



TOURISM TUESDAYS

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JUNE 2026 EDITION



Inspiring new ways

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As we conclude Youth Month and join millions around the world in celebrating the FIFA World Cup 2026, we are reminded of the power of tourism, sport, culture, and heritage to bring people together and showcase the best of South Africa. We also celebrate a historic sporting achievement, as Bafana Bafana reached the FIFA World Cup Round of 32 for the first time in history. While their journey concluded with a hard-fought match against Canada, the team's resilience, talent and determination inspired South Africans at home and abroad, proudly showcasing our nation's spirit on the global stage.

This edition highlights how South Africa continues to leverage global platforms and strategic partnerships to grow tourism and strengthen its international presence. From destination promotion activities in Mexico during the FIFA World Cup 2026, engagements with United Airlines to explore opportunities for strengthening air connectivity between South Africa and North America, and the launch of Air Europa's new direct route between Madrid and Johannesburg, to celebrating 50 years of the iconic Market Theatre and showcasing the impact of tourism in small towns through the SPAR Kirkwood Wildsfees, these stories demonstrate tourism's role in driving economic growth, creating opportunities, and enhancing South Africa's global competitiveness.

As we marked Youth Month, we also reaffirmed our commitment to investing in the next generation of tourism professionals and entrepreneurs. During a #YouthInTourism engagement in the Free State, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Makhotso Sotyu, called on the sector to increase investment in initiatives that connect young people to employment, skills development and entrepreneurial opportunities, recognising youth as central to the long-term growth and sustainability of South Africa's tourism sector.

The new Air Europa service marks an important milestone for South Africa's air access strategy, improving connectivity from Spain and providing seamless links to key European and Latin American markets through Madrid.

The newsletter concludes with the latest tourism benchmark properties, as well as a spotlight on South Africa's exceptional portfolio of premium five-star properties that continue to position the country as a world-class destination.

Happy reading!

Regards,
Tourism Tuesdays Team





South Africa Advances Tourism Growth and Market Expansion in Mexico and Latin America

As football fans from around the world gathered in Mexico for the opening stages of the FIFA World Cup 2026, South African Tourism joined Team South Africa in a coordinated effort to showcase South Africa as a world-class tourism destination.

Working alongside the Department of Tourism, Brand South Africa, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC), the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), the South African Football Association (SAFA), and the South African Embassy in Mexico, South Africa used one of the world's biggest sporting events to promote the country's tourism offerings, culture, investment opportunities and sporting heritage.

A major highlight was the launch of South Africa's presence at the Aldea Global Showcase, attended by South Africa's Ambassador to Mexico, Her Excellency Beryl Rose Sisulu, Minister of Tourism Patricia de Lille, Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture Gayton McKenzie, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola, representatives from Brand South Africa and other Team South Africa partners. The activation provided an opportunity to engage directly with travellers, trade partners, media and investors from Mexico and across Latin America.

Mexico remains an important growth market for South African tourism, with increasing interest in experiences such as wildlife, culture, gastronomy, adventure travel, luxury tourism and

sports tourism. Through destination activations, media engagements and trade partnerships, South African Tourism continues to strengthen its presence in the region and drive future visitor growth.

The programme also highlighted South Africa's commitment to improving visitor accessibility through initiatives such as the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), making travel to South Africa easier and more seamless for international visitors.

Click here read the full article: [South Africa advances tourism growth and market expansion in Mexico and Latin America \(GL\)](#)



The Iconic Market Theatre Celebrates 50 Years of Telling South African Stories

For half a century, the Market Theatre has been a key space for artistic achievement and social change in South Africa. From 19 to 21 June 2026, artists, audiences, and cultural leaders gathered in Johannesburg's Newtown precinct to celebrate the theatre's 50th anniversary.

The event honoured its role as a witness to history, a supporter of free expression, and a storyteller of the nation's journey. The Market Theatre which opened its doors on 19 June 1976, at a difficult time in South Africa's history went on to be known around the world as the "Theatre of the Struggle." And bravely shared stories that challenged apartheid and gave a

voice to people whose experiences were often ignored. Through its performances, it helped shape public conversations and encouraged dialogue when it was most needed.

“ *The celebrations showed that culture is one of South Africa's greatest strengths. Places like the Market Theatre help keep our shared history alive and inspire new generations of artists.*

Over its five decades of existence, it has nurtured South Africa's celebrated talent, which includes legendary artists such as

John Kani, Janice Honeyman, Gcina Mhlophe, Fiona Ramsay, Winston Ntshona, and Mbongeni Ngema who have graced its stages, and have gone on to captivate audiences worldwide. Its acclaimed productions and global recognition have cemented its place as one of Africa's leading centers for theatrical excellence and expression.

Beyond its cultural significance, the Market Theatre plays a vital role in destination branding and tourism advocacy. As a cornerstone of Johannesburg's creative economy, it attracts tourists seeking authentic South African stories, heritage, and cultural experiences. And is an integral part of the Newtown Cultural Precinct, which offers tourists an opportunity to

engage with the country's history, creativity, and contemporary identity in a meaningful way.

The celebrations showed that culture is one of South Africa's greatest strengths. Places like the Market Theatre help keep our shared history alive and inspire new generations of artists.

In 2026, the theatre remains a key place for young talent to grow. For many young actors, writers, directors, dancers, and storytellers, it has been a home and a starting point. Its training and youth programs help new voices

develop, making sure the next generation can share their stories, question old ideas, and add to South Africa's lively culture.

As South Africa continues to position itself as a world-class tourism destination, the arts remain one of its most compelling competitive advantages. Cultural institutions such as the Market Theatre do more than preserve history and showcase artistic excellence, they create authentic experiences that inspire travel, encourage longer stays, and deepen visitors' understanding of the country's people and identity.

Cultural tourism generates opportunities for local businesses, supports jobs across the creative and tourism value chains, and contributes to the revitalisation of urban precincts such as Newtown. The enduring legacy of the Market Theatre demonstrates that when the arts thrive, tourism thrives too, strengthening South Africa's global appeal as a destination where visitors can experience not only breathtaking landscapes and wildlife, but also the powerful stories, creativity, and cultural richness that define the nation.





South African Tourism Showcases the Power of Small-Town Tourism at the 23rd SPAR Kirkwood Wildsfees

South African Tourism proudly joined thousands of festivalgoers, exhibitors, artists and tourism stakeholders at the 23rd SPAR Kirkwood Wildsfees, held from 26–28 June 2026 in the heart of the Eastern Cape.

The festival, officially opened by Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, demonstrated the remarkable role that events play in driving tourism, economic growth and community development in South Africa's Villages, Townships and Small Dorpies (VTSDs). As one of the Eastern Cape's largest outdoor festivals and agricultural expos, the Wildsfees attracted visitors from across the country, creating a vibrant platform for local businesses, accommodation establishments, restaurants, crafters and tourism operators to benefit from increased visitor spending.

A standout feature of the festival was the seamless integration of

conservation and tourism through the significantly expanded Walk on the Wildside pavilion. The pavilion brought together 15 conservation exhibitors and 26 tourism exhibitors from Addo, Tsitsikamma and surrounding destinations, showcasing the region's rich biodiversity, wildlife experiences and nature-based tourism offerings. The exhibition highlighted how conservation and tourism work hand in hand to protect natural heritage while creating sustainable economic opportunities for local communities.

South African Tourism's involvement formed part of its ongoing commitment to promoting inclusive tourism growth and showcasing the diverse experiences that can be found beyond South Africa's major cities. And highlighted Kirkwood and the surrounding Sundays River Valley as a compelling tourism destination rich in

culture, agriculture, hospitality and authentic local experiences.

The success of the festival reinforces the importance of supporting VTSD destinations as key contributors to South Africa's tourism economy. Events of this scale not only generate direct economic benefits but also strengthen destination awareness, encourage repeat visitation and create opportunities for local communities to participate meaningfully in tourism value chains.

As the curtains close on another successful SPAR Kirkwood Wildsfees, the festival leaves behind a lasting legacy of community pride, economic activity and destination promotion; demonstrating that tourism remains a powerful catalyst for growth, opportunity and shared prosperity in South Africa's small towns.





Deputy Minister of Tourism in South African , Makhotso Sotyu delivering a key note address.

Deputy Minister Calls for Greater Investment in Youth Opportunities in Tourism

At a #YouthInTourism engagement in the Free State on 18 June 2026, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Makhotso Sotyu, called on the sector to increase investment in initiatives that connect young people to jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities within tourism.

Speaking under the Youth Month theme “Reset@50 – A future in tourism calls”, the Deputy Minister highlighted tourism as a people-centred industry that can play a key role in unlocking youth participation in the economy.

“Tourism is built by people, powered by people, and sustained by people. We must ensure young South Africans are equipped with the skills and

opportunities to meaningfully participate in the sector,” she said.

The engagement included culinary showcases, mentorship, and networking sessions aimed at exposing young people to career and business pathways in tourism. Tourism continues to contribute 4.9% to GDP and supports approximately 954,000 direct jobs, with domestic tourism and small businesses remaining key entry points for youth.

The event was hosted in partnership with the Free State Provincial Government and tourism stakeholders as part of Youth Month commemorations

marking the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Youth Uprising.





TSHWANE
TOURISM
ASSOCIATION



of Welcoming the
World to Tshwane

Tshwane Tourism Awards 2026 Finalists Announced

The Tshwane Tourism Association (TTA) has officially announced the finalists for the 2026 Tshwane Tourism Awards, celebrating excellence across the city's tourism and hospitality sector.

The awards recognise outstanding businesses and individuals in categories including accommodation, attractions, restaurants, tour operators, tourism suppliers, chefs and tourist guides. This year's finalists include some of Tshwane's most recognised tourism brands, showcasing the diversity and quality of experiences available in South Africa's capital city.

Winners will be announced at the Tshwane Tourism Awards Gala Evening on 22 August 2026, where industry leaders and stakeholders will gather to celebrate the people and businesses driving tourism growth in Tshwane.

The awards form part of the Tshwane Tourism Association's 25th anniversary celebrations and continue to highlight the important role tourism plays in creating memorable visitor experiences and supporting local economic growth.



The finalists for the 2026 Tshwane Tourism Awards have officially been announced, marking the start of the countdown to this year's ceremony. Pictured above are several guests who attended the 2025 awards, hosted at Batter Boys Village in Pretoria.



Celebrity Drive South Africa Showcases Tourism, Fashion and Lifestyle at Sun City

South African Tourism partnered with Celebrity Drive South Africa 2026 to showcase the country's unique blend of tourism, fashion, entertainment, and lifestyle experiences at Sun City Resort.

The platform brought together influential voices from the creative and tourism sectors to highlight South Africa as a world-class destination, while reinforcing the role of tourism in driving economic growth, job creation, and inclusive development.

Held at The Palace in Sun City, the event featured a fashion showcase by designer David Tlale, who also shared his vision of supporting local designers

and strengthening the use of locally produced textiles to contribute to job creation and economic opportunity within the creative economy.

The collaboration aligns with its strategic focus on promoting domestic and international travel, encouraging South Africans to explore their own country while also positioning South Africa as a competitive global leisure and lifestyle destination.

Sun City is as an iconic tourism asset, demonstrating the scale and quality of experiences available across the country. The activation also reinforced

the importance of domestic tourism under the "Shot Left" campaign, encouraging South Africans to discover the diversity of experiences across all nine provinces.

The Celebrity Drive South Africa activation forms part of ongoing efforts to amplify South Africa's tourism story through culture, fashion, and lifestyle platforms, strengthening the country's appeal to both local and international travellers.





The inaugural flight was met by a welcoming delegation at OR Tambo. Source: ACSA

Air Europa Launches Direct Madrid-Johannesburg Service

South Africa's air access network received a significant boost last week with the arrival of Air Europa's inaugural direct flight between Madrid and Johannesburg on 25 June 2026.

The new route marks Air Europa's first-ever service into sub-Saharan Africa and represents an important milestone in strengthening tourism, trade, and cultural ties between South Africa, Spain, Europe, and Latin America. The airline will operate the route three times a week using its Boeing 787 Dreamliner, offering travellers

enhanced comfort and improved connectivity.

The introduction of direct flights comes at a positive time for the Spanish market, which continues to show encouraging recovery and growth potential. Improved air access is expected to make travel to South Africa more convenient for both leisure and business travellers, while increasing destination awareness in Spain and beyond.

The Madrid service also provides seamless onward connections to key destinations across Europe and Latin

America through Air Europa's extensive network, creating new opportunities to attract visitors and strengthen South Africa's tourism economy.

The route further supports South Africa's tourism growth objectives and reinforces Johannesburg's position as a leading aviation gateway to the African continent.



Left: Air Europa Crew with Mosilo Sofonia, Head: Global Trade Relations at South African Tourism



TOURISM GRADING COUNCIL SA

TGCSA CORNER

JUNE 2026

Benchmark Properties

An array of outstanding properties that make every visit a pleasure.

Benchmark properties are handpicked by the TGCSA Property Approvals Committee for their outstanding offerings, regardless of category or grading. They are referred to South African Tourism's Brand Experience team to support inclusive growth and geographic diversity.



Carthews Luxury Bed and Breakfast

Location: Komani, Eastern Cape

Newly renovated and styled with high-end finishes, Carthews Luxury BnB offers eight individually themed suites in the heart of Queenstown, blending warm hospitality with modern comfort just a short walk from the Queenstown Golf Club. Each suite tells its own story through bespoke design themes such as the Protea and Huchi suites, while guests enjoy a tranquil garden setting, generous breakfasts, free Wi-Fi and secure on-site parking.

Contact: Email: admin@carthewsluxurybnb.co.za, call: +27 45 838 3147, or visit: carthewsluxurybnb.co.za.



Benchmark Properties



Tamodi Estate and Polo Reserve

Location: Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape

Set along the Garden Route between the Tsitsikamma Mountains and the Robberg Peninsula, lies the Tamodi Estate & Polo Reserve where polo culture, equestrian heritage and considered design come together. The estate features generous suites with fireplaces, soaking tubs and private terraces, world-class polo facilities and stables, a swimming pool, library and a wine cellar showcasing centuries-old South African labels, all set within interiors curated by London-based Studio Ashby in collaboration with local artisans.

Contact: Email: guest@tamodi.com, call: +27 82 556 5943, or visit: tamodi.com.

Upcoming Events

EVENT NAME	DATES	LOCATION
The National Arts Festival	25 June - 5 July 2026	Makhanda (Grahamstown), Eastern Cape
2026 FIFA World Cup	11 June - 19 July 2026	Canada, Mexico and United States of America
Scatterlings Music Festival	18 July 2026	Trafalgar Square, London, United Kingdom
Women's Day	9 August 2026	Nationwide
South African Music Awards (SAMAs)	15 August 2026	Sun City Resort, North West
Tshwane Tourism Awards 2026	22 August 2026	Venue to be confirmed
African Tourism Leadership Conference	2 - 4 September 2026	Meropa Casino & Entertainment World, Limpopo
Heritage Day	24 September 2026	Nationwide
World Tourism Day	27 September 2026	Nationwide
TBCSA Conference	27 & 28 October 2026	Sun City Resort, North West