Local and Cultural Inspired Tourism Trend Report

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South Africa

SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

OUR RESEARCH APPROACH.

This report explores how destinations are integrating local and cultural elements into tourism itineraries, and highlights opportunities for the South African tourism industry to capitalise on this growing trend.

Desktop research was used to identify current digital trends in tourism. The process followed a three-fold matrix to identify recent trends. The matrix assesses the popularity, activity, and freshness of each trend. Freshness relates to the relative newness of an article; Activity – the number of people interacting with an article, including social media postings; and Popularity – the scoring of appeal based on how many people choose an article when given other options in the same category or cluster.

The selection of key trends was based on a relative score of 4 and above, with a high relative freshness.

Source: Trend Hunter

CONSUMER INSIGHTS.

1. Community-Based and Equitable Tourism.

TREND

Travelers are seeking experiences that directly involve and benefit local communities.

INSIGHT

Destinations are shifting towards models where tourism benefits local communities directly. In Penglipuran, Bali, the village operates a community-based tourism model where all households participate equally, and tourism revenues fund communal development projects. This approach ensures that tourism supports local infrastructure and preserves cultural heritage

2. Nature and Culture Integration.

TREND

Destinations are increasingly combining natural landscapes with cultural heritage to offer immersive, holistic travel experiences. This trend appeals to travelers seeking both scenic beauty and authentic cultural connection in a single journey.

INSIGHT

Destinations are blending natural beauty with cultural heritage to offer holistic travel experiences. In Tibet, festivals like the Mount Qomolangma Cultural Tourism Festival celebrate both the natural grandeur of the Himalayas and the rich cultural traditions of the region, including Tibetan opera and Buddhist rituals

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3. Digital Engagement and Virtual Cultural Access.

TREND
The rise of digital platforms has enabled cultural institutions to reach a global audience. Virtual tours and online exhibitions allow travelers to explore cultural sites remotely, sparking interest in physical visits and providing accessible cultural education.

INSIGHT
Digital platforms are transforming cultural tourism by expanding global access to heritage experiences. Virtual engagement is not replacing travel but enhancing it, inspiring future visits and making cultural education more inclusive and far-reaching.

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4. Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Practices.

TREND

There is a growing emphasis on sustainability within cultural tourism. Travelers are increasingly seeking experiences that minimise environmental impact and support local communities. This includes staying in eco-friendly accommodations, participating in conservation efforts, and engaging in activities that promote cultural preservation.

INSIGHT

Travellers are becoming more conscious of their impact and are prioritising sustainable cultural tourism experiences that align with their values, favoring eco-friendly, community-driven activities that both protect the environment and preserve local traditions.

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5. Personalized and Niche Cultural Experiences.

TREND

Travelers are moving away from generic tours in favor of personalised, niche experiences that align with their specific interests, such as art history, indigenous cultures, or culinary traditions. This trend is supported by technology, allowing for customized itineraries and private tours that offer deeper cultural insights.

INSIGHT

Destinations are shifting towards offering personalised, interest-driven experiences, as travelers seek deeper, more meaningful connections with local culture, enabled by technology that allows for custom itineraries and specialised cultural immersion.

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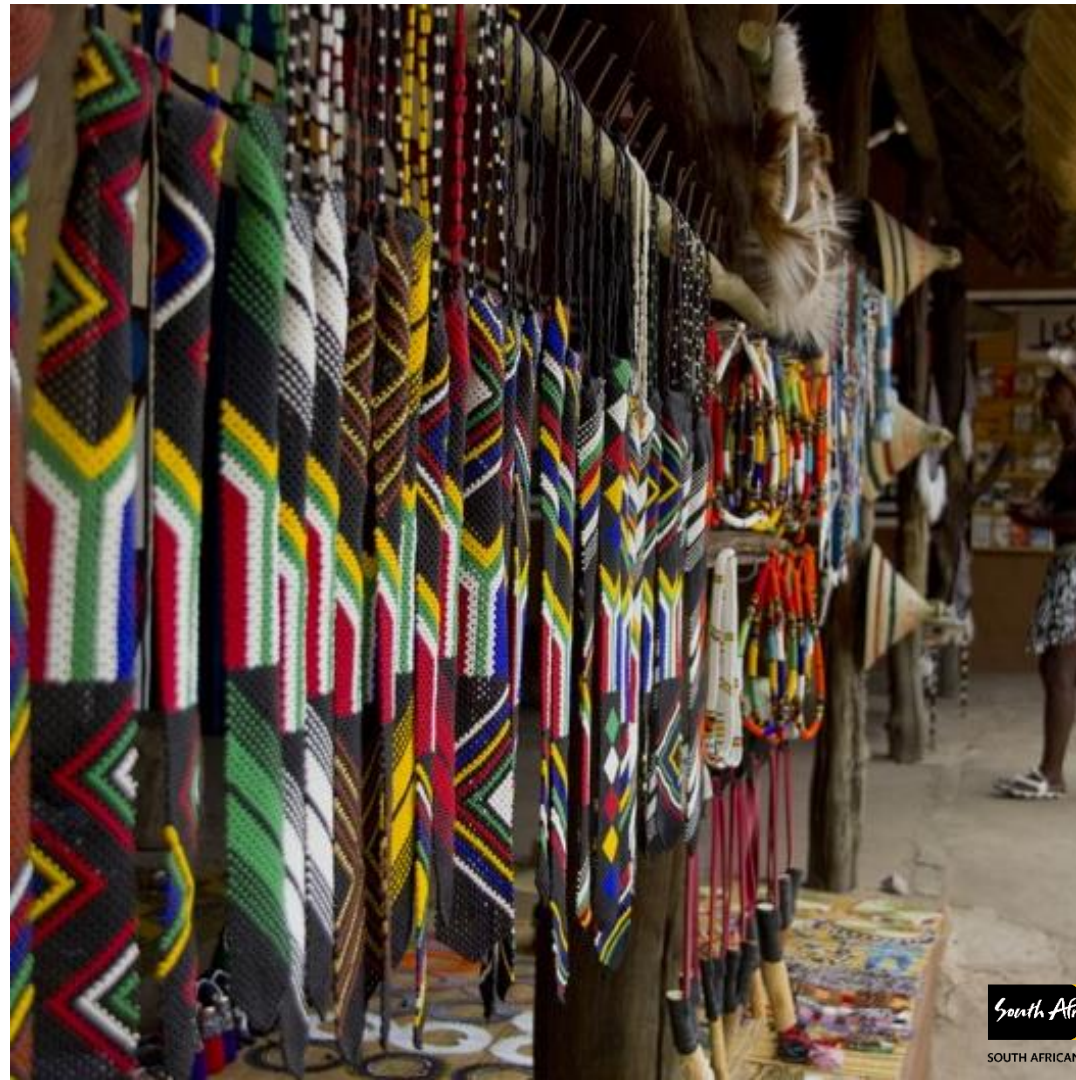
6. Local Hospitality.

TREND

As the boutique hotels market grows, new hotels are embracing local culture through design plans, local sourcing, and/or community collaborations. These hotels aim to facilitate more authentic local experiences, while maintaining the benefits of luxury travel for their guests.

INSIGHT

The demand for authentic travel experiences continues to grow, and more consumers are traveling while aiming to reduce their impact on local communities and environments. As their values evolve, travelers who want authentic (but luxurious) experiences opt for businesses that are clear about their local contributions.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES.

Retro Singaporean
Coffee Experiences.

Chin Mei Chin Confectionary Offers a 1925-Inspired Breakfast

Chin Mee Chin Confectionery, established in 1925, offers a nostalgic breakfast experience that reflects its rich heritage. Located in the Katong area of Singapore, this historic coffee shop is renowned for its traditional offerings, including kaya toast, soft-boiled eggs, and kopi. The kaya toast, a signature dish, features a generous spread of house-made kaya (coconut jam) on freshly toasted bread, often accompanied by a slab of butter. The soft-boiled eggs are served with a dash of soy sauce and white pepper, providing a simple yet flavorful start to the day. The coffee, brewed using a traditional sock filter, is robust and aromatic, complementing the breakfast items perfectly.

The ambiance of Chin Mee Chin Confectionery adds to the overall experience, with its vintage decor and old-school charm. The shop's interior features marble-topped tables, wooden chairs, and tiled floors, reminiscent of a bygone era. The walls are adorned with photographs and memorabilia that tell the story of the coffee shop's long history. Despite modern renovations, the establishment has retained its classic appeal, attracting both locals and tourists who seek an authentic experiences.

Curated Travel Guides.

Gaido Connects Travelers With Local Experts for Unique Experiences

Gaido is a travel platform designed to help users discover authentic experiences beyond typical tourist a ttractions. It provides curated recommendations from local experts on dining, activities, and nightlife, ensuring travelers access unique and high-quality options.

With a network of over 25 guides, Gaido also offers in-person tours and virtual itinerary consultations, allowing users to plan tailored experiences with insider knowledge. By prioritising local expertise, the platform aims to create meaningful travel encounters while supporting regional businesses. Whether exploring a new city or seeking hidden gems in a familiar destination, Gaido streamlines the process of finding distinctive experiences. For travelers looking to go beyond mainstream recommendations, this service provides a structured approach to immersive and personalised exploration.

Porto
NIGHTLIFE GUIDE

Filipino-Perspective City **Campaigns.**

'Of Course, Hong Kong' Features Four Local Filipino Creators

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has introduced the 'Of Course, Hong Kong' campaign, featuring four Filipino creators who have lived in Hong Kong for nearly a decade. The campaign provides their personal recommendations of hidden gems and local experiences in the city.

The participants include "illustration artist Reana Bachiller, rugby player Rob Fogerty, content creator Jen Balisi, and fashion photographer Paul Sunga: each highlights their favorite locations across different themes: Arts and Culture, Nature and Adventure, Food and Drinks, and Shop and Play."

Presented as "a four-part series, this campaign aims to showcase the diverse experiences Hong Kong has to offer and mirrors a recent initiative by the Singapore Tourism Board, which featured Malaysian celebrities to promote travel," emphasising how targeted campaigns can engage specific audiences effectively.

OF COURSE, HONG KONG

FILIPINOS RECOMMEND

Localised Destination **Campaigns.**

Rosewood Hotels & Resort Debuts 'Discovered at Rosewood'

Rosewood Hotels & Resorts has launched its latest campaign, 'Discovered at Rosewood,' highlighting the importance of authentic travel experiences and local partnerships. This initiative celebrates the cultural diversity and traditions of each Rosewood destination, offering travelers a deeper connection to the communities they visit. Featuring photography by Jo Metson Scott, the campaign showcases Rosewood's commitment to preserving and promoting local heritage.

The focus is on cultural immersion, encouraging guests to explore regional crafts and traditions. Artisans like "paddleboard maker Gerald Aichriedler and fisherman Gerhard Langmaier are highlighted, embodying the spirit of their communities and the craftsmanship Rosewood seeks to support."

Additionally, 'Discovered at Rosewood' emphasizes sustainability through traditional practices, such as circular fishing, aligning with modern environmental goals.

Recommendations.

Strategic **Recommendations.**

Grow Community-Based Tourism
Help local communities benefit directly from tourism by supporting and promoting their initiatives. Use successful examples like Bali's Penglipuran Village, where everyone in the village is involved. Show how the money earned is used to improve the community and preserve its culture.

Combine Nature and Culture
Create travel packages that mix beautiful natural areas (like the Drakensberg or Garden Route) with local cultural experiences (like storytelling, crafts, or heritage tours). For example, a hike that ends with traditional food and dancing at a village. These experiences appeal to visitors who want a deeper, more meaningful trip.

Make Culture Accessible Online
Use digital tools to showcase South Africa's culture with virtual tours, behind-the-scenes videos, and interactive stories. Work with museums and local guides to create engaging content that inspires people to visit in person.

Strategic **Recommendations.**

Support Sustainable and Ethical Travel
Promote tourism businesses that are eco-friendly and protect local culture. Introduce a special label like "Sustainable SA" to help visitors identify responsible travel options, and support businesses that care for the environment and use local products.

Create Custom Cultural Itineraries
Offer themed travel plans for people interested in things like art, food, wellness, or history. Let small groups and solo travelers customise their trips with the help of local guides and digital tools. Show that South Africa offers more than typical sightseeing.

Strategic **Recommendations.**

Boost Local Hospitality
Encourage hotels and lodges to reflect South African culture through their design, food, and staff. Promote small boutique stays and homestays that offer unique, locally-inspired experiences and employ people from nearby communities.

Run Authentic Local Campaigns
Use real South African voices in marketing. Highlight local creatives and influencers from different provinces who can show off the country's best hidden spots, food, and art from their own perspective.

Equip Trade with Powerful Stories
Give travel agents the tools they need—like videos and brochures—to sell South Africa by focusing on its people, stories, and culture. Train them to explain what visitors will learn, who they'll meet, and how their trip helps local communities.

For more information contact:

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