



**TOURISM  
TUESDAYS**  
JOIN THE CONVERSATION  
[#TourismTuesdays](#)

JUNE 2025 EDITION





# NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

**South Africa Awaits – Come Find Your Joy in every kind of experience.**

South Africa is a destination beaming with variety. From luxury tents under the stars to world-class lifestyle centres; from thrilling wildlife safaris led by passionate guides to bold young entrepreneurs shaking things up with fresh tourism ideas, this country is a blend of unforgettable experiences waiting to be explored.

In this edition of **Tourism Tuesdays**, we highlight and celebrate some of the exciting people and stories that make South Africa so special. We check in at the brand-new Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Centre in the Free State; we celebrate the best in field guiding at the Safari Guide of the Year Awards; and we peek inside South Africa's first-ever Glamping Expo.



And because June is Youth Month, we're shining a light on the incredible young talent recognised at this year's Youth-Owned Brand Awards (YOBAs) – the future of our tourism industry is in great hands.

So, as we gear up for the month of July, we also look forward to honouring the legacy of our global icon, *Tata Nelson Mandela* – who is a reminder of how far we've come and the potential we still must unlock.

Wherever you are in South Africa, there's something amazing to explore and experience!

**Warm regards,  
The Tourism Tuesdays Team**



**From left:** Patricia de Lille, Minister of Tourism; His Majesty Morena e Moholo: Moremoholo Mopeli of the Bakoena Kingdom; and Dr Dion George, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries.

## Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Centre is Open!

Launched at the Golden Gate Highlands National Park this past weekend, the brand-new Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre is a world-class scientific and cultural tourism attraction.

**T**he R120-million facility, co-funded by the European Union through the South African National Treasury, blends palaeontology, geology, and cultural heritage into an immersive visitor experience. It also marks a major milestone in tourism development with the centre already graded as a quality-assured establishment, a significant achievement that positions it as a flagship attraction in the region.

Launched under the theme 'A Nation That Works for All – Unearthing Our Past, Building Our Future', the centre showcases the oldest known dinosaur embryos and features interactive exhibits designed to inspire all ages.

The event also celebrated the graduation of newly trained local tourist guides, reinforcing government's commitment to inclusive growth through tourism.



Patricia de Lille, our Minister of Tourism, described the centre as a joyful fusion of science, culture, and opportunity. In addition to offering guided tours, the interpretation centre has been designed as a multifunctional venue suitable for hosting events and conferences.

The facility includes an auditorium, a conference/ boardroom equipped with a breakaway room, and a dedicated function area that can accommodate approximately 50 guests.

The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) has awarded it a 3-star events venue grading, which is an exciting achievement that reflects its quality and potential. With ongoing enhancements, the venue is well-positioned for an upgrade in future.



For more information

[CLICK HERE](#)



**“Kgodumodumo is an experience that brings it all together, locally rooted and globally inspiring.” – Patricia de Lille, Minister of Tourism**







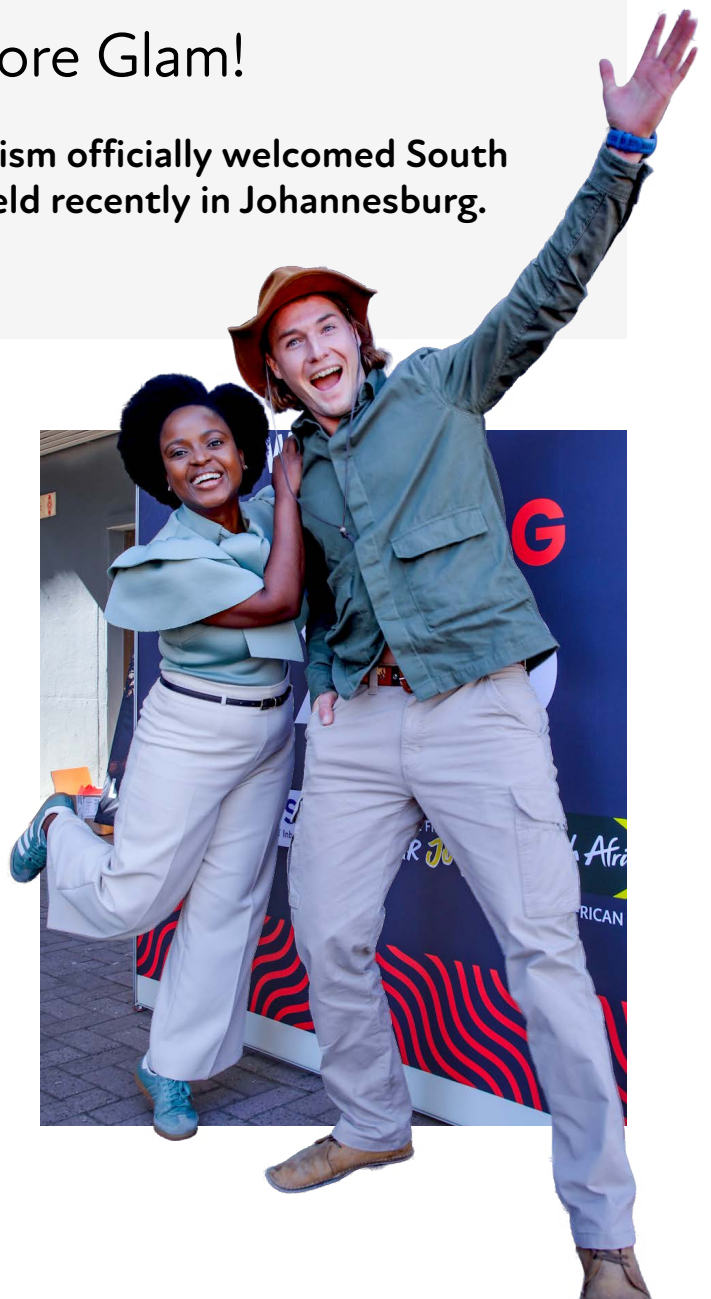
## It's Camping, But Far More Glam!

**Patricia de Lille, our Minister of Tourism officially welcomed South Africa's first-ever Glamping Expo, held recently in Johannesburg.**

**A**s the country continues to diversify its offerings to meet the evolving expectations of global travellers, the Minister expressed her excitement at the emergence of glamping, which is a luxury-meets-nature trend that is transforming how visitors experience the country.

"Glamping is more than just comfort in the wild – it's a game-changer for rural tourism, a job creator, and a bridge between conservation and commerce," she said. "It brings income to communities, dignity to local service, and joy to visitors without bulldozing the bush." She also applauded the initiative as a timely and innovative leap forward for South Africa's tourism landscape.

The Minister noted that in a competitive global travel market, South Africa must constantly innovate, offering variety, authenticity, and immersive experiences – all while creating inclusive growth.







Minister De Lille thanked the organisers for their bold vision and commitment to sustainability, transformation, and community empowerment. These are all key pillars of the tourism sector's future. She hailed the expo as an important platform to spark fresh ideas, expand market opportunities, and showcase the full potential of this fast-growing niche.

**“South Africa doesn’t need cookie-cutter ideas. We need magical places, under trees and stars, that tell our story,” she added. “You’ve really pitched a perfect tent for tourism transformation.”**

Glamping is in ideal alignment with South African Tourism’s South Africa Awaits – Come Find Your Joy! global brand campaign, offering unique, joy-filled experiences in nature that resonate with today’s conscious traveller.

The Glamping Expo will be an annual platform for businesses across the glamping value chain, where participants can showcase their glamping innovations and products, network with industry peers, and seek potential collaborations and investments.



**From left:** Nonnie Kubeka, Gauteng Tourism Authority; Kenny Hlela, Gemini Destination Advisory; Thembisile Sehloho, CMO, South African Tourism; and Londy Ngcobo, moderator.



**From left:** Mike Karantonis, Founder of the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa and judge; Nombulelo Guliwe, Chief Executive Officer, South African Tourism; and Michelle du Plessis, Managing Director of the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa and judge.

## Celebrating the Safari Guide of the Year 2025

Last Saturday, the sweeping grasslands of the Eastern Cape Province's Kariega Game Reserve played host to a celebration of skill, spirit, and storytelling at the Safari Guide of the Year 2025 awards.

**M**ore than just a competition, this prestigious event, powered by the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA), was a tribute to the men and women who bring South Africa's wilderness to life. These are the expert guides who do more than interpret the natural world – they ignite wonder, connection, and a lifelong passion for the bush in every visitor they meet.

Co-founded by Mike Karantonis in 2011, the Safari Guide of the Year event is designed to honour professionals nominated by lodges, guests, training

providers, and fellow industry experts. These are individuals who embody integrity, experience, and excellence in their craft.

The finalists were from a range of specialised disciplines, and were assessed on their skills in offering guided walking and photographic experiences and storytelling, to track and sign, and bird identification by sight and sound. These skills all reflect the high standards of FGASA, a body that has trained more than 40 000 guides and continues to push the envelope in ethical, accredited field guiding.





**From left: Cameron Schmidt and Matthew Derry, with Nombulelo Guliwe, Chief Executive Officer, South African Tourism; Megan Heramb-Smith; Jason Gipson, overall winner; and Kalie Otimile, runner-up.**

In remarks delivered on behalf of Patricia de Lille, our Minister of Tourism, Nombulelo Guliwe, South African Tourism's Chief Executive Officer, affirmed the powerful role these guides play.

"When tourists come to South Africa, they come for more than the scenery – they come to connect with us," she said. "Our field guides are often the first, most unforgettable point of connection. In addition to enhancing the overall tourist experience, tour guides are key to promoting cultural understanding, imparting knowledge, stimulating local economies and ensuring sustainable tourism practices. Thank you for helping us to deliver on our global brand campaign's promise: South Africa Awaits – Come Find Your Joy!"

At its core, this event is about more than recognition. It's about amplifying the impact of field guides

on conservation, local communities, and tourism economies. It's about building a platform for career longevity and excellence. And it's about reinforcing the critical truth: that great guiding transforms safaris into unforgettable journeys.

The Safari Guide of the Year Awards also echo broader goals, aligning with the Tourism Sector Master Plan, advancing professionalisation.



**For more on the winners**

**[CLICK HERE](#)**



# Youth Entrepreneurs are Changing the Face of Tourism in South Africa

**On 21 June, the 2025 Top 16 Youth-Owned Brand Awards (YOBAs) honoured the young tourism talent that's taking travel to the next level.**



**A** new wave of young businessowners are transforming the industry with fresh ideas and bespoke unforgettable experiences. Their innovative spirits are helping to reshape how the world explores our country – from adrenaline-fuelled dune adventures and holistic wellness hikes to culturally rich rural getaways, these young visionaries are taking tourism into bold new territory.

Four dynamic businesses were shortlisted in the Travel & Tourism category of the 2025 Top 16 YOBAs: Twin Venture, Hikeobics, NBSG Travel, and Asambeni Getaway.

Although there could only be one winner, the judges agreed that each company represented a powerful example of how youth-led businesses are driving inclusivity, sustainability and innovation in tourism.

This year's winner was Sanele Mthembu, the founder of Asambeni Getaway, a business that stood out for its impact, ingenuity, and commitment to community.

Thembisile Sehloho, Chief Marketing Officer at South African Tourism, said: "These young entrepreneurs are creating jobs, uplifting communities, and ensuring that South Africa remains a compelling destination. They are the future of our sector, and we are proud to support and celebrate them."

In a country with many unemployed young people, youth-led tourism ventures are providing unique travel experiences, creating livelihoods, shifting



**“I’m incredibly happy and emotional – this award means so much to us. Starting the business just a month before the COVID-19 pandemic began, and nearly giving up because of it, this moment reminds us that pushing through was worth it. It’s also a reminder of why we do this – to help people discover the beauty of our country, its people, and to inspire hope. You don’t have to be great to start, but you have to start to become great.”**

**Sanele Mthembu,  
Founder of Asambeni Getaway**

mindsets, and turning passion into opportunity. And with limited access to capital and formal business networks, these young entrepreneurs are carving their own paths by leveraging social media, garnering community support, and harnessing authentic storytelling to grow their brands.



# SAT Nabs Three Film Festival Awards

On 6 June, South African Tourism (SAT) scooped a trifecta of gongs at the 2025 International Tourism Film Festival Africa (ITFFA), held in Johannesburg.

The North Europe Hub, won two Gold Awards for its 'Live South Africa' campaign, recognised as Best Advertising Campaign and Best Tourism City Video in Africa, while the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB) received a Silver Award for their 'Meet South Africa' campaign.

The ITFFA is a premier platform that celebrates outstanding video content in the tourism and travel industry, recognising innovative, high-quality storytelling across all media.

This achievement highlights our commitment to excellence in tourism storytelling and showcases the power of our campaigns in inspiring global travellers.

The North Europe Hub was represented by Abby Jacobs, Acting Hub Head for North Europe. The 'Live South Africa' campaign was localised for a North European audience, attracting travellers from the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden to experience and live South Africa through the eyes of locals.

The SANCB was represented by Bongizwe Nzeku, Head: Business Development & Support Services. Their 'Meet South Africa' campaign positioned South Africa as the 'Reimagine Republic' and invited the world to visit a place where challenging the norm is the reason why South Africa is home to some of the world's leading discoveries, innovations, experts, and industries.

Congratulations to Team North Europe, and Team SANCB for bringing these campaigns to life!







## China: A Growing Tourism Market with Untapped Potential

**As potentially one of South Africa's largest tourism source markets, South African Tourism is committed to finding ways to boost growth.**

In 2024, China ranked as South Africa's 13th largest overseas tourism source market and 22nd overall.

It's also the third most lucrative market from Asia and Australasia, following Australia and India. Despite steady progress, there is still significant room for growth. Recognising this potential, South Africa's tourism industry is intensifying its focus on China.

"Arrivals in 2025 are at 13 976 for the period from January to April 2025 and, although they've improved, they remain below half of the 2019 levels" notes Gcobani Mancotywa, South African Tourism's Regional General Manager for Asia, Australasia, and the Middle East.

"The South African Tourism China hub has increased our investment in this market for the 2025/26 fiscal year because we see clear growth potential. Success in this space requires deep cultural understanding, a strong digital presence, and tailored experiences that speak to the evolving needs of Chinese travellers."

Chinese tourists contribute significantly to South Africa's economy. To foster growth, South African Tourism is committed to elevating the visitor experience, building brand awareness, and encouraging repeat travel.

South Africa's appeal lies in its many immersive experiences, which include safari adventures, rich cultural encounters, wine and gastronomy tourism, and stunning natural landscapes.

Chinese visitors are particularly drawn to experiences that blend authentic local flavours with high-end dining and familiar Chinese cuisine.

With rising interest in unique, off-the-beaten-path itineraries, the Chinese market presents exciting new opportunities, but barriers like long-haul travel, visa processing delays, and safety concerns remain challenges that must be proactively addressed to unlock the full potential of this vital tourism market.



**For more insights and a detailed analysis, see the latest report compiled by the South African Tourism Insights and Analytics team.**

**[READ IT HERE](#)**





# TGCSA CORNER

TOURISM GRADING COUNCIL  
OF SOUTH AFRICA

# GAUTENG

## Johannesburg Expo Centre (JEC):

South Africa's Premier Venue for World-Class Events Area



The Johannesburg Expo Centre (JEC) is South Africa's largest purpose-built venue for exhibitions, conferences, conventions, and large-scale events. Strategically located at Nasrec, just minutes from Johannesburg's central business district, the JEC stands as a landmark in the city's events landscape offering an expansive 150 000m<sup>2</sup> of highly adaptable indoor and outdoor space.

The venue is jointly owned by GL events Group and the UK-based Montgomery Group, two globally recognised leaders in the events industry. The GL events Group has a presence in over 20 countries and a network of 51 venues, bringing world-class venue management expertise, while the Montgomery Group contributes decades of experience in specialised exhibition organising.

More than just a venue, the JEC is a partner in delivering exceptional event experiences. From comprehensive onsite amenities and professional catering to advanced technical support and seamless

logistics, the JEC offers a fully integrated environment tailored to the needs of organisers and delegates alike.

The centre is proudly home to some of the country's most iconic exhibitions and trade shows, including the Rand Show, Electra Mining Africa, and Automechanika Johannesburg, drawing thousands of local and international visitors each year.

In recognition of its outstanding facilities, operational excellence, and readiness to host high-profile international gatherings, the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) is proud to award the Johannesburg Expo Centre a 4-star grading in both the Events Venue and Convention & Exhibitions categories.

This prestigious accolade underscores the JEC's readiness to support global events such as the upcoming G20 Summit and affirms its position as a benchmark for excellence in South Africa's events and exhibitions sector.





# G20

SOUTH AFRICA 2025

With G20 Summit season almost upon us, here's what you can look forward to in late-June and July.

EVENT NAME	DATES	VENUE
G20 Tourism Hackathon, official launch	27 and 28 June 2025	University of Western Cape
G20 Outreach Engagement with Deputy Minister of Tourism, Maggie Sotyu	3 July 2025	Francis Baard District Municipality, Northern Cape
G20 Ministerial Outreach Programme Legacy Project	July 2025	Mkhondo Local Municipality: Gert Sibande District
G20 Ministerial Outreach Programme Legacy Project	July 2025	Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality: Nkangala District