

Figures show growth in foreign visitors to Joburg

The last 20 years have been exciting for the burgeoning and subsequent boom of the tourism industry in Joburg which is borne out by the figures. According to the third annual MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index released in June 2013, Joburg proved to be the most popular destination in Africa, with about 2.54 million international visitors to the city in 2013.



Despite a marginal 5.5% increase in the number of international visitors from 2012, Joburg's substantial 53.6% growth in international visitors from 2009 to 2013 has propelled it into the Index's top 20 fastest growing cities globally. Joburg also comes out tops in Africa in terms of international visitor spending, with US\$2.7 billion estimated injected into the city during 2013, a slight increase (1%) on 2012's expenditure.

While a vast number of these visitors arrive for business reasons or events, ever-increasing numbers are staying to sample and experience Joburg's fascinatingly diverse, urban tourism and lifestyle scene. Although only 128 years old, Joburg boasts layer upon layer of interesting, arts, culture and heritage - from its ancient paleontological and anthropological history to its farming, Boer War and mining boomtown past, and, of course, not forgetting its significance in the more recent struggle history.

The development of the tourism scene in Joburg over the past 20 years has featured a dramatic increase in the number of precincts, museums and attractions to highlight the city's fascinating story, developed by both the public and private sectors. Vilakazi Street in Soweto, the Maboneng Precinct to the east of the CBD, as well as Braamfontein further north, are just some of the lively neighbourhoods and precincts that have come into their own over the past decade or more.

New heritage sites

A myriad outstanding new heritage sites have been brought into being include the Origins Centre at Wits, the Apartheid Museum at Gold Reef City, Liliesleaf Farm, the Hector Pietersen and Chancellor House Museums, and the Constitution Hill complex, home to South Africa's Constitutional Court. These are just the tip of the iceberg and a number of routes have been developed to take in the city's diversity in terms of themes and attractions, including arts, cuisine, Indian and Chinese heritage, adventure and nature.

All these developments showcasing the city's extraordinary story have been complimented by infrastructural developments like the Gautrain, the Rea Vaya BRT, as well as the arrival of the City Sightseeing Bus, Joburg's first hop-on, hop-off tourist bus and hundreds of tour guides and transport companies operating in the private sector.

Destination marketing campaign

In its bid to leverage as much leisure tourism from both business visitors and locals alike, Joburg Tourism launched its "Explore, Experience & Enjoy Joburg" destination marketing campaign, in partnership with radio partner KayaFM, with industry partners and stakeholders in October 2013.

The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness and drive business for sites, attractions and tourism product owners across the board - not just large operators and companies, but for small and emerging establishments as well. The promotion features bi-monthly outside broadcasts, weekly interviews on business and lifestyle shows on KayaFM, as well as a real-time interactive online Jozi Guide at www.joburgtourism.com and www.kayafm.co.za

The Jozi Guide is an interactive, dynamic map which reflects real-time events, establishments, transport and transport timetables and many other features. This will be updated on a daily basis and tourism partners are encouraged to submit their events and initiatives for uploading onto the guide to joziguide@joburgtourism.com and joziguide@kayafm.co.za.

The advantage of being included in the guide is that individual establishments will be promoted extensively on Kaya FM, which has over one million listeners daily. The Jozi Guide provides real-time updates regarding shows and exhibitions, as well as directions, traffic and transport tips.

"Johannesburg boasts layer upon layer of fascinating history, development and human interest stories - of course not forgetting the leisure and lifestyle aspects of entertainment, sports, music, arts and culture. This is a city with a colourful past and a future filled with excitement, potential and promise," said MMC for Economic Development, Ruby Mathang.

"Guided by economic development objectives of the GDS Joburg 2040 - it's mission of the city's leadership to continue positioning Joburg as one of the world's leading cities: an all-year-round destination, a leading business and business event destination, and a vibrant, cosmopolitan centre for lifestyle, leisure, heritage, the arts, culture, entertainment, sports and mega-events. We continue our efforts to create an enabling environment for the tourism sector, which includes a focus on SMMEs, assisting them with training, service enhancement to gain accreditation and creating business linkages where possible," he concluded.

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