



Eastern Cape tourism's agility proved to be saving grace

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With tourists increasingly looking for experiences in the wilderness, South Africa is an ideal destination. But zero in on the Eastern Cape, and tourists will find the rugged, untouched natural wide open spaces that are unmatched anywhere in the country.

The South African Pavilion at the Expo 2020 Dubai took the global travel trade to the Eastern Cape for the sixth instalment of its Provincial Showcase held on Tuesday, 21 December. The pavilion's theme "Think South Africa, Think Opportunity," is a fitting motto for a tourism industry that is looking to revive itself after the effects of Covid-19.

The Eastern Cape is known for its myriad landscapes that include its vast coastline, the arid regions of the Karoo Heartland, snow-capped Amathole Mountains, its dense forests in Hogsback, Stutterheim and Tsitsikamma, and urban centres in Gqeberha and Buffalo City.

Eastern Cape Parks & Tourism Agency (ECPTA) CEO, Vuyani Dayimani, said the pandemic gave tourism stakeholders in the province a chance to redefine the sector for a new kind of traveller.

From this came new and innovative packages centred on vast open spaces, a more aggressive online campaign and a new slogan: Yours to Explore. "We appreciated the challenges that came as a result of Covid-19 and embraced the innovation. New product offerings have come into play," said Dayimani.

He added that the travel packages are being created with an eye to attracting the new kind of conscious traveller – one who is concerned with safety and cares for others and the planet.

Adapting was key to building tourist confidence

The ECPTA's Chief Marketing Officer, Lihle Dlamini, said the province partnered with the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) to align itself with the Covid-19 protocols and therefore boost tourist confidence. "We ensured that all product owners got to understand the protocols. We had training and exposed them to a number of initiatives that made sure they were in line."

When the pandemic shut down tourism, the ECPTA embarked on a digital campaign that sought to keep the Eastern Cape top of mind for future travellers. "We went full on digital," said Dlamini. "We recognised that people were at home. We knew people were not in a position to come to the Eastern Cape so we continued to market online."

While the rejuvenated online presence has increased the province's international exposure, Dlamini said it was the domestic market that the agency wished to attract. "Domestically, we have initiatives that use media and videos we have created to make sure you know there is a province called Eastern Cape. We are aware that domestic tourism is key. It is our bread and butter."

Dlamini called on the travel trade to promote Eastern Cape as a preferred destination for those looking for experiences in nature. "The Eastern Cape has endless products and experiences. Even

though we suffered a lot, there is still a lot of business. We still need trade to market and promote us so that tourism [in the Eastern Cape] survives.”

The Provincial Showcase makes its way to the Western Cape on Wednesday, 22 December, showcasing its rolling vineyards, coastal gems and the Mother City. To catch this event, register on the pavilion's [online portal](#).

Keep up with the South African Pavilion Team on Twitter using the handle TeamSA_Expo2020. Follow the events at the pavilion using #ThinkOpportunity #Expo2020SA #ShareSouthAfrica.