

CoCT kicks off Tourism Month with several campaigns to bolster industry

The City of Cape Town has marked the start of Tourism Month with the announcement of several campaigns and strategies under the theme of *Tourism for Inclusive Growth*, which is all aimed at revitalising and reimagining the key sector in Cape Town.



Source: Supplied

Speaking at the city hall's revamped Visitor Information Centre, a walk-in space boasting interactive screens where people and business groups can engage with products and experiences, mayoral committee for economic opportunities and asset management, Alderman James Vos, said the goal of inclusive growth was the driving force of the directorate.

"The sector contributed nearly 3% - or R130bn – to GDP in 2018 and 4,5% of those employed in South Africa worked in the tourism industry while 113,000 tourism jobs were held in Cape Town in that year. And that is not even taking into account the indirect value of tourism to other industries such as retail and manufacturing.

"Now consider that the volumes of tourists countrywide decreased by 72,6% from 10,2 million in 2019 to 2,8 million in 2020. This makes clear that tourism is everybody's business," said Vos.

Through funding to partners such as the official Destination Marketing Organisation, Cape Town Tourism (CTT), Vos said the City was able to maintain vital awareness of the Mother City, stay connected with travellers before, during, and after their visit, and simultaneously empower local industry businesses with access to information, networking opportunities, exposure, and more.

Vos further highlighted actions already taken in the last year and a half, namely the Tourism Bounce Back Strategy and the Six-Pillar Destination Marketing & Communication Initiative positioning Cape Town as the premier destination in Africa to visit, live, work, study, play and invest.

Under the umbrella of the strategy, the city has:

- Attracted more airlines, via the Air Access initiative, back to Cape Town International Airport.

In recent weeks, Emirates, Singapore Airlines, Lufthansa, and Turkish Airlines came back while British Airways is set to fly to and from Cape Town from November. Local hospitality businesses saw a resultant uptick in business with Cape Town hotel occupancy rates during the second quarter of 2021 recording a more significant improvement in occupancy than almost all other submarkets in the country

- Spearheaded a call for national government to roll out a Remote Work Visa to allow international working tourists to stay and spend in South Africa for longer periods
- Urgently appealed to the UK government to remove South Africa from its so-called red list and similarly appealing to other nations to also review their travel restrictions, particularly for vaccinated travellers
- Called on the national transport department to approve the request from US airline, Delta, to fly to Cape Town, a move that would be welcomed by US travellers, the majority of whom include the Mother City in their itineraries
- Launched Cruise Cape Town, a partnership with Wesgro, Transnet National Ports Authority, the Western Province Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the V&A Waterfront, and the South African Maritime Safety. With cruise ships due to set sail from South African ports in November, this is a critically important time to boost Cape Town's destination profile in this high value market
- Appealed to national government to roll out an e-visa
- Campaigned for the reduction of aviation taxes as a way of lowering the cost of air travel so that more South Africans can travel at an affordable rate.
- Turning to next steps, the city's economic opportunities mayoral member laid out a series of interlinked goals to realise inclusive growth, including:
 - Boosting domestic tourism through CTT's 'Explore Captivating Cape Town' local campaign
 - Further targeting local tourists by highlighting affordability of products and services through initiatives such as CTT's pocket-friendly challenge and a list of 50 things to do for under R50.
 - Amplifying community tourism to show the diversity, cuisine and cultures of Cape Town. Local SMMEs were also encouraged to contact city's business hub for advice relating to business growth.
 - CTT will also be providing businesses with a neighbourhood experience development training manual to help guide SMMEs through developing their operations and to encourage neighbourhood readiness for when travellers return. The manual was drafted together with experts at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

"This is really a fantastic tool and a tangible example of working towards inclusive growth because it's got detailed modules and practical activities on, for example, packaging your business offering for tourists, conducting market research, and cultural understandings. There are even guides on how to do an income statement and making use of booking and marketing platforms," said Vos.

- Using technology to make for a fuller and more seamless travel experience. An example of this is Namola, a travel safety app with whom CTT has collaborated. Vos said further tech solutions are being explored, such smart apps and enhanced search engine optimisation that would highlight Cape Town when would-be travellers are looking online for information about different kinds of activities or adventures around the world.

- Increasing international marketing to bring back the millions of travellers keen to visit the Mother City. At CTT, this will take shape under the 'Find Your Freedom' campaign where potential travellers will be able to choose their own Cape Town adventure in an interactive video. The body is also engaging with international partners to put branding in airports and train stations or subways to make sure potential travellers in key source markets become actual travellers.

CTT CEO, Enver Duminy, said that, on reflection of the past 18 months, the organisation had identified three high-level needs of businesses in the industry: marketing, increasing international demand, and financial support.

"At CTT, we have looked at first addressing the financial support to SMMEs. As such, we're offering free membership until the end of this financial year. That, of course, comes with access to our research, network and exposure opportunities," said Duminy.

Asked about when he expected the industry to recover, Duminy said it must start immediately. "We need to focus on our key source markets. This means we need to play and hunt smarter in terms of our marketing in order to see that conversion from potential to actual tourists."

The month will also include activations at various tourism and hospitality service providers in Langa, Mitchells Plain, Kirstenbosch, Khayelitsha, Woodstock as well as visits to schools to encourage Cape Town's future entrepreneurs to understand the value of tourism and socially investing in their city home.

"Let's face it, Covid-19 has changed everything. Most of us have had to make drastic changes to the way we live, work and play and brought into stark relief the challenges that have long rocked our country.

"But we can recover. With the tailwinds of innovation, collaboration and positivity pushing us, we can break barriers and create a more inclusive tourism industry that will fly higher than ever. But it will require us as government and industry leaders to radically reimagine how we work together, and reimagine what we offer to travellers looking for an experience they will not get anywhere else. There is no time to waste," said Vos.

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