

Sanlam Cape Town Marathon provides economic boost

Established as the highest profile road running race on the continent, the [Sanlam Cape Town Marathon](#) aims to further impact the economy this year by again boosting various sectors in the local community.



The 42km race was relaunched in 2014 with a new headline sponsor, Sanlam, and a vision of making a valuable contribution as a world-class sports event. Achieving immediate success, the race was recognised by global governing body, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

Having set a goal of being included among the world's most prestigious road races, the 2015 Sanlam Cape Town Marathon was recently announced as the only marathon in Africa to receive IAAF Silver Label status.

Race director Janet Welham says: "Our goal now is to achieve IAAF Gold Label status, and ultimately we want to be considered among the best 42km races in the world. This event is more than just a road race; we want to be able to leverage off it in order to meaningfully promote and change, to contribute towards the economy and make an impact on society. We have taken giant strides, it is only our second year and we can already see how much difference it has made."

The Sanlam Cape Town Marathon's Executive Committee hope to offer as much of a contribution to the Western Cape across various sectors as other marathon and ultra-marathon races around the country have achieved. This has been done by race organisers who have attracted thousands of amateur and professional runners.

Races that have created a successful model with this approach, boasting fields of between 5 000 and 23 000 runners, include:

- Soweto Marathon, 42km, Johannesburg
- Gauteng Marathon, 42km, Johannesburg
- Durban City Marathon, 42km, Durban
- Comrades Marathon, 89km, KwaZulu-Natal
- Loskop Marathon, 50km, Middelburg
- Om die Dam Marathon, 50km, Hartbeespoort

In the Western Cape, existing events across a number of different sports have also established themselves as world-class festivals:

- Cape Epic mountain bike stage race (1 200 participants)
- Cape Town Cycle Tour one-day road race (35 000 participants)
- Two Oceans Marathon, 56km road race (28 000 participants)

The success of these events, which all have entry limits for logistical and safety reasons, hinges on attracting local and foreign interest. This in turn creates a spinoff effect by boosting multiple sectors, including tourism and transport.

Welham says: "We believe we can add to and support what has already been achieved by existing events in order to provide real support to local communities. Studies have shown sport and recreation can be used as a vehicle to provide a significant financial boost. We are confident we will continue to achieve this goal as the race expands."

Research presented at last year's inaugural Cape Town PEACE Conference, held on the sidelines of the Sanlam Cape Town Marathon, showed major opportunities exist to position sport and recreation as a sector with a comparative advantage in increasing economic growth. The research also indicated the potential to increase employment and social development. "The actual impact of sport and recreation is largely unknown and vastly underestimated," the PEACE Conference revealed in its findings.

However, a 2011 recreation study of the City of Cape Town found the participation rate of adults in the metropolitan area in sport and recreation was 27%, and participation trends were relatively low compared to other provinces. Despite the low rate of activity, the GDP contribution of sport and recreation to the Western Cape economy was estimated at R8 billion per annum. This indicated tremendous potential offered by the organisation and promotion of high-profile, mass participation sports events.

Sport and recreation could also be directly linked to tourism trends, the PEACE Conference found, with a large number of people visiting the province and other areas around the country as sports tourists.

South Africa has previously hosted numerous successful major international events:

- Rugby World Cup, 1995 (1.1 million tickets sold for live matches)
- All Africa Games, 1999 (25 000 foreign spectators, athletes and officials)
- Cricket World Cup, 2003 (626 845 tickets sold)
- Fifa World Cup, 2010 (3.1 million tickets sold)

All these events attracted fans and visitors from around the globe, and their success created a springboard for annual domestic festivals hoping to create similar interest.

If Durban wins its bid for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, according to an economic impact study by international services firm Ernst and Young, international visitors are expected to provide up to R20 billion in output to the economy. This would translate into an additional R11 billion GDP growth.

While the Games would attract more visitors than annual road races, it would be a once-off competition, whereas annual events such as the Sanlam Cape Town Marathon have the potential to make a regular economic impact. Last year's race attracted over R22 million in advertising value alone in the four-month build-up to the race, and raised over R350 000 for charity.

Yegs Ramiah, chief executive of Sanlam Brand, says: "The potential impact of hosting Africa's only IAAF accredited marathon is undeniable. Besides providing a unique experience to runners from all over the world, the event will boost city tourism and has the potential of putting Cape Town, South Africa and our continent on the global stage. Sanlam is proud to

be able to bring the race to Africa."

The Sanlam Cape Town Marathon consists of five events:

- 42km City Marathon
- 10km PEACE Run
- 4.2km Community Fun Run
- 22km PEACE Trail Run
- 11km PEACE Trail Run

Last year, these combined events attracted more than 12 000 participants from 53 countries. The marathon race, also boasted a world-class field of 29 elite athletes from six nations.

A total of 96.5% of participants were South African citizens, with 22% of these runners residing outside Western Province. Of the 3.5% of foreign participants, the largest representation came from:

- United States (20%)
- United Kingdom (15%)
- France (10%)

The pre-race expo catered for 42 exhibitors, while the PEACE Conference welcomed 73 delegates from 12 countries, creating a forum of exchange across various sectors of society.

This year's event is expected to attract thousands more runners, and the results across the different sectors are expected to be seen in relative terms.

The aims and objectives of the race, a partnership between Western Province Athletics, ASEM Running and the City of Cape Town, are to deliver a prestigious, sustainable, all-inclusive City Marathon, and its success should reverberate across the province.

Race ambassador Elana Meyer, a Stellenbosch resident and former world record holder over the 15km and 21km distances, says: "We believe the Mother City is the ideal host for an iconic city marathon that showcases the continent's remarkable talent for long-distance running. We've seen how overseas races like the New York and London marathons have earned global recognition as major international events, and we hope to achieve the same success here. The more this event grows, the more it will provide an economic boost by developing multiple sectors across our society. After a successful start last year, we see this race growing in leaps and bounds, and communities in the Western Cape will continue to benefit accordingly."

The second edition of the relaunched Sanlam Cape Town Marathon will be held in Cape Town on 20 September.

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