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EDITION

04

Bolanala



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- SONA 2020



tourism

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Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the fourth quarter edition of our newsletter, Bojanala. Once again, it is my pleasure to keep you updated with news and happenings from the Department as well as the sector as a whole.

Of course this edition comes at a very testing time, when the world is been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. Since the arrival of this pandemic, our country and in particular, the sector has seen many challenges. The tourism supply chain in general has been hit hard, with many hotels closed and airlines grounded. Although this is the case, there is still hope that the pandemic will pass. We can only hope that when it passes, it does so without affecting jobs and the sector's ability to contribute to the economy of South Africa.

While this is the case though, we urge role players to continually stay positive and keep their heads up. We further urge the traveling community, both internationally and domestically to not cancel their travel arrangements. Instead, they should postpone them until this pandemic passes.

I also want to take this opportunity to reiterate the message by the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa and well as the health community at large, that we should stay at home, respect the proposed social distance and regularly wash our hands. This is the only way in which this pandemic will be defeated.

This edition also carries the message from the Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, during an occasion in which she was engaging business and labour about the effects of the pandemic. Amongst many other pointers, the Minister told the industry that they were undergoing a very severe crisis due to the pandemic and that since the outbreak; the sector was and continues to be affected negatively. Read more on this.

The edition is not all doom and gloom though, it carries various other stories depicting the good work done by the Department and other industry players. Some of these stories include the recent Meetings Africa event. In its 15th sitting, the event highlighted the best of Africa, with over 320 exhibitors from across the continent displaying the best of African tourism.

You will also read about the continued efforts by the Department to curb unemployment as young people continue to graduate from various hospitality courses. Further, read about the Deputy Minister's visit to Spain, where he met with his counterpart and discussed ways in which the two countries can collaborate on tourism.

Criminal activities affecting tourists have now become a problem, especially in recent times. Read more about how the Department has done in this front as well as the measures pursued in this regard.

The Minister of Tourism recently met with the wine entrepreneurs in Cape Town. The meeting was held as part of a greater initiative to listen to their frustrations, while also mending means to support them. The idea at a greater scale is to ensure that there is transformation in the wine industry and that previously disadvantaged groups are allowed to play a role as well.

Get perspectives from both ASATA and SATSA CEOs on various issues in tourism. For example, ASATA CEO, Otto de Vries indicates that there is a greater need for the industry to have real human skills. De Vries says that currently, "It is difficult to think of humanity when all you read in the media is about the rise of artificial intelligence." His biggest concern is the growing talk of artificial intelligence, in the expense of humans.

Also, read about Barsa's CEO June Crawford as she bids the organisation farewell after been in the helm for 6 years. We say goodbye CEO, for your contribution to the industry. You will indeed be dearly missed. It is understood that your contributions to Bojanala will also be missed. You never missed an edition and your contributions have gone into the hearts of our readers. Thank you.

In addition, I also want to heartily thank other contributors from the industry who continue to make their voices heard. As this is an industry magazine, we continue to invite you to please make use of it as we all work together to make it grow. You may not be aware, but your voices are worthwhile and this is proven by many compliments we continue to receive from the readers. This would not be so if it were not because of your consistent contributions.

See you in the next edition!

Blessing Manale



Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane addresses industry stakeholders during a working session in Sandton



Some of the industry players listening in during the address by the Minister of Tourism

MINISTER OF TOURISM, MMAMOLOKO KUBAYI-NGUBANE, SPEAKS TO THE INDUSTRY **ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON TOURISM**

We are meeting here this evening under a very dark cloud, when our industry is undergoing a very severe crisis. The outbreak of the Coronavirus in December 2019 has already affected the tourism industry very negatively and this will continue until the world finds a way of containing this virus. The Coronavirus i(COVID-19) is currently affecting 104 countries and territories around the world with confirmed Coronavirus cases, having surpassed 100 000 and more than 3 500 recorded thus far. We convened this meeting so that we can discuss the impact that the virus will have on our sector and together suggest ways of minimising this impact in the sector.

Globally, we are waking up to more and more bad news in relation to the travel industry. Kenya has also joined Mauritius and the Seychelles as the latest African country to have banned flights from the Italian cities worst affected by the Coronavirus after most of the continent's confirmed cases were linked to Italy. Countries such as Australia have imposed travel restrictions on travellers arriving from affected countries.

Airlines, including Air Canada, have cancelled all flights or significantly reduced the number of flights in and out of China. Some researchers have predicted that

coronavirus could wipe out between \$63 billion and \$113 billion in worldwide airline revenues this year. Russia closed its land borders to passenger travel with China and Hong Kong shutting down its borders, cross-border ferries and railways. Yesterday, Italy formally locked down more than a quarter of its population, about 16 million people, in a bid to stop the spread of the virus. On the African continent cases have been reported in Senegal, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and Tunisia. The SADC region is still largely unaffected and we hope the situation stays that way.

Tourism supply chains involve everything from agriculture and fishing to banking and insurance. The longer these restrictions continue, the hardest hit part of the value chain will be the core industries which include accommodation, food and beverage services, recreation and entertainment, transportation and travel services.

Here at home we now have seven confirmed cases of the virus, and it remains uncertain whether the number of cases will grow or the virus will be contained to just a few cases. Despite the fact we have had very few cases of the virus, the local tourism industry has already suffered serious losses. Undoubtedly, these losses are still going to increase. Whatever happens, the truth of this situation is that the virus will have a

negative impact on the tourism sector, at least in the short to medium term.

During this uncertainty, there are three possible scenarios that we will have to consider going forward so that we can start thinking about how we are going to respond as a country and as a sector.

The first scenario is one in which by the second quarter of this year the cases of Coronavirus in South Africa have peaked as with the rest of the world. Countries start to open up their borders and the travel bans are lifted, restoring normality in the travel and tourism sector. In this scenario industry quickly recovers and it quickly returns to a growth trajectory.

The second scenario is one in which the cases of Coronavirus increase at an alarming rate and certain areas in our country have to be closed off similar to what Italy did yesterday. The cases of the virus only peak between the third and fourth quarters. These areas may include popular tourist attractions. This impact of the virus in this scenario would be severe, leading to closure of businesses and severe job losses. In this scenario the industry takes an extended period to recover.

The third scenario is one in which case numbers grow rapidly in the country

and the virus spreads to the SADC region and most of Sub-Saharan Africa. This development may prompt countries in the region to seal their borders. In this scenario the global economy descends into a recession and our country's economy suffers significant contraction for the year 2020. The impact in our case, under this scenario, may be prolonged by the fact that the region may not be able to contain the virus for an extended period.

What are the prospects that we could end up with Scenario 1? China has continued its downward trend in new cases, with only 40 new infections and 22 deaths. South Korea also saw some positive news, with 248 new cases announced, far below the daily increases of roughly 500 seen last week. If this trend continues and these two countries share the lessons learned on how to manage case growth with other affected countries the situation could be quickly brought under control. Given the rising cases in Italy and other parts of the world including our country, the first scenario is highly unlikely.

Scenarios 2 and 3 would be the most devastating for the tourism industry. The United States has just reached 500 cases, with more than 30 states announcing infections. Our region has less robust health systems and therefore, we could see more general transmission. This means that it is possible that our region can remain with the stigma of the virus long after other parts of the world have brought the situation under control. These two scenarios are highly likely to be the ones that prevail in the coming months.

To mitigate against the potential negative impact to businesses and jobs, we will work with all stakeholders to implement certain measures that will assist to bring relief to affected businesses and individuals. Amongst other things:

- We will engage Treasury to assist businesses in distress to access the employment incentives that have been put in place

- We will negotiate with various meeting and events owners to postpone to future dates based on scenarios so that we minimise cancellations.
- Inevitably there will be job losses. We have engaged the Minister of Labour and Employment who has agreed to look at relief measures for those registered with the UIF.

In their February 27, Joint Statement on Tourism and COVID-19 - UNWTO and WHO called for responsibility and coordination in the handling of this situation. The statement also emphasised the fact that WHO "did not recommend any travel or trade restriction based on the current information available". Our Government is continuing to monitor the situation and decisions that will be taken will be communicated by the relevant departments. But I must make it clear that the decisions that will be taken going forward, depending on how this situation evolves, will be based on putting South Africans first. Protecting the health of South African citizens is of the utmost importance for our Government.

WHO and UNWTO also advised that "Tourism's response needs to be measured and consistent, proportionate to the public health threat and based on local risk assessment, involving every part of the tourism value chain – public bodies, private companies and tourists, in line with WHO's overall guidance and recommendations." The Department of Health through Minister Zweli Mkhize has been giving regular updates about developments around the Coronavirus cases in our country and he will continue to do so that all of us are aware of the local risk going forward.

Post the Coronavirus crisis, work will need to be done to restore the country's brand and to promote South Africa as a tourist destination of choice. To this end, we will reduce spending on marketing especially global marketing given that in the current environment we are unlikely to make the impact we want with our marketing initiatives. We will conserve the funds for use in the future to reposition the country

through various programmes including incentives and mega events.

Sadly, this outbreak is happening at a time when our economy is not doing well and has not been doing well for the past few years. We have just experienced a technical recession because of the contraction of the economy in the third and the fourth quarter of last year. Our fiscus is severely constrained given the reduction in the revenue collection. The economic impact of the Coronavirus will be felt in every corner of the world and almost every sector of the economy. Globally, it is estimated that lower demand could slow growth of the global economy between 1,8% and 2,2% instead of the 2,5% envisioned at the start of the year. This will further strifle economic growth in our country.

Simply put, ladies and gentlemen, we do not have the resources to offset the damage that our economy will suffer because of this crisis. We are, however, willing to work with the sector to engage development finance institutions and banks to assist the sector to get some relief on capital debt repayment.

The question is what is it that we need to do, together, in the short to medium term to minimise the impact of the virus on the tourism sector? Given the uncertainty around the evolution of the spread of this virus we cannot at this moment provide definitive answers.

It is important that we work together through these challenging times. There are many aspects about this situation that as Government we are still going to discuss and take decisions and we are inviting you as industry players to make inputs so that as we discuss we make more informed decisions. This is our way of ensuring that tourism's response is "...measured and consistent, proportionate to the public health threat and based on local risk assessment, involving every part of the tourism value chain".

I thank you.

COLLABORATION IS CRUCIAL FOR AFRICA'S GROWTH - MEETINGS AFRICA 2020



Tourism Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane welcomed delegates to the 'largest' 15th Meetings Africa in Johannesburg Sandton Convention Centre on 25 February 2020.

"It stands to reason that this year we are hosting the largest Meetings Africa, to date. In this regard, we have sold all the floor space, with 320 exhibitors from 20 African countries. A special welcome to the Democratic Republic of Congo, who are first time exhibitors at Meetings Africa," said Kubayi-Ngubane.

"I would also like to welcome the 313 buyers from across the globe, who have come to explore and buy what Africa has to offer. After the walkabout, I could already sense a buzz of excitement surrounding the many possibilities that Africa has to offer the international business travel industry," she continued.

Meetings Africa is a Pan-African Business Events trade show, which has been in existence for 15 years. The show was born in response to the global meetings industry's growing recognition of Africa as a sought-after premier business events destination. The two-day event has brought

under one roof key business tourism sector players to help African countries to collectively advance the tourism interests of the continent.

The Minister noted that African countries are at varying degrees of development, and the majority of them now form part of the virtuous growth cycle. She further highlighted that collaboration, rather than competition, was crucial to assist all African countries to realise their potential.

The business events sector is vital to tourism and South Africa's economy, as well as that of the continent. As a premier business event, Meetings Africa has emerged as one of the cornerstone events in South Africa's MICE (Meetings, Incentive, Conferences and Exhibition) sector, commonly known as the meetings industry that attracts people who are travelling into the country for business, conferences and exhibitions.

The vibrant tourism industry directly and indirectly sustains more than 250 000 jobs and contributes an estimated R115 billion to South Africa's economy, "Underlining an incontestable fact, that business tourists spend more than leisure tourists".

Minister Kubayi-Ngubane illustrated this undisputed fact during her walkabout on the trade floor, when she purchased a locally made round handbag and hat from the Tshinga Trading Enterprise exhibition stall, owned by Vuyo Mavuso. The 46-year-old female business owner is a self-taught designer originally from the Eastern Cape and is currently based in Yeoville, Johannesburg. "The love of fashion inspired my business, going through the magazines and going to flea markets, because I would buy certain things and alter them," Mavuso said. She added that it was her third year of exhibiting at Meetings Africa.

"Tourists come to the country and I would normally sell to them. So at least they buy some things from South Africa and take them home. Some even have shops and stock from me. Today's highlight was just meeting the Minister for the first time," she smiled.

"Government is putting its money where its mouth is by committing an amount of R90 million to be used over the next three years to help South Africa draw more international MICE numbers to the country," confirmed Chief Executive Officer of South African Tourism, Sisa Ntshona.

The Minister concluded by saying, "To all buyers from across the world, we can assure you that you have come to the right place. Africa is a capable, globally competitive business events destination and with warm people coupled with authentic and unique experiences, and any event you host here is set to be a memorable one!"

"To all exhibitors, thank you once again for exhibiting at Meetings Africa, thank you for believing in this platform and for putting your best foot forward and presenting compelling tourism products and services to the world. To members of the media, thank you for your continued support in sharing the African story and helping showcase Meetings Africa as the premium business events platform that it is."

By Staff Reporter

TOURISM SECTOR URGED TO FOCUS MORE ON **CURBING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT**

Deputy Minister of Tourism Mr. Fish Mahlalela called on the tourism sector to double up on Government's initiatives to curb youth unemployment in the country.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony to honour Mpumalanga learners who successfully completed the Hospitality Youth Training Programme (HYTP) learnership, Deputy Minister Mahlalela lamented over the low number of graduates who had been successfully placed within the industry.

The HYTP is an initiative of the Department of Tourism that addresses skills shortages in the sector, whilst contributing towards Government's greater objective of creating employment for the youth. The Mpumalanga graduates received CATHSSETA-accredited National Senior Certificates in Fast Food Services (NQF level 3) after successfully completing 12-month learnership programmes at various hospitality establishments within the Province.

"Our country is faced with a high unemployment rate, especially amongst the youth. As Government we have taken a stance to strengthen our skills development and empowerment initiatives to capacitate the youth to prepare them for the world of work," Mahlalela started by saying. "As we celebrate the achievement of the 289 youth who are graduating today, I am equally concerned that a large number of them are yet to find employment or support to

pursue entrepreneurship opportunities in the hospitality space."

"However, I am also hopeful that their acquired qualification will give them a competitive edge as they search for employment, and importantly it will renew their hope," Deputy Minister Mahlalela continued. With the National Development Plan (NDP) target for job creation set at 11 million jobs by 2030, the Minister insisted that businesses within the tourism value chain could contribute immensely in Government attaining this goal by employing skilled youth, and by continuing to offer on-the-job experience for those who have completed similar programmes.

"Our skills development training programmes are world class, and I'm confident that we are releasing qualified and proficient young people who can provide an excellent service. The entire tourism value chain has the potential to help us curb unemployment by offering employment opportunities for competent graduates," the Minister believes.

"The multiplier effect of investing in competent youth will not only yield positive gains for the tourism market, but for our economy. I therefore call on the sector to boldly invest in employing our graduates, and help us build a thriving economy and a better country," concluded Deputy Minister Mahlalela.

By Staff Reporter





Part of the impressive opening of Parliament ceremony ahead of President Cyril Ramaphosa's SONA 2020 speech.

SONA 2020: INDUSTRY LEADERS WELCOME ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF **SAFETY CHALLENGES**

It is a clear indication of how seriously President **Cyril Ramaphosa** takes the role of the tourism sector in driving growth and creating jobs by acknowledging and tackling the issue of tourism safety and security in his State of the Nation Address 2020 (SONA) in February.

This was the consensus from two industry leaders – Deputy Minister of Tourism, **Fish Mahlalela** and CEO of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, **Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa** – who spoke to Tourism Update early this morning.

“President Ramaphosa showed South Africa and the world that barriers to tourism growth are a high-level Government priority and that the safety of tourists was therefore also a major priority,” said Mahlalela.

He specifically welcomed the increased visibility of the South African Police Service at identified tourism sites as well as the

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training of Tourism Safety Monitors who will be absorbed into the SAPS as reservists.

During his speech, Ramaphosa highlighted that, following the graduation of 5 000 police trainees last year, 7 000 new police trainees had been enlisted this year to strengthen local policing.

“To improve the quality of general and specialised SAPS investigations, we are establishing a Crime Detection University in Hammanskraal,” added the President.

Tshivhengwa pointed out that he got a ‘clear sense’ from this and other references to growth and jobs creation – along with addressing the energy crisis as well as safety issues – that tourism was ‘front and centre’ of the president’s speech.

By Adele Mackenzie

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Fish Mahlalela



#LETSGROWTOURISM: SA COULD ATTRACT MORE OF THE **SIX MILLION SPANISH TOURISTS**

An agreement between Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales (Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organizations), or CEOE, a massive Spanish business organisation and South African Tourism has been signed to host a tourism roadshow in Spain later this year in an effort to grow tourism and increase Spanish investment in tourism infrastructure in South Africa.

"As part of the roadshow, CEOE and South African Tourism will hold an investment seminar to highlight opportunities in South Africa for Spanish businesses," said Deputy Minister of Tourism, Fish Mahlalela.

Speaking to Tourism Update today (Friday) from the sidelines of the International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR), which is being held in Madrid from 22 to 26 January, he pointed out that South Africa's cultural heritage and diverse wildlife held particular appeal to the Spanish market.

According to Mahlalela, tourism numbers to South Africa from Spain have grown from 15 000 in 2015 to a projected 44 000 expected to visit this year – but this is a drop in the ocean compared with the six million Spanish international travellers each year.

He highlighted that, to tap into the huge market potential, tourism suppliers needed to move beyond five-star luxury tours and showcase the more affordable tour package options with three- and four-star

According to Mahlalela, tourism numbers to South Africa from Spain have grown from 15 000 in 2015 to a projected 44 000 expected to visit this year – but this is a drop in the ocean compared with the six million Spanish international travellers each year

accommodation options. "Even bed and breakfast and self-catering options should be considered for packages."

"Furthermore, currently only two major South African experiences/destinations are being flagged in Spain and the rest of Europe – Kruger National Park and the private lodges, and Cape Town," Mahlalela added.

"We have so much more to offer and we, as the ministry, have agreed to work with South African Tourism's country hubs, to meet with all the destination marketing companies to market all nine provinces."

The Minister also lamented the fact that, of the 13 or so South African exhibitors at FITUR this week, the majority were from the Western Cape with a few from KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

In terms of air access, Mahlalela said there were several flights to other parts of Europe from South Africa, but there was no direct flight to Spain. "However, once the tourism numbers increase, airlines will be more inclined to see the economic viability of introducing a direct flight," he said.

By Staff Reporter

MINISTER OF TOURISM CALLS FOR FLOURISHING TOWNSHIP TOURISM IN HONOUR OF SHARPVILLE MASSACRE



I am as committed to township tourism, as I am about the quality of our products, the safety of tourists, employment of youth, empowerment of women and the marketing of our country. Our unique offering in the township will indeed depend on what we offer those who come to tour South Africa for our culture, our history and the story of our resilience as a people." These were the words of Tourism Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane while addressing the community of Sharpeville on 22 February 2020, at Kwa Dlomo Dam.

Ahead of the planned month-long celebration of Human Rights Month in March, the Minister, in partnership with the Emfuleni, Sedibeng District and Local Municipalities, held a stakeholder Engagement Imbizo in Sharpeville and visited numerous sites of historic significance.

"Sharpeville is home to eight memorials of national significance. Of utmost importance is the fact that this is where our late President Nelson Mandela signed the country's globally celebrated democratic Constitution in 1996, thereby ushering in a new era of constitutional democracy. The Vaal is more than just its history and its future is in its tourism potential," said Emfuleni Executive Mayor, Rev. Gift Moerane.

The stakeholder consultation was held as a part of the continuing engagement in unlocking the potential of tourism,

which continues to be the highlight of Government's economic turnaround amidst constrained economic growth and high youth unemployment.

The counter National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) and various other supplementary strategies have identified Liberation heritage routes and township Tourism Nodes as immediate interventions required to bring townships into the mainstream packaged offering for both domestic and international tourists.

"We need strategic thinkers to apply themselves in terms of how to design Naledi route to become a tourism route without building shacks; to redesign the road to be the likes of Vilakazi Street. There are now funds approved for Moshoeshoe road to be rebranded and such approvals make our country grow," Rev. Moerane continued.

As the country prepares to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the post-apartheid Human Rights Day and the 60th Anniversary of the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre on 21 March, there was a renewed motivation in the development of liberation heritage routes. In addition, the celebration of the struggle history as part of the country's tourism offering was made a priority to empower community and private safety initiatives by training and placing tourism monitors to ensure the safety of tourists and create job opportunities for the youth. In the

same vein, the Minister said, "the training of tourist guides in different languages remain our priority as it goes a long way to improve the experience of tourists, ensuring that our stories are told better, making tourists want to return to our country."

The Minister said, "Together with the municipalities and provincial Government we will have to work together to make the 60th anniversary celebrations memorable and use them to reposition the Sedibeng district as a tourism destination of high potential of and preference. As the Department we will make our fair contribution and importantly be part of the new tourism product to be offered in this part of our country."

"The Government awaits applications from the youth of Sharpeville to apply for tourism training in order to access employment opportunities. Available training includes the chefs training programme, Sommeliers, tourism safety monitors and hospitality training. We will support product owners by supplying business planning skills in order to successfully apply for, and submit proposals for programmes such as the Tourism Transformation Fund, Green Tourism Incentive Scheme and the Market Access Programme amongst others. We will support in assisting B&Bs and other accommodation facilities to be graded," concluded Minister Kubayi-Ngubane.

By Staff Reporter

MANDARIN TO BOOST EXCELLENT SERVICE TO TOURISTS

The World Federation of Tourist Guides Association (WFTGA) declared the 21st of February International Tourist Guides Day (ITGD). On this day, tourist guides are celebrated by recognising the important work that they do within tourism. Since its inception, the event has been celebrated across the world by WFTGA members' countries of which South Africa, through the national guiding association, is also a member.

In South Africa, the event has gained prominence and is celebrated at both national and provincial levels. The objective of the event is to profile the tourist guiding sector and create awareness about the profession.

With over 13 000 registered tourist guides in South Africa, only 228 tourist guides are able to speak Mandarin, most of whom are Chinese nationals. Hence, the main objective of the project is to provide an opportunity for local tourist guides to be

trained in the command of the Mandarin language to better serve the potential influx of Chinese tourists to South Africa.

Twenty South African tourist guides from Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Western Cape are currently being trained to speak Mandarin; the training takes a period of two months at Malibu Lodge in Kameeldrift.

It was on International Tourist Guide Day, 21 February 2020, when Department of Tourism Deputy Director General Mme Morogoe Ramphele met and engaged with the tourist guides at Malibu Lodge.

"We are in this sector to mainly create jobs, it is important to the Department to meet this team during the training to observe and also encourage you not to give up," said Ramphele.

The 2015 Annual Report on Tourist Guiding states that the changing consumer needs and travel patterns have placed more demands on the average tourist guide. The

demand for quality services and more skilled tourist guides is increasing and to remain highly competitive and ensure sustainable employment, tourist guides of today need to be able to speak foreign languages, have a range of specialities, be able to guide across regions/borders and provide exceptional and authentic customer experiences.

Ramphele further emphasised that, "We are praying and hoping that the Coronavirus will end soon to permit our Chinese counterparts to visit our country so that you can welcome them in their language, making them feel special and to see the need to visit again, we also rely on you to give our visitors an excellent experience and good service."

"Hope to see you at Constitutional Hill on 12 to 13 March as we will be celebrating all the tour guides in South Africa for doing a brilliant and remarkable job," concluded DDG Ramphele.

By Staff Reporter



DEPUTY MINISTER HONOURABLE FISH MAHLALELA EMBARKED ON A **TOURISM PROMOTION AND INVESTMENT DRIVE** IN MADRID, SPAIN



Deputy Minister Mahlalela with South Africa's Ambassador to The Kingdom of Spain, Ambassador Thenjiwe Mtintso arriving for the Tourism Investment Trade Fair (FITUR) in Madrid, Spain.



Deputy Minister Mahlalela with Spain's Deputy Minister for Tourism, Ms. Isabel Mario Oliver.



Deputy Minister Mahlalela, Ambassador Thenjiwe Mtintso, Venezuela Minister of Tourism Mr. Felix Plasencia and Acting Head of Office, Ms. Nkhopotseng Hlasa.

Deputy Minister Honourable Fish Mahlalela embarked on a tourism promotion and investment drive in Madrid, Spain, 21 to 24 January 2020.

The Deputy Minister was in Madrid for the Tourism Investment Trade Fair and 11th Edition of the *Tourism Investment and Business Forum for Africa (INVESTOUR)* Sessions.

Jointly organised annually by FITUR and Casa Africa, INVESTOUR is an investment attraction drive through tourism promotion, advocating for brand Africa in line with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's agenda of tourism enhancement and promotion.

Deputy Minister Fish Mahlalela used this opportunity to engage various tourism players and counterparts in an effort to drive South Africa's investment goal. Amongst these, Deputy Minister Mahlalela met with the Deputy Minister of Tourism in Spain, Ms. Isabel Mario Oliver to discuss working relations between South Africa and Spain. He also met with the Venezuelan Minister of Tourism, Mr. Felix Plasencia to discuss tourism opportunities between the two countries.

He also met with representatives of Norwegian Airlines, who have an interest in introducing their business in South Africa. As part of their mandate to promote and drive the tourism strategy in our country, South African Tourism (SAT) invited South African entrepreneurs in the tourism industry to exhibit at this year's FITUR, here they got to showcase and market their various products to those attending the event. The Deputy Minister visited the South African stand and interacted with the exhibitors, giving them assurance

that Government will support them wholeheartedly.

Deputy Minister Mahlalela addressed members of the media at the sidelines of INVESTOUR. He detailed South Africa's tourism plans, and sought to allay fears with regard to safety and other negative narratives which have been recently portrayed and communicated by some. He also addressed the visa and abridged certificates for those traveling into South Africa.

"We have eased visa travel regulations for those travelling to our country. Furthermore, those travelling with minors to South Africa are no longer required to carry unabridged certificates for those minors."

Deputy Minister Mahlalela assured the media that the Department of Tourism has developed a safety plan in partnership with the Department of Police, to ensure the safety of tourists visiting our country.

"We have had unfortunate incidents of attacks on tourists in our country, and have in light of these had various meetings with the Police Department and came up with a safety plan to curb the incidents of attacks on our tourists," the Minister explained. "This will be brought about through the creation of a tourism safety-focused unit, and we believe that these attacks will end."

The Deputy Minister spoke on many product offerings which our country has, i.e. the wildlife, scenic beauty, etc.

Throughout his visit, the Deputy Minister was accompanied and supported by South Africa's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Spain, Ambassador Thenjiwe Mtintso.

By Staff Reporter



CAPE TOWN READY TO FIGHT CRIME

Following concerns of crime in Cape Town, 500 new law enforcement officers have been deployed in the Western Cape, making the province safer for tourists.

The new officers are part of the City of Cape Town's Law Enforcement Advancement Programme (LEAP), which is jointly funded by the Western Cape Government in line with the Western Cape Safety Plan.

Western Cape Premier, **Alan Winde**, said: "We promised the people of this province that we would do everything in our power to make it a safer place to live. Today, the Western Cape Government and the City of Cape Town will be significantly boosting the number of boots on the ground, as a deterrent to crime in communities most impacted by it."

This follows an incident in Khayelitsha, reported by Tourism Update in January, in which a group visiting in a tour bus was robbed. The incident sparked concern for the safety of tourists in Cape Town.

Winde said this was just one aspect of the safety plan and that a wide range of initiatives across departments were being implemented.

One such initiative, dedicated specifically to keeping tourists safe, is the Travel Wise project, which was implemented over the festive season by Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Opportunities and Asset Management, **James Vos**.

When he spoke to Tourism Update at the time, Vos made it clear that, while the

Travel Wise initiative proved successful in providing tourists with reassurance and comfort, the responsibility of policing was primarily that of the South African Police Service as the lead agency.

The 500 newly qualified law enforcement officers will be deployed to communities such as Khayelitsha, in what is the first step of a multi-phase roll-out.

"Today is evidence of how much more we can achieve when we work together, and I look forward to continuing this partnership with the Western Cape Government, which will see even more law enforcement officers on the streets of Cape Town," said **Dan Plato**, Executive Mayor of Cape Town.

By Erin Cusack



KWAZULU-NATAL GEARS UP FOR **WORLD FOOTBALL SUMMIT AFRICA**

KwaZulu-Natal will host the first African edition of the largest global football event, the World Football Summit (WFS) Africa.

It will take place at the Durban ICC on 17 and 18 March 2020, and will see global leaders of football – such as the FIFA Secretary General, **Fatma Samoura**; La Liga President, **Javier Tebas**; and South African Football Association President, **Danny Jordaan** – attending.

KwaZulu-Natal Premier, **Sihle Zikalala**, said global research showed that the sports industry was the second fastest growing sector for brands, outpacing the GDP growth of most countries.

“We are excited and very proud as the Province of KwaZulu-Natal to play host to

such a global event that brings all those involved in the business of sports together,” said Zikalala.

Global research showed that the sports industry was the second fastest growing sector for brands, outpacing the GDP growth of most countries

The summit will bring together over 1 000 attendees and 80 top speakers from 50 different countries. The World Football Summit reports that the summit’s economic impact on Durban will surpass €12 million.

eThekweni Municipal Mayor, **Mxolisi Kaunda**, said it was a vote of confidence in the country’s ability to host major international events. “With over 1 200 delegates from around the world expected to attend the WFS, this will once again position Durban as a globally competitive city for investment and a venue of choice for sport events.”

WFS started in Madrid in 2016 and currently hosts yearly summits in Madrid and Kuala Lumpur.

By Tourism Update

SUPPORT OF **BLACK FEMALE WINE ENTREPRENEURS** VITAL FOR TRANSFORMATION

Female wine producers are at the forefront of transformation in the wine industry and need adequate support to contribute meaningfully in the commercial space and ultimately help boost the country's economic growth.

The Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, met some of the black wine entrepreneurs in Cape Town's Bantry Bay Suite Hotel recently, who shared some insight on some of the barriers they face in this historically male-dominated and traditionally lily-white industry. This is despite some of them owning vineyards on the fertile slopes of the Stellenbosch.

precisely support a calibre of such women who are driven by passion in their respective business arenas.

Minister Kubayi-Ngubane used the occasion to also share with the women some of the market support programmes offered by the Department to specifically assist with market access. The latter has been identified as a major hurdle, which the woman believed had the propensity to sink their businesses.

Nodumiso Pikashe, founder of Ses'fikile Wines, recounted some of the frustration endured despite years of experience, with some retailers imposing strict criteria

from the market, we are as good as nothing."

Nomsa Sondani of Lathitha echoed the same sentiment and explained that because of resistance locally, 90% of her wines are exported. While they make an impact internationally, the local environment was challenging particularly for black women trying to make their mark in the sector, she added.

The Minister described the engagement as very insightful and undertook to continue the discussion and consider some of the ways to intervene. She highlighted the importance of industry support to



"I'm here to hear about your story, to learn more about your products and what I can do to assist you so we can transform the industry," said Minister Kubayi-Ngubane to the women who had displayed their beautifully packaged ranges of wines on the foyer, some of which making an impact internationally. These include Ses'fikile, Mhudi, Lubbys, Lathitha, Seven Sisters and Thembi Wines – all job creators with about 15 years of industry experience.

Significantly, this engagement happened on the eve of President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address (SONA) in which he announced various programmes that Government would provide to

to even suggest their products are "too ethnic" to appeal to local wine consumers. Wine productivity and sourcing funding for infrastructure development was a challenge. Malmsey Rangaka of M'hudi Wines, the first black-owned vineyard in Stellenbosch, who described her 15 years as a "revolving door", echoed this sentiment.

"They'd suggest a change of name on the basis that the product is distinctively an African concept. We are the first black women to buy our own land instead of relying on sourcing the grapes from third parties and stand on our own, but all that is of no consequence," Rangaka explained. "No matter how good our product is, without support

black women wine entrepreneurs as the economic value in which the tourism sector can exponentially benefit South Africa. This was crucial as the Department also works towards positioning the country as the number one tourist destination globally.

The wine entrepreneurs commended the Minister for the gathering, saying it was a rare occurrence and one that gave them hope for a better future for the success of their businesses.

"I assure you, this is not the last time we interact," said Minister Kubayi-Ngubane.

By Staff Reporter

GREATER INCLUSION OF COMMUNITY NEEDED TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY



Green Tribe is sponsoring nine children at the Tujatane school in Zambia. Source: Dragonfly Africa Group

For true sustainability in the long term, there has to be a greater impact and inclusion for communities, according to **Kerry Roos**, Director: Incentives and Travel, Green Route Africa.

Green Route Africa is a division of the Dragonfly Africa Group, providing Destination Management Services to the UK and European markets.

"As a company we are passionate about environmental sustainability and as a result, we have sought multiple opportunities of leveraging situations arising within our destinations to create as much value for, and enhancement of sustainability from the community and conservation projects we support," said Roos.

As an example, she points out that Green Route Africa has been taking action within its own office by collecting plastic waste and making Eco-brick.

"This extremely exciting project by Eco-brick Exchange offers Green Route the

opportunity to address the shortage of quality education facilities, implement sustainable waste management systems and raise environmental awareness. Eco-brick Exchange collects these bottles and then facilitates the construction of preschools in underprivileged communities using this unrecyclable plastic waste."

Green Route Africa is also busy finalising details of support for a sustainable community project in the Lowveld area via the Tourism Conservation Fund.

"Once finalised, this project will see us supporting the establishment and growth of supplies and commerce between the established and aspirant entrepreneurs in the Nkuhlu community adjoining the southern KNP and the lodges operating in and around the KNP."

Roos said the organisation also had its own registered charity called Green Tribe and, as a group, was currently sponsoring nine children at Tujatane School in Zambia.

"Education is the most sustainable way to uplift entire communities and therefore key to breaking the poverty cycle. By giving local Zambian children the tools they need to improve their own lives, Tujatane gives them access to opportunities that they would otherwise never have been exposed to," said Roos. "A visit to the school is also a favourite CSR and give-back opportunity for many of our clients."

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

When planning itineraries for adventure-seekers who care about wildlife and the environment, tour operators should definitely consider booking an excursion with White Shark Projects, which operates from Gansbaai in the Western Cape.

At the heart of this organisation, which organises a number of activities, including shark cage diving and Voluntourism experiences, White Shark Project is all about conserving "these magnificent ocean predators" through various conservation projects, according to MD, **Charmaine Beukes**.

Every spring (since 2014) White Shark Projects has held its 21-Day Campaign to create awareness about sharks in the local community.

The initiative is all about educating the communities who live along the Cape Coast as to how they can be responsible. Through educational talks at various schools, social media initiatives, radio interviews, fundraisers and beach clean-ups, young and old in the community are educated about how everyday behaviour can affect the ocean.

White Shark Projects also offers various initiatives to educate travellers about sharks and the ocean, including its Voluntourism experiences. For Beukes and her team – education and awareness are the answer.

By Denise Slabbert

TOURISM MINISTER VISITS TSHWANE YOUTH SHELTER

"I could not finish reading all the handwritten letters I received from these beautiful children, I got emotional because most of them were asking for assistance with the provision of basic needs such as school shoes and uniforms," said Minister of Tourism Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane during her visit to donate school uniforms, clothes, shoes and toys at the Youth for Survival Centre in Pretoria on 28 January 2020.

Over the festive season, 50 children from the centre wrote letters, outlining some of their basic needs in a request for assistance from the Tourism Minister. As a non-governmental organisation based in the community of Pretoria West, the shelter offers strategic programmes and awareness

campaigns, which are vital in the intensive fight against the scourge of gender-based violence amongst other social ills. It is a safe haven for abused and orphaned young women and children.

"I am only here to hand this over to the children to say we care not only as Government, but as parents, human beings and members of society, it is important that the private sector such as the Khuthulula Foundation, work alongside Government to improve the lives of the less fortunate and vulnerable people," emphasised Minister Kubayi-Ngubane.

"These children deserve to be loved and they deserve to be told that they are special. I know this is not a big thing as

the Youth for Survival Centre has many needs, but we hope today can contribute in making sure that your work becomes easier," concluded the Minister.

Youth for Survival founder and CEO Ms. Mushi Mathe thanked the Minister for her generosity saying it was even more special to the children that they received all they had requested in their letters.

The Ministerial visit to the shelter reinforced Government's firm stand against all forms of violence against the most vulnerable in our society and is in line with the President's call for a year-round education, awareness and prevention campaign.

By Staff Reporter





TOURISM INDUSTRY RECOGNISES MICE GROWTH POTENTIAL

There are extensive benefits from the development of the MICE industry in South Africa, with the global meetings industry starting to recognise Africa as a sought-after business and events destination.

This is according to the Minister of Tourism, Mmamololo Kubayi-Ngubane, addressing media on Friday at the official launch of Meetings Africa, set to place at the Sandton Convention Centre from 24 to 26 February.

The Minister added that platforms like Meetings Africa were important for showcasing what Africa's business event suppliers could offer international MICE groups.

Following Kubayi-Ngubane's keynote address, a team of panellists highlighted how beneficial encouraging MICE growth in South Africa would be not only for

the tourism industry, but adjacent and unrelated industries too.

Panellists included SA Tourism CEO, Sisa Ntshona, Economist Xhanti Payi, Senior

Lecturer of Pharmacology at North West University, Dr Makhotsa Lekhooa, and CEO of the Black Business Council, Kgaanki Matabane.

"The tourism industry is one of the 'low-hanging fruits' for job creation in the country," said Matabane, adding that the challenge lay in making all sectors of the economy feel included. "We cannot have inclusive economic growth if the majority of South Africans are excluded from the tourism value chain."

Ntshona agreed, and said inclusion was one of the key roles played by SA Tourism. "A is to provide access and B is to inform and educate." He emphasised that the MICE market was an opportunity for potential investors to see South Africa, noting that tourism was a gateway to business.

By Erin Cusack

Platforms like Meetings Africa were important for showcasing what Africa's business event suppliers could offer international MICE groups



CEO JUNE CRAWFORD BIDS BARSa FAREWELL AFTER 6 YEARS

Board of Airline Representatives (BARSa) CEO June Crawford has announced that she will be stepping down from her role, effective 30 April 2020. She has held the position since 2014, having initially been appointed on a short-term basis, but having overseen BARSa with distinction for the past six years.

June departs on the back of a wish to spend more time with her family in Australia. She will continue to serve on the Board of BARSa from 1 May to support the incoming CEO, for whom the search will commence, shortly.

She had previously held positions at KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and been appointed by the then-Minister of Transport to the position on a non-executive director of Air Traffic and Navigation Services (2008-2012), before becoming CEO.

She has a particular interest in Corporate Governance, having served on both private and public sector boards. June is also currently the Deputy Chairman of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, a Board member of the International Women's Forum of South Africa, chairs the Aviation Working Group of the South African BRICS Business Council and is a director of Aviation Coordination Services.

"It has been my pleasure to serve the International and African member airlines of BARSa, as well as the aviation and tourism industries in a full-time capacity," she says. "I will continue to support the Board, my successor and the team at BARSa - albeit from afar - and look forward to my regular visits back to South Africa".

Carla da Silva, BARSa Chair, says that it has been a pleasure to work closely with a dynamic and seasoned professional like June. "She is a woman of excellence, who is extremely passionate about aviation, tourism, corporate governance - and enabling the growth of other women. I am delighted that she will stay on as a BARSa Board member, as her wealth of knowledge will continue to add tremendous value," she says. "The BARSa Board and team wish to thank June for her incredible work at the helm of the organisation and for always being a proud ambassador for South Africa - and for the aviation and tourism industry".

ABOUT BARSa

The Board of Airline Representatives of South Africa (BARSa) represents the interests of its African and International members to Government, airport operators and other stakeholders in the airline industry with the aim of facilitating and further developing a safe, efficient and viable aviation industry in South Africa. BARSa provides a single concerted voice on policy and other matters in relation to Government and other stakeholders in transport, business and tourism. Within this structure, and as members of Business Unity South Africa (BUSA), BARSa remains at the helm; offering a voice to African and International airlines operating to and from the Republic of South Africa.

By Gabriella Brondani Rego



REIGNITING SOUTH AFRICA'S REPUTATION **AS A FAMILY DESTINATION**



David Frost, SATSA CEO

South Africa's potential as a quality international family travel destination is undisputed. For several years, this was stymied by the requirement for international minors to produce an Unabridged Birth Certificate when travelling to South Africa.

Imagine for a minute – a multi-generational family travelling from the USA. The parents have 10 days' annual leave. The shortest flight to South Africa is 17 hours. And, to be allowed entry to South Africa, they have to produce documentation that no other country in the world requires.

When you can choose between tens of other destinations, over a hundred, why would you go with a destination that is difficult to gain access to?

There is no question that South Africa's superb coastal and safari destinations, depth of world-class family experiences and excellent weather offers an attractive proposition for travelling families from all over the world. But if we want them to come to South Africa in droves, we need to focus on delivering the easy-access, hassle-free, responsible travel experience that the market demands.

A Sabre Corporation study found that one or two trips per year would increase to three if the traveller's experience was hassle-free.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS NOW

After fervent lobbying from industry partners and stakeholders, we are relieved

that South Africa's unpopular immigration policy for families travelling with under 18s has finally been removed, paving the way for more family business.

In practical terms, for the first time in more than four years, travellers from other parts of the world can travel to South Africa and enjoy our many bucket-list cultural, wildlife, beach and foodie experiences, together with their children, without worrying about being turned away at check-in or being repatriated for producing the 'wrong' supporting documentation.

It's a crucial first step towards rebuilding confidence among inbound tour operators and discerning international family travellers.

FAMILY TRAVEL POTENTIAL

Since 2017, research by GlobalData shows around 300 million family trips are taken each year, representing 30,8% of outbound tourism. The data and analytics company believes those numbers will grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4,6% to 367 million trips by 2022.

The report attributes the performance to a multi-generational travel drive. The number of trips will grow with rising levels of disposable income in emerging markets with more open borders or that are able to "tap into the specific needs of this complex cohort".

"Family travel is moving beyond the traditional sun-and-beach getaway, to offer families some much-needed time to reconnect and create lasting memories in unique destinations, or on niche holidays; from cultural trips to activity-filled adventures. It has never been so essential to offer travellers something beyond the norm to stand out from the crowd, and that caters to their specific demands, irrespective of where they are from," the research concluded.

Other notable family travel trends include gap trips and 'ed-ventures',

multi-generational and skip-gen travel ('gramping') when grandparents travel with their grandchildren without a parent present. Research suggests that this type of travel will grow because of a more flexible global workforce. We too see younger, Generation Z travellers having more say in the decision-making phase. At the same time, Millennial parents continue to value experiences like travel over 'things'.

Not only is access important, but the more adventurous modern family market is seeking diverse and authentic experiences. Safety is non-negotiable, while sustainability is another significant travel trend.

SUSTAINABILITY

In 2019, Booking.com found that 75% of travellers regard sustainable travel as important. Yet, only 50% understood what they could do to travel more sustainably, "[so] it's up to tour operators, travel agents and DMCs to enable their customers to make sustainable choices."

To help our visitors make better, responsible choices when it comes to choosing whether to visit institutions that offer animal interactions, SATSA in partnership with South African Tourism has introduced a new set of voluntary guidelines for wildlife interactions and tourism activities. More than 70 leading SATSA tour operators have committed to upholding the new standards so far.

After a year-long robust and widely consultative study, the aim was to develop a long-term vision of where the South African tourism industry would like to get to in terms of animal interactions in the next 10, 20 and 50 years. If a business practice falls into the 'unclear' zone, concrete steps can be taken to advance towards an 'acceptable' zone.

SATSA's work did not examine the welfare of wild animals outside of captive wildlife attractions and activities. However, five

tourism activities involving captive wildlife have now been classified as unacceptable. These include performing animals, tactile interactions with all wild animals, walking with predators or elephants, tactile interactions with predators or cetaceans, and the riding of wild animals.

Like ethical wildlife interactions, travellers are becoming more conscious around the impact of over-tourism and awareness about the issue is growing. A report by Skift predicts tour operators will "simply refuse to send their customers to packed destination in high seasons" and will "increasingly promote less travelled destinations".

Being able to adapt to these changing traveller preferences and market trends is key to the success of our industry. South Africa is still a destination where over-tourism is not a factor, but a great deal of work needs to be done to create awareness about our world-class approach to all forms of sustainability in tourism.

South Africa's tourism economy and family travel prospects have been suppressed for long enough.

Let's capitalise on our commitment to protecting our wildlife and uplifting our communities which offer the depth of cultural experiences we have in South Africa. Let's promote the many tourism assets that provide families an opportunity to learn together and make lifelong memories in our beautiful country.

It's not just the travellers, but the businesses and local communities in the tourism value chain, which are counting on us for sustainable tourism growth and job creation and who will benefit.

By David Frost





TOURISM, CAREERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

As the New Year commences, it does so with many questions for all of us; the most prominent thought for many being, "Will it be a better year for me than it was last year?"

In addition, matriculants have just received their results and just like you and me, they are hoping for a better year.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2019!

Naturally, some of them will join the mainstream university-based pursuit of careers in law, medicine, economics, agriculture and the like, while others will dive in head first and immediately join the world of work. Then there are others who will be confused about which direction to head in. Those youngsters need to be encouraged to explore the many opportunities within the tourism sector.

The undisputed truth is that tourism remains one of the key sectors of the world, especially of late, where young people are

able to blossom in various careers within the sector, with some becoming bosses in their own rights.

As sector ambassadors, you and I have a duty to sound the loudest hailer in a call to these youngsters, telling them about various opportunities in tourism. Importantly, Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges and some Universities offer courses in tourism, with some even offering them through various bursary schemes.

There's a great future in tourism, and numbers talk for themselves. Just as an example, 58 graduates from the Eastern Cape, 35 from the Western Cape and 57 from KwaZulu-Natal received their qualifications as Chefs in November 2019, with more scheduled for January 2020. And this is not all.

Over 180 students graduated last year under the Tourism Resource Efficiency Training Programme, where they were trained on monitoring the use of resources

such as water, energy and waste on a daily, weekly and monthly basis for various tourism establishments.

These and many more examples go to show that the sector is ready to welcome South African youth, and may even compete head-to-head with other sectors, and could surpass them. Recent statistics reveal that Travel and Tourism directly supported a sizeable number of jobs. Many of these jobs are occupied by young people.

It's heartening to see that the tourism sector has shown significant flexibility despite various challenges; especially when compared with other major industries, where more jobs were shed instead.

The best thing about the tourism sector is its multidimensionality, catering to so many interests and preferences including housekeeping, travel and tourism, wildlife, hospitality and culinary studies.

By Staff Reporter

ECO-TOURISM MUCH MORE THAN A PASSING TREND



Tintswalo Lapalala Source:
Tintswalo Safari Lodge

While ‘tourism with a conscience’ may continue to hold a place on ‘Travel Trends’ lists this year, sustainability and eco-tourism have gone mainstream. Inbound tour operators are seeking to sell products and experiences that make a difference to both local communities in the area and the environment, and holidays that give back are the ‘new normal’.

In a blog post earlier this year titled, ‘Responsible and Sustainable Travel: Reaching the higher ground in 2020’, **Daniel Batchelor**, Vice President of Communications for Amadeus, said companies were listening to customer needs and therefore were being more sustainable.

“Since sustainability has become a deciding factor for individuals purchasing travel and accommodation, companies are adapting their offers to reflect this. From reducing plastic in hotels to the creation of sustainability-focused package holidays, consumers are being offered a wide choice when it comes to an eco-stay, and are starting to hold companies accountable if they don’t meet the demands,” said Batchelor.

As Southern and East Africa are long-haul destinations, the local travel trade is well aware that these destinations face numerous challenges when it comes sustainability, as was reported by Hilka Birns in *Tourism Update* in last year. The article titled ‘Flight shame offers an opportunity for SA’ pointed out that the country could benefit from carbon offsetting schemes and/or from developing a sustainable aviation industry.

In the same article **Tim Harris**, CEO of Wesgro said that, without the contribution of long-haul tourism, wildlife, including Africa’s pristine wildlife areas would suffer in the long run.

“Without long-haul tourism, Africa will lose the funding that supports the survival of our wildlife and wildlife areas, and

unsustainable resource exploitation will become the order of the day. In the end, this would be worse for the environment than long-haul travel,” said Harris.

In 2019, SATSA and South African Tourism launched “The Spekboom Challenge” to the travel industry – a carbon offsetting initiative that has seen the industry encourage the planting of spekboom plants.

Among many other industry players, the Tintswalo group have taken up the #SpekboomChallenge within the pristine Lapalala Wilderness Reserve in Limpopo province.

CEO and owner of Tintswalo Lodges, **Lisa Goosen**, says: “Recently, in line with the #SpekboomChallenge, we introduced a new initiative whereby we present small spekboom seedlings to our guests as farewell gifts when they check out, and encourage them to plant them in the reserve to help set off the carbon footprint of our game-viewing vehicles and back-up power generators. Our guests love it and after spending time with us at Tintswalo Lapalala, they are inspired to do their bit for conservation.”

Goosen says sustainability and eco-tourism are important pillars of the overall Tintswalo philosophy and the team are particularly proud of Tintswalo Lapalala as a flagship lodge for their sustainability model.

“Changing the way people think is a slow process, but we are finding that guests are becoming increasingly willing to participate in conservation initiatives and make do without certain modern luxuries in the name of being environmentally friendly and sustainable,” Goosen explains.

She adds that tackling sustainability and eco-tourism is an ever-changing landscape with new and exciting innovations on sustainability emerging daily.

“The trick is to ensure that they are financially viable and to find a way to introduce these innovations effectively to ensure longevity.”

Gondwana Game Reserve, along the Garden Route, is a leader in the field of sustainable practice and incorporating conservation experiences into their guests’ safari experience. Gondwana’s Tented Eco-Camp is another great option for tour operators wanting to sell an authentic bush experience for responsible travellers.

The eco-friendly, solar powered camp is an option for travellers who want to have a more hands-on, behind-the-scenes conservation experience. This was highlighted in a recent article – Unique Wildlife and Conservation Experiences – where visitors can assist in monitoring and wildlife research, supporting the reserve’s conservation department while on a ‘working/learning/experiencing’ holiday.

Gondwana also offers a daily Botanical Conservation Experience for anyone with an interest in botany and bio-diversity. Participants learn about indigenous plants and wildflowers that exist nowhere else in the world, and get involved in monitoring and geo-mapping of the various plant species. This hands-on experience gives guests the chance to learn all about the conservation of this endangered Fynbos biome – a unique experience for every visitor.

“Guests love getting a behind-the-scenes view of our conservation efforts and experiencing the Reserve on foot,” says owner **Wendy Rutherford**. “By making our Fynbos conservation part of our tourism offering it enriches our guests’ safari and makes its conservation more sustainable – it’s a win-win.”

By Denise Slabbert

REAL SKILLS IN TRAVEL MANAGEMENT



ASATA CEO, Otto de Vries

"We think too much and feel too little. More than machinery, we need humanity; more than cleverness, we need kindness and gentleness. Without these qualities, life will be violent and all will be lost." **Charlie Chaplin**

It's difficult to think about humanity when all you read in the media is about the rise of Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and the Internet of Things.

It is true that AI has the capacity to do tasks in the travel industry that humans once had to do. Those tasks that were transactional in nature can now be performed by technology, saving businesses time and money, eliminating human error and allowing tasks to be performed quickly, accurately and 24/7.

AI can assist with quick responses. If a traveller needs to find answers swiftly, chatbots can address queries immediately and at any time of the day or night. No

need for a call centre agent to be online all the time when a 'trained' chatbot has the answers to almost every question – from whether you need a visa, to any flight changes that have occurred.

AI ENHANCING LIVES

Discussions around AI generally centre around how technology will enhance our lives.

Very rarely does that discussion extend to the real skills that we as humans will need to enhance technology – the skills that Charlie Chaplin so eloquently mentions; those of kindness and gentleness ... but there are many more. These are skills that machines

will never be able to mimic, along with such skills as creative and critical thinking, problem-solving, tolerance of change and emotional intelligence, among others.

There are discussions that predict that AI will threaten human abilities, contributions and roles. These claim that computers could evolve to the extent where they are able to make complex decisions, learn how to reason, analyse data and patterns and essentially become 'smart' in the human sense.

In the travel industry, technologies such as AI, machine learning, IoT and near field communication are coming of age and together share the potential to create personalised moments that matter and bring joy to a travel experience still riddled with pain points, interruptions, and a lingering one-size-fits-all mentality.

With years of investment in big data analytics under their belts, travel brands and technology partners are becoming proficient at analysing new, complex data streams.

The problem, however, lies with operationalising it in real time, and getting relevant data and information out to the front lines via digital channels or through employees where it can impact the customer. The definite value of a travel agent - the human touch - is the differentiator. Intangible qualities like specialisation, experience, knowledge and reliability are things customers look for.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA

Data is key in understanding more customers' needs and preferences to ensure personalisation. The travel agent has the ability to collect more data than ever about customers, thanks to a myriad of online touch points like social media and apps. This will enable travel businesses to make better recommendations to aid customers in their decisions.

AI has the ability to sift through massive amounts of data with speed and accuracy. This is something that would take humans

significantly more time and without the level of accuracy that AI achieved. You can use AI to sift through expense data to analyse trends, ascertain who the serial offenders are that fail to comply with the travel management policy or build a clear picture of how your policy should change based on the travel behaviour of your travellers.

But that gets you only so far. It takes human insight to make the decision to change your travel policy for optimum productivity and efficiency. It takes a human to think strategically, creatively and critically about how that data should be used to make the changes that need to be made.

Personalisation does not just mean learning about customer habits; it is about relating them to a specific trip and determining their relevance in that context. If a traveller always arrives late to the hotel and orders room service, why not enable that traveller to order in advance and have dinner ready on arrival?

This is why a blended technology approach works best. Combining the functionality of technology to deal with the repetitive transactional tasks that require collection and an exchange of information. The human touch brings the technology to life, enhancing the first few steps that tech has made to climb the rest of the length of the ladder of travel management.

Your ASATA-accredited TMC are re-engineering themselves to provide the best in cutting-edge technology and blending this with the human touch through well-trained consultants and account executives who have the real skills required to take technology to another level.

Ask your TMC today how their blended technology approach will help you to ensure greater productivity and efficiency in your departments so you can make the most of your travel management.



SA TOURISM CEO TACKLES TOUGH ISSUES DURING **INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT SESSION**

Tourism marketing body, South African Tourism, is seeking closer collaboration with the industry, not only to tackle current obstacles to growth but also to create a platform where industry issues can be heard and addressed.

This was the key message from CEO of SA Tourism, Sisa Ntshona. "We are looking for viewpoints, advice and even criticism, but ask that those are backed up by workable solutions," he said, highlighting that tourism was interconnected to so many other industries and could not operate in isolation.

"Policies created by other Government bodies – at national, provincial and local level – need to take into account the impact they have on what President Cyril Ramaphosa has identified as the number-two growth priority in the country – tourism."

Ntshona welcomed the fact that the Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, was chairperson of Parliament's Economic Cluster, as this meant she could directly influence policy decisions affecting the tourism sector.

Readers, along with those who were listening to the live webinar, were encouraged to send through their questions, concerns and comments to Ntshona and he addressed as many as he could during the time allowed.

Some of the issues addressed included the "dysfunctional" National Public Transport Regulator (NPTA), e-Visas, niche target markets, increased intra-African tourism and changing South African Tourism's marketing strategy and branding.

By Adele Mackenzie



Inspiring new ways



SOUTH AFRICA SET FOR INCREASED ARRIVALS FROM INDIA AS TOURISM MINISTER HAILS A SUCCESSFUL ROADSHOW

Minister of Tourism, Ms. Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane has hailed as resounding success, a two-day market roadshow to India, Mumbai from 14 – 16 January 2020.

The road show was characterised by robust engagement with tour operators, destination management companies, film producers and potential investors as South Africa intensifies its efforts to unlock the market opportunities to realise the country's target of doubling international tourist arrivals from 10,5 million to 21 million by 2030.

"India has been identified and remains one of our key trading partners and priority markets for driving arrival numbers to South Africa. We will continue investing in our marketing and engagement efforts, both with our Indian trade partners and travellers, while bringing diversified products and a wider geographic spread to the market," said the Minister.

To this effect, South African Tourism is reengineering its strategy to tap into the market potential and set new growth benchmarks aiming at sustaining the growth momentum it has in the market with a forecasted 1,3% rise in Indian traveller arrivals to South Africa in 2020.

While business and leisure traveller segments continue to drive footfalls to South Africa, the country witnessed a steady rise in Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) groups from India. From January to September 2019, MICE accounted

for 24% of the Indian traveller visits, with 43% of overall Indian arrivals to South Africa being repeat visitors. 2019 witnessed a 36,6% increase in Indian traveller spends on shopping and a 26% increase in spend on leisure activities in South Africa.

"India houses one of the largest outbound segments in the world, and as the country continues fast-paced development, with an increase in spending capacity – potential only continues to grow," continued the Minister.

Reinforcing India as a key source market, Sthembiso Dlamini, Acting CEO, South African Tourism, reiterated that destination South Africa has more and better to offer.

"We are actively promoting our newer products, and efforts are being undertaken to educate travel trade – our biggest endorsers – of the wide geographical expanse of South Africa and products in our unchartered provinces," Dlamini explained. "The growth in total spend and the average length of stay signifies that Indians travelling to South Africa are staying longer, exploring more and experiencing newer activities than ever before. This is a positive indicator of the potential growth in the market and gives us the confidence to continue introducing new regions and experiences."

With the aim to further stimulate travel and tourism from India, the Minister indicated that the piloting of e-visas for the market was under serious consideration and would be initiated shortly.

"As Government, we recognise the need for more solutions-driven approaches to address impediments to access our destination. We are in the advanced stages of interventions that eases visa regulation to unlock the full potential of tourist arrivals from India. The introduction of electronic visas will reduce processing time and provide Indian travellers ease of convenience," Minister Kubayi-Ngubane elaborated.

The Minister also acknowledged that air connectivity was a key driver for outbound travel for business tourism from India, as she reassured the partners about the commitments to resume the Mumbai-Johannesburg direct route.

"I am convinced that the delegation of Government and trade has, through its engagements with key representatives of travel and tourism, impressed upon key decision makers to continue considering and making South Africa as a tourism, business and investment destination of choice," the Minister said.

"Tourism is one of the key contributors of growth to the South African economy, and our Government will continue to use tourism to advance sustainable development whilst working closely with SMMEs to create job opportunities, thus contributing significantly to the development and prosperity of our people," concluded the Minister.

By Staff Reporter



MOTHER CITY PARTNERS WITH CHINA TO BOOST TOURISM

The City of Cape Town (CoCT) is exploring options to grow the number of tourists from China as well as discussing the possibility of increasing trade by securing Chinese investment.

This follows the recent hosting of a delegation from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China by the CoCT Mayoral Committee Member for Economic and Asset Management, James Vos and Executive Mayor of Cape Town, Dan Plato.

"The CoCT has a long and fruitful relationship with China. We work closely together to promote travel and trade benefits and to attract foreign direct investment into the city," said Vos to strengthen this relationship, the CoCT has signed 'Sister-City Agreements' with four cities in China.

"Collaboration with cities across the world and our ability to focus on the catalytic

sectors that drive demand and make business sense, are what make our business ecosystem such a success," explained Vos.

Tourism was a key sector for Cape Town and accounted for roughly 300 000 jobs in the city with potential for growth and development, to which the city was fully committed to investing in, said Vos.

Collaboration with cities across the world and our ability to focus on the catalytic sectors that drive demand and make business sense, are what make our business ecosystem such a success

Speaking to Tourism Update on Friday, 17 January, CEO of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, also commented on the Chinese market as a core source market. "We are busy with a 'China-Ready' strategy; it has to be an implementable document with tangible results."

In terms of when Chinese tourists could be expected, Tshivhengwa said, "For China, there's a whole lot more that we need to do to be 'China-Ready' – from the language, signage and payment methods that they use... and we are working on that."

Tourism Update's #LetsGrowTourism campaign aims to gain awareness around tourism growth and development in South Africa. Look out for posts and articles with the hashtag #LetsGrowTourism to support this initiative and, most importantly, sustain regular communication.

By Tourism Update



KNP LODGE – INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

Mdluli Safari Lodge officially opened on January 15, and is giving 35 investors the opportunity to invest in the property.

The lodge, situated in the Kruger National Park, is offering a first-of-its-kind fully tax-deductible investment leisure opportunity and will only be accepting investments of R1 million.

Senior traditional leader of the Mdluli Royal Family and Traditional Council, **Inkhosi MI Mdluli**, said the project had taken many years of dedication. "After a long journey of land restitution, the Mdluli Community have freehold title of 850 hectares of land, inside the border of the iconic Kruger National Park. Through this project, I undertake to bring stability and social cohesion in the community."

By Tourism Update

TOURISM MINISTER CONGRATULATES SAA FOR BEING **ONE OF THE MOST PUNCTUAL AIRLINES**

The year 2020 promises to go from strength for tourism. This thinking was clear in a congratulatory note written by the Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, and addressed to the national airline, South African Airways (SAA) recently.

The Minister congratulated the national airline on being named one of the top-performing airlines globally for on-time performance (OTP) by travel data and analytics company, Cirium.

The International Airlines Transport Association's benchmark of OTP is that an airline is on-time when it arrives within 15 minutes of the scheduled time of arrival or departs within 15 minutes of the scheduled departure time. According to the recently released Cirium Report, SAA was ranked fourth in the category for the Middle East and Africa mainline carriers, making SAA the leading African carrier on OTP.

"This accolade of South African Airways being one of the top on-time airlines is another indication that our tourism services are among the best in the world. As a destination, we strive to offer a product where excellence is a habit and we will constantly enhance our offerings to ensure we reach our target of 21 million tourists by 2030, also aiming to secure a top position in the hearts of those who visit and tour our country," said the Tourism Minister.

By Staff Reporter



Source: Airway

MPUMALANGA SUCCESSFULLY TAKES ON TOURISM SAFETY AND SECURITY



The importance of tourist safety in South Africa has taken on profound proportions, from the implementation of a joint force between business, labour, Government and the private sector, to the training and placement of Tourism Monitors. Indeed these concerted efforts will surely not be in vain. Interestingly, President Cyril Ramaphosa also highlighted the prioritisation of this all-important aspect when delivering the State of the Nation Address (SONA) recently.

The President spoke plainly about tourists' safety. He indicated that for tourism to grow, the SAPS would increase visibility at identified tourist attraction sites. President Ramaphosa further assured South Africans that training Tourism Safety Monitors will be trained and will establish a reserve police capacity to focus on the policing of tourist attraction areas.

In addition to these, the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA), the Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism and the Mpumalanga SAPS, also recently implemented a Joint Provincial Tourism Safety Forum that has shown tangible results.

In reiterating this, spokesperson for Mpumalanga SAPS, Brigadier Leonard Hlathi, indicated through a statement that the collaboration between these organisations and the task team that was subsequently established had produced information that led to the identification of two kingpins, and warrants of arrest had been issued.

The Joint Provincial Tourism Safety Forum was launched in December by Deputy Minister of Tourism, Fish Mahlalela. This resulted in an establishment of a joint operations centre in Hazyview. Sixty additional officers, under the command of Brigadier Prince Ngobeni, were allocated to a tourism safety task team, which is in operation until March.

The Joint Tourism Safety Steering Committee includes various law enforcement agencies as well as the regional tourism organisations in the province.

In December 2019, the Minister of Tourism, together with Minister of Police announced a joint safety plan for the festive season, where the issue of tourism safety during and beyond the festive season was laid out. During the announcement, Minister Mmamoloko Khubayi-Ngubane said, "We have crafted a workable Tourism Safety Plan, integrating proactive preventative measures to potential incidents, responsive measures to ensure quick and effective operational response, and importantly, an aftercare programme that focuses on measures to facilitate and provide victim support after an incident has occurred."

Minister Khubayi-Ngubane added that in the long term, the Department "will remodel the Tourism Monitors Programme so that that they are linked with SAPS Community Policing Forums and Community Safety Patrollers as part of SAPS Community Policing Strategy."

According to the Senior Manager of Communications from Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, (MTPA) Kholofelo Nkambule, Graskop, Hazyview, White River and Sabie had been identified as the most common crime hotspots, with several incidents having occurred in the last six months.

An action plan, based on the identification of a common *modus operandi*, has been developed and integrated into the overall tourism safety plans.

"Criminals are using rented vehicles and target self-drive tourists. It becomes difficult to know who these tourists are as they collected rented cars and proceeded with their trips," said Nkambule.

"We are now engaging car rental companies at national level through the Southern African Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association to check whether there is a leak through their branches. Furthermore, the police are using crime intelligence sourced from outside the province in order to prevent the leaking of information."

There are a number of victim support programmes that are being supported by the MTPA and other tourism and security stakeholders. These include the White River Victim Support Group and the Kruger Lowveld Tourism Victim Support Programme.

**By Boitumelo Masihleho and
Johannes Mokou**



NEW TOURIST ATTRACTION FOR **GONAREZHOU NATIONAL PARK**

RHINO AND ELEPHANT **POACHING DECLINE IN SA**

The number of rhinos killed for their horns in South Africa has dropped for a fifth consecutive year, according to recent data released by the Ministry of Environmental Affairs. A total of 594 rhinos were killed in South Africa in 2019, a 22% drop from 769 in 2018.

Minister of Environmental Affairs, **Barbara Creecy**, said the decline was due to several strategies implemented by the Government, with the addition of technology to inform law enforcement authorities about poaching activities.

"A decline in poaching for five consecutive years is a reflection of the diligent work of the men and women who put their lives on the line daily to combat rhino poaching, often coming into direct contact with ruthless poachers," Creecy said.

Thirty-one elephants were killed in 2019, a 56% decrease. Creecy said improved capabilities to react to poaching incidents had helped decrease the number of poaching incidents.

"At a national level, 332 arrests were effected in respect of both rhino poaching and rhino horn trafficking. A total of 85 firearms were recovered during the year."

By Tourism Update

Gonakudzingwa National Monument is a new tourist attraction, due to open before the end of the year in Gonarezhou National Park in Chiredzi, Zimbabwe. Gonakudzingwa, along with Sikombela in Gokwe, is one of two restriction camps that the Rhodesians established (before Independence) to confine and restrict the movement and political activities of nationalists. The monument is located at the border of Zimbabwe and Mozambique at the Sango/Chiquaquala border post, close to the Limpopo River.

National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe Director, Dr Godfrey Mahachi, noted that progress had been made and all paperwork had been completed for the development of the monument. "We are therefore now only awaiting the official gazetting of Gonakudzingwa as a national monument," he said.

Chiredzi South legislator, Calisto Gwanetsa, added: "This place occupies an important part of our history and it's imperative that we revive its salience. We are the generation to do that. The place remains desolate in its present form but still captures the imagination of anyone who visits it and inspires the quest for an in-depth understanding about life, values and experience of the nationalists who spent years in the jungle in pursuit of freedom."

Some nationalists once held at Gonakudzingwa include Zimbabwe's late Vice Presidents, Dr Joshua Nkomo and Joseph Msika, Cephas Msipa, Josiah and Ruth Chinamano, Enos Nkala, Sikhanyiso Ndlovu and Willie Musarurwa.

Gonarezhou is part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP), which also includes South Africa's Kruger National Park and Mozambique's Gaza National Park. GLTP is home to more than 500 species of birds, 147 species of mammals, at least 116 species of reptiles, 34 species of frogs and 49 species of fish.

By Tourism Update



TRAVEL AND TOURISM: A KEY SECTOR IN UNLOCKING THE ECONOMY AND CREATING JOBS

Travel and tourism play a vital role in growing the economy and creating jobs. According to Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), South Africa has 16,2 million workers, and tourism directly employs 4,5% (726 500 jobs) of this total workforce.

Tourism created more jobs than manufacturing and mining between 2014 and 2017. It is critical that the industry is protected from forces that could impede its growth and sustainability.

In 2017, travel and tourism contributed R412 billion (€291m) to SA's GDP, and its direct and indirect contribution to employment is 1 530 500 jobs, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. This is a sector that Government must fully embrace, and nurture its growth with the intent to further contribute to the economy and employment.

The tourism sector created 31 752 nett new jobs (total jobs created within the sector less jobs that disappeared) in 2017. This is the greatest number of nett new jobs generated by tourism within a year

*Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa,
CEO of the Tourism
Business Council
of South Africa*



in at least the last eight years. This also represents the second year of employment growth after the sector saw a nett loss of 12 262 jobs in 2015. This highlights the strength of the industry and why it is imperative to build and strengthen the sector in a country that is suffering a particularly high unemployment rate.

To realise the full potential of the tourism industry's impact on the economy and job creation, the departure point must be the urgent removal of regulatory barriers that are impacting growth. This includes immigration regulations, national public transport regulations, and sharing economic concerns.

President Cyril Ramaphosa recognised tourism as one of the key sectors in stimulating the economy and creating jobs. In his inauguration speech, he said tourism was an area that provided our country with incredible opportunities to, "Quite literally, shine". He acknowledged that the industry was performing better than most other growth sectors and that there was no reason why it couldn't double in size.

However, this sentiment is yet to translate into the industry itself. The Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) believes that Government policy is a crucial area that can make or break the industry. Being sensitive to socio-political developments, the tourism industry can struggle to be profitable and sustainable if these developments are not in its favour, as was proven by Government's decision that travelling minors had to carry an unabridged birth certificate, without consulting the sector.

This regulation continues to have a significant negative impact on tourism as South Africa is perceived as an unfriendly family travel destination. The recent

amendment of the regulation still has not inspired confidence in airlines, tour operators, and travel agents to promote South Africa in their offering. The statistics show that key markets' arrivals are stagnant and the industry forward bookings have not improved.

Travel and tourism is a low-hanging fruit that can stimulate the economy and create more jobs. Unlike many industries that need the building of factories and buying of equipment, and many other capital expenditures, tourism is about our culture, food, wildlife, iconic mountains, breathtaking scenery, our cities and, most importantly, who we are. We already have a tourism infrastructure that surpasses that of many competitors.

To boost the economy and create jobs, the TBCSA suggests that the following actions be taken urgently by Government in consultation with the industry:

1. Urgent introduction of online visa application with fast turnaround time
2. Urgent granting of visa waivers to more countries
3. Suspending the confusing travel requirement for minors to promote family travel

We have seen many countries around the world that have introduced these systems, granting visa waivers and simplifying immigration, which have significantly grown their tourist arrivals. These measures will go a long way in increasing tourist arrivals. When we implement these suggestions, we could increase arrivals by 6% every year where we could see 14,5 million arrivals in 2014 and possibly 21 million arrivals in 2030. This will have a significant impact on job creation in a country that has a high unemployment rate.

By Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa

UNIQUE **WILDLIFE** **AND CONSERVATION** EXPERIENCES

Volunteers doing 'bait prep.' Source: © White Shark Projects



Voluntourism continues to grow as a form of niche travel that is definitely going mainstream. While the actual term 'voluntourism' may have had its origins in the 'gap-year' school-leaver market, it has morphed into a form of travel and tourism that applies to families, empty nesters, solo travellers and anyone who wants to give their time to benefit the environment or communities while on holiday.

Charmaine Beukes, MD of White Shark Projects (based in Gansbaai), says: "Volunteer travel provides people with the unique opportunity to explore and experience a destination through the eyes of the locals. It also affords the chance to meet and join forces with likeminded people from across the globe. Volunteering takes you out of the spectator seat and allows you to become integrated within the community where you choose to be."

According to Beukes, White Shark Projects has taken the lead in establishing shark tourism as an educational experience, and there are a few options on offer. There is the option of a 24-hour experience for people visiting the Mother City but who don't have much time. "But we would really like to recommend an extended stay of anything between two and six weeks."

Hands-on learning is a big part of the experience, which includes lectures on shark-related topics, boat and cage preparation,

and participation in data collection and collation among other ways to help. Beukes says White Shark Projects is a great option for international tour operators looking to cater for the more environmentally conscious holidaymaker.

"This is the perfect solution for the traveller who wants to give back to the community, meet new people as well as interact on a more personal level with the locals," says Beukes. "Over the years, the average age of a volunteer has changed from school and university leavers to a more mature group that wants to become part of a community rather than a visitor."

Another option for tour operators looking to package unique wildlife voluntourism encounters, is the cheetah wilding and release programme on offer by Ashia Cheetah Sanctuary and Awareness Centre, situated outside Paarl in the Western Cape.

Chantal Rischard, co-owner and founder of Ashia says, "Our conservation efforts primarily focus on the wilding and introduction of captive-bred cheetahs into the protected wild. The ultimate purpose is to strengthen the gene pool and to secure a viable cheetah metapopulation in South Africa, in order to prevent the further decline of cheetah numbers in the wild."

While staying at Ashia, volunteers are trained by first working alongside the

sanctuary staff. There are educational sessions with a focus on cheetah habitat and behaviour and wildlife conservation. Volunteers then have the option to extend their stay in South Africa by volunteering at one of the game reserves involved in the wilding and release programme. Generally, volunteers need to be available for three to four weeks but there are also flexible volunteering programmes on offer from two weeks to several months at a time.

Volunteers get to stay at Volunteer House, but there are also two cottages available for tour operators wanting to book clients on 'Working Holidays'. Ashia is a Fair Trade and Tourism-accredited Cheetah Centre.

Gondwana Game Reserve's Wendy Rutherford says the reserve's hands-on safari experience is a great option for those who want to take part and give back while enjoying the bounty of the environment.

"We have a fantastic three- and five-day conservation experience at our Tented Eco Camp that is very much like a volunteer vacation," says Rutherford.

The camp is on the Garden Route and guests stay in the super-stylish eco-friendly tented camp in a protected fynbos valley with stunning views as far as the eye can see. There are five large tents on raised platforms, each with its own deck and private bathroom. Up to 10 guests at a time enjoy this exclusive camp.

Gondwana is known for its eco-tourism ethos, and at the Tented Eco Camp families, groups or individuals can take part in an eco-conservation experience that not only teaches them about Africa and its incredible wildlife and plant life, but also assists the Gondwana team in collecting important data. Guests are offered the opportunity to get involved with veld management, and to learn bush skills and interpretation. The findings from the programme are sent back to Gondwana's conservation department to assist in improving and enhancing the existing reserve management plan. In between bush walks, game drives and time to relax guests have the opportunity to play a role in the future vision of this incredible reserve.

By Denise Slabbert



FUTURE-READY LODGES TURN TO **SOLAR POWER**

Forward-thinking luxury bush lodge owners across Africa have embraced this concept by engineering bespoke solutions for power generation, electrical reticulation and water heating. Besides doing the right thing for the environment by going green, there are substantial financial benefits to be gained by harnessing the renewable resources available to provide energy to the lodges.

With China, the US and India leading the surge in renewable energy production, the IEA predicts renewable energy capacity will expand by 43% – or more than 920 gigawatts – by 2022. Solar is expected to continue to dominate the renewables market, generating far more electricity in the next four years than wind and hydropower.

Erik Solheim, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment, in his report for *The European Sting* last year, says: “For eight consecutive years, global investment in renewables has exceeded \$200 billion, with a massive fall in renewables costs — particularly the tumbling price of solar panels — bringing increased bang for the buck. Its share of the grid has doubled in a decade.”

Off-grid sites typically run generators 24/7. In the minds of the people on the ground, if you have a generator you have an ‘infinite’ amount of power (running 24/7); but with

solar there’s a finite amount of energy that’s going to come out of the sky every day (amount of time the sun shines), and it’s capital intensive. **Andy Heathcote Marks**, director of Cape Town-based 1Energy, specialists in remote, off-grid solar installations, explains that the key is to learn how to be energy efficient without compromising the guest experience. “It’s about the type of equipment engaged in running the facility. Most of the power is used not in the guest rooms but in the back of the camp – water-treatment systems, laundries, water-heating equipment and so on. The trick is to use as much solar power as you can during the day and subtly reduce the amount of power used at night,” he says.

Sanctuary Retreats’ Chiefs Camp, on Chief’s Island in the Moremi Game Reserve in the Okavango Delta, Botswana, is one example where solar has been used to help minimise the impact of the camp on the local environment. They went as far as building their own solar farm, which combines solar panels with battery banks to provide effective solar power for the camp. This allows the camp to use direct energy from the sun during the day and store energy for use at night.

Energy-efficient solutions are being implemented at Sanctuary Olonana in Kenya, which is currently being rebuilt.

“A typical solar design, as long as capital allows for it, aims to produce 90% of power from solar. If a camp was burning 1 000 litres of diesel per day with a generator, that consumption will drop to 100 litres,” says Heathcote Marks. “And the environmental impact of transporting that diesel through sensitive ecological areas such as the Okavango Delta will be reduced, along with the noise pollution created by the generator itself.”

The solar panels are erected out of the sight of guests. They are housed in specially developed mounting systems to avoid the use of concrete, normally on the ground which can be sandy, rocky and uneven, sometimes in swamps. The heart of the automated system is a very complex architecture of batteries, charging and control equipment all working together with a generator. It is in fact a power station built into something like a repurposed shipping container.

Debbie Hathway is an award-winning senior journalist, who has been published in leading publications across Africa and beyond. She is a prolific writer on luxury lifestyle, travel, international and local property investment. Her article on medical tourism in Mauritius and South Africa won her a SADC Media Award 2018.

By Debbie Hathway



VIRGIN BOOSTS LONDON/CAPE TOWN SEASONAL FLIGHTS BY 80 000 SEATS

Virgin Atlantic has reintroduced its Cape Town-London Heathrow route – adding over 80 000 seats between the two cities – with the seasonal service launching October 25.

The seasonal daily service will complement the existing daily A350 service flying between Johannesburg and London Heathrow.

VS478 will operate as a night flight departing Heathrow at 16h20 arriving in Cape Town at 05h55. Return flight VS479 will depart at 08h00 landing later that day at 18h00.

The Cape Town flights will be operated with Virgin Atlantic's Boeing 787-9 aircraft, and the new services will go on sale from February 18.

Head of Africa, Middle East and India, of Virgin Atlantic, Liezl Gericke, commented: "The daily service will not only enhance

The daily service will not only enhance a vital link between Cape Town and the UK's capital, but it also provides seamless connections via Heathrow to Europe and North America

a vital link between Cape Town and the UK's capital, but it also provides seamless connections via Heathrow to Europe and North America."

Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane welcomed the new seasonal flights, noting that, presented with the many choices of holiday destinations, travellers were more inclined to choose destinations with ease of access; especially air access.

"The United Kingdom is one of our key tourist source markets and we believe that an additional direct flight from this market will hugely contribute toward us reaching our goal of 21 million tourists by 2030," she said.

By Tourism Update



KRUGER CONCESSION DUE FOR RENEWAL

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