholders and content creators, she advises, "I'm not just going

to say, 'just post.' What really works is showcasing the real lived experience. When someone can truly connect and relate to what you're sharing, it makes them want to go more. It's not just about the aerial views or the pretty photos – it's about the laughter, the smiles, the human connection. That's what draws people in."



## AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA



## DURBAN EVOLUTION-'THE PULSE OF UNLIMITED AFRICA'

The City of Durban is thrilled to welcome you to our vibrant, diverse, and dynamic destination. As Africa's playground, Durban invites you to discover an unforgettable blend of world-class tourism experiences, stunning natural beauty, and a rich tapestry of culture and heritage. Whether you're here for leisure or business, Durban promises something truly special for every visitor.

Be sure to visit the Durban Tourism Stand (DEC-1G09) for an exciting line-up of activities, interactive experiences, and exclusive showcases from our passionate Community Tourism Organisations and vibrant SMMEs – all bringing the heart of Durban directly to you.

### 13 MAY 2025

07h00

Durban & KZN Breakfast at Hilton Hotel  
(Access strictly by invitation)

13h00

DT Exhibitor Meet & Great Event at  
DEC-1G09 Durban Tourism Stand

14h30-15h30

Presentation - Explore Destination Durban

### 14 MAY 2025

14h30 -15h30

Presentation - Explore Destination Durban

18h00

Industry Leaders Networking Dinner at  
Dukkar Restaurant Florida  
(Access strictly by invitation.)

**\*All day exhibition and product showcase**

### 15 MAY 2025

07h00

CNBC Africa Live Panel Discussion at Durban Tourism Stand  
DEC-1G09 on DSTV CHANNEL 410

**14h00-16h00** Durban Tourism Business Awards Activation  
at Durban Tourism Stand DEC-1G09

**16h00**

Durban Tourism – Cruise Industry Networking Session: Boat Cruise  
Tour & 9th on Avenue Dinner (Access strictly by invitation.)



# SOUTH AFRICA AWAITS — COME FIND YOUR JOY!

## *A Bold and Immersive Global Brand Campaign Brings SA's Vibrant Spirit to the World*

In March, South African Tourism launched its new global brand campaign: "South Africa Awaits – Come Find Your Joy!" as part of its ongoing efforts to attract more local and international visitors to South Africa.

The campaign inspires a childlike sense of wonder by inviting travellers to rediscover South Africa with the excitement and curiosity of a first-time visitor.

This is more than just a tourism campaign - it's an open invitation. Whether you're a young family, a group of friends, an adventure seeker, or simply someone in need of a break, South Africa has something special for you.

### About the Campaign

This campaign is a celebration of the country's boundless energy, rich culture, and extraordinary experiences, it invites travellers to rediscover their sense of wonder, embracing the joy that travel to South Africa can unlock.

In a world where life's simple joys are often lost in the rush of daily routines, the new global campaign invites us to reignite our child-like curiosity and embrace the thrill of exploration.

Another important aspect of the campaign is to inspire South Africans to explore their own backyard. It encourages a culture of local travel and reignites our sense of adventure close to home.

At the heart of this campaign is a powerful and emotive television advert that reflects the true essence of South Africa — where every corner holds an opportunity to experience something magical, something that makes you pause, smile, and truly feel alive.

Presented at Africa's Travel Indaba

During BONDday at Africa's Travel Indaba 2025, SA Tourism's Chief Marketing Officer, Thembisile Sehloho,

presented the campaign to the Tourism Communicators' Forum which joined by tourism authority Marketing Managers from South Africa's nine provinces who received the campaign with great enthusiasm and welcomed the toolkit as a valuable resource.

They will now begin localising and adapting the campaign in their respective regions, reinforcing how aligned we are as a country in our shared mission to market South Africa with one strong, unified voice.

Let's continue working together to invite the world, and each other to come find their joy.



**SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM**

# South Africa awaits



COME FIND  
**YOUR JOY**





## Join South African Tourism's engaging panel discussions at **Africa's Travel Indaba**

**VENUE:** Media Centre, Durban ICC

**DATE:** Tuesday 13 May  
**TIME:** 14:00

### **African Ministers' Roundtable**

Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, hosts an African Ministers' roundtable that brings together tourism leaders from across the continent to discuss strategies to unlock Africa's tourism potential and foster greater regional collaboration for inclusive tourism growth.

**DATE:** Tuesday 13 May  
**TIME:** 15:30

### **Sports, Arts & Culture Tourism Panel Discussion**

Exploring the magnetic pull of South Africa's sports, arts, and cultural legacy in attracting global travellers.

**DATE:** Tuesday 13 May  
**TIME:** 16:30

### **Sports & Wellness Panel**

Join leading industry voices to see how South Africa's rich cultural heritage, thriving creative industries, and globally celebrated sports legacies intersect to create compelling Pan-African tourism opportunities.

**DATE:** Wednesday 14 May  
**TIME:** 10:00

### **Film & Tourism (TKZN & Film Commission) Panel Discussion**

Join the the KwaZulu-Natal Film Panel at Africa's Travel Indaba as they discuss the intersection of film, tourism, and economic development, while showcasing KZN's film industry as a powerful tool for destination marketing.

**DATE:** Wednesday 14 May  
**TIME:** 12:00

### **Gastronomy Panel Discussion**

This panel focuses on the unique African flavours that serve as powerful storytelling tools, offering visitors seeking a more experiential holiday a taste of culture that lingers long after the journey ends.

**DATE:** Wednesday 14 May  
**TIME:** 14:00

### **Township & Cultural Tourism Panel Discussion**

We explore locations in our country that are unique cultural, historical, and natural drawcards to showcase how the tourism sector can make an economic impact in these areas through job creation.

**DATE:** Thursday 15 May  
**TIME:** 10:00

### **Youth Tourism & Backpacking Panel Discussion**

Examining how youth tourism can economically and socially empower the next generation, positioning South Africa as a top choice for Millennial and Gen Z explorers.

**DATE:** Thursday 15 May  
**TIME:** 11:00

### **Astro-Tourism Panel Discussion**

Looking at the projects and investments that will help establish Africa as an astro-tourism destination.

## NELSON MANDELA BAY: RISING STAR ON G20 STAGE

*Hosting Key G20 Tourism and Employment Meetings is transforming Nelson Mandela Bay's profile, writes Donna Denniss.*



Nelson Mandela Bay has emerged as a pivotal stage for global dialogue and action on youth employment and sustainable development during South Africa's historic G20 presidency in 2025. Hosting the inaugural G20 Employment Working Group meeting in February, the city has become synonymous with progressive targets and inclusive economic strategies aimed at transforming the future of work for young people.

Done Louw, Manager of the Nelson Mandela Bay Convention Bureau, highlights the significance of the city's role: "Nelson Mandela Bay is proud to be at the forefront of this global effort to reduce youth unemployment and create meaningful opportunities. Our hosting of the G20 Employment Working Group has placed us on the map as a city committed to inclusive growth and sustainable development."

A landmark outcome of the meeting was the adoption of the "Nelson Mandela Bay Target," a bold commitment by G20 members to reduce the rate of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) by an additional five percent by 2030. This target builds on the 2015 Antalya Goal and aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals, reflecting a renewed global focus on empowering young people in a rapidly changing labour market.

Louw explains, "The Nelson Mandela Bay Target is not just a number. It represents a transformative step forward, addressing the realities young people face today—from the rise of remote work and artificial intelligence to the growth of the gig economy. It calls for investment in quality jobs, skills development, and entrepreneurship, especially for young women."

The city's hosting of multiple G20 events, including the Digital Economy Working Group and the Provincial Launch themed "The Oceans Economy: South Africa's Next Gold Mine," has brought significant economic benefits to local businesses and communities. **"Our venues, hospitality operators, transport services, and cultural performers have all shared in the success. These events showcase Nelson Mandela Bay's capacity to deliver world-class conferencing and highlight our rich cultural heritage,"** says Mr Louw.

He adds, "The influx of international delegates and media attention has boosted our global profile, positioning us as a competitive destination for future conferences and investment. More importantly, it has aligned us with key global trends in digital innovation, sustainability, and economic inclusion."

Louw is optimistic about the legacy these engagements will leave: "Hosting the G20 meetings has laid a foundation for future growth in tourism, infrastructure, and international collaboration. Nelson Mandela Bay is proving itself not only as a destination of natural beauty and culture but as a capable and forward-looking hub for global engagement."

As South Africa prepares to welcome world leaders to the G20 Summit later this year, Nelson Mandela Bay stands as a shining example of how local action and global partnership can drive youth empowerment and inclusive economic transformation.

"Our city's commitment to the Nelson Mandela Bay Target and the broader G20 agenda is a call to action for all stakeholders to invest in our youth, support sustainable enterprises, and build a future where no young person is left behind," concludes Louw.

**We look forward to welcoming you!**





# AFRICA SPEAKS WITH ONE VOICE: G20 PANEL HIGHLIGHTS UNITY AND OPPORTUNITY THROUGH TOURISM



**O**n the sidelines of the 2nd G20 Tourism Working Group meeting currently underway in Durban, Africa's Travel Indaba kicked off its Bond Day with a powerful plenary session titled 'Africa's Voice at the G20 – A Continental Collaboration for Future Tourism Opportunities.' The session brought together thought leaders from across sectors who urged the continent to rally as one in shaping global tourism policy and practice.

The panel offered a candid and deeply practical look at what Africa's tourism future could hold under the banner of South Africa's G20 Presidency. Guided by the 2025 G20 theme of Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability, panellists explored how the continent's youthful population, cultural wealth and growing travel sector could reshape global narratives, if Africa speaks with a unified voice.

## Tourism Diplomacy

"Africa has the power to influence global tourism frameworks," said Lethabo Sithole, a trade and investment lawyer with a pan-African footprint. "Tourism already supports over 24 million jobs on the continent. It's time our voice helps shape the rules, especially around the movement of people, visa policies and trade in services. These are not abstract issues; they define whether African travellers can experience their own continent affordably." Sithole pointed to how intra-African leisure travel remains far more expensive than flying to Europe. "It's cheaper to go to AfroNation in Portugal than to attend a similar event in Ghana. That's not sustainable.

We need tourism diplomacy that's backed by aligned policy frameworks, cultural exchange and access."

## Narrative Ownership

Speaking from the entrepreneurial frontlines, Zimasa Vabaza, a media entrepreneur and small business economist, unpacked the four tourism priorities under South Africa's G20 leadership: AI and innovation, tourism financing, air connectivity, and resilience. "AI is levelling the playing field for small tourism businesses," said Vabaza. "It gives access to new markets and streamlines operations. But more importantly, we must talk about narrative ownership. Sustainability also means speaking well about ourselves, about what is working. That's the kind of advocacy that shapes perception and builds momentum."

"Unspoken positivity is a lost opportunity," he added.

Jacqui Mabuza, Head of Commercial at Cruises International, agreed, saying local pride is foundational to global success.

"South Africans need to speak positively about our own destinations. Be your own ambassador," she said. "We are more than just one city. AI and tech have made discovery seamless, but our voices are still the most authentic marketing tool we have."

## Market Our Diversity

The conversation also touched on collaboration across sectors, from education to transportation and community development, as a driver of sustainable growth.

"We cannot build sustainable tourism in isolation," said Dr Vumi Msweli, entrepreneur and philanthropist.

"Tourism needs to be co-owned across regions like SADC, ECOWAS and EAC. Unity is not a cliché, it's a strategy. We must begin marketing our diversity as a strength: Francophone, Lusophone, Anglophone, this is what makes Africa remarkable."

Dr Msweli called for a deeper embrace of inclusive tourism that includes universal accessibility that reflects "the fullness of who we are as a continent".

The session was moderated by media personality Carol Ofori, who steered the dialogue toward actionable takeaways for delegates attending the Durban meeting.

## Historic Moment

South Africa's hosting of the G20 in 2025 marks a historic moment, the first time the summit is held on African soil. The Tourism Working Group is expected to produce an action plan focused on the four key pillars agreed upon under South Africa's Presidency:

- People-centred AI & Innovation
- Tourism Financing & Investment
- Air Connectivity
- Enhanced Resilience

"We don't just want a seat at the table," concluded Sithole. "We want to help design the offering."

As the continent looks ahead to the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting in Mpumalanga in September and the Heads of State Summit in November, it's clear that Africa's voice is not only present, it is clear, purposeful, and determined to shape the future of tourism for generations to come.



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# FAIR TRADE TOURISM ANNOUNCES NEW LEADERSHIP

*These strategic appointments signal a renewed commitment to leading the continent’s tourism sector towards deeper sustainability, equity, and impact.*

As Africa’s Travel Indaba 2025 gets underway, **Fair Trade Tourism (FTT)** has announced the appointment of **Grace Stead** as its new General Manager, alongside the expansion of its Board of Directors with three new members: **Lisa Scriven**, **Michel Girardin**, and **Emilie Hagedoorn**. These strategic appointments signal a renewed commitment to leading the continent’s tourism sector towards deeper sustainability, equity, and impact.

## Upswing in Responsible Travel

**Grace Stead** is a seasoned sustainability practitioner with more than two decades of experience driving change in tourism, events, and civil society. She now takes the reins at FTT at a time when responsible travel is seeing a global upswing. “FTT is uniquely positioned to help businesses translate sustainability commitments into real-world impact,” said Stead. “I’m excited to help grow that reach across the continent.”

The additional Board appointments reflect both continuity and renewal:

- **Lisa Scriven** previously served as FTT’s General Manager, as well as its Certification Manager and various consulting roles since 2006. Lisa’s leadership has been central to FTT’s recent revitalisation, and she now joins the Board to remain actively involved in shaping the organisation’s strategic direction.

- **Michel Girardin**, a long-standing supporter and advocate of Fair Trade Tourism, brings a wealth of experience in tourism development and sustainable investment. He has been delivering qualitative tourism consulting services to both established and emerging players in the industry, contributing significantly to the growth and evolution of the tourism sector.
- **Emilie Hagedoorn**, an expert in responsible tourism, certification, and market access, brings a deep understanding of sustainable tourism supply chain management. Emilie previously worked with FTT as Sales Manager and European Representative from 2011, and her long-standing association with the organisation adds valuable continuity and international perspective to the board.

## Transparent and Trustworthy

The announcements come at a time when the tourism sector is rebounding and evolving. With growing demand from travellers, tour operators, and funders for transparent and trustworthy sustainability credentials, third-party certification is no longer a “nice to have” - it’s essential.

Dr. Salifou Siddo, Chairperson of the FTT Board, said: “Tourism is at a crossroads, and more stakeholders are recognising that business-as-usual won’t get us to where we need to be. This expanded leadership team ensures

that Fair Trade Tourism is equipped to support a broader shift toward ethical, inclusive, and low-impact tourism across Africa.”

Fair Trade Tourism will be engaging with stakeholders throughout the week at Africa’s Travel Indaba to showcase its renewed strategic direction and upcoming initiatives aligned with the FTT Standard and the 2025–2030 sustainability roadmap.



Grace Stead



Emilie Hagedoorn



Lisa Scriven



Michel Girardin



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# DRC RISING: TOURISM WITH A NEW NARRATIVE

*The country is steadily reclaiming its place on the global tourism map, starting with a festival.*

Despite being plagued by decades of war and conflict, the Democratic Republic of Congo is steadily reclaiming its place on the global tourism map, with growing efforts to attract travellers, protect its unique natural heritage, and showcase its rich cultural identity.

“In the 1970s, Congo was among the top tourism destinations, but years of conflict tarnished that legacy. Today, we are working to restore the country’s reputation. Despite the unrest that has affected the eastern region, much of Congo remains safe and full of potential - from the mighty Congo River to the expansive rainforests,” said DRC’s Minister of Tourism Didier M’Pambia Musanga.

## Bucket List Adventures

The minister adds that though infrastructure challenges exist, tourism in DRC is slowly expanding, with more conservation-focused and community-led initiatives emerging to support sustainable travel and protect the country’s natural heritage.

The country home to some of the continent’s most dramatic landscapes and rare wildlife experiences chief among its offerings being Virunga National Park, Africa’s oldest national park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where travellers can embark on unforgettable treks to see endangered mountain gorillas (DRC has 80 percent of them) in their natural habitat. The park is also home to active volcanoes like Mount Nyiragongo, whose lava lake is one of the largest and most spectacular on earth - hiking to its summit is a bucket-list adventure for thrill-seekers.

In the southeast, Kahuzi-Biega National Park offers another rare primate encounter: the chance to see the critically endangered eastern lowland gorillas, larger and gentler than their mountain cousins.

## Soukous and Street Art

Beyond wildlife, DRC is rich in cultural heritage, with over 200 ethnic groups, each with its own traditions, music, dance, and languages. Cities like

Kinshasa buzz with creativity and energy, boasting a vibrant music scene that birthed soukous (Congolese rumba), street art, fashion, and a dynamic nightlife.

The Congo River, one of the world’s greatest waterways, offers river cruises that pass through dense equatorial forests, remote villages, and bustling ports, providing a unique perspective on the country’s daily life and natural beauty. DRC’s portion of the Congo Basin, the world’s second-largest rainforest, plays a vital role in global climate regulation and is home to countless endemic species. Waterfalls like Zongo Falls and Boyoma Falls offer serene getaways for nature lovers, while Lake Kivu on the eastern border provides opportunities for lakeside relaxation, kayaking, and exploration of nearby communities.

## ‘Peace In Africa’ Festival

With over 460 ethnic groups, the DRC’s cuisine is immensely diverse, featuring staples like fufu, cassava bread, and peanut-based chicken. To showcase this, the country will host a 3-day Music and Tourism Festival in Kinshasa in July, themed “Peace in Africa.” The event will blend food, art, and music as tools for unity and cross-cultural dialogue.

“Many people only associate Congo with its music, which is why I chose to start with a music and tourism festival - to bring peace in the country and help the world discover the country’s full potential beyond war and rhythm, and to showcase its rich array of attractions,” he concludes.



## CHECK OUT THESE EXHIBITORS



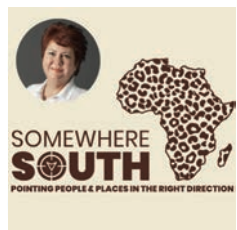
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# BEYOND THE SAFARI: EAST AFRICA CHARTS A NEW TOURISM PATH

*The region is redefining tourism by investing in culture, cuisine, adventure, writes Harriet Akinyi.*

For decades, East Africa has been synonymous with iconic wildlife experiences - safaris across the Serengeti, gorilla trekking in Uganda, and the Great Wildebeest Migration in Kenya. But there's so much more to explore beyond wildlife. The region is redefining tourism by investing in culture, cuisine, adventure, and business travel to attract a broader range of visitors and build more resilient economies.

For cultural immersion, travellers can visit traditional communities such as the Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania, the Samburu, Mijikenda, Turkana, and Kikuyu in Kenya, or the Hadzabe hunter-gatherers near Lake Eyasi in Tanzania. In Uganda, meet the Batwa, Karamojong, or Banyankole, famed for their long-horned Ankole cattle.

East Africa offers rich cultural diversity where visitors can experience local customs, crafts, dances, and daily life. For spiritual travellers, Kampala, Uganda is emerging as a hub for faith tourism, where Islam, Christianity, the Bahá'í Faith, and African traditional religions coexist. Visit sacred sites like the Namugongo Martyrs Shrine - drawing thousands of pilgrims each June - Gaddafi National Mosque, and the Bahá'í Temple, the only one of its kind in Africa.

Gastronomy tourism is flourishing, with culinary trails, food markets, and cooking classes available in cities such as Nairobi, Kampala, Kigali, and Zanzibar. Sample authentic dishes like Uganda's luwombo, Tanzania's mishkaki, and Kenya's nyama choma. Arusha recently hosted the UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy, spotlighting local staples like ugali,

senene (fried grasshoppers), and Swahili seafood as central to the East African travel experience.

For adventure lovers, the region boasts Africa's highest and second-highest peaks - Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya - both bucket-list destinations for climbers. You can also white-water raft on the Nile in Jinja, Uganda, or in Sagana, Kenya. Paragliding is gaining popularity in Rwanda's Lake Kivu region and Kenya's Kerio Valley, known for its dramatic landscapes and thermals.

Beach lovers are spoiled for choice with East Africa's scenic coastlines and islands. Relax on the white sands of Zanzibar, Diani, Watamu, Malindi, Lamu, Kilifi, or Mafia Island. Enjoy diving, snorkeling, and dhow cruises in the warm Indian Ocean waters.

History and heritage enthusiasts can explore UNESCO World Heritage Sites like Lamu Old Town, Stone Town

in Zanzibar, and the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela in Ethiopia - part of the broader Horn of Africa. Discover Swahili and colonial heritage in historic coastal towns.

Agri-tourism is another emerging experience. Visit coffee and tea plantations in Tanzania's Arusha region, Kenya's Tigoni, Kericho, or Nandi Hills, Uganda's Mount Elgon, or Rwanda's Northern Province, and learn the journey from bean to cup.

Business travel is also thriving, with East African cities investing in modern venues for conferences, exhibitions, and weddings. Kigali, Nairobi, Kampala, Dar es Salaam, and Arusha are fast becoming leading MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destinations. After meetings, explore the urban culture - visit art galleries, museums, fashion boutiques, live music venues, and local restaurants for a true taste of East Africa.



## TRIBE HOTEL IS REDEFINING NAIROBI AS A DESTINATION, NOT JUST A STOPOVER

For years, Nairobi has been viewed largely as a gateway to Kenya's more celebrated destinations - Masai Mara, Diani, and Amboseli. But Tribe Hotel, a design-forward luxury property nestled in the heart of the city's diplomatic district, is quietly changing that narrative.

With an ambitious and thoughtful approach to curating local experiences, the luxury hotel is redefining Nairobi not just as a stopover, but as a destination worth exploring on its own. Tribe is

positioning itself as the hotel that not only understands the evolving needs of luxury travellers but also reimagines what urban tourism can look like.

At the heart of Tribe's latest innovation is an exclusive night safari experience in Nairobi National Park, developed in partnership with Wow Safaris. Unlike traditional day tours, this nocturnal adventure offers something rare and magical - witnessing the city's wildlife under moonlight, with Nairobi's skyline glowing in the distance.

"The inspiration behind this came from our constant desire to showcase the best of Nairobi and Kenya in engaging, creative ways," says Shamim Ehsani, Co-founder and Marketing director of the Tribe Hotel.

The night safari is intimate and entirely unique. Guests

enjoy the park without crowds, guided by a certified silver-level safari expert and accompanied by two Kenya Wildlife Service rangers. The exclusivity is matched by ethical conduct; guides are trained to observe animal behavior and ensure wildlife is not disturbed, maintaining the delicate balance between access and preservation.

The experience is curated for travellers who crave adventure and appreciate wildlife —from luxury seekers to time-pressed business travellers looking to make the most of their stay. **"This program is particularly ideal for business travelers who are busy during the day. A night game drive gives them a rare chance to explore the park after hours, and no other city in the world offers this type of safari under the stars with skyscrapers in view,"** Ehsani notes.





# THE POWER OF TRUTH AND CONNECTION

## “Who do you think you are?”

Captain Londi Ngcobo, known as the ‘Blaqmermaid’, stood before a sea of industry leaders, her words echoing with the weight of lived experience and the promise of transformation.

She asked, “Who do you think you are?”- not as a challenge, but as an invitation. An invitation to bring our full, authentic selves to the table, to own our stories, and to lead with truth.

“In this industry, you know very well that people buy connection before they buy your service,” Captain Ngcobo reminded us.

Her journey, from scrubbing toilets on ships to commanding vessels of 50,000 gross tonnage, is a testament to resilience and the power of embracing one’s roots. “Where I come from, women of the highest calibre walk bold in the streets... I carry the habits of women who lead villages. My hope is that you speak the truth.

Because that is what serves.

“Let us not miss the opportunity to connect. Because when you connect, stuff happens,” Captain Ngcobo urged, challenging Africa’s Travel Indaba delegates to move beyond mere transactions and to build relationships rooted in authenticity and shared purpose.

“Let us connect. Let us grow. Let us tell the world who we truly are. If you are not the truth, you are nothing,” Captain Ngcobo said.



## WHY SOUTH AFRICANS KEEP GOING BACK TO MAURITIUS

*SA continues to stand out as one of the island nation’s most consistent source markets, says Hermina Sennelo from Mauritius Tourism SA.*

South Africa has long held a central role in Mauritius’ tourism landscape - not just as a steady source of arrivals, but as a valuable, resilient, and culturally connected market. Despite global shifts in travel patterns and the emergence of new visitor demographics, South Africa continues to stand out as one of the island nation’s most strategic and trusted tourism partners.

“South African travellers don’t just visit Mauritius once - they keep coming back. With over 106,524 arrivals in 2024, South Africa is the fifth-largest market for Mauritius, and one of the most consistent,” says Hermina Sennelo consultant Mauritius Tourism SA.

### Deep Cultural Ties

So, what makes Mauritius such a beloved destination for South Africans? “First and foremost, it’s the beaches and luxury resorts. South African tourists flock to the island for its warm hospitality, world-class service, and the sheer beauty of its coastline,” notes Sennelo.

“Whether it’s lounging under a palm tree, enjoying a

spa retreat, or celebrating a honeymoon, the island delivers a sense of serenity and escape that’s hard to match. Couples, families, and groups of friends alike appreciate the versatility of Mauritius - its ability to offer both relaxation and adventure.”

### Beach and Beyond

Water-based activities are a major draw too. “South Africans relish the opportunity to go snorkelling, scuba diving, deep-sea fishing, or sailing on catamaran cruises... Golf is another favourite among visitors, with several championship courses offering breathtaking views and challenging play,” she continues.

Beyond the beach, there is a deep cultural resonance between the two nations. Both countries share a colonial history, multicultural influences, and strong diasporic links. South African travellers feel at ease in Mauritius, thanks to the welcoming hospitality, English-speaking environment, and a lifestyle that blends luxury with relaxed island charm.

Mauritius continues to innovate and offer new products

to enhance the visitor experience. The “Made in Moris” initiative promotes locally produced goods, showcasing the quality and authenticity of Mauritian products.

### Easily Accessibility

In addition, South African tourists, particularly those from the middle and upper-income brackets are drawn to Mauritius’ premium offerings - five-star beach resorts, golf holidays, wellness retreats, and destination weddings. The island has cultivated a reputation as a safe, sophisticated destination for discerning travellers, making it particularly attractive to South Africans seeking high-quality, personalised service.

Accessibility also is another major factor fueling the strong tourism link. “Mauritius is just a four-hour flight from Johannesburg, with several daily direct flights operated by Air Mauritius and South African Airways. Fysafair also operates flights four times a week, and Air Mauritius connects Cape Town to the island twice weekly. These convenient routes make it easy for South Africans to plan both short getaways and longer holidays,” she explains.



# SMART TRAVEL, SMARTER MARKETING: HOW AI IS REVOLUTIONISING TOURISM

**O**n BOND Day, the message was clear: AI is not just the future of tourism marketing, it's the present, and it's already opening up powerful new frontiers.

Kgomotso Ramothea, CEO of the African Travel and Tourism Association (ATTA), highlighted the role of AI-driven platforms in connecting suppliers - ranging from boutique lodges to major hotels, to global buyers.

"We must promote seamless experiences," she said, pointing out that AI-powered platforms allow travel products to be discovered and matched to consumer preferences in real time, improving booking efficiencies and marketing effectiveness.

AI is also helping break down long-standing barriers in

tourism. Whether it's using data analytics to identify market gaps or deploying smart tools to address issues like destination safety perceptions or visa complexity, the tech is giving tourism businesses - particularly small players - a competitive edge.

"We need to take what we know are blockages and take them to custodians for change," Ramothea explained, referring to AI insights that spotlight structural challenges in the tourism ecosystem.

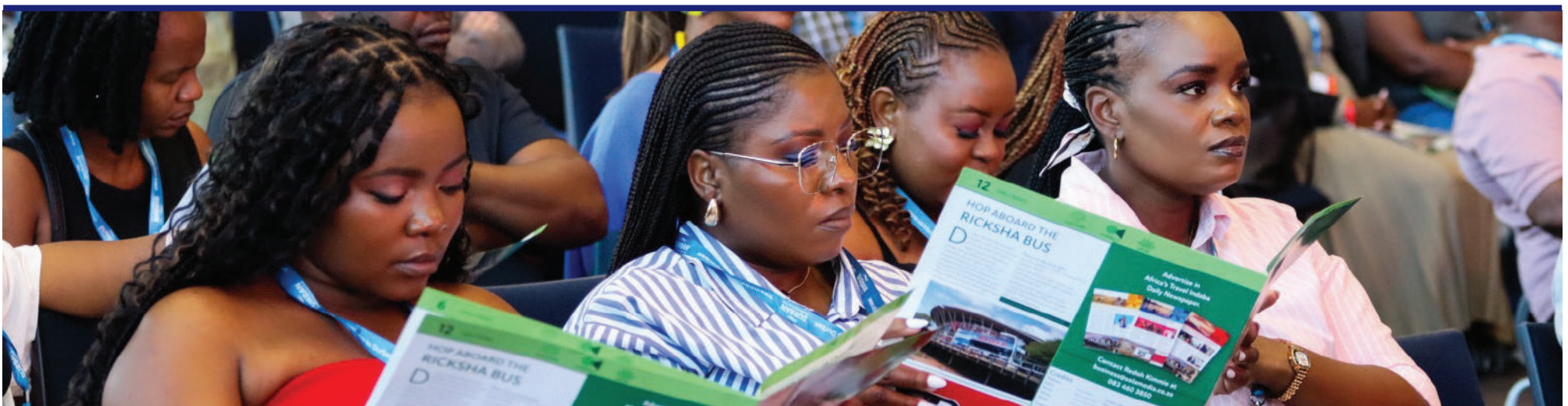
Importantly, AI is enabling destinations to rebrand beyond outdated stereotypes. "Africa is more than safari," she emphasised, pointing to niche and authentic experiences - from rural farm stays to immersive coffee tours in Ethiopia - as key attractions. With

AI, these hidden gems can now reach audiences who may never have known they existed.

As the industry strives to rebuild stronger after COVID-19, AI is enabling smarter, more strategic storytelling. This means putting culture, community, and sustainability front and centre in tourism marketing strategies.

So whether it's recommending tailor-made itineraries, analysing tourist sentiment, or supporting small businesses to compete in global marketplaces, AI isn't just a backend tool, it's a bold front-facing ambassador for African tourism.

Welcome to a future where smart travel means smarter marketing. And the best part? It's already happening.



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**"It is both a pleasure and a privilege to welcome all delegates to Africa's Travel Indaba 2025 in the Magical Zulu Kingdom."**

Reverend Musa Zondi, MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs

Africa's Travel Indaba is more than a trade show — it's a catalyst for collaboration, investment, and inclusive tourism growth. In 2024, the event generated over **R500 million** in economic impact for KwaZulu-Natal. This year, we proudly welcome over **1,000 global tourism leaders, buyers, and media** to our province and host city, Durban.

**Visit the KwaZulu-Natal stand at DEC1 – G37**, where you'll meet more than 10 local tourism businesses and explore **7 signature tourism routes** — from the cultural heart of Zululand to the breathtaking Drakensberg, Midlands, South Coast, North Coast, Battlefields and the world-renowned KZN Birding Route. These routes offer curated, immersive journeys for every kind of traveller.

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**KwaZulu-Natal. Discover it. Film it. Feel it.**  
**The Magical Zulu Kingdom.**



## NEW ATTA® REPORT REVEALS HOW TOURISM TRENDS ARE ROOTED IN AFRICA

The African Travel & Tourism Association (ATTA®) has launched a new report at this year's Africa Travel Indaba that challenges how global tourism trends are understood, and where they started.

Titled **Rooted in Africa**, the publication shows how today's most talked-about concepts - wellness travel, sustainability, slow travel and authenticity - are not recent innovations but longstanding practices across African communities.

"What the world now celebrates as innovation is how Africa has always travelled," says Kgomothea Ramothea, CEO, ATTA® Memberships. "We don't need to reinvent ourselves to stay relevant. We need only recognise the value of what we already have and tell that story with clarity and pride."

The report includes contributions from leading voices across the continent including Singita, Green Safaris, Jacada Travel, Natural Selection, Lemala Camps & Lodges and African Bush Camps. It highlights locally grounded approaches such as:

- Wholeness-based wellness models rooted in ancestral wisdom
- Community-led conservation that predates ESG frameworks
- Slow safari journeys shaped by patience and presence
- Cultural exchange based on lived experience rather than performance

"When we recognise that Africa hasn't been behind but ahead all along, we change not just how the world sees us, but how we see ourselves," continues Ramothea. "That's where true transformation begins."

Kgomotso Ramothea will be available for interviews during Indaba 2025 to discuss:

- How industry narratives can better reflect Africa's leadership
- Why reclaiming language around trends matters for positioning
- Practical ways operators can leverage their indigenous knowledge
- Why Western sustainability and wellness models often miss what Africa has known for generations



To book an interview slot, please contact:  
**Brenda Waltersb:**  
[renda@bigambitions.co.za](mailto:renda@bigambitions.co.za) | 0760613114

## JOHANNESBURG TO HOST THE 7TH AFRICA YOUTH IN TOURISM INNOVATION SUMMIT

The Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit (AYTIS) & Challenge empowers youth, entrepreneurs and start-ups in tourism across Africa. It uniquely focuses on innovation, creativity, leadership, and entrepreneurship in the sector. Hosted by Africa Tourism Partners with UN Tourism, AfCFTA, BDO, Millvest, the summit will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 24 to 27 June 2025, in partnership with South African Tourism.

- The event will run from 24 to 27 June 2025 at the Midrand Conference Centre as follows:
- 23rd June – Delegates Arrival and registration
- 24th June – Masterclasses & B2B Speed Marketing
- 25th – 27th June – Full Summit Days & Exhibition

These dates align with South Africa's Youth Month in June, which is significant to the country. Similarly, the Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit gathers young change-makers, ministries of tourism, ICT, hospitality policymakers, venture capitalists, international buyers, and investors to discuss the growth of tourism on the African continent. The Summit also offers networking, collaboration, career guidance opportunities, and business growth through an organized exhibition.

The thematic areas of the Summit will include but are not limited to:

- 1. Innovation:** Travel, Tourism, Hospitality and all sector cross-cutting areas including Fintec, AI/Automation, Social Innovation, Digitalization, Design Thinking, Travel Tech Start-ups, etc
- 2. Entrepreneurship:** Entrepreneurship, Capital Raising, Project Financing, Crowdfunding and Nano-Entrepreneurship
- 3. Employability:** Career Development, Critical Thinking, Leadership Development, Inter-generational Learning
- 4. Creative and Cultural Industries:** Intellectual Property Rights Protection, AfCFTA Digital Trade and Trade in Services, and Entrepreneurship in Creative and Cultural Industries (Film, Music, Cultural Heritage, Arts, and Sports)

To register for physical attendance and exhibition booking, please visit [www.youthtourismsummit.com](http://www.youthtourismsummit.com).

For more information about the Summit, exhibition, partnerships, sponsorships, registration, please contact Ms. Rejoice Chishamba at:

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## DISCOVER THE REAL HEARTBEAT OF SOUTH AFRICA PARTNER WITH JOZI MY JOZI

If you want to truly understand South Africa, there's only one place to start – Johannesburg, or Jozi, as us locals like to call our beloved city.

While Cape Town's beauty and the Kruger National Park's safari adventures are iconic, it's in Jozi where you'll feel the real pulse of the country - the energy, the diversity, and a creative collision of cultures.

As the host of the 2025 G20 Summit, and this year's SATSA25 Conference, now is the perfect time to experience Johannesburg as the real heartbeat of the nation. Come and see how Jozi does it: witness a city in transformation, where neglected spaces are being revitalised, where vibrant walkable networks are being reborn. Take a tour of the inner city's Literary District, discover why Jozi is the mural art capital of the world, explore historic political sites and admire incredible architecture. From buzzing markets and world-class art galleries to township festivals and lively nightlife, Jozi is where authentic stories unfold at every turn.

**Jozi My Jozi** is a movement rooted in pride, resilience, and the spirit of reimagining Joburg. We are redefining urban experiences by empowering local talent, fostering creative collaborations, and celebrating both tradition and bold new ideas.

**Babizebonke – come see how Jozi does it**

Curious about what to see or do in Joburg? Let us show you the real heartbeat of South Africa.

Visit **Jozi My Jozi** at **Africa Travel Indaba (Stand: ICC 205)**.

We look forward to partnering with you to create unforgettable experiences for you and your clients in Johannesburg!

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*A city not built by skyscrapers, but by its people*

**WE, THE PEOPLE**



# WHY TOURISM SMMES HOLD THE KEY TO AFRICA'S JOB CREATION BOOM

**T**he tourism sector has long been hailed as a job-creating powerhouse, but according to industry leaders participating in a BOND Day panel discussion, it's the small and emerging businesses - Tourism SMMEs - that truly hold the key to unlocking inclusive economic growth across Africa.

Septi Bukula, founder of Rendzo Network and an advocate for strategic SMME empowerment, explained how his network prioritises SMEs in everything from event logistics to experience delivery. "If it can be done by an SMME, it must be done by an SMME," he said, underscoring a business model that puts local entrepreneurs at the heart of international events.

Tourism SMMEs aren't just subcontractors, they're becoming the main stage act. Bukula's network actively promotes itself as a platform where world-class experiences are powered entirely by small businesses. From managing ground logistics to crafting bespoke cultural experiences, these enterprises are proving that big doesn't always mean better.

This strategic elevation of SMMEs is not just about contracts, it's about building long-term capability. "We've moved from tactical to strategic collaboration," Bukula explained. By partnering with institutions like the South African National Convention Bureau and city governments, his network is now bidding for major international events, alongside municipalities, not under them.



In practical terms, this means more business for SMMEs, more training opportunities, and more local hiring. It also means new tourism nodes in lesser-known regions, thanks to targeted development initiatives like the Drakensberg campaign, which brings together local stakeholders to collectively boost their tourism offering.

"We're not just saying collaboration, we're doing it," Bukula added. His approach proves that when SMMEs are empowered with the right partnerships, funding, and visibility, they don't just benefit, they lead.

Tourism SMMEs are often embedded within local communities, offering authentic experiences that resonate with conscious travellers. This alignment between job creation, social impact, and cultural tourism is exactly what Africa needs to redefine its travel story on a global stage.

By prioritising the empowerment of small tourism businesses, the industry isn't just creating jobs - it's cultivating leaders.

And that's a future worth building.

## UNVEILING THE RICH HISTORY OF THE NELSON MANDELA MUSEUM'S BHUNGA BUILDING AND THE YOUTH AND HERITAGE CENTRE

**A**s the Nelson Mandela Museum prepares to showcase its treasures at Africa's Travel Indaba from May 13th to 15th in Durban, we invite travelers and history enthusiasts alike to explore the significance of our iconic Bhunga Building and the Youth and Heritage Centre in Qunu.

### A Symbol of Resistance: The Bhunga Building

During the apartheid era, the Bhunga Building served as the seat of the Transkei Legislative Assembly, a government imposed by the apartheid regime. Despite its controversial past, the building has been transformed into a beacon of hope and freedom, housing an impressive collection of gifts and exhibitions that celebrate the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela.

### Treasures Within

The Bhunga Building is home to an array of artifacts, including gifts presented to Nelson Mandela from around the world. These tokens of appreciation and admiration offer a glimpse into the global impact of his tireless advocacy for human rights and equality. Our exhibitions also delve into the history of the Transkei region, providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities of South Africa's past.

### Join Us at Africa's Travel Indaba

We're excited to share the story of the Nelson Mandela Museum's Bhunga Building and the Youth and Heritage Centre with travelers and industry professionals at Africa's Travel Indaba. Our team will

be on hand to answer questions, provide insights, and showcase the museum's offerings. We look forward to welcoming you to our stand and sharing the spirit of these incredible destinations with you.

By visiting the Nelson Mandela Museum's Bhunga Building and the Youth and Heritage Centre, you'll not only be exploring significant pieces of South African history but also supporting the preservation of our cultural heritage. Join us on this journey of discovery and inspiration.

For more information about the Nelson Mandela Museum, the Bhunga Building, and the Youth and Heritage Centre, please contact on our social media platforms

Facebook: Nelson Mandela Museum

Twitter: @Mandela Museum

Instagram: @official\_nelsonmandelamuseum

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Website: [www.nelsonmandelamuseum.org.za](http://www.nelsonmandelamuseum.org.za)





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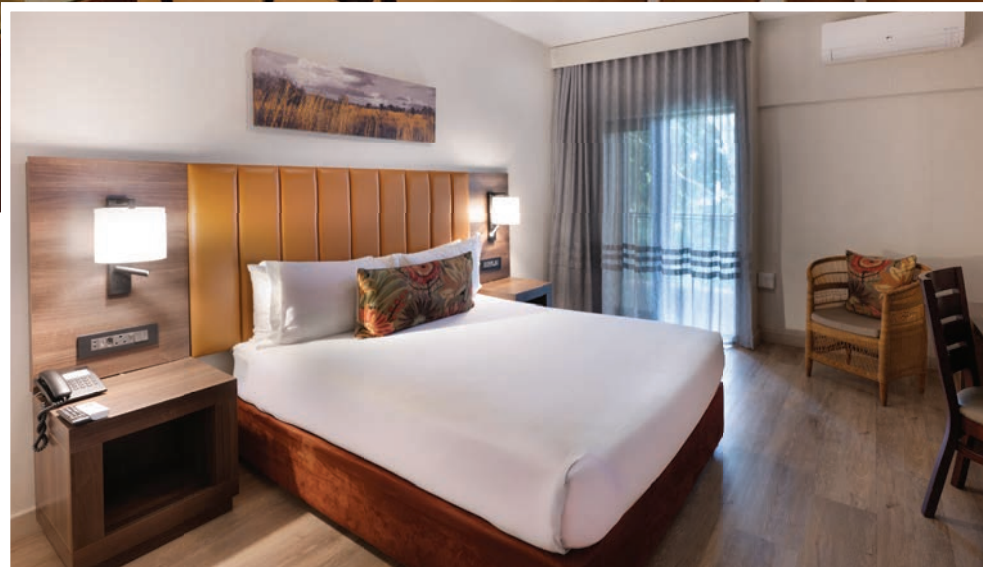
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# MILESTONES AND MOMENTUM FOR ANEW HOTELS & RESORTS



Africa's Travel Indaba kicks off today in Durban, and ANEW Hotels & Resorts is delighted to return to the industry's biggest platform with a strong year of progress and momentum behind it. The group continues to grow steadily across South Africa, with recent 4-star upgrades of six properties, widespread refurbishments, and two new properties set to be announced in 2025.

Now operating 18 properties nationwide, ANEW Hotels & Resorts has evolved from a newcomer in 2017, to a well-established national group, balancing growth with reinvestment and long-term ownership relationships. The most recent milestone is the official ownership transfer of ANEW Resort Hunters Rest, a popular leisure and conferencing destination in Rustenburg. Although it has been in the portfolio for the past five years, it now forms part of ANEW's owned property portfolio, which is a significant long-term commitment to the region.

Six properties were recently successfully regraded by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa, from

3- to 4-star, reflecting ongoing upgrades across the group. These properties include ANEW Hotel Capital Pretoria, ANEW Hotel Hluhluwe, ANEW Hotel Highveld eMalahleni, ANEW Hotel Hatfield Pretoria, ANEW Hotel & Convention Centre OR Tambo Johannesburg and ANEW Hotel Green Point Cape Town.

"This past year was not just about expansion. It was about raising our standards and continuing to upgrade our properties to the modern traveller's needs," says Clinton Armour, CEO of ANEW Hotels & Resorts.

One of the group's most notable brand milestones this past year has been the introduction of the ANEW Collection, which is a luxury sub-brand that includes only ANEW's 5-star properties. Hluhluwe Lodge by ANEW and Hilton Homestead by ANEW (in Pietermaritzburg)

are both self-catering properties, and form part of this the collection, offering high-end, flexible stays for families, groups and longer leisure breaks.

Alongside the luxury portfolio, ANEW has extended its guest experience offering beyond accommodation with the launch of ANEW Collection Wines, in partnership with Van Loveren, South Africa's leading family-owned winery. The bespoke range includes a Chenin Blanc and a Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot blend, made for ANEW, now available at all ANEW property restaurants.

**"We've grown this group with intention through the right partners,"** says Alan Campbell, Sales & Marketing Director. **"We're not chasing numbers. We're building value for our owners, for our partners, and for our guests."**

Looking ahead, the group is set to announce two new properties in 2025 - both set in high-demand regions - signalling the group's continued commitment to strategic growth.



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For more information contact:

Jani-Mari Swart, PR Manager at ANEW Hotels & Resorts  
janis@anewhotels.co.za  
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Mfundo Ngangca | +27 (0)81 363 2914  
ngangcamfundo312@gmail.com



## TOURISM RATES: NAVIGATING PRICING STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

**T**he challenge of balancing affordability, value, and sustainability in tourism is more pressing than ever, as industry leaders and communities grapple with the realities of global economic shifts and local inequality.

At a panel discussion on BOND Day moderated by Gerry Rantseli Elsdon, leaders from across the tourism value chain delivered a powerful message: pricing strategies are not just about profit—they are about shaping the future of South African travel for everyone.

Gerry Rantseli Elsdon opened the discussion with a clear focus: “We’ll be focusing on balancing affordability with the value that we’re able to offer, promoting sustainable prices so that we here on the continent and in the country are still able to sustain our businesses, but also engaging communities to ensure that there’s inclusivity.” Her words set the tone for a conversation that would challenge both industry and government to think beyond the bottom line.

Darryl Erasmus, Chief Operating Officer of South African Tourism, highlighted the tension between attracting foreign currency and making travel accessible to locals. “One of the biggest challenges we have is because the Rand against many international currencies is quite unique, we tend to price ourselves differently for the international market. What that does is it doesn’t democratise travel for South Africa,” Erasmus called for investment in “mid-market lodges to become more affordable for the average traveller,” warning that excessive rates “minimise our market” and leave local travellers behind. “We have to continue to focus on the fact that travel needs to be democratised and people need to be able to enjoy every part of South Africa.”

Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, delved into the complexities behind pricing. “Input cost is quite important. When you have electricity rising beyond inflation, when you have wages rising beyond

inflation, when you have municipal rating taxes and many other levels rise... the price of petrol matters and therefore determines how much things will cost.”

Tshivhengwa emphasised that while differential pricing for locals and internationals is debated, the real solution lies in making all cities and regions work for tourism: “We need to make sure that Nelson Mandela Bay works, East London works. All the cities that are around the coast must work and also the cities inland. People travel to where things work and to where they receive value for their money.”

Nkosi Khuzwayo, KwaZulu-Natal Regional Manager for the National Empowerment Fund, underscored the importance of supporting small businesses and inclusive growth. “We have serious appetite for the tourism sector... At the NEF, we teamed up with the Department of Tourism to ensure that the cost of capital is typical for the industry.” Khuzwayo called for continued partnerships and funding to uplift SMMEs, making it clear that “the improvement of their environments, the uplifting of their environments matters.”

Ronelle Pillay, Regional Revenue Manager at Southern Sun Group, brought a practical perspective: “For us, it’s about responsible tourism. Having that budget category – your entry level, your BnBs, your three stars, your four-star, your five star – allows you to basically understand accordingly.”

Pillay dispelled myths about pricing, noting that “the timing goes with it, and the customer... so much so for locals.” She stressed the need for pricing that reflects both demand and responsible tourism, ensuring that “locals are able to travel.”



## ‘WE HAVE CULTURE, CUISINE, FASHION, SPIRITUALITY. THESE ARE OUR NICHES’

**F**or decades, Africa’s tourism narrative has been framed around one trope – safari. Elephants. Lions. Wide open plains. While these iconic images remain powerful, industry voices during a BOND Day discussion made one thing clear: Africa is far more than its wildlife. And for tourism to grow sustainably, the world needs to be told a different story.

“People outside Africa already love our continent,” said Zipho Skhakhane, a global speaker and thought leader. “But we often fail to tell them what makes us different, beyond the safari. We have culture, cuisine, fashion, spirituality. These are our niches.”

Skhakhane emphasised that sustainable growth must start by identifying what makes us unique. “Growth must include impact, and impact means communities. The heart of our differentiation lies in our people.”

One such community is the rural Venda area, where designer Craig Jacobs found inspiration for his heritage fashion label. “It started with a story,” he shared. “I met a woman who blended cultures through her clothing. That curiosity led me to Lake Fundudzi and Venda culture, which few South Africans even know about. We’ve got these jewels around us, we just don’t tap into them.”

Tour operator Makhosi Msimango has built her business around showcasing these untold stories. “People know the Zulu kingdom, but they’ve never been to an actual homestead or witnessed the Reed Dance,”

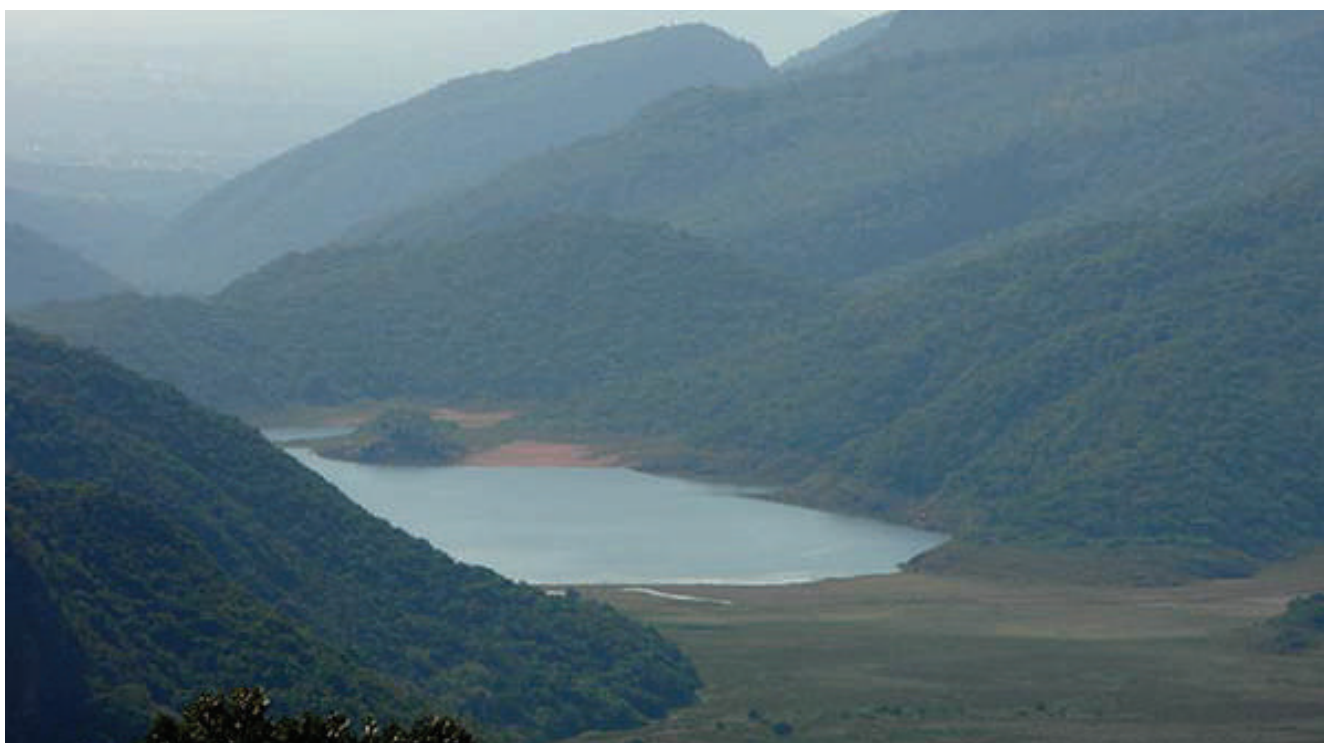
she explained. “I take them there. I let them feel it. That’s tourism. That’s what people remember.”

South Africa’s niche lies in its complex cultural layers, urban creativity, and sacred heritage. These are rich, emotional, and immersive, and most importantly, they are not replicated anywhere else in the world.

“Other nations are crafting entire tourism strategies

around their cuisine, their rituals, their identity,” Skhakhane said. “So why are we still exporting the same three images of lions and giraffes?”

As global travellers increasingly seek connection and meaning, the time has come for South African tourism to reposition itself – not as Africa’s safari stop, but as Africa’s soul.





# SOUTH AFRICA'S CINEMATIC LANDSCAPES: A HIDDEN ASSET FOR TOURISM

South Africa's breathtaking terrain, from dramatic coastlines to sun-soaked savannahs, has long served as the backdrop to major Hollywood productions, yet the country has yet to fully capitalise on its cinematic fame to boost tourism. During BONDay, panellists called for a more intentional integration of film and tourism strategies to unlock untapped demand, locally and globally. Global speaker, thought leader and strategist Zipho Skhakhane reminded delegates that our region holds remarkable value, value we often fail to recognise ourselves. "Other countries build entire economic strategies around the uniqueness of their landscapes and stories. We need to start doing the same," she urged. South Africa has played host to films like Black Panther, Mad Max: Fury Road, and Blood Diamond,

but unlike countries such as New Zealand (which leveraged The Lord of the Rings trilogy), our tourism offerings often miss opportunities to link popular filming locations with visitor experiences.

This, the panellists noted, is a missed chance to not only market the country but to empower local communities through storytelling and sustainable income generation.

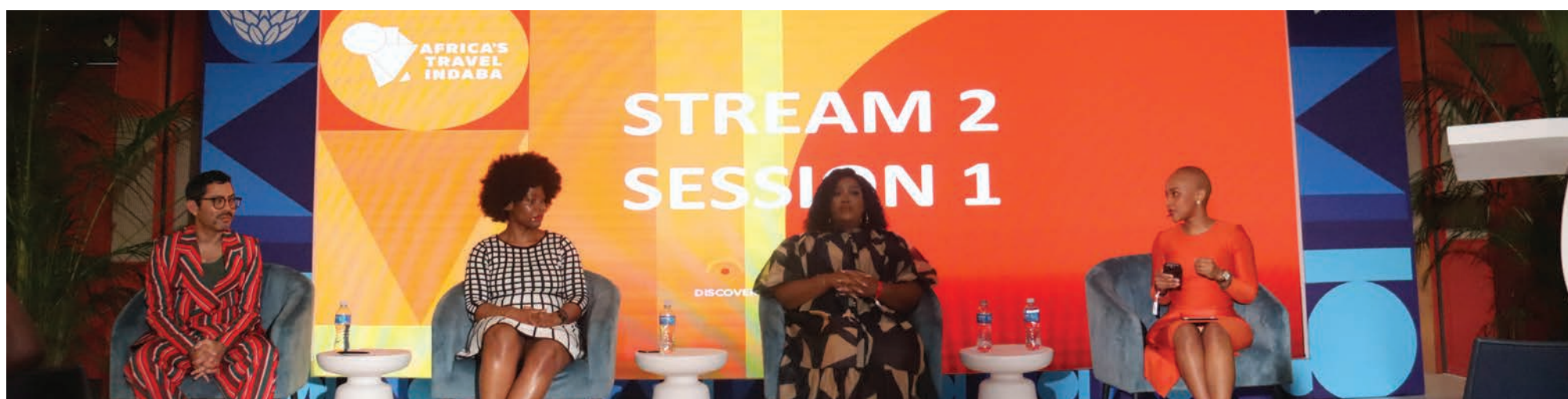
Designer and cultural curator Craig Jacobs added, "We need to be more evangelical about our country. We need to tell people our stories, proudly." Jacobs' fashion brand draws inspiration from the Venda people and sacred landscapes like Lake Fundudzi - South Africa's own mystical lake that few know exists.

"It's the largest freshwater lake in southern Africa formed by a landslide, and it's culturally rich. UNESCO is investigating it, but many locals have never heard of it."

Film, fashion, and tourism intersect naturally. Visitors are hungry for authentic narratives, and South Africa has these in abundance. The key lies in packaging them into immersive experiences - from visiting a Black Panther-inspired rural village, to exploring indigenous landscapes seen in blockbuster films.

"Tourism isn't just about seeing," said Makhosi Msimango, a tour operator spotlighting rural Zulu homesteads and cultural ceremonies. "It's about feeling and understanding. And film gives us a powerful bridge into those deeper stories."

To truly leverage South Africa's role on the silver screen, tourism stakeholders must think beyond marketing. They must craft experiences that connect the world's curiosity with our own cultural pride - before someone else does it better.



## REFRAMING THE NARRATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA

Guest speaker Onke Dumeko, Head of Operations of the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF), joined Africa's Tourism Indaba to highlight the relationship between Tourism and Film. Dumeko explains: "The whole point on tourism is that you are not just selling a country or destination; you are informing people of what they didn't know or what they needed to know about somewhere else in the world and inspiring them to go there." Dumeko highlighted the importance of the present narrative and how different polarising aspects can influence the world view of a country, be it through statistics, politics and even film. "In order to get what you want, the best way is to develop it yourself. If you want to change the narrative, you've got to create the bedrock, of what would be the foundation of the narrative." Dumeko urges us to redefine the narrative that we show the world and believe ourselves, "You have to ask yourself what is the one thing that I take away from that." To do this Dumeko presented

3 key principles:

### Value Reframing

"We have to decide who we are." Dumeko explains that South Africa unlike many countries, has not marketed itself under a main idea. Making these ideas known across the country also influences the narrative created. "You cannot sell a country if the people in the country do not understand what the country position is," she declared. Prioritise Intra-Africa Trade and Tourism Dumeko urged for better trade policies within the continent and reasoned that it contradicts the purpose of trade shows such as the ATI if we are unable to properly exchange services and products showcased in these events.

### Go Big to Sell Home

"You can't divide your budget into equal pieces of pie across different industries." Dumeko explained that there needs to be a significant investment on this narrative to see a change in the image of South Africa portrayed to the world. She also mentioned that it is a lengthy process and requires commitment.

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