

DAILY SOUTHERN & EAST AFRICAN
TOURISM UPDATE

AUGUST 2021

Reignite Tourism

**Tourism heroes rise
after unrest**

**Isibindi Foundation supports
anti-poaching**

Reignite Tourism



Like a phoenix rising from the ashes during a week of violent protests last month, South Africans rallied to assist vulnerable communities and help towns, cities and businesses rebuild.

Heroes rise amid protests

■ Adele Mackenzie

WHILE calm has been restored in the provinces of KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng, President **Cyril Ramaphosa** has maintained a military and police presence in potential hotspots and has issued assurances that law and order will be maintained.

Investigations continue and a large number of suspects have already been arrested.

But the protests are not what defined South Africa. It was strength, resilience, courage and determination that once again defined the nation as her people defied the looters and rioters.

Some formed human, or automotive, chains of protection around the shopping malls and vaccination sites and hospitals. A Facebook group, ReBuildSA, garnered support (in just two weeks) from just under 60 000 volunteers offering to help clean up streets, buildings, warehouses and businesses that had been destroyed.

Others were offering their time and or services – from legal and

insurance advisers to construction workers, farmers and bakers – to help meet the needs of those who lost everything.

Logistics service providers offered their vehicles free to get emergency supplies, including food, to the affected areas. And others stepped up to help co-ordinate the deliveries.

One such example was **Evi Moller**,

from Journeys with Evi, who worked with **Chad Botha** and many others in the tourism sector who put out a plea through another Facebook group, We Support – established to support the tourism and hospitality industries – for volunteers and businesses to help fill an eight-tonne truck, supplied by Inspire Furniture Rentals, with food.

In the end, two trucks were needed and 16 tonnes of much-needed food, nappies, toiletries, baby formula, vegetables and pet food were delivered to those needing help in KwaZulu Natal.

ANEW Hotels & Resorts, which has properties in KwaZulu Natal that

were under threat, has highlighted the huge role community members played during this time of crisis.

“While malls and shopping centres were the primary targets during these riots, many other businesses were also affected, and we had to band together to protect buildings

from being destroyed in the process,” said ANEW CEO, **Clinton Armour**.

Sadira

Nayager, General Manager of ANEW Hotel Hluhluwe, said the property managed to make it through untouched, largely due to the community standing together day and night, ensuring businesses and residents were protected.

“We would like to thank Alpha Security, SAPS, Hluhluwe farmers and the local community members for their efforts in protecting our hotel.”

General Manager of ANEW Hilton, **Anthony Moskovitch**, said his hotel had assisted with tables and chairs to man vehicle checkpoints in the area. “We provided bottomless coffee, sandwiches,

and bottled water to the police, community protection forums and community members and cleaned up and replenished coffee stations throughout the night. We also offered complimentary venue hire for meetings with the Hilton/Sweetwater leaders, while some of our staff members assisted with patrols in the area.”

Armour added: “It was really heart-warming to see local communities taking a stand to look after one another and protect local businesses amid this type of crisis. This proves that when South Africans come together, we are a force of nature and able to strengthen communities.”

The South African National Taxi Council (Santaco) together with local airline, Airlink, supermarket chain Shoprite and global law firm, Herbert Smith Freehills (HSF) joined forces to provide vital relief, supplies and support in cleaning up Pietermaritzburg in KZN.

Together, the companies provided, and safely transported, over 2 000 food packages and provisions to people who were without any food after shops in the city and surrounds were pillaged.

“When South Africans come together, we are a force of nature.”
Clinton Armour

Tourism SME Digital Transformation Programme

Propelling Africa's tourism and hospitality SMEs. Digitally.

The Tourism SME Digital Transformation Programme seeks to enhance the domestic and international competitiveness of tourism SMEs and to grow their market share through digital enablement.

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Q&A: Helping SMEs embrace digitalisation



Seeza Tourism Growth Network – a national collaborative network of tourism small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – has launched its Tourism SME Digital Transformation Programme in conjunction with local and global partners. *Tourism Update* chatted to Seeza Director, Septi Bukula, to find out more.

■ Adele Mackenzie

Q TELL us about Seeza Tourism Growth Network, its goals and objectives.

A It was established in 2017 with the aim of facilitating domestic and international market access for tourism SMEs, mainly by linking them to inbound business events and taking a collective approach to promotions abroad. The founding philosophy of the network is rooted in the theory and practice of inter-firm collaboration, which is practised in many parts of the world as an approach to SME development.

Q Who are your members?

A Because Seeza is not an association but a network, we refer to the SMEs we work with as partners, not members. There is no membership fee payable to be part of Seeza, but our SME partners contribute financially to the network based on the actual business we facilitate for them. Our partners are mostly, though not exclusively, tour operators across the country. There are currently about 100 partners who form part of the Seeza network.

Q Why is it important for tourism and hospitality SMEs to embrace technology to help their businesses grow?

A In recent years, and especially following the advent of COVID-19, numerous studies by several leading international institutions – including the World Economic Forum, OECD, Vodafone

Business and Visa – have shown that unless SMEs in general embrace digitalisation, they will increasingly be marginalised in future.

The Vodafone study unequivocally states: “SMEs that lack agility and willingness to invest into digitalisation are likely to fade away.”

Q Is it true that, despite the importance of embracing digitalisation, very few SMEs actually do so? And why is that?

A We certainly believe so. The reasons are many and varied. In South Africa, we believe that one of the key reasons

is that government tourism SME support programmes have not focused on encouraging and enabling SMEs to make the transition to digital.

For instance, in Seeza’s 2020 SME Tour Operator Insights Survey, 39.73% of SMEs identified branding (which included website development and optimisation), and 36.99% identified technology upgrades as among the key support services they needed.

Yet, of the 46.58% respondents that had participated in past support programmes, only 19% and 2.38%, respectively, reported that the support they had received included website

development and optimisation and technology upgrades. So in these two areas there’s a clear mismatch between support required and support provided.

Q How can this be addressed and by whom?

A We believe future government support programmes must make digital transformation a key component. Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN) is leading the way by implementing the Tourism SME Digital Transformation Programme in partnership with Seeza. That’s a positive start.

Q How is Seeza Tourism Growth Network addressing the challenge through its Digital Transformation Programme?

A We believe that there is no one entity that can comprehensively drive the digital transformation of SMEs, especially in tourism where, of necessity, digital transformation has so many facets. So, our Tourism SME Digital Transformation Programme delivery model is unique in that we have various partners, based both locally and internationally, that bring unique specialisations that address a specific aspect of the SME’s digital transformation journey. We call it a multi-partner delivery approach.

Q Who are those partners?

A For the current TKZN programme we are collaborating with four partners, three of whom are based in

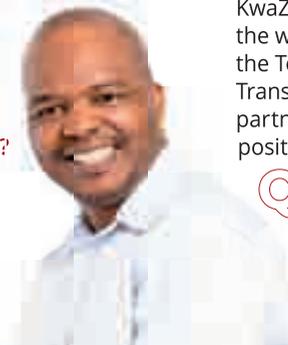
South Africa, and one abroad. Since the launch of the TKZN programme, we have added four more partners to our network, two in South Africa and two abroad.

Q What has the feedback been in terms of the benefits of this programme?

A Feedback we are receiving from SMEs participating in the programme is that it has fundamentally shifted their thinking about the importance of going digital as a way of enhancing their domestic and international competitiveness and market visibility. Also, our digital readiness diagnostic assessment helps them see where their current strengths and weaknesses lie. Based on the result of this assessment, the programme organises specific sessions for SMEs, such as webinars, to address specific identified gaps.

Q Who can, and should, participate in this programme?

A We believe any SME that desires to enhance its competitiveness and market visibility both now and in future should embark on the digital transformation journey. Because there is a cost associated with the programme, only those SMEs that are currently sponsored by Tourism KwaZulu-Natal are participating. We hope SMEs outside KZN can similarly be assisted in future. There have been expressions of interest from SMEs in other provinces but we unfortunately cannot assist them at this stage without them being sponsored.



Septi Bukula

A new voice for SMEs

THE newly launched Small Tourism Enterprise Association (STEA) aims to give a voice to over 60% of businesses in the tourism sector in South Africa – small and medium enterprises (SMEs) who “for far too long” have not been heard.

This according to the Chairman of STEA, **Jabu Matsilele**, who told *Tourism Update* the COVID-19 pandemic had laid bare the plight of small businesses in various forms, including challenges in

receiving financial relief and the Unemployment Insurance Fund Temporary Employee Relief Scheme.

“While many associations have been advocating on behalf of the various tourism sub-sectors, the concerns of small tourism businesses have largely been put at the back of the queue,” said Matsilele, noting that the STEA had positioned itself to answer this call and engage stakeholders on

behalf of small businesses.

“The association’s mission is to stimulate inclusive economic growth within the sector by giving a voice to small tourism businesses while facilitating equitable access to opportunities in a sustainable way,” he said.

To reinforce these objectives, STEA has embarked on the development of a digital platform that consolidates the needs of small businesses.

This platform will offer members a free resource to better

understand and manage their compliance needs and engage on relevant issues facing small businesses.

STEA focuses on small businesses with, amongst others, accommodation, tour operator, and activity space, and is aligning itself with the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA).

Any tourism business with an annual revenue of under R5 million (€285 600) can register on the STEA website as a free member.

Conservation Focus



Foundation gets behind K-9 anti-poaching initiative

■ Adele Mackenzie

THE Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HIP) K-9 unit has proved to be an “extremely effective tool” in combating poaching of the park’s rhino population.

The Isibindi Foundation has stepped in to support this

initiative through fundraising with Manager, **Luke Martin**, pointing out: “We are witnessing the wholesale slaughter of these magnificent creatures, threatening to wipe them off the planet forever. We cannot be the generation that loses the rhino. “We had to do something to

support those on the frontlines of the battle and are thrilled to be involved in an initiative, together with the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife’s Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park and other partners in the area.”

The unit currently consists of two tracking dogs named Gecko and Ghost, who are a cross between Bloodhound and Doberman, alongside their handlers.

Martin said the pair had been ‘on the job’ day and night protecting the rhino and had already successfully tracked down a number of poachers, catching them before they were able to poach. “Impressively, they are able to track a scent from up to eight hours after it has been placed in a particular area.

“The project is excellent, but it’s expensive to run and requires substantial funding on an ongoing basis,” Martin said. “The approximate cost of a trained dog is in the region of R90 000 (€5 000) and handler is R39 000 (€2 000), making the total combined cost for dog and handler R129 000 (€7 000).”

The Isibindi Foundation – alongside Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge – hopes to add three more dogs and handlers to the K-9 unit and build up sufficient funding to ensure the unit’s long-term sustainability.

The Foundation will be working together with Wildlife ACT – a partner of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife – Fund Trust in ensuring the funds are implemented effectively and for their intended purpose.

Did you know?

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, established in 1895, is the oldest proclaimed game reserve in Africa, famously known for saving the Southern White rhino, thanks to key conservationists Dr Ian Player, Magqubu Ntombela and Nick Steele, who started Operation Rhino in the 1950s.

Click [HERE](#) to watch a short video showcasing the HIP K-9 unit. ■



Every guest staying at Isibindi Africa's Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge is supporting the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi K9 Anti-poaching Unit through our Isibindi Foundation levy.

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