

# Taking investment for a ride

What had initially seemed like an impossible idea turned out to be one of the main attractions at the Swiss Economic Forum, Switzerland's biggest economic gathering, which was held in the Alpine town of Thun on 11 - 12 May 2006. The first-ever South African-branded London taxi to leave Britain gave the South African stand a huge lift and showcased South African tourism, trade and investment.



The sky-blue taxi, bearing the cheeky slogan "In South Africa, the sky matches this cab 350 days a year", stood out in a fleet of Audi's which ferried VIPs from the station to the conference centre in the scenic Alpine venue.

Among the VIPs to travel in the SA-branded taxi was Adolf Ogi, a former President of Switzerland, who insisted on being driven in the sky-blue taxi even though he had the choice of opting for the biggest and most luxurious of the limousines.

## Inspired presence

The inspired presence of the sky-blue taxi high in the Alps was the brainchild of Thomas Seghezzi, marketing officer of the South African Embassy in Switzerland. Seghezzi contacted the IMC's UK country manager, John Battersby, who connected him with Taxi Media, the London company that operates the branded taxis. A deal was struck after a long process of authorisation.

"I wanted something eye-catching like the taxi to market South Africa more generally as both a tourism and investment destination," says Seghezzi, who pulled off his vision against all the odds - in keeping with the IMC's brand-positioning statement for South Africa ("Alive with Possibility - Making the Impossible Possible").



Not the least surprised was taxi driver Paul Wardell: "When I drove through towns and villages on the way to Thun, people would stop in the street in amazement," he comments. "Adults jaws would drop and kids would be waving. Everybody wanted to take pictures and pose with the taxi. People really loved it."

Wardell is the proud driver of one of 20 SA-branded taxis in London which are sponsored by the IMC and carry a range of slogans promoting the attributes of South Africa as a destination for tourism and investment. Wardell's taxi is one of only a handful of London's 18 000 or so cabs that has ever left the British Isles for continental Europe.