



Gauteng a globally competitive force in tourism

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Gauteng might be South Africa's smallest province, with just a total area of over 18,000 square kilometres, but its economy packs the biggest punch.

The Gauteng province showed its mettle at the South African Pavilion's Provincial Showcase on Tuesday, 21 December, held at the Expo 2020 Dubai. The showcase promotes the business and leisure tourism opportunities that exist in each of the nine provinces. The pavilion's theme "Think South Africa, Think Opportunity," calls on investors from around the world to consider South Africa a lucrative business destination.

Speaking during the showcase, newly appointed CEO of the Gauteng Tourism Authority, Sthembiso Dlamini, said the province is positioning itself as a globally competitive force in tourism. Gauteng contributes 33% of the South Africa's GDP and is the seventh biggest economy in Africa. Some 54% of South Africa's exports originate from the province. Its tourism generates R35-billion, which is three percent of the province's GDP.

Its first-world infrastructure and economic clout has regularly hosted large-scale international cultural and sporting events. It has also forged strong partnerships with neighbouring provinces, as well as countries in West Africa. Dlamini considers the province that takes you to the rest of the continent.

But what makes Gauteng stand out from the rest, she said, is that it is where humankind began. "It all starts here. Our common human ancestry is here in Gauteng. That is appealing enough for one to say they want to come to Gauteng. It is breath-taking and humbling to get into a province where you can understand your DNA as a human being."

The Cradle of Humankind is home to the largest amount of hominin fossils in the world, some of which are as old as 3.5-million years. But besides the so-called paleo-tourism, Gauteng is a hub of fashion, food, sports, pop culture, media, and commerce – three-quarters of corporates in South Africa call Gauteng home and – making it a bucket-list destination for both leisure and business tourists. It also has 134 diplomatic missions, with Pretoria being the second biggest diplomatic city in the world behind Washington DC.

Gauteng tourism on the mend after Covid-19

Dlamini said that tourism in Gauteng is on a recovery path after the debilitating effects of Covid-19. "We need to rejuvenate to ensure we still do business. We are assessing what quality means for Gauteng. You want to have that unique proposal and unique visitor experience. So word of mouth is important to us."

Some of the key elements that will aid in recovery include:

- Maintaining quality health and safety protocols to ensure tourist confidence when travelling through Gauteng.
- Enhancing mobility and transport networks so that people can move around easily.
- Creating an enabling environment to increase tourist capacity and tourism growth.

- Taking advantage of the already world-class infrastructure to revive the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions industry and attract big international events.

Gauteng tourism has the ability to adapt

The Gauteng Tourism Authority Chief Marketing Officer, Barba Gaogamediwe, said that the Covid-19 pandemic has actually provided the province an opportunity to adapt to a new situation, particularly around medical tourism. “This has been a challenging 18 months, but what drives us is the belief that to adapt to different situations. Covid-19 has given us the opportunity has propelled us to offer medical tourism to visitors.”

Gaogamediwe said that the modern traveller is no longer looking for escapism but for meaningful experiences. “We need to repackage the province in terms of the hidden gems we have such as the Cullinan Diamond Mine and our paleo tours.”

He added that Gauteng offers these travellers an African experience with first world infrastructure, making it good value for money. “We will not tire in engaging with our partners to gain a competitive edge. Gauteng remains a value for money destination.”

The Provincial Showcase makes its way to the Western Cape on Wednesday, 22 December, showcasing the 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.