

# Reignite Tourism



During October, November and December, *Travel News* will help the industry Reignite Travel by providing a showcase for the best deals, the newest products and the most exciting offers that agents can use to entice their clients. We are doing so with a series of three features in those months, with advertising at reduced rates, to make it affordable for all suppliers. This is the first of the three, focusing on Domestic Tourism. Erin Cusack reports...

## Local – the cure for COVID ills

BY ERIN CUSACK

**D**OMESTIC tourism will play a vital role in the recovery of South Africa's tourism sector, and agents and operators need to understand the needs of this market to unlock its full potential.

This has been borne out by the number of operators that have historically dealt only with the inbound market, but have now had to turn to the local market to tide them over until the proper rebooting of inbound tourism.

"Domestic tourism has solidified the road to recovery," said Minister of Tourism, **Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane**, adding that the phased reopening of tourism in South Africa had seen great support for domestic travel.

She encouraged the industry to embrace domestic tourism and find ways to appeal to the domestic market during her speech on World Tourism Day.

### Opportunity

"The domestic market is playing a significant part in the opening up of travel as clients test the waters. Our COVID numbers have been surprisingly low and hotels are steadily reopening due to increased demand,"



**"New offers, innovative packaging and responsible pricing for this market are imperative."**  
**Mark Jakins**

said CEO of Cullinan Outbound Tourism, **Joanne Adolphe**. She said now was the ideal opportunity to showcase South Africa to South Africans. "A great advantage [of domestic tourism] is that there is no threat of forced quarantine on returning from your holiday."

Group sales, marketing and revenue director of Premier Hotels & Resorts, **Mark Jakins**, agreed. "Capitalising on some latent pent-up demand,

domestic leisure tourism has South Africans keen to venture out and experience the best South Africa has to offer. As a result, strategic growth plans for domestic leisure support for hoteliers and others in the tourism industry have to be a focus to offset the limited demand from other segments.

"New offers, innovative packaging and responsible pricing for this market are imperative." Mark emphasised the need to understand and cater for the needs of the domestic market.

### What are those needs?

"The market is largely looking for good value at properties that follow full COVID protocols. Hotels with outdoor activities are popular with families with young children," said Joanne.

Value is a theme that is going to gain ground in any discussion about the domestic market. Over the summer months, South Africans would be looking for packages that added value to their trip, said COO of City Lodge Hotels, **Lindiwe Sangweni-Siddo**. "It's going to be all about value-add activities and fun. Hotels need to ask what else they can offer guests."



**"The market is largely looking for good value at properties that follow full COVID protocols."**  
**Joanne Adolphe**

And adding value is a good alternative to compromising on price. Mark told *Travel News* that as South Africans were spoilt for choice at the moment, value was going to be of huge importance. "Guests are demanding the best experiences at affordable prices – which should continue deep into 2021."

"It is no longer about the cheapest offer, but about the value proposition and experience the property

can offer," said Joanne.

Lindiwe pointed out: "In terms of price, it's very difficult for us to talk about lowering our prices. We have to contend with the fact that our cost prices are on the increase." There remains, however, a discussion to be had about implementing a two-tier pricing system.

"We do support a two-tier pricing system as it creates a window of opportunity for suppliers to have year-round support," said Joanne. "International markets have their respective seasons and suppliers can rate yield at the same time, acknowledging the domestic market travellers."

Both Joanne and Mark, however, cautioned that the booking and distribution channels needed to be understood. "The wholesale, retail and online channels for booking inventory are managed differently and sensitively but most companies strive for rate parity," said Mark. He explained that as international itineraries were generally more complicated and involved substantial ground operator involvement, that needed to be taken into account.



# Heritage on our doorstep

AS SOUTH Africans emerge from lockdown, there is a great opportunity for them to dig into their history and support rural tourism while they explore the heritage sites they may otherwise never have known were there.

The UNWTO's theme for this year's World Tourism Day was 'Tourism and Rural Development'. "It is a theme that celebrates the sector's unique ability to drive economic development and provide opportunities outside of big cities, including in those communities that would otherwise be left behind," said Minister of Tourism, **Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane**.

While travel to South Africans' traditional December overseas holiday playgrounds is either looking impossible or fraught with inconvenience, and fears of quarantine, lockdown or disease, this is the perfect time for agents to sell South Africa to South Africans. While your clients are in a particular area, they will be looking out for activities, and it's highly likely they will get a great deal of pleasure in exploring some of the lesser known heritage tourism sites.

Many of the sites are rural and remote but, according to national tourist guide, **Maria**

**Louise Kruger**, they are an untapped tourism resource.

Maria offers online tourist guide training and wants to encourage people in small towns and dorps to engage in some kind of training. "Learn how to sell your town! Imagine the difference if, rather than just visiting the site, there was a local there who could tell you more about it," she said.

She admitted that there were challenges to exploring the lesser known parts of the country but highlighted several opportunities for developing these rural attractions. "There is definitely a lack of signage; sometimes even the experts you're with will get lost. But that could be solved by something as simple as more information centres. There needs to be an increase in communication about these places.

"You can't build a future without knowing your past," said Maria. "There's a story about every cultural group, and visiting helps us better understand ourselves and our country."

For South Africans who are feeling adventurous, here are a few heritage sites and experiences just an hour or two outside major cities, and what they offer.



Visitors can learn about the traditions of the San people.

## 1 !Khwa ttu – San Heritage Centre

The centre, only 70km outside Cape Town, gives an insight into the history of southern Africa's native San people. !Khwa ttu has a restaurant, guest houses, tented camps,

mountain bike trails and the opportunity to buy hand-crafted gifts.

The heritage centre has more than the usual artefacts one finds in a museum. Visitors are

guided through trails and experiences that demonstrate the skills and knowledge of the San while also telling the history of the southern African people.

## 2 Talana Museum, Battlefield & Heritage Park

In the northern KZN town of Dundee, a day trip from Pietermaritzburg, visitors can view military exhibits depicting the conflict between the Zulus, Boers and British, alongside coal-mining exhibits

that pay tribute to the town's heritage. Guests can enjoy a meal at the Miner's Rest restaurant and pick up some local crafts at the museum gift shop. The museum also pays

tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, with a bronze statue and a satellite museum in the old court house where he was tried and sentenced for the first time in South Africa.

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Elephant Point's Mavalanga Lodge. Photo: Legacy Hotels & Resorts

## Locals benefit with Legacy

LEGACY Hotels & Resorts is offering special promotional rates to South Africans. Rates are all per night, per person sharing, are valid until January 15, 2021 and are commissionable to agents at 10%.

- Kuzuko Lodge, Addo, Eastern Cape: from R1 250 (incl. breakfast)
- Elephant Point, Kruger National Park:
  - Yingwe Lodge from R1 170 at maximum occupancy (4 bedrooms)
  - Umganu Lodge from R1 350 at maximum occupancy (5 bedrooms)

- Mangwa Lodge, Mavalanga Lodge, Mpfuvu Lodge, Ngala Lodge, Rhulani Lodge, Thanda Lodge, Xidulu Lodge, and Kambaku Lodge are all from R1 485 at maximum occupancy (4 bedrooms)
- Matumi Lodge from R1 655 at maximum occupancy (2 bedrooms)
- Ndophu Lodge and Nyarhi Lodge are from R1 655 at maximum occupancy (3 bedrooms)
- Thekwane Lodge from R1 655pps at maximum occupancy (3 bedrooms).

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From page 2

Heritage on our doorstep



Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains.

3 Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains

Just 40 minutes outside Nelspruit, the historic town of Barberton sits at the foot of a Unesco World Heritage Site. The Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains contain some

of the world's oldest preserved volcanic and sedimentary rock, estimated to be around 3,6 billion years old. "Heritage isn't just buildings, it's in the rocks

and the plants too," said Maria. The mountains are home to several game reserves where visitors can enjoy hiking, mountain biking and 4x4 experiences.

4 Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve

A 40-minute drive south of Johannesburg brings you to this large, 134 sq km nature reserve, which is home to a long-lost ancient Tswana city, identified and archaeologically explored as recently as 2018. At several locations in

the reserve, rough stone walls can be seen. Iron-Age tools and pottery found in the area are exhibited at the Diepkloof Farm Museum. The museum offers insight into farm life in 19th century South Africa, including two

restored residences. The reserve also offers hiking and cycling trails, plus picnic and braai areas along the game drive route. For the more adventurous, there are overnight hiking trails, with accommodation.

5 Pretoria: Wonderboom Nature Reserve

The reserve, in the north of Pretoria, is named after its remarkable and iconic 1 000-year-old wonderboom, or wild fig tree (*Ficus Salicifolia*). Its central trunk is surrounded by a grove of offspring trees that have rooted all around the original parent, covering an area of 1,5 hectares. Until part of the original tree burned in a fire in 1870, it was said that a thousand people could sit in its shade. According to records, the tree was large enough to offer shade for 22 ox-wagons with 20 oxen in front of each.

Wonderboom Reserve offers hiking trails with scenic views among broadleaf woodland vegetation. An old fort dating back to the second Boer War lies at the top of a hill. Other features include a Stone-Age site that has produced the largest single accumulation of Neolithic tools ever found in South Africa, as well as an Iron-Age site. Impala and zebra roam the reserve, as do monkeys. A breeding pair of black eagles have raised chicks there since 2010, feeding on the dassies living in caves on the banks of the Apies River.



The wonderboom fig tree.

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FlySafair tunes in to COVID times

A VALUABLE new offering from FlySafair is its COVID-19 Book Assured guarantee, which reassures passengers that no matter what happens during this uncertain time, there are policies in place to assist with refunds, cancellations or what they must do should they contract COVID-19 while on holiday. Should there be a change in travel regulations, customers will be able to choose between a voucher for the full value of their reservation, which is then valid for 12 months, or a cash refund with a 45% penalty applied. In the event that a customer contracts COVID before flying, a voucher for the full value of their purchase will be issued. Should a customer contract COVID while on holiday, penalty-free flight changes will be allowed. FlySafair is one month

into a successful interline agreement with Qatar Airways, meaning that passengers on both airlines who are booked on connecting flights on each other's inventory do not have to check in again. It also ensures seamless baggage transfer without passenger intervention. "We are delighted to see international travel returning to South Africa and we are thrilled to have partnered with such a reputable airline," said FlySafair chief marketing officer, Kirby Gordon. The domestic airline has several other interline agreements in place with KLM, Air France and Condor as well as an upcoming agreement with Emirates. FlySafair offers flights between Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, East London and George – 66 flights daily on 12 routes.





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The bush offers families a great way to relax together. Photo: Safari Plains

## Great glamping for families

SAFARI Plains is offering an ideal family experience while camping in comfort and style.

Set against the backdrop of the magnificent Waterberg mountain range in Limpopo, the wide-open savannahs, free roaming Big Five and spectacular vistas create an idyllic wilderness destination.

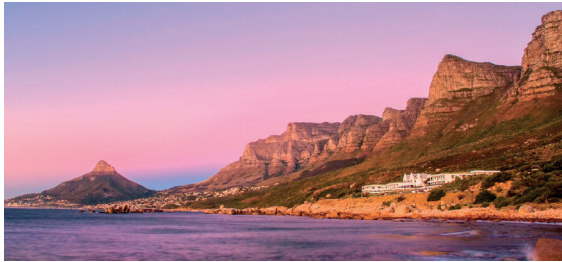
Each tented suite offers guests a private wrap-around deck and brings all the comforts of the indoors, outdoors. Guests have access to a high-ceilinged dining room, lounge, bar and a spa.

The surrounding bushveld can be explored on open safari vehicles, bush walks or horseback safaris and evenings

can be spent roasting marshmallows over a boma fire or stargazing with the whole family.

With a host of kid-friendly activities that include yoga on the lawn, arts and crafts, nature walks and movies with popcorn, parents can be sure their little ones will go to bed tired and happy every evening.

## ‘Get some space!’



The Twelve Apostles. Photo: The Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa

RED Carnation Hotels Collection is inviting South Africans to enjoy some space at its three bespoke hotels across the country.

In Cape Town, The Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa awaits. Guests can take a deep breath of fresh air with views of the Atlantic Ocean as well as the

Table Mountain National Park, not to mention the sunsets that can be seen from the Azure Restaurant Terrace or the Leopard Bar.

Guests can relax in the infinity or heated rock pools, enjoy mountain walks, indulge in the spa, and experience a movie night in the hotel's in-house cinema.



Bushmans Kloof. Photo: Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve & Wellness Retreat

If you're looking to get out of the city, Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve & Wellness Retreat is only a short drive away in the foothills of the Cederberg Mountains. Wide open plains, majestic rock formations, ancient Bushman paintings and crystal-clear waterfalls provide a unique wilderness

experience in this South African Natural Heritage Site.

The five-star Relais & Châteaux and NatGeo Lodge is renowned for its hospitality, spa and cuisine served in unique locations. Activities include nature drives, rock art excursions, mountain biking, canoeing and swimming in rock pools.



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The Oyster Box on Umhlanga's beachfront. Photo: The Oyster Box Hotel

Or perhaps it's a beachfront location you're looking for? The Oyster Box on Umhlanga's beachfront offers panoramic views of the Indian Ocean. The five-star hotel offers a combination of old-world charm, impeccable service and tropical gardens.

Guests can wine and dine at the casual Ocean

Terrace or the fine-dining Grill Room and choose between traditional high tea at The Palm Court and cocktails at the Lighthouse and Oyster Bars. The hotel also boasts a multi-award-winning spa that offers a range of wellness experiences created to celebrate KwaZulu Natal's rich culture.



SPECIALS

Here are some local specials, chosen from Travelinfo. Get more details from the supplier!

AfricaStay

Three-star **Cabanas at Sun City** adventure package. Two nights from R1 775pps; Valid until November 30. Includes breakfast; use of resort shuttle; access to Valley of Waves. Added value: choose either one three-hour Pilanesberg game drive or one 60-minute quad bike excursion per person. Excludes items of a personal nature, transfers, travel insurance and all meals not mentioned.

Dream Kist

Four-star **Lagoon Beach Hotel**, Cape Town. Land arrangements only. Includes three nights in a Classic room from R4 239pps; daily breakfast at hotel; private return airport transfers. Valid until March 31 2021. Includes tourism levy and VAT. Dream Kist T&Cs apply. Subject to availability.

Thompsons Holidays

Four-star **Premier Resort Sani Pass**, Southern Drakensberg. REFERENCE NR: PP-TH2797412. Book by October 25, travel up to October 27, 2020. The self-drive package includes four nights' accommodation in a Standard Room from R3 186pps, dinner and breakfast daily. Bonus: one child under 16 stays free when sharing with two adults, and receives a free breakfast; fruit basket on arrival; one round of golf per person per stay; parking and early check-in and late check-out (subject to availability). Excludes all items of a personal nature and meals not mentioned. Thompsons T&Cs apply.

Development Promotions

**Wild Coast Sun** Three-night #FunwithDP School Holiday break at the Wild Coast Sun from only R5 250pps (two kids under 12 stay free). Valid on selected dates between October 24 and November 1. T&Cs and weekend surcharges may apply.



Bakubung Bush Lodge. Photo: Legacy Hotels

Legacy

Three specials for South African residents only. **Bakubung Bush Lodge**, Pilanesberg, from R1 000 per night, pps, including breakfast. **Kwa Maritane Bush Lodge**, Pilanesberg, from R1 000 per night, pps, including breakfast. **Tshukudu Bush Lodge**, Pilanesberg – from R2 400 per night, pps, including breakfast, dinner and local drinks. Subject to availability. Booking numbers are limited to accommodate social distancing. Applies to new bookings only. Valid until January 15, 2021. Agents get 10% commission. T&Cs apply.

Coming soon to Umhlanga

PREMIER Hotels and Resorts is nearing completion on its Umhlanga development – the four-star Premier Hotel Umhlanga, a three-star Premier Splendid Inn and a Convention Centre, all within one precinct high up on Umhlanga Ridge in Durban. Completion is envisaged for November this year.

The Premier Hotel Umhlanga will offer 130 bedrooms, a restaurant and bar, swimming pool, gym, and a conference centre that is fully subdivisible into three noise-dampening venues, acoustically designed for delegate comfort and offering capacity for up to 300 attendees.

The conference centre also offers a viewing deck from the 10th floor overlooking the Indian Ocean. All bedrooms have balcony access and sea views.

The Premier Splendid Inn will feature 64 bedrooms and its own 50-seater restaurant. Guests can also access the rooftop pool and conference centre, with the main access from the four-star property.

The Premier precinct offers six floors of undercover parking, with the courtyard entrance offering a turning



Artist's impression of the Premier Hotel Umhlanga's exterior and interior. Illustrations: Premier Hotels and Resorts



circle of small bus access or drop-offs for conference or international tour groups.

"Our decision to invest in Umhlanga, even during this difficult time in the COVID-19 virus pandemic, is testament to the confidence we have in South Africa's ability to recover economically. "The Umhlanga project will position the Premier Group as a firm favourite amongst corporate, government and international clientele

as we strive to secure a hotel presence in every major South African city," said **Samuel Nassimov**, the founder and md. "The unique configuration in offering two hotels and a conference centre in one spectacular location, combined with the very best modern, contemporary and in some cases classical design specifications, will provide Umhlanga with probably its finest hospitality experience!"

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# Whales and fynbos

Sean Hough, md of Travel by Investec, took a winter break at Lekkerwater, a lodge by Natural Selection. These were his thoughts...



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**L**ekkerwater means 'good water'. It's a piece of land named because the fishing was so good, by Bill Green, a keen fisherman who built a holiday house there in 1939.



Only a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Cape Town, the property, now home to Natural Selection's Lekkerwater Beach Lodge, overlooks a massive Marine Protected Area that stretches 5km out to sea and 46km along the coast.

The history of Lekkerwater wouldn't be out of place in a Bond movie. During the 1980s, the government of the day expropriated Green's land and home to establish a missile-testing base in this secluded and remote part of the world. When that facility closed, the site became a retreat for government ministers. It was at Lekkerwater that President de Klerk decided he would unban the ANC and release Nelson Mandela and, in so doing, rewrite the history of South Africa.

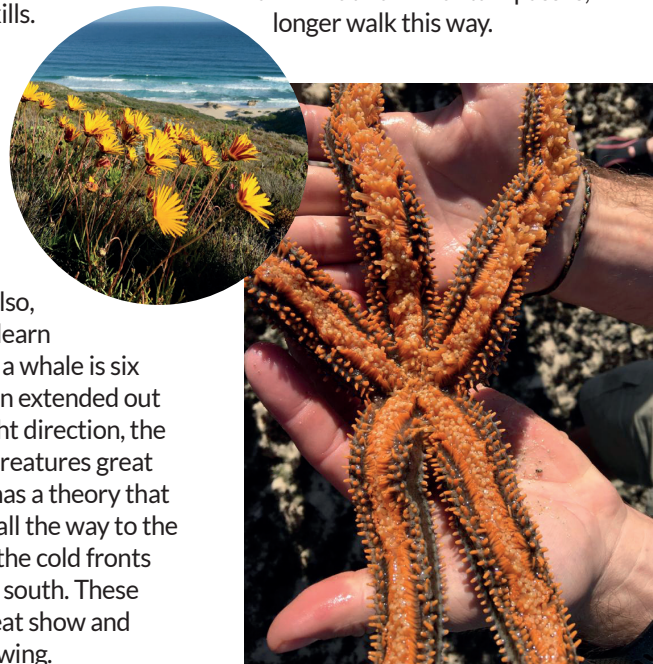
But, enough of history lessons. We were more interested in the fynbos-infused G & Ts served each day on the

beach.... and the whales, of course.

De Hoop Nature Reserve is famous for whales. Most are Southern Right whales, and these beautiful, massive 40-ton mammals migrate here from the Antarctic and may be found in large numbers when they arrive to calve in the waters surrounding De Hoop. The calves (and some of the guests) come here to fatten up and to learn some survival skills. It's not just a layer of fat the whales need to survive the icy waters of the Antarctic. Here, the calves learn to breach, the skill required to break through surface ice. Also, believe it or not, they learn how to sail. The tail of a whale is six metres wide and, when extended out of the water in the right direction, the wind can blow these creatures great distances. Our guide has a theory that these guys hitch a lift all the way to the Cape on the winds of the cold fronts that blow up from the south. These lessons make for a great show and endless afternoon viewing.

Billy, our guide, is a real character. A large ex-rugby player with a heart of gold and passion for all things whale and fynbos, he is an absolute specialist on the area and has a superb talent for storytelling. On the top of a hill overlooking the whales, Billy tells us that, had we approached over

the pass via Franschoek, we would have followed the migration path of the elephants as they left the winter rainfall areas of the Western Cape in search of the summer rainfall pastures of the Eastern Cape. What a sight that must have been; the biggest land mammal looking down on the largest sea mammal. It's a sad realisation to know that those elephants, which carved out our mountain passes, no longer walk this way.



Billy does a marine morning walk, a 'beach safari', where we got to feel what it's like to have an abalone squirming in your hand. We tried to coax an octopus from his hiding place, photographed spiny sea stars and watched plough snails hunt on the beach. The many rock pools were scattered with periwinkles, mussels and oysters and, of course, plenty of sea anemones. To top it all off, playing in the waves was a large pod of dolphins. I've never experienced a beach with such abundant wildlife, and I felt like a kid again, learning things for the first time and in awe of this natural beauty surrounding us.

The afternoon fynbos walk was no less fascinating. Fynbos once provided food, shelter, fuel and medicine to the

original inhabitants of the area. The traditional medicinal uses of fynbos are well reported and research into its benefits continues. Why do we ignore this precious resource?

September is especially beautiful for this region. It's flowering season for many indigenous plants and, together with the abundance of whales, you couldn't paint a more beautiful picture. I hung on every word Billy told us (except for the numbers, I didn't hang on to those) and after the walk I declared myself a fynbos expert, only to be reminded that this was one of four distinct seasons. Each season has its own unique flowering plants – which can only mean we'll have to go back three more times this year!

Not to harp on the G & Ts... but what interested me was the plants they used to infuse our drinks, all growing naturally around the lodge: wild sage, wild rosemary, citrus-flavoured buchu, and my number-one favourite, rose-scented pelargonium or geranium. I wasn't aware that geraniums came

from the Cape, were you? These plants are exported and grown in window boxes all over the world, from Italy to California.



Lekkerwater is all about experience, thrills vs frills. So, city-slicker, you won't find a telephone, a TV or an AC in your room. Nor do they waste electricity on mini bars – to be honest, that stuff is not important when the view from your bed is one of whales and sunsets and endless seas. We slept with our large patio door open, enjoying the sea breeze and we awoke to the sound of crashing waves with the sun as our natural alarm clock.

The lodge is off the grid; it has 99 solar panels and can switch over to gas generators when the sun doesn't shine.

There is actually very lekker water, from a 150m borehole, so fresh you can drink it from the tap.

Protecting the environment is clearly an important value too which means the lodge was built on the footprint of the original home. That means only six rooms, and one family unit, giving plenty of space, privacy and exclusivity. The lodge is simply and tastefully decorated with natural wood and shades of blue – exactly how you'd imagine an idyllic beach hideaway.

The chef prepares perfect home-cooked meals, including freshly baked bread for breakfast, lunch and supper. It's difficult to pop to the shops as the nearest is half a day away and so everything is home-made and delicious. The highlight was the lekker braai, served in potjie pots and cast-iron pans.

The team makes you feel at home right off as you arrive. Why the 'welcome home' greeting? This was a cradle of humankind, where some of the earliest remains of modern humanity were found in the nearby Klipdrift Cave. Like geraniums, Homo Sapiens originated here.

*Sean Hough*

