



TOURISM TUESDAYS

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#TourismTuesdays

AUGUST 2025 EDITION



Inspiring new ways



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As we close Women's Month and step into September, we do so with renewed energy and purpose. Spring is here, and so is National Tourism Month, which is a time to celebrate not only our heritage, but the people and stories that make South Africa shine.

This edition of the **Tourism Tuesdays** newsletter captures that spirit: from powerful stories of women reshaping the tourism sector, to the launch of Tourism Month under the theme of 'Tourism and Sustainable Transformation'.

We shine a spotlight on the 2025 Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) Annual Assessor

Conference and highlight youth-led innovations through the G20 Tourism Hackathon.

From township gastronomy in Alexandra to self-drive adventures and adrenaline-filled hikes, this issue showcases the richness of our tourism landscape and the opportunities it creates for communities.

And as we count down to the Tourism Month celebrations in Gauteng and beyond, let's be inspired to explore new provinces, support local businesses, and continue to build a tourism economy that uplifts us all.

**Tourism regards,
The Tourism Tuesdays Team**

Tourism's Growth Lies in 'Her Story'

Empowering women is South Africa's economic imperative.



From left to right: Mapholo Ratau, Buhle Magwentshu and Zandra Habana.

From township innovators to global entrepreneurs, South African women are proving that the future of tourism is sustainable, transformative, and female-driven.

South African women are the heartbeat of our tourism industry, making up nearly 70% of its workforce. Their creativity and resilience are reshaping tourism into one of the country's most dynamic and inclusive sectors.

Across the country, their stories inspire. **Buhle Magwentshu** grew [Asmara Coffee](#) from a township dream into a national supplier for hotels. **Mapholo Ratau**, through [Ledikana Creations](#), has brought South African heritage to the global fashion stage, turning culture into economic opportunity. And in technical supply chains, where women are still rare, **Zandra Habana** leads [Inkezo Industrial Mining Services](#), proving that excellence has no gender.

These journeys show what's possible when women are supported with the right tools and networks. Initiatives like the Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) programme by [City Lodge Hotels](#), in partnership with [Sigma International](#) and

the [SATSA Tourism Business Incubator](#), are helping to widen access, proving that inclusive transformation is no longer aspirational but that it's a lived reality.

When women thrive, we all do

The impact of investing in women is most visible in communities. A woman who turns her home into a guesthouse doesn't just build a business; she creates jobs, buys from local farmers, and supports artisans. Her income pays for school fees and healthcare, strengthening an entire micro-economy. This ripple effect is our advantage: by empowering women, we multiply progress.

Recognising these women's stories is not enough – action is essential. As travellers, we must choose women-owned guesthouses, tours, and crafts. Private sector partners should embed women-led businesses in supply chains and mentorship networks, so we can build a tourism economy where the 70% who power our industry also shape its leadership and future.

The women of South Africa are ready. They're building, innovating, and transforming, one community at a time.

Tourism Month 2025 Launches in Gauteng

Presented at the iconic Sakhumzi Restaurant, this year's national Tourism Month focus is 'People, Planet and Prosperity'.

Tourism Month 2025 was officially launched on 13 August at the vibrant Sakhumzi Restaurant at Zoo Lake, Johannesburg, by Patricia de Lille, our Minister of Tourism, and her Deputy, Maggie Sotyu.

Ahead of the vibrant festivities, the launch event, led by South African Tourism (an agency of the Department of Tourism), in partnership with the Gauteng Tourism Authority and the Joburg Tourism Company, set the tone for a month dedicated to reimagining tourism in South Africa as a catalyst for inclusive growth and sustainable change.

“To truly transform our tourism sector, we must expand our economy. Our youth need us. Fresh thinking, bold ideas and next-generation entrepreneurs must power transformation.”

– Patricia de Lille,
Minister of Tourism

This year's commemoration takes its cue from the United Nations World Tourism Organization's World Tourism Day theme, 'Tourism and Sustainable Transformation'. The theme highlights tourism's extensive economic value chain and its deep social impact, positioning the sector as a key driver in climate change response and socio-economic transformation.

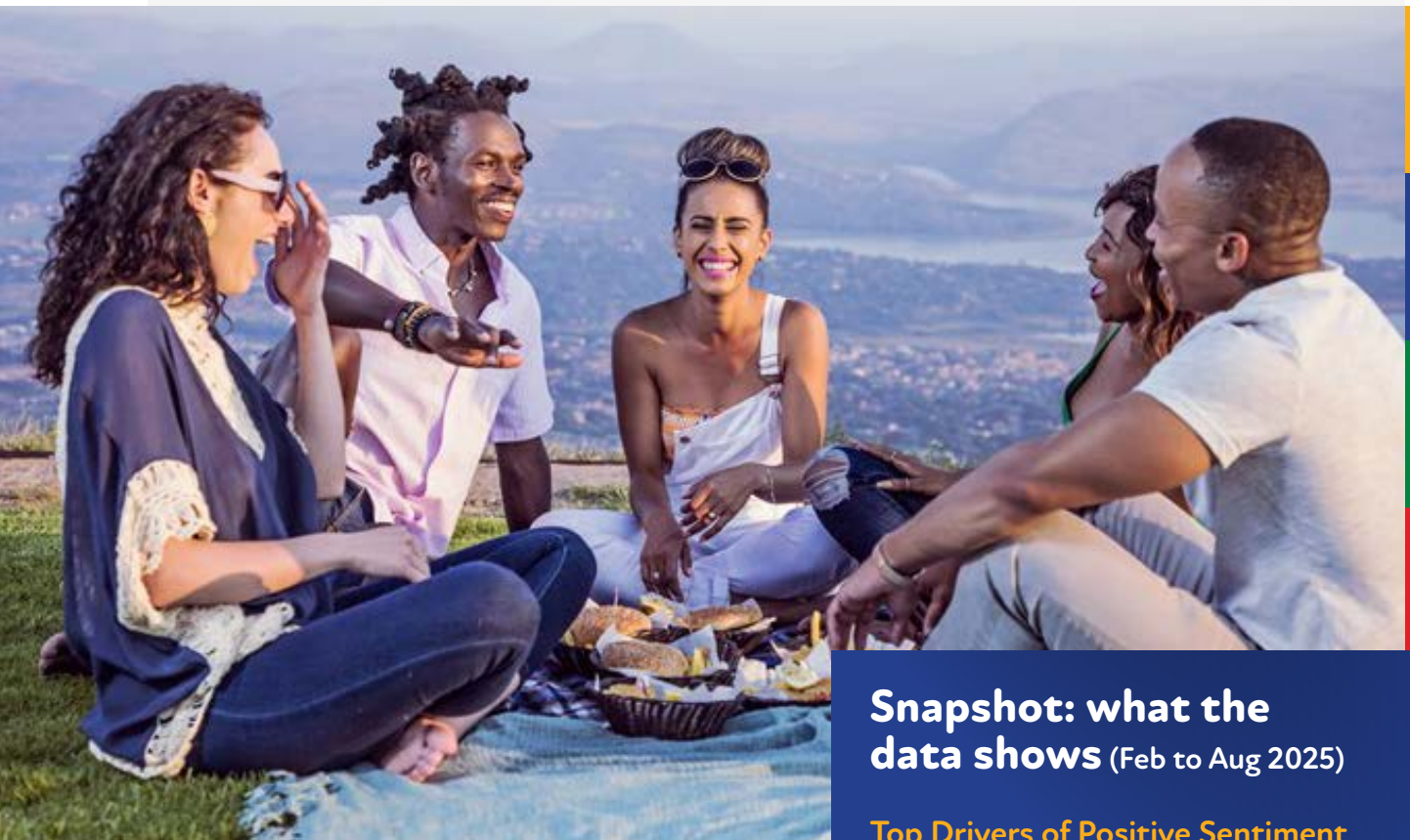
It's a powerful reminder that tourism isn't just about travel and leisure, but also about protecting the environment, promoting fairness, and encouraging lifestyles that benefit people and the planet.



Gauteng province will host our national Tourism Month celebrations in September 2025.

Our People, Our Places & Our Passion Make South Africa Shine

We've said it for years: South Africa's biggest tourism asset is its people. Now, thanks to big data, we can finally prove it.



Between February and August 2025, thousands of visitor reviews from across the country were analysed and the results tell us something we already know but can now prove with data: our people are our greatest asset.

The analysis shows that nearly three out of four reviews highlight the friendliness, professionalism, and warmth of South Africa's people. From hotels and guesthouses to restaurants and shuttle drivers, staff were consistently described as helpful, kind, and always smiling. Visitors felt looked after, and this human touch is what makes South Africa unforgettable.

Our landscapes, too, continue to capture the imagination. Beaches scored some of the highest

Snapshot: what the data shows (Feb to Aug 2025)

Top Drivers of Positive Sentiment

- **75%** praised staff friendliness and professionalism
- **80%** applauded efficient, fast service
- **85 - 100** sentiment scores for beaches and nature
- Cleanliness, pools, spas, and transport consistently praised

sentiment ratings, with travellers praising the cleanliness, the safety, and the sense of vitality they bring. Cultural landmarks also shone brightly, with the Nelson Mandela Capture Site described as 'truly amazing' for the way it brings history to life. And of course, South Africa's wildlife continues to thrill, one safari-goer raved about the Kruger National Park, saying it was 'a once-in-a-lifetime experience to see lions in the wild'.

Together, people and place form the backbone of South Africa's appeal. Whether it's enjoying a warm welcome from hotel staff, relaxing in a well-kept spa, or marvelling at ocean views and majestic wildlife, the experience consistently exceeds expectations.

What did visitors love? The strongest driver of positive sentiment is the warmth and professionalism of staff. Guests frequently named individual employees for going above and beyond in reviews.

Building on strengths, tackling weaknesses

To put these insights into action, South African Tourism continues to champion its 'Welcome Campaign', which works hand in hand with trade partners to train front-line staff on how to be welcoming to tourists from all backgrounds.

The data confirms that warmth and friendliness are South Africa's strongest drivers of positive sentiment. Through this campaign, the industry is reinforcing the skills and behaviours that make visitors feel at home.

For tourism trade, this data is gold. It provides live, customer-driven insights that can guide operational decisions, marketing strategies, and investment priorities. Hotels can use positive guest quotes in campaigns, attractions can highlight their strongest assets, and service providers can address specific

weaknesses before they turn into bigger problems. Most importantly, this analysis gives us a roadmap for how South Africa can continue to raise the bar as a destination.

Our people, our power

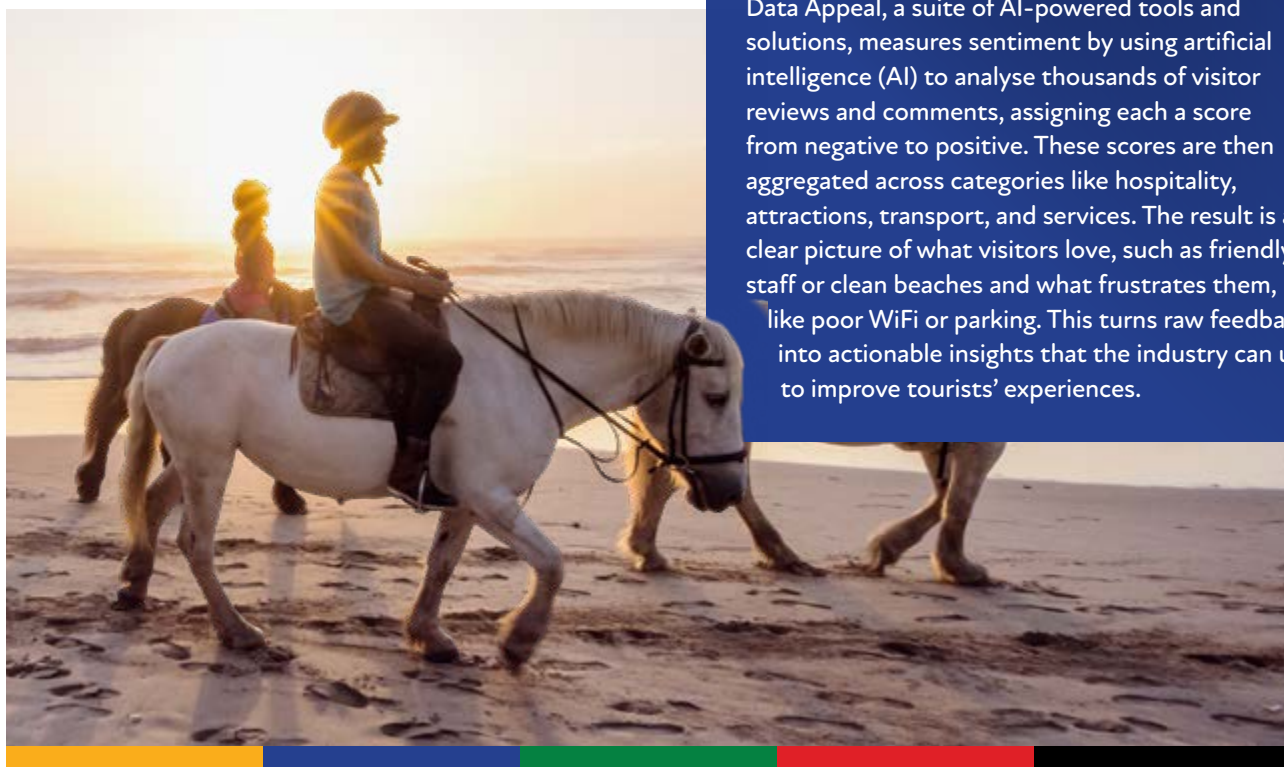
What stands out most from this analysis is that the heart of South African tourism is its people. Time and again, visitors spoke about the staff who made their trips special, from waiters and shuttle drivers to receptionists and hosts. This human touch, combined with the natural beauty of our beaches, cultural heritage, and wildlife, creates a visitor experience that is difficult to replicate elsewhere.

Big data may be helping us measure and understand these experiences with greater precision, but it's our people who are writing the story every day. By celebrating these strengths and addressing the manageable detractors, South Africa can continue to build a reputation as one of the most welcoming and reliable destinations in the world.

As one delighted visitor summed it up: "Everything is great. The WiFi, the parking, the breakfast, the room is very clean, the sea view, the kindly staff."

About the Data Appeal tool

Data Appeal, a suite of AI-powered tools and solutions, measures sentiment by using artificial intelligence (AI) to analyse thousands of visitor reviews and comments, assigning each a score from negative to positive. These scores are then aggregated across categories like hospitality, attractions, transport, and services. The result is a clear picture of what visitors love, such as friendly staff or clean beaches and what frustrates them, like poor WiFi or parking. This turns raw feedback into actionable insights that the industry can use to improve tourists' experiences.



Young Innovators at G20 Tourism Hackathon

South African students show their mettle in harnessing artificial intelligence (AI) solutions to transform tourism in rural communities.



On the sidelines of the G20 Tourism Working Group and Tourism Ministers' meetings from 10 to 12 September 2025 in Mpumalanga, South Africa will host the 'People-Centred AI and Sustainable Tourism Innovation Hackathon' – a dynamic challenge designed to ignite fresh ideas at the intersection of travel, technology, and sustainability.

In total, 18 universities participated, each nominating two students from their top performers to form competitive teams. Their task: to create AI-powered solutions that improve the travel experience while promoting responsible, people-centred tourism. By focusing on challenges facing rural villages, towns, and small dorpiess, the hackathon underscores the role of innovation in unlocking inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The Hackathon has unfolded as a three-stage journey:

- **LEG 1, MAY 2025:** The process began with the selection of participants from across South Africa's leading universities and colleges, identifying talented final-year and postgraduate students with skills in technology, engineering, design, and tourism.

- **LEG 2, JUNE 2025,** Cape Town: The shortlisted students presented proposed solutions, which were reviewed and evaluated against the competition theme and challenges. Teams were then formed and began collaborating online over a 15-week period, refining their concepts and developing prototypes.
- **LEG 3, SEPTEMBER 2025,** Mpumalanga: The journey culminates as teams gather to present their final solutions during the G20 Tourism programme, demonstrating how their innovations can transform tourism in rural communities and beyond.

The final phase will take place on 12 September 2025, when the teams will present their projects to the Ministers of Tourism in Mpumalanga. The top three groups will have the unique opportunity to showcase their solutions to world leaders, reflecting South Africa's commitment to innovation, sustainability, and youth entrepreneurship.

As the countdown to the final presentations begins, excitement is building. The G20 Tourism Hackathon promises to shine a spotlight on South Africa's next generation of innovators – young visionaries ready to shape the future of travel.

Township Gastronomy Masterclass

SA Chef Conference and Expo 2025 Masterclass unlocks opportunities and spotlights gastronomy offerings in Alexandra township.



Guests at the SA Chef Media and Wakanda Food Accelerator Masterclass in Alexandra, Johannesburg.

As part of the SA Chef Conference & Expo 2025 recently held in Sandton, SA Chef Media, in partnership with the Wakanda Food Accelerator, hosted a high-impact masterclass in Alexandra, Johannesburg, with support from South African Tourism and the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB).

The initiative aimed to spotlight township gastronomy and unlock economic opportunities in VTSD communities – Villages, Townships, and Small Dorpies – with Alexandra positioned as a vibrant, emerging culinary hub.

Held at the YES Ulusha Hub, a youth innovation centre equipped with a training kitchen and textile manufacturing facilities, the masterclass brought

The session focused on practical, solution-oriented discussions designed to help entrepreneurs scale their businesses and products. Key themes included:

- **ACCESS TO MARKET** Entrepreneurs engaged directly with chefs and buyers to understand what independent restaurants and hotel chains look for – from packaging and consistency, to pricing and delivery reliability.
- **HEALTH AND SAFETY COMPLIANCE** A health and safety expert unpacked Health and Safety regulations and shared actionable tips on hygiene, documentation, and food handling – essential for entering formal supply chains.
- **FUNDING AND FINANCIAL SYSTEMS** With many township businesses operating in cash-heavy environments, TymeBank presented bespoke financial solutions tailored to informal traders. These included tools for managing cashflow, digitising transactions, and accessing micro-loans.

together township-based food entrepreneurs and a delegation of industry leaders, including established chefs, restaurateurs, caterers, distributors and food suppliers.

This direct engagement resulted in leads and opportunities for the entrepreneurs, many of whom connected with distributors and suppliers interested in their products, as well as pathways to explore culinary tours and food events in Alexandra.

Entrepreneurial exposure at the conference

Beyond the masterclass, five entrepreneurs from the Wakanda Food Accelerator exhibited their products at the two-day SA Chef Conference & Expo, while others attended as delegates. This gave them access to high-level panel discussions, networking sessions, and exposure to buyers and partners across the food value chain.



A group of passionate foodies went on a culinary adventure, visiting Alexandra's gastronomy hotspots.

Community-centered innovation: Gcwalisa shops

As part of the Alexandra programme, delegates also toured Gcwalisa shops, Wakanda's micro-retail initiative that allows community members to buy essential goods in small quantities – such as R5-worth of grain, or a single nappy. This model supports food security and economic dignity, while inspiring chefs and financial partners to explore new ways of supporting township communities.

FEATURED EXPERIENCES



Explore South Africa Your Way with Maui Motorhome Rentals

With Tourism Month just around the corner, now is the perfect time for South Africans to explore their own backyards. Maui Motorhome Rentals makes it easy to see the country at your own pace, offering a range of motorhomes that cater to solo travellers, couples, and families alike.

Travelling in a motorhome allows visitors to go beyond the usual destinations and discover provinces they haven't explored before. Each vehicle is equipped with: a fridge, stove, air-conditioning, and a personal bathroom giving travellers the freedom to enjoy their journey without sacrificing comfort.

Options range from two-sleeper to six-sleeper motorhomes, ideal for families or small groups looking to reconnect with South Africa's diverse landscapes.

Whether it's a self-driving safari through a national park, a weekend getaway to a coastal town, or a road trip to a neighbouring province, a Maui motorhome opens the door to adventure.

This Tourism Month, don't let excuses hold you back. Exploring South Africa in a motorhome is a chance to create memories and appreciate the country's incredible sights and experiences.



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Sky-Berg Tours: Adventure at Every Turn

A South African tour operating company, Sky-Berg Tours specialises in small-group adventure experiences across the country.

Founded by Neo Norman Mokoena, an adventurer with a passion for the outdoors, Sky-Berg Tours offers guided activities that range from day hikes, river rafting, kayaking, and abseiling, to via ferrata climbs and 4x4 overland adventures, each designed to thrill and immerse participants in South Africa's breathtaking landscapes.

One standout experience is the Amphitheatre (Tugela) Hiking Adventure. Guests check in at Maluti Backpackers and meet fellow hiking enthusiasts before tackling the Amphitheatre, scaling heights of up to 3 200 metres above sea level.

Along the way, hikers are treated to stunning vistas, waking above the clouds, vulture sightings, and even

the chance to see snowflakes at higher elevations for a truly unforgettable South African adventure.

Sky-Berg Tours continues to create adrenaline-packed journeys that celebrate the country's natural beauty while providing adventure seekers with safe, expertly guided, and truly memorable experiences.



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TGCSA CORNER

TOURISM GRADING COUNCIL
OF SOUTH AFRICA

TGCSA Assessors Commit to the Next 25 Years of Quality Assurance

This year's TGCSA's Annual Assessor Conference set a bold course of action for the future of quality assurance in tourism.



From 19 to 21 August 2025, the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) brought together its national network of assessors at Wild Coast Sun in Port Edward for their Annual Assessor Conference. Held under the powerful theme, 'Commitment to the Next 25 Years of QA', the gathering reinforced the TGCSA's role as the custodian of quality assurance (QA) in South Africa's tourism sector.

Prioritising collaboration and maintaining standards
Each day's sessions covered a range of critical topics,

Held over three days, the conference provided a dynamic platform for assessors to sharpen their expertise, exchange knowledge, and reaffirm their role in positioning South Africa as a destination of choice.

including the 'Grading Criteria Review and Basic Quality Verification', training activations on the 'Value of Grading and Sales Upskilling for Assessors', as well as advanced modules on 'Enhancing Evaluation Techniques' and 'Quality Assurance Training'.

A highlight of the programme was the exploration of global best practices in grading systems across hospitality, emphasising how differentiated facilities, features, and quality standards guide travellers in making informed choices. Assessors also examined how grading continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening the competitiveness of South African establishments while promoting inclusivity and sustainability.

Beyond the formal sessions, the conference served as a vital networking opportunity, allowing assessors to share experiences, challenges, and innovations. The collaborative spirit underscored TGCSA's commitment to maintaining standards and evolving them in line with global tourism trends and technological advancements.

As TGCSA looks ahead to the next 25 years, the 2025 Assessor Conference stood as a clear signal of intent: to safeguard, adapt, and elevate South Africa's tourism offerings through unwavering commitment to quality assurance.

“We are dedicated to creating an inclusive tourism landscape where everyone, regardless of ability, can enjoy the rich diversity and warmth of South Africa. Together, these efforts reinforce our pledge to excellence and position South Africa as a world-class, accessible travel destination.”
– Bronwen Auret, TGCSA



Bronwen Auret, Chief Quality Assurance Officer at South African Tourism, gives a keynote address at the 2025 TGCSA Annual Assessor Conference.

Upcoming Tourism Events

Here are some of the events to look forward to between September and November 2025.

EVENT NAME	DATES	PROVINCE
FNB Art Joburg	5 – 7 September 2025	Gauteng
Third G20 Tourism Working Group Meeting	9 – 11 September 2025	Mpumalanga
G20 Tourism Ministerial Meeting	12 September 2025	Mpumalanga
TBCSA Tourism Leadership Conference	17 – 19 September 2025	North West
DSTV Delicious Festival	20 – 21 September 2025	Gauteng
Standard Bank Joy of Jazz	26 – 28 September 2025	Gauteng
Tourism Month Celebrations	27 September 2025	Gauteng
Township and Village Intra-Trade Conference 2025	13 – 14 November 2025	KwaZulu-Natal
G20 Leaders' Summit	22 – 23 November 2025	Gauteng
50th SELECTOUR Congress	25 – 30 November 2025	Western Cape
2025 Surf Expo Africa	28 – 30 November 2025	Western Cape