

# AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA 2025 DECLARES CONTINENT 'UNLIMITED' AND OPEN FOR BUSINESS



**T**he African continent's premier travel and tourism trade show, Africa's Travel Indaba 2025 officially opened its doors today at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Running from May 13-15 under the resonant theme "Unlimited Africa", the event was officially opened by South African Deputy President Paul Mashatile and South Africa's Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, signalling a powerful, unified drive to showcase the continent's boundless tourism potential and declare Africa open for global business.

## Durban sets the stage for Indaba 2025

The vibrant city of Durban, renowned for its rich cultural tapestry, golden coastline, and warm hospitality, provides the perfect stage for this monumental gathering. Over 1,300 exhibitors from 27 African nations, including first-time participants from Chad, St Helena, and Burkina Faso, kicked off their engagement with more than 1,200 vetted buyers representing 55 countries. This underscores the Indaba's significance as a proudly Pan African platform for forging partnerships, driving investment, and shaping the future of African tourism.

The official opening address and keynote were delivered by Deputy President Paul Mashatile, who was joined by other esteemed speakers who shared insights and welcomed delegates, including South Africa's Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille; Mayor of eThekweni Municipality, Councillor Cyril Xaba; KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Reverend Musa Zondi; and Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Arthur Thamsanqa Ntuli. Their collective remarks highlighted

the importance of Indaba for the African continent.

## A bold vision for African tourism

In his keynote address, Deputy President Mashatile articulated a bold vision for the continent's tourism sector. "Our theme, 'Unlimited Africa', is not just a statement; it is a bold declaration of Africa's promise and possibilities. It speaks of an Africa unbound by old stereotypes, an Africa driven by its own ambitions and solutions. This is an Africa where intra-continental trade, investment, and tourism are no longer mere aspirations but rather everyday realities. Tourism is a significant economic engine, a catalyst for social change, and a cornerstone of inclusive growth. Let us demonstrate to the world that Africa is ready for business. With these words, I would like to officially declare the Africa's Travel Indaba 2025 open!"

The Deputy President highlighted that travel and tourism contributed 6.8% to Africa's GDP in 2023, with projections indicating a rise to 10.4% by 2030. He also noted that South Africa's hosting of the G20 Summit, is a prime opportunity to spotlight African perspectives on global economic and development issues.

## A catalyst for driving tourism

Echoing the Deputy President's optimism, South Africa's Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, emphasised the tangible strategies underpinning this vision. "Africa's Travel Indaba is a catalyst for inclusive growth, job creation, and sustainable development, not only in South Africa but throughout Africa. Tourism remains a powerful economic driver.

She further unveiled ambitious targets for the next five years under the Department of Tourism's Growth

Partnership Plan. "We aim to grow total tourism employment from approximately 1.84 million in 2024 to 2.5 million jobs, increase domestic spend by 25%, and grow tourism's GDP contribution from 8.8% to 10%. Crucially, we plan to welcome an extra one million international air arrivals annually. This is achievable if we work together. We are also proud to spotlight South African Tourism's new global brand campaign, 'South Africa awaits - Come Find Your Joy', a heartfelt invitation to experience our country not just through places but also through people, culture, and emotion. Joy is Africa's gift to the world, and our tourism offerings are its vessel."

## Africa tourism is open for business

The welcoming ceremony culminated in the traditional ringing of the bell, a symbolic gesture that resonated through the halls of the Inkosi Albert Luthuli ICC, officially heralding the start of business and three days of intensive networking, deal-making, and showcasing the very best of "Unlimited Africa".

As Africa's Travel Indaba 2025 unfolds, it serves as a powerful reminder of the continent's collective strength and vast, untapped potential. With a united voice, Africa is not just inviting the world to visit; it is confidently asserting its place as a leading, dynamic, and truly "unlimited" global tourism destination, ready for business and poised for unprecedented growth.

South Africa awaits

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Conservation, Partnerships & Ecotourism



# KWAZULU-NATAL HAS AMBITIOUS AND SKY-HIGH PLANS



**K**waZulu-Natal – the host province for Africa's Travel Indaba – has ambitious plans to attract more international tourists and investments to the region, Reverend Musa Zondi, MEC of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) told the Durban KZN Business breakfast held at the Hilton Hotel yesterday.

That includes securing more direct flights from Europe and Asia to the award-winning King Shaka International Airport.

Those efforts include securing a direct route from Air France, to complement the newly built Club Med at La Mercy, he said.

He also announced that the province was doing everything in its power to fast-track the long-awaited proposed Cable Car project which will be in Okhahlamba in the Drakensberg.

eThekweni Mayor Councillor Cyril Xaba announced that there was over R1 billion capital investment by Southern Sun which will see major upgrades of Elangeni Hotel, Maharani Hotel, Garden Court South Beach, and The Edward Hotel.

He announced the mixed-use development at Westtown, near Shongweni, opened recently, comprised of a shopping mall, hospital, and residential units provided a family friendly shopping environment and seeks to boost the local economy through tourism, particularly in the outer west region.



The Club Med Resort at Tinley Manor on the KwaZulu-Natal North Coast was nearing completion and would open in June next year.

This would create hundreds of permanent jobs, and together with a luxury safari lodge in Pongola, would offer a unique beach and safari

experience, the first in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The breakfast audience was given a further breakdown of the project by Chris du Toit, the project manager, who explained that the Big 5 game reserve experience would be at Mpilo Safari Lodge in northern Zululand and that there would be a beach experience at La Mercy.

The 75-room tented camp on the 18 000 reserve is to be accessed via a 45-minute chartered flight.

Giving a breakdown of jobs, du Toit said 1 200 construction jobs had been created and there were another 1 500 indirect jobs. At the peak of construction, there are 1 400 people on the site every day, with a further 90 offsite.

There are 17 main contractors and 250 sub-contractors.

Eight hundred staff would be employed at Club Med, including 70-100 SMMEs.

Sixty young people have been taken to the Eastern Cape to receive hospitality training and another 120 others will also receive training. And 300 chefs are to be trained at the International Hotel School in Durban.





# SHOW DAY 2 PROGRAMME

\* CORRECT AT TIME OF PRINT

| Time          | Event  | Venue   |
|---------------|--|---|
| 6H00 - 08H00  | AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA FUN RUN & SUNRISE YOGA  | BEACHFRONT PROMENADE<br>REGISTRATION ONLY                     |
| 07H30 - 08H00 | SANPARKS PANEL DISCUSSION: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CONSERVATION  | HILTON HOTEL<br>ALL DELEGATES                                 |
| 08H00 - 09H30 | SPEED MARKETING SESSION 2 - SOUL OF AFRICA (CULTURAL ROOTS AND CITY LIFESTYLE PRODUCTS)                                      | MEETING ROOM 21<br>BY INVITATION ONLY                         |
| 10H00 - 11H00 | MEDIA EDITORIAL SESSION: THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM & FILM IN DESTINATIONS  | MEDIA CENTRE<br>ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES                      |
| 10H00 - 13H00 | G20 PROVINCIAL FEEDBACK MEETING  | ROOM 11 A, ICC<br>BY INVITATION ONLY                          |
| 10H00 - 14H00 | DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION   | MEETING ROOM 12<br>BY INVITATION ONLY                         |
| 10H00 - 18H00 | EXHIBITION STARTS / DIARY MEETINGS   | EXHIBITION AREAS<br>ONLINE DIARY SYSTEM /<br>EXHIBITION AREAS |
| 11H00 - 11H30 | BOMA TALKS: SHAPING SUSTAINABILITY SESSION 2 - GREENER JOURNEYS: INNOVATIONS IN ECO-TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT                     | BUTTERFLY WALL<br>ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES                    |
| 11H00 - 12H30 | TGCSA STAND (25 YEARS)   | ICC105<br>ALL DELEGATES                                       |
| 11H00 - 14H00 | BOMA TALKS: NTCE 2025 BUSINESS NETWORKING SESSION  | SOUTH FOYER, ICC<br>BY INVITATION ONLY                        |
| 11H00 - 14H00 | NTCE 2025 BUSINESS NETWORKING SESSION  | SOUTH FOYER, ICC<br>BY INVITATION ONLY                        |
| 12H00 - 13H00 | MEDIA EDITORIAL SESSION: GASTRONOMY  | MEDIA CENTRE<br>ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES                      |
| 13H00 - 14H00 | LUNCH - VENDORS TRADE FROM 12H00   | DESIGNATED VENUES<br>ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES                 |
| 14H00 - 15H00 | MEDIA EDITORIAL SESSION: TOWNSHIP & RURAL TOURISM  | MEDIA CENTRE<br>ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES                      |
| 14h00 - 16h00 | TRUSTED TOUR OPERATORS WORKSHOP WITH HOME AFFAIRS  | MEETING ROOM 21<br>BY INVITATION ONLY                         |
| 15h00 - 15h30 | FUTURE FORWARD SESSION 2 - THE CONNECTED TRAVELLER: LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA TO ELEVATE THE AFRICAN TOURISM EXPERIENCE | FUTURE WHEEL - ICC CONCOURSE<br>ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES      |
| 15h30 - 16h00 | TOURVEST SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT  | MEDIA CENTRE<br>ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES                      |
| 18h00 - 23h55 | CITY IMMERSION EXPERIENCE  | FLORIDA ROAD<br>ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES                      |

## COME FIND YOUR JOY!



Step into the SA Tourism Brand Village and discover a vibrant space designed to amplify the “South Africa Awaits: Come Find Your Joy” campaign through immersive fun experiences. Located between the ICC and DEC at Indaba, this activation invites attendees of the trade show to explore and express their joy in unforgettable ways that make joy real. Come find your joy at the SAT Brand Village where excitement meets inspiration and innovation.

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

**T**ravel 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)

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# AFRICA'S TOURISM MINISTERS ISSUE A BOLD CALL

*A powerful panel of ministers were clear about their goal: a borderless, prosperous African tourism industry.*

The African continent's natural wonders, vibrant cultures, and youthful energy have long been celebrated, and there is still vast potential to unlock even more growth. At the 2025 Africa Travel Indaba, a powerful panel of tourism ministers from South Africa, Eswatini, Zambia, Mozambique, and Angola issued a clarion call: it is time to tear down the walls that divide us and build an unstoppable, united African tourism movement. In an optimistic conversation, these leaders did not mince words. Their message was clear—Africa's future lies in collaboration, not competition; in action, not endless discussion. The time for incremental change is over. The continent must embrace bold reforms, from visa-free travel to open skies, and invest in its people, infrastructure, and shared identity.

## Creating a movement

The panel opened with a frank assessment from Zambia's Minister of Tourism, Honourable Rodney Sikumba, who set the tone for the session. "Gone are the days of competition," he declared. "If you have a member country that seems to have done something right, you need to support them." His words resonated across the room, drawing nods from his counterparts. Sikumba pointed to the rising number of African countries participating in the Africa Tourism Indaba as proof of the continent's potential. "Last year, there were only about 22. Today, we're hearing about 27 African countries out of the 54, 56-whichever it is. We can do more. There's no reason why we can't come together and support each other."

He challenged the audience, "Watch this space. We are creating a movement. This team you see here is not just sitting for coffees and family pictures. We are about implementing. Anything that cannot be implemented should be taken off our checklist."

## Competitive Edge

While Africa's wildlife draws millions, its true competitive edge lies elsewhere. "Yes, maybe the elephants, rhinos, cheetahs are the same," Sikumba acknowledged, "but what we need to showcase is our culture. Our cultures are very unique and they relate to different people."

He cited Zambia's own growth at the Indaba: "Many years ago, just before I went into office, we had only 12 to 15 exhibitors. Then we moved to 20, then 30. Today we have a record-breaking number of 41 exhibitors." This, he said, is proof that when



African nations lift each other up, everyone wins.

No issue sparked more passion than the twin barriers of visas and closed skies. South Africa's Tourism Minister, Patricia de Lille, did not shy away from the challenge. "The two biggest barriers to growing tourism in the continent are visas and open skies," she stated bluntly. "We need to put a lot more pressure on the African Union."

## Game-changing Initiative

She traced the slow progress of the Single African Air Transport Market, launched in Kigali in 2018, and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which is supposed to enable both the movement of goods and people. "When we sorted out the visa regime for Kenya, immediately it was our fastest growing market to South Africa. Last year, we sorted out the visa issue with Ghana and saw a 149% increase from Ghana," she revealed.

De Lille mentioned a game-changing initiative: "We are testing a new visa regime called Electronic Travel Authorisation. We will move away from paper-based systems. Applications will be online, and this ETA will be applicable to the whole world. It will solve many of the visa problems we have in the continent."

Her vision was unequivocal: "We cannot continue having our people locked out of the natural resources and opportunities that should benefit them. We must sweat

our resources so that our own people get to benefit."

## Interconnectivity Summit

Angola's Minister of Tourism, Márcio de Jesus Lopes Daniel, issued a powerful challenge: "We still have barriers that we have to put away in order to create stronger relationships between our private sectors, our tour operators, and our hospitality industries."

He announced a landmark event that will take place in Angola's capital city, Luanda, from 22 to 24 July 2025. The 2nd United Nations World Tourism Organisation and International Civil Aviation Organisation Ministerial Conference on Tourism and Air Transport in Africa will bring together African ministers, aviation, and tourism stakeholders, and global industry leaders to shape policies promoting regional connectivity and economic diversification.

Daniel explained, "This Interconnectivity Summit can be a very good place to discuss and come up with solutions. Africa's Travel Indaba is the main place where we can see all Africans together, talking about tourism, and put tourism as a driving force to influence decision-makers in our sector and beyond." The conference will focus on enhancing air connectivity and seamless travel across Africa, strengthening dialogue between tourism and air transport stakeholders,





and encouraging political commitment to integrate these priorities into national and regional agendas.

#### Investing in People

Beyond borders and bureaucracy, the ministers were united on another front: investing in Africa's people and infrastructure.

De Lille mentioned a dedicated tourism investment summit in South Africa for September, inviting African ministers to pitch opportunities. "There is a great need for infrastructure investment in tourism assets. We need to work together with all three spheres of

government in terms of access, road and water."

On skills, she was blunt: "We need to stop training people and then giving them a certificate, and they cannot find jobs. We are going to invest in demand-led skills that are needed in the sector, so that when you train young people, they are able to get a job after that training."

She challenged the private sector: "They must project what will be the skills needed in the tourism sector in the next five to ten years. Then we need to go to the universities and institutions of higher learning and let them start changing

their curriculum to produce those skills."

No discussion on open borders is complete without acknowledging the concerns over security and illegal immigration. When pressed on the issue, the ministers did not dodge. "Visas are a necessity for people who want to come into the country, but we must find ways to deal with illegal immigration without stifling the movement of genuine travellers and entrepreneurs."

#### Time for Action

Throughout the session, one theme rang out above all: enough talk. It is time for action. As Sikumba put it, "Anything that will not be able to be implemented should be taken off our checklist."

The ministers called on every African government, business leader, and citizen to join the movement:

- Invest in infrastructure and skills that empower young Africans.
- Champion cross-border collaboration—from joint marketing to seamless travel experiences.
- Celebrate and showcase Africa's unique cultures as the continent's greatest asset.
- Embrace technology to make travel easier, safer, and more inclusive.

As the panel closed, Sikumba reminded the audience. "We are here to build a new Africa—one where our people move freely, prosper together, and show the world our true potential."



## DISCOVERING THE CRADLE OF LEADERSHIP: QUNU AND MQHEKEZWENI

As we continue to celebrate the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela at Africa's Travel Indaba, we invite travelers to explore the picturesque village of Qunu and the historic Great Place at Mqhekezweni. These two locations played a significant role in shaping the values and leadership style of the iconic leader.

#### Qunu: A Glimpse into Mandela's Childhood

Qunu, a small village in the Eastern Cape, is where Nelson Mandela spent his childhood, surrounded by the rolling hills and lush landscapes of the region. Visitors can explore the village, visit Mandela's humble home, and pay their respects at his resting place. The Youth and Heritage Centre, located in Qunu, offers a unique glimpse into Mandela's early life and provides stunning views of the surrounding countryside.



The Youth and Heritage Centre offers a range of facilities, including:

- Travelling exhibitions that explore Mandela's life and legacy
- Conference facilities for meetings, workshops, and events
- Kitchen facilities for catering and events
- Accommodation for visitors and guests
- Venue hire for weddings, events, programs, and camps

This centre is a must-visit destination for anyone interested in Mandela's life and the history of the Eastern Cape. The combination of natural beauty, cultural significance, and modern facilities makes it an ideal location for a variety of events and activities.

#### Plan Your Visit

If you're planning to visit Qunu and Mqhekezweni, we recommend allowing at least a day to explore each location. Guided tours are available, and visitors can also stay in our Qunu Accommodation Facility.

#### Mqhekezweni: The Cradle of Leadership

Mqhekezweni Great Place, located near Mthatha, is where Mandela was sent to live with Regent Jongintaba Dalindyebo, the paramount chief of the Thembu people. It was under the regent's guidance that Mandela learned valuable leadership skills, including diplomacy, negotiation, and conflict resolution. The Great Place at Mqhekezweni is a historic site that showcases the traditional



architecture and cultural heritage of the Thembu people.

#### Join Us at Africa's Travel Indaba

We're excited to share the story of Qunu and Mqhekezweni with travelers and industry professionals at Africa's Travel Indaba, please visit our stand **DEC J15**. Our team will be on hand to answer questions, provide insights, and showcase the region's offerings.

We look forward to welcoming you to our stand and sharing the spirit of these incredible destinations with you.

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

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# TRILAND: A THREE-COUNTRY TOURISM INITIATIVE SET TO REVITALIZE THE SECTOR



**T**RILAND™ is an initiative entered into between the three tourism entities, Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA), Eswatini Tourism Authority (ETA) and the Mozambique National Institute of Tourism (INATUR), to promote the region as a tourist, trade and investment destination.

## BACKGROUND TO THE TRILAND INITIATIVE

The relations between these three countries has its historic origin from 1928 and relations were further strengthened with the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, especially in areas of economic cooperation and investment.

The cooperation resulted in the implementation of multi-billion-rand economic projects, inter alia, the Maputo Development Corridor and the Trilateral Spatial Development Initiative with Eswatini. It is against this backdrop, and many other technical cooperation agreements and international relations policy instruments that the tourism entities signed a Memorandum of Understanding to grow tourism in the region in 2009 and the TRILAND Regional Tourism Destination Brand Strategy was launched in 2011 in Mozambique.

The essential elements of the Brand and Regional Tourism Routes are packaged on three unique selling propositions (USPs): NATURE in Mpumalanga, ROYAL TRADITION in Eswatini and SEA and WHITE SANDY BEACH in Mozambique. Collectively, these key product offerings depict the regional destination presented as the TRILAND.

## KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE TRILAND BRAND

To develop and position the region as a world-class tourism, trade and investment destination; joint marketing; contribute to the integration of the region and their common economic development goals including employment creation and economic growth; to develop sustainable and responsible tourism; to enhance joint collaboration in the conservation and protection of biodiversity, and to preserve cultural values, heritage and national pride.

**Trade promotion:** establish a uni-visa; remove barriers to trade; lobby and advocate for the upgrading of major trade routes and road networks.

**Investment promotion:** create a single Investment Forum.

## TOURS FOR TOUR OPERATORS

As part of the promotion of the TRILAND initiative, the tourism agencies from the three countries have hosted tour operators and media with the aim of showcasing the different tourism offerings available in each country. Six local tour operators and four media from Mpumalanga were afforded an opportunity to interact with other tour operators and promote tourism packages that seek to promote Mpumalanga. The tour started with a two-day visit to the Kingdom of Eswatini, which was hosted by the Eswatini Tourism Authority. Another two days followed in Mozambique, where the group was hosted by INATUR and the tour concluded with a final two days enjoying the highlights of Mpumalanga.

The familiarisation trip was an activation of one the elements within the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed at the Africa's Travel Indaba held in Durban in 2022. The TRILAND route is about enhancing regional tourism initiatives, collaborating and supporting exchange programmes with the aim of growing tourism.

This is an exciting period for all three tourism agencies. To be able to take part in the promotion of the TRILAND route and to expose local tour operators to the various features and experiences offered by the route also enhances the ability of all role-players to create effective packages. This collaboration



presents an opportunity to promote regional tourism and showcase the variety of products available.

## THE TRILAND ROLLOUT PLAN

There are five major projects that underpin the rollout of the TRILAND strategy:

### 1. Tourism airlift

Investigate the business case for the establishment of a tourism airlift strategy between Mpumalanga, Eswatini and Mozambique.

**Key points:** Lobbying, feasibility study of routes, stakeholder engagement, including civil aviation authorities.

### 2. Joint regional marketing and promotion

Establish a programme for an integrated Regional Marketing and Promotion Programme to jointly promote the route.

**Key points:** Establish Tour Operator Exchange Programme, develop an integrated media plan, plan for TRILAND integration at trade shows and events, develop social media pages, develop a revolving marketing plan, identify markets.

### 3. Marketing collateral

Development of joint marketing collateral to promote the route.

**Key points:** Develop terms of reference for marketing collateral, appoint service provider, to include videos, film, website, images, digital brochures.

### 4. Collaboration in mega events

Collaboration in mega tourism events to promote the TRILAND brand.

**Key points:** Identify flagship events, agree on attendance (for example, Maputo Tourism Fair, King's Cup in Eswatini and Innibos in Mpumalanga), partners to include these events in budgets.

### 5. Tourism route(s) development

Development of a tourist route connecting identified unique selling features and points of the region to create a sustainable demand for the regional and international market.

**Key points:** Establish terms of reference for service provider to map and develop the TRILAND Route, engage with stakeholders, develop brochures.





# THE TOURISM GRADING COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

*At Indaba 2025, the TGCSA is not only reflecting on a quarter-century of achievements but also unveiling exciting updates, writes Dominic Naidoo.*



**T**he Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) is proudly celebrating a remarkable 25 years of setting and maintaining quality standards across the country's tourism sector.

As part of the festivities at Africa's Travel Indaba 2025, the TGCSA is not only reflecting on a quarter-century of achievements but also unveiling exciting updates that will shape the future of tourism quality assurance.

Launched in 1999 under the stewardship of the late Minister Stella Sigcau, the TGCSA has evolved from grading traditional accommodation establishments to becoming a cornerstone of national tourism development.

Today, it serves as the gold standard in assuring local and international visitors of the quality and safety of accommodation and venues throughout South Africa.

Speaking at Indaba, Bronwen Auret, Chief Quality Assurance Officer at TGCSA, highlighted the organisation's journey and impact. "We started by grading formal accommodation like hotels, B&Bs,

and guesthouses, but we've expanded significantly over the years," Auret said. "Now we include game lodges, country houses, camping and caravan parks, backpackers, and even conference venues like the Durban ICC, which is a 5-star graded facility."

This broadening of scope reflects the council's commitment to inclusivity and the diverse nature of South Africa's tourism offering. Auret said the council is particularly proud of its work in rural and township areas, supporting emerging tourism businesses through an innovative "basic quality verification" programme. This initiative targets new entrants who may not yet qualify for full star grading but are mentored and trained through Department of Tourism partnerships to eventually reach that level.

"It's about demystifying the sector," Auret explained. "Tourism can seem overwhelming to someone in a small village who's just starting out. We help them enter the system, access support,

and eventually become proud graded businesses contributing to local economic development."

A major highlight of this 25-year celebration is the announcement of a soon-to-be-launched modernised grading framework, developed in consultation with both industry stakeholders and consumers. According to Auret, the revised criteria will place a strong focus on sustainability, accessibility, and technology - all vital pillars for a competitive and inclusive tourism landscape.

"We're enhancing standards around universal accessibility, including staff readiness to accommodate travellers with disabilities, a massive, often overlooked market. We're also addressing safety, security, and the adoption of smart technologies that allow for hybrid and virtual assessments," she said. "This evolution ensures we stay dynamic and relevant in a fast-changing world."

As South Africa positions itself as a leading destination for both domestic and international travel, the role of trusted quality assurance becomes increasingly vital. The TGCSA Star insignia offers instant recognition and peace of mind, signaling to guests that they can expect excellence - whether they're staying at a humble one-star backpacker lodge or a luxurious five-star hotel.

"There's a place for everyone," Auret affirmed. "We're just as proud of our one-star properties as we are of our five-star establishments, because each one serves a different market with care, passion and value."

The call from TGCSA is clear: every accommodation provider should strive for grading. The benefits are extensive - from marketing visibility and customer trust to access to training and business support.

"Grading helps drive our national reputation," said Auret. "It assures visitors that South Africa is ready, not just with warm welcomes, but with world-class quality. And when things go wrong, there's a trusted entity they can turn to."

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# EZEMVELO KZN WILDLIFE MAKES NATURE MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR LOCAL TOURISTS



**A**t this year's Africa's Travel Indaba, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife's CEO, Siphesihle Mkhize, shared a renewed vision for conservation, community empowerment, and inclusive tourism in KwaZulu-Natal.

Ezemvelo, the provincial authority responsible for managing some of South Africa's most ecologically significant protected areas including iSimangaliso Wetland Park, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi, and parts of the Drakensberg, has long been synonymous with biodiversity protection. But as eco-tourism evolves, so too does Ezemvelo's approach to balancing conservation with accessibility.

## Ecotourism Experiences

"Our mandate is twofold: biodiversity conservation and ecotourism management," Mkhize explained. "We don't just offer tourism - we offer ecotourism experiences that connect people with nature. From bush to beach, we cater to various needs and budgets."

Unlike private lodges that cater exclusively to luxury travellers, Ezemvelo offers more affordable, inclusive options designed to make nature accessible to local tourists. These include traditional camping facilities and, more recently, a move into "glamping" - a hybrid of glamorous and rustic camping, aimed at younger travellers who want to immerse themselves in nature without sacrificing comfort.

## Community Partnerships

Beyond tourism, Ezemvelo is investing heavily in community-based partnerships. A new initiative launched in 2023 is shifting away from short-term, uniformed contract jobs and instead integrating local entrepreneurs into the biodiversity economy.

"We're working with local suppliers and service providers to handle everything from fencing and plumbing to



guesthouse operations and catering," Mkhize said. "This approach improves livelihoods and strengthens community relationships around protected areas."

Ezemvelo is also empowering these entrepreneurs with technical support and supply-chain access, helping them become long-term contributors to the tourism ecosystem. "We're seeing this work already improving relations and creating a sense of ownership and pride in conservation areas," he added.

## Premium Offerings

On the commercial front, Ezemvelo is opening doors to partnerships with the private sector to co-manage and invest in higher-end tourism products within some of its protected areas. "We offer affordable, government-backed experiences," Mkhize said. "Now we're creating space for the private sector to come in and complement that with premium offerings."

The CEO expressed enthusiasm about the meetings held at Indaba, highlighting fruitful engagements with tourism

businesses and operators. "The energy at our stand is fantastic. People are excited to explore what Ezemvelo has to offer. Indaba has been incredibly productive for us."

With fresh ideas and a strong commitment to both conservation and community upliftment, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife is proving that responsible tourism can be a force for good in South Africa's protected landscapes.





# AIR ACCESS INVESTMENT WELCOMED BUT REGIONAL TOURISM STILL NEEDS A BROADER LIFT

With the South African Government announcing a R6.5 million investment to improve air access to attract more tourists, ANEW Hotels & Resorts has welcomed the move as a promising step toward unlocking the country's full tourism potential.

However, the group cautions that unless this investment is matched with deliberate planning to benefit all provinces, not just established hotspots, South Africa risks deepening regional imbalances in its tourism economy.

Although tourism has rebounded to 82% of pre-pandemic levels, the majority of international visitor traffic remains concentrated in Cape Town and the Kruger National Park. Other regions - despite offering rich tourism assets - remain under-visited. The Garden Route accounts for just 4% of arrivals, KwaZulu-Natal 2.7%, and Mpumalanga (excluding Kruger) a mere 0.8%.

Alan Campbell, Sales and Marketing Director at ANEW Hotels & Resorts, says the government's investment in air access is optimistic, but it must be viewed as a foundation not a finish line.

"This is the kind of catalytic investment we've been hoping for, and it should be applauded," says Campbell. "But now the real work begins: ensuring this increased air access opens the door for growth in underserved provinces like Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, not just reinforcing the dominance of already-successful destinations."

"Visitor recovery for hotspots Cape Town and Kruger have already surpassed 100% and although that is worth celebrating, they cannot become the only stories we tell," Campbell says.

"Without coordinated investment across provinces like KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, we risk deepening regional inequality and missing out on the full potential of South Africa's tourism economy."

He says that while President Cyril Ramaphosa's 2025 State of the Nation Address rightly positioned



tourism as a national priority, meaningful change will only come if industry and government align around a shared vision for inclusive tourism development.

"Improving air access is a vital piece of the puzzle but without parallel investment in infrastructure, regional marketing and capacity-building, many areas will remain out of reach for international travellers," Campbell adds.

As industry leaders gather for Africa's Travel Indaba 2025, ANEW Hotels & Resorts supports the Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (SATSA) in calling for a more coordinated, inclusive tourism strategy that builds resilience across the country, not just in its best-known destinations.

"Africa's Travel Indaba is a critical opportunity for private-sector collaboration. If we want to compete with global destinations that benefit from massive public-sector support, we must first act like a unified industry at home," Campbell says.

"It's no longer enough to rely on government alone," Campbell adds. "The time has come for the tourism industry to lead with intention. Collaborate, even across competitors, to strengthen the entire sector. We need to stop waiting and start building partnerships that put lesser-known destinations on the map."

With challenges like energy instability, urban

flooding and limited air access to regional hubs, Campbell calls for dedicated infrastructure planning and marketing strategies that de-risk investment outside the dominant centres.

"This is an opportunity for both the public and private sector to collaborate more intentionally," Campbell says. "We have a chance to design air routes and infrastructure strategies that de-risk investment in lesser-known areas and bring much-needed economic activity to communities outside the spotlight."

He adds that recent hotel closures in provinces like the Eastern Cape are not due to a lack of demand, but rather poor accessibility and underinvestment, gaps that the new air access funding could help close if deployed strategically.

"We need to stop waiting for perfect conditions and start building bridges literally and figuratively," says Campbell. "Let's use this momentum to tell a broader story of South Africa, one where every province can thrive."



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Come visit ANEW Hotels & Resorts at stand ICC1414 at Africa's Travel Indaba 2025

For interviews, kindly contact:

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# LIMPOPO'S SMMES TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT PROVINCIAL PAVILION

As Africa's biggest travel and tourism showcase unfolds in Durban, Limpopo has once again proven that it's not only South Africa's leading domestic destination but also a powerhouse of innovation, resilience, and diversity, especially when it comes to the power of small businesses in tourism.

Leading the charge is the Limpopo MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET), Tshitereke Matibe, who is spearheading a dynamic delegation of SMMEs, tourism stakeholders, and provincial leaders at this year's Africa's Travel Indaba (ATI).

With 54 proudly Limpopo-based tourism products on display, the province is turning heads with a colourful, immersive pavilion that embodies the spirit of its people and places.

"Our SMMEs are the backbone of our tourism industry," MEC Matibe emphasised, "and we are committed to supporting their growth and development."

The MEC's goal is to solidify Limpopo's position as the top-performing tourism destination, while forging strategic partnerships and attracting investments that will drive long-term economic growth.

In 2023, Limpopo recorded 7.5 million overnight trips, marking a 34% increase from the previous year. Building on this momentum, the province's presence at ATI this year is not just about visibility - it's about economic inclusivity.

Andrew Dipela, chairperson of the Limpopo Tourism Agency (LTA), echoed this sentiment during an interview on the show floor. "We're proud to offer our SMMEs the opportunity to network, learn, and build business relationships.

These sessions are essential not just for exposure, but for developing real marketing and operational capacity," Dipela said.

He added that programmes run by the Agency have recently supported 25 women-owned businesses, empowering them to better understand market dynamics and tailor their offerings accordingly.

One of these dynamic entrepreneurs is Tshego



Phakwago, the young owner of BKT Boutique Lodge in the Sekhukhune District.

"Being part of Indaba is a dream. I've had buyers stop by our stand who had never heard of Sekhukhune, and now they're interested in booking site visits. This is the exposure we need to grow and hire more people from our community."

Similarly, Mmakwena Nzimande, owner of Lesolo Lodge, is using this platform to secure partnerships with tour operators and government buyers.

"Limpopo's pavilion is a game-changer. It's not just a stand - it's a celebration of who we are. We've seen a lot of interest from the international market, especially in our cultural and eco-tourism offerings."

Beyond promoting products, the LTA is focused on fostering mentorship and peer exchange. "What we're doing here is not just exhibiting," Dipela added. "We're cultivating knowledge. Our SMMEs get to learn from each other, observe how others deliver services, and take those

lessons back home to improve their own operations."

This kind of exposure is critical. It allows small tourism businesses not only to dream bigger but to turn those dreams into action. It also encourages the broader industry to look beyond large hotels and reserves, toward community-rooted experiences that are deeply authentic and environmentally sustainable.

With events such as the Limpopo Marula Festival and the upcoming 2025 National Tourism Career Expo on the horizon, the province is well-positioned to continue its upward trajectory.

These flagship platforms are set to spotlight local talent, create youth employment opportunities, and keep Limpopo top-of-mind among domestic and international travellers.

As ATI 2025 continues, one thing is clear: Limpopo is not just participating, it is leading. And with its dynamic SMMEs at the forefront, the future of tourism in the province looks not just promising, but transformational.





# ‘SEYCHELLES IS MORE THAN WORLD-FAMOUS BEACHES’

Seychelles is here at Africa’s Travel Indaba for a very clear reason: the African market holds significant value for its tourism strategy, and South Africa, in particular, represents a major contributor to their business from the continent.

“Being at Indaba allows us to directly connect with this important market, engage with various stakeholders, and share our story with potential partners and travellers across Africa,” says Bernadette Willemin, Director General



for Destination marketing at Tourism Seychelles.

She adds that the event provides an excellent platform for them to promote the Seychelles tourism product and align with our broader year-round marketing efforts.

“Indaba allows us to engage face-to-face with travel trade professionals, media, and press - helping us tell the Seychelles narrative more effectively and authentically. It is part of a strategic push to keep Seychelles top of mind among African travellers, particularly from the southern region.”

At Indaba, Seychelles is showcasing more than just its world-famous beaches. They are here to reinforce the message that Seychelles is a diverse, year-round destination.

“Our aim is to remind the South African audience- and other markets in the region—of the richness and variety our islands have to offer. While many are familiar with our beautiful coastlines, the real wealth of Seychelles lies in its people, culture, biodiversity, and way of life,” she adds.

Seychelles is a nation of about 130,000 people, all proud to welcome visitors and share their Creole heritage, local gastronomy, music, and traditions.

“We are also home to unique flora and fauna, including a number of endemic species that make our islands a paradise for nature lovers. Our lush vegetation, marine reserves, hiking trails, and sea-based activities such as cruising and snorkelling offer visitors much more than just a beach holiday,” she explains.

An important part of our message at Indaba is that Seychelles is not only beautiful but also safe. Travelers can explore our islands freely, engage with locals, and enjoy a peaceful and welcoming environment. This sense of safety and ease adds greatly to the overall visitor experience.

“We are also highlighting Seychelles’ proximity to South Africa—just a five-hour flight away. With airlines like Airlink operating routes between our countries, travel is increasingly convenient. Our objective is to grow visitor numbers from South Africa and southern Africa by showcasing just how accessible and appealing Seychelles is as a nearby escape,” she says.

South Africans are naturally drawn to our coastline and outdoor activities, but the tourism board has also observed strong interest in our biodiversity.

“The opportunity to experience endemic species, immerse in island life, and enjoy the Creole culture resonates strongly with travellers from this region.”

At the heart of their message is a broader vision: Africans should begin by exploring Africa. “Our continent is rich in natural beauty, culture, and shared history. Unfortunately, we often look beyond our borders without first discovering the treasures that exist right next door. We believe it’s time to get to know each other better—both our similarities and our unique differences. This kind of mutual exploration builds stronger regional connections and a deeper appreciation for what Africa has to offer,” she concludes.

## HOW INDABA EMPOWERS YOUNG PEOPLE

The youth in Africa are a powerful force in shaping the future of the tourism and hospitality industry. With energy, innovation, and a willingness to learn, young people are eager to take up roles that will transform African tourism into a dynamic, inclusive, and sustainable sector. However, the journey for young professionals is riddled with challenges ranging from outdated education systems to a lack of access to platforms that connect them with industry leaders and decision-makers.

Luxon Zamboco, a passionate youth advocate and the Founder – Youth in Tourism and Hospitality Association a youth-led organization that seeks to empower and capacitate young people through skill development, capacity building, and robust advocacy believes that one of the challenges facing African youth is the mismatch between academic training and industry expectations.

“While we have colleges and universities across the continent, the curricula often fail to keep up with the rapid evolution of the tourism and hospitality industry, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As hotels and travel facilities modernize and adopt digital systems, many graduates find themselves underprepared for the realities of the job market. Digital proficiency, which has become a critical skill in the post-pandemic tourism landscape, is often lacking among graduates due to these outdated training programs,” he notes.

Another pressing issue is the lack of representation and inclusion of young people in decision-making spaces.

“Despite having innovative ideas and strong concept

notes, young professionals are rarely given leadership opportunities or access to funding to implement their projects. We cannot discuss innovation without creating pathways for financing and mentorship.

As we continue to build the tourism landscape of tomorrow, it is imperative that we keep young people at the center — not just as beneficiaries, but as architects of Africa’s tourism future.

Governments and industry stakeholders must collaborate to ensure that young people are not just participants but leaders in the tourism conversation,” he says.

Luxon adds that platforms like Africa’s Travel Indaba (ATI) play a pivotal role. Having attended this year’s ATI, where he speaks on youth inclusion and sustainability, he has witnessed first-hand how powerful such events are in bridging the gap between youth and industry leaders.

“Indaba provides a unique space for young professionals to network, pitch their ideas, and showcase their talents without the formalities of pre-scheduled meetings or restricted access. The seamless nature of interactions allows for spontaneous yet impactful conversations with policymakers, recruiters, and business leaders,” he notes.

“INDABA is not just a trade show — it’s a platform for exposure, empowerment, and engagement. It allows young people to demonstrate their skills directly

to potential employers and partners, creating opportunities that are otherwise hard to come by.”

Moreover, the platform celebrates the diversity of African tourism beyond safaris. From cultural heritage and the Bantu migration routes to the historical richness of North Africa, Africa’s tourism offerings are varied and deeply rooted in a shared identity. According to him, Indaba fosters this sense of unity and showcases Africa as one interconnected destination, enhancing collaboration among Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and regional stakeholders.

“Tourism is more than travel — it’s a tool for unity, economic growth, and cultural preservation. For African youth, it’s a gateway to entrepreneurship, leadership, and innovation. With continued support from events like INDABA and increased investment in education reform and youth-led initiatives, the potential of young people in tourism can be fully realized,” he concludes.





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## NAMIBIA SHOWCASES 37 BRANDS AT INDABA 2025

The Namibia Tourism Board (NTB) has announced that at Africa's Travel Indaba this year the country is being showcased in collaboration with 37 co-sharers, including the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MEFT), Namibia Tracks and Trails, Matiti Safaris, Ondili Lodges Namibia, Naturefriends Safaris, Namibia Wildlife Resorts, Namibia Airports Company, Hammertein Africa Lodge, Fly Namibia,

Ohorongo Safaris, Dune Tours, Gondwana Collection, Namibia2Go, Paparazzi Namib Trails and Safaris, Swakop Cultural Tours, Skeleton Coast Safaris, Sandwich Dunes Tours Car Rental, Ultimate Safaris, Naturally Namibia, Wilderness, Mountain Elephant Safaris, Peoples Tours Safaris, Ombahe Tours, and eleven MSMEs under MEFT. In addition to B2B meetings, NTB will host a "Networking with Namibia" B2B Cocktail Networking

Reception and PR Engagement event on 14 May, from 18:00 to 22:00 at Maharani Hotel. This Namibian-themed event aims to connect buyers with local suppliers and media, encouraging them to learn and sell Namibia's diverse tourism offerings.

For more information, contact: Flora. quest@namibiatourism.com.na

### VOICES FROM THE FLOOR



**Jacqui Mabuza – Guest Speaker**  
Head of Commercial at Cruises  
International – South Africa

"What I am hoping for at this year's conference is more collaboration across stakeholders in South Africa. I think tourism on the continent can only grow once we help each other. For instance, I work for a company that has representation in other African states, in Kenya, Angola, Mauritius and Nigeria. We can also begin to find other services that can help the packages that we sell. We sell international cruises and holidays, but are always in need of people that provide services like visa services, because customers are wanting a one-stop shop."

**Zimasa Vabaza – Guest Speaker – Dynamic**  
Media Entrepreneur and Small Business  
Economist – South Africa

"What is key and what we must understand is that trade must work with the marketers and they must create experiences that people can buy into. So, [Indaba] is important for people who are in the trade to meet and create better structured packages, so buyers feel they are getting value but also make sure that the people and trade are getting value. We need to look for sustainable tourism not just being about climate issues but more than that, how we invest in our customers so they can be repeat customers. We need to understand the conditions on the ground, the economic conditions and income disparities."



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# UNLOCKING AFRICA'S CINEMATIC POTENTIAL

*Lance Gibbons and Filmset are revolutionising film location discovery.*

Lance Gibbons, Director of Filmset and Publishing Editor at Film & Event Media, is leading a transformative shift in how filmmakers discover and connect with locations across Africa. With over 35 years in the industry, including collaborations with international directors like Ridley Scott, Gibbons understands the unique needs of global productions and how Africa's diverse landscapes can meet them. Filmset, the platform under Gibbons' direction, unites film production and technological innovation to promote film tourism. This is achieved through a consolidated, geotagged database of filming locations encompassing private, public, and commercial sites. "We tag every location—from a house, kitchen, or beach to national parks and waterfalls—with geolocation and metadata," Gibbons explains. "This makes it simple and cost-effective for producers and scouts to find multiple locations in close proximity, streamlining production logistics." Africa's untapped potential as a filming destination excites Gibbons. "The backdrops Africa can provide for the international film community are vast and largely unexplored," he says. He points to Cape Town's evolution into a film hub, noting, "Cape Town is film friendly, and the hospitality industry is world class. Hotels understand the unique needs of film crews, creating a home away from home."

Film tourism is a powerful driver of tourism, economic development, and sustainability. South Africa's film industry attracted R2.52 billion (€132 million) in foreign investment between November 2023 and June 2024, with projections to exceed R5 billion (€261.5 million) by October 2025. During this period, foreign film crews booked over 59,000 hotel bed nights, generating R148 million (€7.7 million) for



the hospitality sector alone, alongside significant spending on transport, dining, and recreation.

Gibbons highlights the broader impact: "A film is

an absolute catalyst for generating interest in a destination. Look at New Zealand and the Lord of the Rings movies—one in six visitors goes to those filming locations. Film showcases cultural heritage and drives tourism growth." This kind of tourism encourages authentic engagement with local culture, supporting sustainable economic benefits for communities and preserving cultural heritage.

By attracting international productions and supporting local filmmakers, film tourism fosters upskilling, job creation, and a sustainable creative economy. "Supporting local filmmakers is vital, but attracting international productions accelerates upskilling, economic growth, and industry sustainability," Gibbons adds.

With Filmset, Lance Gibbons is simplifying location scouting while championing Africa's rise as a premier global filming destination—where breathtaking landscapes meet authentic cultural storytelling.

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# 30 YEARS OF ICONIC HOSPITALITY IN VICTORIA FALLS

*The Victoria Falls Safari Collection team is showcasing three decades of excellence, innovation, and sustainability.*

The Victoria Falls Safari Collection, operated by Africa Albida Tourism, is proudly celebrating 30 years of delivering extraordinary hospitality at the award-winning Victoria Falls Safari Lodge. This milestone is taking centre stage at Africa's Travel Indaba, where the Victoria Falls Safari Collection team is showcasing how three decades of excellence, innovation, and sustainability have shaped its legacy and vision for the future. Since opening its doors in December 1994, Victoria Falls Safari Lodge has evolved into one of Southern Africa's most iconic properties, earning the prestigious

Best Resort Hotel award in Zimbabwe for an unprecedented 26 consecutive years. Today, the Victoria Falls Safari Collection – which also includes Victoria Falls Safari Club, Victoria Falls Safari Suites, Lokuthula Lodges, Victoria Falls Safari Spa, The Boma – Dinner & Drum Show, and the newly launched Queen Nandi Place meetings and events venue, is a shining example of Zimbabwean hospitality at its finest. Over the years, this superb collection has continually embraced innovation – from being the first tourism project in Zimbabwe to employ an environmental architect, to its diverse hospitality offering, incorporating

accommodation, restaurants, wellness, and, recently, the launch of the new Queen Nandi Place venue designed to host upmarket meetings and events.

Africa Albida Tourism Director and co-founder Ross Kennedy reflected on the milestone, saying:

"From the beginning, our mission was to create a world-class destination rooted in sustainability and local culture. Reaching 30 years is a testament to the dedication of our team and the unwavering support of our community and partners. We are proud not only of the accolades but of the values we've upheld, and we're excited for the next chapter."

Africa Albida Tourism Managing Director Nigel Frost added: "This anniversary is more than just a celebration – it's a launchpad. We remain committed to investing in innovation, exceptional guest experiences, and meaningful sustainability practices. With the introduction of new facilities like Queen Nandi Place, we're looking ahead with renewed energy and purpose."

At this year's show, the Victoria Falls Safari Collection team is sharing key highlights from their journey, showcasing what's new and upcoming developments, and reaffirming their commitment to providing unforgettable, responsible travel experiences in one of the world's most extraordinary destinations.



## A CITY FOR THE CURIOUS

*Bridget Hilton-Barber*

I recently returned to Jozi after 22 years of living in rural Limpopo. Those glorious old mountain views have given way to suburban sprawl, endless malls, highways, skyscrapers, buses, trains, taxis and the thrum of hundreds of thousands of people going about life. Jozi, you restless, relentless beast. Fascinating, friendly, edgy... One of the most complex cities on the planet... but, there's just something about Jozi, and I've become a tourist in my own city. It's easy enough to do, there are tours and tour guides aplenty and Jozi certainly caters to the curious.

I've done Constitution Hill and the Apartheid Museum, both are heavy and enlightening, take tissues. I've been around historic Fordsburg, Brixton and Sophiatown. Charming and gritty.

I did an amazing night walk through Soweto, a brilliantly guided tour of Orlando West and Vilakazi Street, taking



in historical spots, accompanied by the sweet sounds of the Phakama Youth Choir. [www.sowetonightout.tours](http://www.sowetonightout.tours).

I also did a lekker street art tour in Noordgesig, the first coloured community in Soweto. The place pops with colour as you enter off New Canada Road, gateway to Soweto. From street art, murals and shop signs to entire

buildings colourfully painted, it was inspiring to see how public art has united a community. (Call Fabian: 076 838 3296; [fabian.otto@global.ntt](mailto:fabian.otto@global.ntt))

And no, I couldn't resist going to the top of Ponte. Staring over the city at sunset is bizarre, exhilarating – 54 storeys high and rising 173m into the sky from the suburb of Hillbrow, panopticon Ponte has been an interesting symbol of Jozi.

It rises, it falls, it rises. Now it's a clean, well-run residential building. You can take tours to the top and around Hillbrow. (Visit [www.dlalanje.org](http://www.dlalanje.org))

I took friends from Limpopo and Maputo to the Rand Club for lunch, with the longest bar in South Africa (31m). The occasion was inspired by a walkabout in Marshalltown, the old mining district of the CBD, which has been upgraded and renewed. The walk was hosted by Jozi My Jozi, a 'coalition of the willing' initiating sustainable solutions in the inner city.

We strolled from Carlton Centre, around Ghandi Square and down Marhsall, Main and Fox Streets, where the architecture ranges from Victorian to Brutalist, Art Deco to modern. The fountains were tinkling, there was public art, plenty of security, pedestrians walking freely around. Jozi My Jozi is 'a movement born out of deep passion for the city and desire to see it thrive again'. I'm in...



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## CHECK OUT THESE EXHIBITORS



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### Madagascar Endemics & Resorts

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Madagascar Endemics & Resorts is a wildlife expeditions and luxury holidays specialist in Madagascar. We endeavor to provide only the best possible services to our clientele.



### Access Southern Africa

Heidi Helm

heidi.helm@access-southern-africa.com | +27(0)82 318 1894

Access Southern Africa, based in Cape Town, offers expert wholesale travel services across Southern Africa, providing professional, personalized care and 24/7 emergency support from Heidi Helm and her dedicated team.



### Lotsane Limpopo

Carl Frederick Knight

reservations@lotsanelimpopo.com | +27 (0)82 749 1747

Lotsane Limpopo is a 5-star luxury river lodge in Botswana's Tuli Block, offering exclusive retreats, game drives, conservation initiatives, and community engagement as part of the Lotsane Signature Collection

## NEW ROAD STUDIO



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www.newroad.studio.

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kordomtrust@gmail.com | martuin.kordom@gmail.com

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Mogopodi Adventures is a South African tour operator based in the North West Province, specializing in authentic, immersive travel experiences that celebrate local culture and community. Founded by Katlego Mogopodi, it offers tailored journeys from luxury escapes to outdoor adventures, promoting sustainable tourism and economic empowerment through job creation and heritage engagement.

www.mogopodiadventures.co.za | +27 (0)78 624 0963

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# KAVANGO ZAMBEZI LAUNCHES BRAND HUB

*The world's largest terrestrial transboundary conservation area has embarked on a landmark branding and marketing strategy.*

The Kavango Zambezi TransFrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA), the world's largest terrestrial transboundary conservation area spanning five southern African nations, has embarked on a landmark branding and marketing strategy to position itself as a premier tourism destination.

Spanning approximately 520,000 square kilometres across Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, and home to the largest contiguous population of African savanna elephants (approximately 228,000 according to a 2022 aerial survey), the Kavango Zambezi TFCA stands as a beacon of conservation, community development, and sustainable tourism.

With the launch of the "Rivers of Life" brand and an integrated marketing campaign, Kavango Zambezi TFCA is elevating its status on the global tourism stage. Through strategic partnerships, cutting-edge digital outreach, and industry collaborations, Kavango Zambezi aims to drive sustainable tourism while benefiting local communities and reinforcing conservation efforts.

To enhance visibility and maintain brand consistency, stakeholders are encouraged to integrate the destination brand assets into their marketing efforts as part of a co-branding initiative when promoting Kavango Zambezi. These assets are now available on an online brand hub hosted on the new website ([www.uncoverkaza.com/become-a-media-partner](http://www.uncoverkaza.com/become-a-media-partner)), offering logos, templates, and promotional materials to ensure cohesive messaging across all platforms.

"The 'Rivers of Life' brand represents far more than a new logo – it embodies the essence and unique offering of this extraordinary place, where five visionary nations have come together to care for a vast conservation area rich in natural and cultural diversity. Under the 'Rivers of Life' brand, we call on all stakeholders to explore, conserve, and celebrate one of Africa's last



great wildernesses," said Dr. Nyambe Nyambe, Executive Director of the Kavango Zambezi TFCA Secretariat.

"Through this brand activation, we're creating a

unified voice that tells the story of our extraordinary landscape, its people, its wildlife, and the Partner States' commitment to conservation through tourism."

## ARTFUL ENCOUNTERS

*Jacky Lourens curates Cape Town's unique cultural connections*

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# CAPE TOWN'S NEW VISITORS' GUIDE DROPS AT INDABA

*The 2025/26 edition is bursting with colour, heart, and local magic*

**G**et ready, globetrotters and local explorers. The Cape Town Visitors' Guide 2025/26 has officially landed! Fresh off the press and launched this week at Africa's Travel Indaba, this year's edition is packed with fun finds, big feels, and a few surprises.

It's not just a guide, it's a vibe, a vision, and a whole celebration of what makes Cape Town unforgettable, inclusive, and full of big-sky potential.

## Why Indaba?

Africa's Travel Indaba provided the perfect platform to launch Cape Town's latest visitor guide to operators and buyers from across the continent. With a clear focus on strengthening partnerships and boosting the visitor economy, Enver Duminy, CEO of Cape Town Tourism and Alderman James Vos, the City's Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Growth, led the launch.

## Bright Ideas from Brilliant Young Minds

One of the most exciting things about this year's edition is the stunning artwork splashed across the pages, created by the talented students at Oakley House High School, a school for neurodiverse learners and a key partner in Cape Town Tourism's Future Tourism Leaders Programme.



Twelve learners were asked to show what Limitless Cape Town means to them, and the results are joyful, raw and bursting with personality.

"These illustrations go beyond the page," says Duminy. "They're filled with imagination, hope, and individuality, just like the city. We've always said that tourism should

reflect the real Cape Town — its stories, people, and pulse, and these young artists brought that to life in a way no stock image or headline ever could."

He adds, "Cape Town isn't just a destination, it's a creative playground. Thanks to these learners, this edition feels more human, heartfelt, and alive than ever."

# WESKUS SHOWCASES EMERGING TOURISM GEMS

**T**he Weskus (West Coast) region of South Africa invites Africa's Travel Indaba attendees to experience its authentic storytelling, new travel products, and investment opportunities in eco-tourism and rural tourism development.

From sweeping natural vistas to fresh regional developments, the Weskus invites the world to discover why it is fast becoming a destination of choice for travellers from Europe, Africa, Asia, and the United States. The Weskus offers an authentic South African experience defined by untouched beauty, local innovation, and rich cultural heritage. Stretching from Ganzekraal and Blouberg/Cape Town to the remote shores of Doringbaai, the region presents five distinct areas, each alive with opportunities

for exploration, connection, and wonder.

The Destination Marketing team of West Coast District Municipality will join the broader Western Cape tourism marketing teams on the Wesgro expo stand in Durban. Jacqueline Melenephy, regional marketing officer, explained what makes the Weskus different from other regions in the Western Cape.

"From sustainable innovation to scenic escapes, the Weskus is delivering exceptional, experience-rich travel that resonates across generations and continents," says Jacqueline Melenephy, Tourism Marketing Official for the West Coast District Municipality. "We are excited to share the region's newest travel highlights and sustainable growth stories at this year's Indaba."

New Developments and Travel Trends in the Weskus  
Darling Brew's "BREAK FREE": A bold step toward

inclusivity and environmental sustainability, Darling Brew has launched a gluten-free lager designed for modern travellers seeking mindful consumption and ethical tourism.

Bergrivier Farmstall Route: This charming new travel route invites visitors on a journey through local farm stalls, offering fresh produce, homemade delicacies, and Weskus hospitality along picturesque rural landscapes.

West Coast National Park Enhancements: With recent improvements to its trail networks, viewing decks, and visitor facilities, the park continues to be a magnet for birdwatchers, hikers, and nature photographers.

Cederberg's Cinematic Rise: Fast gaining recognition as a filming destination, the Cederberg's dramatic terrain, ancient rock art, and unspoiled wilderness now provide an extraordinary backdrop for international film productions.

Fryer's Cove – Wine by the Sea: Located in the coastal village of Doringbaai, Fryer's Cove is the only wine cellar in South Africa built almost directly on the Atlantic shoreline. This unique terroir offers a maritime twist on traditional winemaking and provides a one-of-a-kind tasting experience where vines meet ocean spray.

!Khwa ttu Gold Award Winner – WTM 2025: Celebrated for excellence in cultural tourism and heritage conservation, !Khwa ttu received the prestigious Gold Award at the World Travel Market 2025. This recognition highlights the San Heritage Centre's global appeal as a transformative experience rooted in authentic storytelling, education, and indigenous knowledge.





# EXHIBITORS PITCH THEIR COASTAL BEACH AND ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

**Y**ou've heard of an elevator pitch, but have you participated in Africa's Travel Indaba Speed Marketing Sessions? Here, exhibitors are given four minutes to pitch their tourism products to a fun and captive audience.

For Tuesday morning's session the spotlight was on the vast coastal beaches and adventure activities with Knysna and St Francis participants focusing on their whale watching activities, and those from Cape Town and Durban showcasing their shark cage diving.

Some exhibitors displayed their extensive efforts and care to inclusivity and sustainability towards accessible tourism. A point emphasised by moderator

Smash Africa: "Accessible Tourism enables people with access requirements including mobility vision hearing and cognitive dimensions of access to function independently with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally desired tourism products."

In this aspect, one business stuck out, White Shark Projects, who provided a full comprehensive breakdown of how they have worked to successfully accommodate all persons of ability challenges to provide an unforgettable and educational experience. They also highlighted their research and conservation pursuits and explained how buyers can help support these endeavours.



Buyers had the opportunity to engage with the presenting exhibitors, post session, and explore potential collaborations over a light breakfast followed by a gift giveaway to the attendants.

The Speed Marketing series continues today with a focus on the cultural roots and city lifestyle.



## MILESTONE YEAR FOR BIZ BUILT ON BOLD IDEA: 'TOURISM CAN DIRECTLY FUND SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION'

**M**arine Dynamics' 25-year journey has been defined by innovation and integration. From its early days with a single inflatable boat to now operating a fleet of eight custom-designed vessels, the company has introduced hundreds of thousands of guests to South Africa's iconic **Marine Big 5**: whales, sharks, dolphins, seals, and African penguins.

Founded in 2000 by conservationist and entrepreneur Wilfred Chivell, Marine Dynamics began with a bold idea: that tourism could directly fund science and conservation. Today, it stands as a globally respected marine tourism company and a model for responsible ecotourism.

Marine Dynamics offers Shark and Whale Tours, providing guests with an opportunity to witness the incredible biodiversity of the Greater Dyer Island Area. Whether it's a thrilling shark cage dive with bronze whaler sharks or a serene whale watching trip, these tours offer unforgettable interactions with the ocean's most majestic creatures. The Shark Cage Diving excursions, in particular, have been instrumental in shifting perceptions of sharks, encouraging appreciation and protection for these apex predators. Guests are also treated to a range of educational experiences, with expert marine biologists on board to share their knowledge on marine conservation, wildlife behaviour, and the importance of ocean preservation.

Through its partnership with DICT, Marine Dynamics has contributed to over 30 published scientific papers, multiple PhD projects, and long-term marine monitoring of endangered species, including great white sharks and African penguins. Artificial penguin nests on Dyer Island, seabird rehabilitation at APSS, and dedicated island ranger patrols are just some of the conservation initiatives funded by tourism revenue.

**"We've always said that our guests are part of the solution," says Chivell. "Every trip taken with us supports conservation, education, and job creation. That's what makes our model work -and what makes this celebration so powerful."**





# YOUR ULTIMATE CONFERENCE VENUE ON THE HARTBEESPOORT DAM



CORPORATE EVENTS ★ CONFERENCES ★ TEAM BUILDING ★ PRODUCT LAUNCHES ★ SALES EVENTS  
EXCLUSIVE CLIENT FUNCTIONS ★ EXECUTIVE MEETINGS ★ END OF YEAR FUNCTIONS

Hartbeespoort Dam, fondly known as Harties, offers the perfect corporate escape just 45 minutes from Johannesburg and Pretoria.

At Harties Boat Company, we specialise in luxury corporate cruises, providing an elegant and sophisticated setting for conferences, meetings, events, functions, and product launches.

Our premier vessel, **The Alba**, accommodates up to 80 passengers and is fully equipped with air conditioning, premium sound, and SAMSA certification, ensuring a seamless and comfortable experience.

Whether hosting a high-level conference or a strategic meeting, our expert team delivers impeccable service, gourmet cuisine, and breathtaking views. Elevate your corporate events with a premium cruise experience on Hartbeespoort Dam.



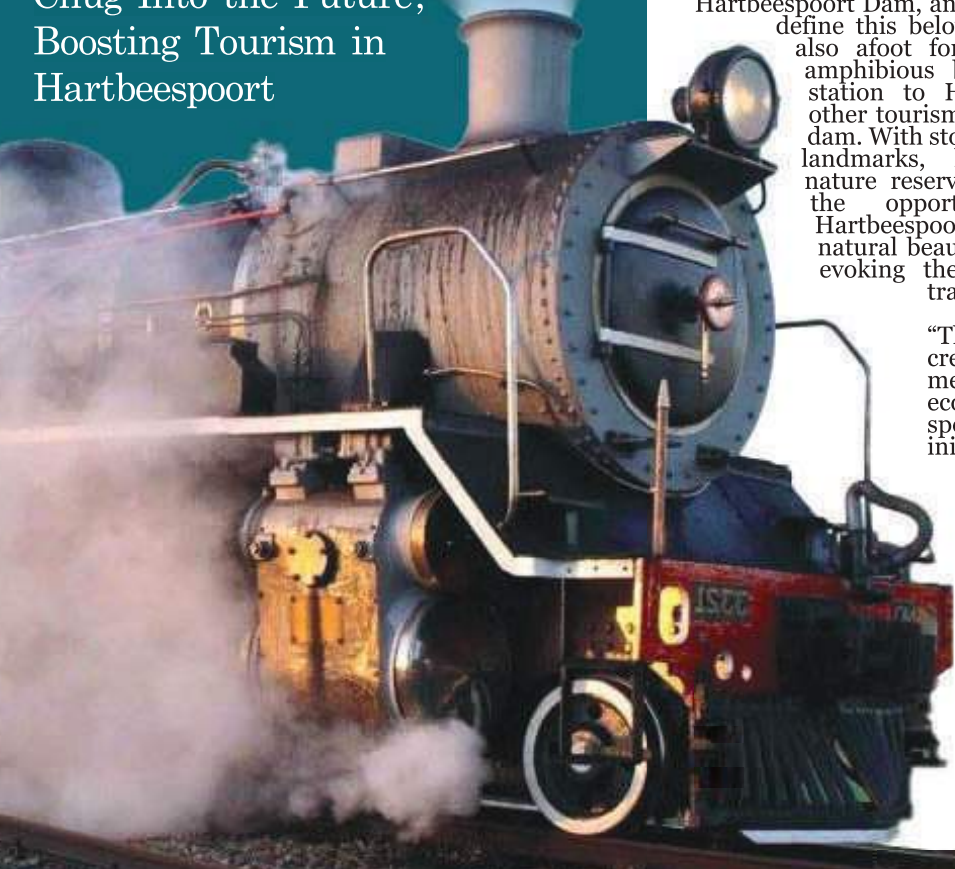
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## ALL ABOARD!

Harties Steam Train Set to Chug Into the Future, Boosting Tourism in Hartbeespoort



HARTBEESPOORT – Get ready to step back in time and embark on a nostalgic journey through the scenic landscapes of Hartbeespoort, as plans for the Harties Steam Train—a captivating new tourism project—gain momentum for a highly anticipated launch later this year. This innovative initiative promises to transform the region into an even more alluring destination for locals and international visitors alike, cementing Hartbeespoort's status as a jewel of South Africa's tourism crown.

The centerpiece of this exciting venture is the restoration and operation of a historic steam train, which will connect key points of interest in and around Hartbeespoort, starting with The Bay Train Station. This beautiful, soon-to-be constructed station, nestled along the region's picturesque shores, will serve as the gateway to an unforgettable experience that blends vintage charm with modern convenience.

According to Dion Mostert, one of the project developers, the Harties Steam Train is designed to be more than just a ride—it's a catalyst for a tourism boom in the area. The train will offer passengers breathtaking views of the Magaliesberg Mountains, the Hartbeespoort Dam, and the lush valleys that define this beloved region. Plans are also afoot for a hop on hop off amphibious bus to link the bay station to Harties Harbour and other tourism activities around the dam. With stops planned at cultural landmarks, local markets, and nature reserves, visitors will have the opportunity to explore Hartbeespoort's rich heritage and natural beauty at a leisurely pace, evoking the golden age of rail travel.

"This project is about creating lasting memories while driving economic growth," said a spokesperson for the initiative. "The steam train will not only attract tourists but also support local businesses, from artisans to restaurateurs, by bringing more visitors directly to their doorsteps."

Harties Steam Train is expected to operate on a regular schedule, family-friendly



The proposed Bay Train Station with the SA Rail History Museum in the background.

packages, special event trains for holidays, and even romantic sunset rides. Eco-conscious travelers will appreciate the commitment to sustainable tourism practices, including the use of renewable energy sources to power certain aspects of the operation.

Construction efforts are already underway, with The Bay Train Station being designed into a vibrant hub featuring a quaint ticket office, a small museum showcasing the history of rail in South Africa, and a café offering local delicacies. The steam train itself, a beautifully preserved piece of history, is undergoing meticulous restoration to ensure both authenticity and safety for all passengers.

Tourism experts predict that the Harties Steam Train will draw thousands of visitors annually, positioning Hartbeespoort as a must-visit destination for those seeking unique, immersive experiences. With its proximity to Johannesburg and Pretoria, the project is poised to become a convenient and enchanting day-trip option for city dwellers looking to escape the urban hustle. Stay tuned for updates on the official launch date, ticket sales, and special preview events.

The whistle is about to blow on a new era of adventure in Hartbeespoort—don't miss your chance to be part of this historic journey!

For more information, contact Dion Mostert on +27 82 765 0699 or visit the Harties Steam Train website at [www.hartiessteamtrain.co.za](http://www.hartiessteamtrain.co.za).

All aboard for an unforgettable ride!





# VOICES FROM THE FLOOR



**Mark de Villiers – Buyer**  
**Liberty Tourism Southern Africa – South Africa**

“The thing that I am looking for is new products, also to meet new and potential buyers and to see the current trends in South Africa. For me, it will always be your two kingdoms, Lesotho and Swaziland and then also the neighbouring countries to South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana and Namibia.”



**Mohammed Danish – Explorer**  
**Afrosia Safaris LTD – Kenya**

“I have come here to get some context for the hotels across the Western Cape and Joburg and Eastern Cape and I am looking for suppliers for Kruger Safaris. Currently, I am interested in South Africa.”



**Lizeka Shandu – Buyer**  
**African Wild Travel – South Africa**

“The reason that I am here at Indaba is collaboration with different companies or stakeholders. My interests are in the Asia and India market. A country I want to partner with is Mauritius. We get a lot of South Africans who are looking to go to Mauritius.”



**Phetheni Mbonambi – Buyer**  
**Syavaya Corporate Travel Pty Ltd – South Africa**

“I am here to look for suppliers, and I have clients that I need to network with. I am interested in African suppliers, who can assist in in terms of corporate travel, so all the hotels, tour operators, transport companies that can assist us with our corporate travellers.”



**Claire Kaplin – Exhibitor**  
**Buitengewoon Outdoor Wood-Fired Hot Tubs – South Africa**

“We have attended Indaba many times before, but this is the first time we have brought one of our hot tubs to the show. It is a proven fact that accommodation properties with hot tubs have a much higher occupancy than those without.”



**Byron Van Der Riet – Exhibitor**  
**Cathedral Peak Hotel – South Africa**

“We have been attending Indaba for more than 10 years now. We have found success with every Indaba, the attendance is always very good and the set up and the quality of our appointments and meeting people have been amazing. We always have good experiences. We make good contact and going on further from that we hope to get more site inspections and get people to visit our property.”



**Lee-Anne Bac – Guest Speaker**  
**BDO Advisory – South Africa**

“In the next few days, in my perspective as an adviser, I would really want to step away because this is now the time for deals to happen. So, we want businesses to sell their products, we want buyers to be here to experience and see what's on offer and to be able to go out there and promote South Africa and other African countries.”



**Siphokazi Ngombane, Head of Tourism, NMBM & Anene Jonk, Manager Economic Development**  
**Tourism, Kouga**

“A strategic collaboration was formed between Kouga Municipality, Nelson Mandela Bay and smaller towns to promote the region as a collective. This cost-effective approach allowed greater visibility and impact. This marks the first year the region promoted itself under the ‘Greater Garden Route’ brand, extending the Garden Route into the Eastern Cape”



**Tariro Mundawarara – Allied Industry Associate**  
**Gardaworld – Kenya**

“We are looking to speak to people in the Safari and lodge space and find out what their medical response options and solutions look like. It is a commercial venture. It is looking to meet kind of like-minded organisations who are interested in taking medical response seriously. We are looking continent wide.”







# iSIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK, A HEALING CRADLE OF NATURE

● Simangaliso Wetland Park is where Africa's natural wonders converge in a spectacular fashion.

Stretching along the KwaZulu-Natal coastline, 210 km north of Durban, from Maphelane in the south to Kosi Bay on the Mozambican border. This UNESCO World Heritage Site, proclaimed in 1999 as South Africa's first, boasts an extraordinary diversity of ecosystems, wildlife and experiences.

The Park's unique location at the intersection of tropical and subtropical Africa, along with the influence of coastal storms and seasonal flooding, supports an incredible richness of life. It is home to around 6,500 plant and animal species, from the depths of the ocean to savannah plains. These include some of the most iconic creatures on Earth: the world's oldest fish (coelacanth), Earth's oldest land mammal (rhinoceros), the largest land mammal (elephant), and the largest marine mammal (whale).

iSimangaliso has long stood as a beacon of conservation and transformation. Beyond its ecological importance, it represents a shift toward inclusive, community-based stewardship of natural heritage, replacing exclusionary past practices with a model that uplifts local communities while protecting biodiversity. Visitors to iSimangaliso are spoilt with a wide range of activities to choose from.

## Water Babies

For lovers of water and marine life, iSimangaliso is a treasure trove of activities. Anglers will find some of the best fishing waters in South Africa, including deep-sea charters from St Lucia and Sodwana Bay and rock-and-surf fishing along designated coastal areas.

Estuary cruises at St Lucia and Kosi Bay offer intimate encounters with hippos, crocodiles, and a variety of waterbirds, while kayaking in Kosi Bay provides a more immersive paddling experience. For those drawn to the deep, Sodwana Bay—ranked among the world's top ten dive sites—beckons with its vibrant



underwater landscapes. Scuba diving is open to the public in this area and is also available to guests of Thonga Beach Lodge in the Coastal Forest Reserve.

Swimming is best enjoyed in the sheltered bays and rock pools at Cape Vidal and Sodwana Bay, with Main Beach in St Lucia offering calm waters on good days. Seasonal highlights include turtle tours from November to March, where visitors can witness loggerhead and leatherback turtles nesting, and whale watching from June to November. Both experiences are led by licensed guides and community members,

ensuring responsible, enriching encounters.

Those looking for more adrenaline can try surfing, jet skiing, or paddling—or simply relax on the Park's pristine, uncrowded beaches.

Kosi Bay estuary mouth lake system with the age-old tradition of fish traps—a local fish trap owner harvesting.

## Bush Babies

Roughly 1.3 million hectares of iSimangaliso are made up of wetlands, savannah, forests, grasslands, and mountains, creating one of the most ecologically diverse regions on the continent. The Park's southern and central areas are home to a wide range of wildlife, with the Big Five all present in the uMkhuze section. St Lucia and the Western and Eastern Shores are renowned for frequent leopard sightings. Visitors may also spot endangered species such as wild dogs, servals, and oribis.

Game drives - whether guided or self-guided - are popular, with both day and night safaris available. For those who prefer to explore on foot or by bike, several scenic trails wind through areas like the St Lucia Estuary, Eastern Shores, and the unique sand forest of the False Bay section. Horse riding on the beach or through game-rich areas adds another memorable dimension to the iSimangaliso experience.

From the age-old fish traps of Kosi Bay to rare floral species and dramatic landscapes, iSimangaliso is a photographer's dream. Whether you visit for a day or stay for weeks, this extraordinary Park offers more variety, beauty, and peace than most places on Earth.



[www.iSimangaliso.com](http://www.iSimangaliso.com)

#VisitSimangaliso

#WhereMiraclesNeverEnd

For more information, contact:

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Marketing & Brand Manager

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Wherever we are, we are  
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