

# What's driving South Africa's guided holiday trend?

By Jenna Berndt

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Given the current state of the economy, it's little wonder that South Africans are changing the way they travel. More than ever, travellers are looking for holidays that will give them the most value for money and tick their travel wish lists and needs. Increasingly popular, guided holidays seem to be the answer.



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## Value for money

With the exchange rate what it is, South Africans want the most bang for their buck.

Accommodation, breakfasts and transport costs can quickly eat into your travel budget. "It is so much easier to get a good deal on a holiday if you book it early, from six months to a year in advance," says TTC managing director in South Africa, Teresa Richardson. "Travellers who book their 2020 holiday in 2019 will save and beat inflation hikes."

## Immersive, authentic local experiences

Today's traveller wants to do more than tick off the iconic hotspots. Journey deeper into the heart of a destination and seek out immersive, authentic, local-led experiences on a guided tour.

These stops can be tricky to identify if you are a D-I-Y traveller, maintains Richardson.

## Itineraries tailored around special interests

Birds of a feather can, and should, flock together. And, special interest and niche trips appeal to many different interests. These types of itineraries offer the traveller a trip perfectly designed around their interests.

Gastronomic and culinary tourism is big business worldwide, and it's no different with a guided holiday. According to a UNWTO report, over a third of tourist spending is devoted to food.

"Food tourism is much more than just waiting in line for (arguably) the best pastéis de nata (custard tart) at the world-famous Pastéis de Belém bakery in trendy Lisbon. It's about sitting down for lunch on a stud farm in Alentejo to enjoy Portuguese chicken and share stories and laughter with the locals who have lived there for generations," says Richardson.

Horticulturalists, on the other hand, can sniff out the blooming delights of the destination's flora and fauna. Trips visiting England's country gardens and the RHS Chelsea Flower Show or the Keukenhof Gardens in the Netherlands ablaze with tulips from March to end-May will put a spring into the step of all plant lovers.

Faith-based travel is also on the rise. According to a World Tourism Organisation report, up to 330 million people visit key religious sites each year. One such bucket list experience is the Oberammergau Passion Play, occurring only once every decade in the tiny Bavarian town in Germany.

## Peace of mind

Travelling with a reputable operator and in the safety of a group offers travellers peace of mind. For the solo, first-time or female traveller, that is often priceless.

"To reduce any other anxiety or concerns regarding the 'what-ifs,' it is also good to ensure that you always travel with travel insurance," suggests Richardson.

## The more the merrier

Guided holidays bring together people from all over the world. That means people with different backgrounds, ages, interests and unique stories to share.

Chéné Roux, who embarked on a Trafalgar guided holiday with her brother and parents, for example, visited Switzerland, Italy and France. She said: "Our tour group had people of all ages. So nobody felt 'out' or uncomfortable. I found that so enriching [and] it was beautiful to connect with people from all over [who are] at different stages in their lives."

"For the solo traveller wishing to have some time to themselves, don't think that a guided holiday is out of the question, either. There are many different itineraries and trip styles, so choose the perfect one for you. Tours are also designed with ample opportunity for solo exploration and me-time," she says.

## ABOUT JENNA BERNDT

With a curious mind and a love for travel and tourism, Jenna Berndt has over nine years' marketing experience in the travel industry. She is currently a brand owner for leisure travel brands at Big Ambitions, a specialist Cape Town-based travel content marketing consultancy.

Jenna has a journalism degree specialising in graphic design, a keen eye for visual and written communication and is focused on achieving brand goals through content creation and PR, marketing strategy, SEO copywriting and social media.

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