

# CT etourism summit challenges tourism industry to embrace social media

Cape Town has just successfully hosted the 2010 eTourism Africa Summit (25 and 26 October) held at the CTICC. Cape Town Tourism partnered with South African Tourism to sponsor the forward-looking event.



A key theme throughout the eTourism Africa Summit was that sharing travel experiences is central to online destination marketing and it's made all the easier and immediate by platforms such as digital images and videos via social networking sites. The summit afforded South Africa's tourism sector an opportunity to learn about growing and marketing their businesses online as travellers increasingly exclude traditional avenues and travel agents

altogether.

For the first time ever, 3D filming of Cape Town was previewed at the eTourism Africa Summit with Cape Town Tourism and South African Tourism sponsoring 3D aerial filming of some of Cape Town's most iconic scenery. The material will be used extensively in profiling Cape Town at upcoming international events such November's World Travel Market.

## Travellers want real place, real experiences

Speaking at the summit, Cape Town Tourism CEO Mariette du Toit-Helmbold said: "The world is tired of smooth, generic destinations. They want real places with rough edges that tell a story as travellers search for authenticity and meaningful experiences. The web and social media platforms have made it possible for challenger destinations like Cape Town to gain credibility as a result of user testimonials. Cape Town was recently rated as one of the Twenty Five Best Destinations in the World by Tripadvisor users; a real credit to our authenticity."

Du Toit-Helmbold said cities that relied on the same tried-and-tested marketing techniques would lose out to their more innovative rivals. To maintain the competitive edge, a city brand needs to be authentic, must appeal to locals first, have emotional pull and have real stories to tell. "Storytelling is changing," she said. "Facebook has replaced holiday albums and Flickr is the new slide show. Research shows that people spend the most time in the planning and memory phase of their holidays and sharing their experiences now takes place on Facebook and Twitter."

## 72 hours turns into 300

International web-celeb and digital strategist, Jesse Desjardins; aka the '72 Hour' traveller, was a guest of the Cape Town Tourism and the etourism summit and posted his 72-hour experience of Cape Town ([www.facebook.com/72HoursInCapeTown](http://www.facebook.com/72HoursInCapeTown)) on multiple social networking platforms. His experience is claimed have drawn positive feedback from local and international fans, reinforcing Du Toit-Helmbold's message that content, storytelling and new tools to tell those stories will be key to successful destination marketing in the future. Initially only planned as a 72-hour visit to the Mother City, Desjardins was so enchanted by Cape Town that he announced his plans to extend his stay for an additional two weeks.



Finally the summit ensured that the tourism sector of tomorrow also had the opportunity to learn and hear from the online experts. Cape Town Tourism and South African Tourism sponsored twenty tourism students from higher education institutions in Cape Town to attend the conference.

Damian Cook, CEO of E Tourism Frontier's, said it was incredibly important that tourism students understand the value of

online marketing and social marketing. "Technology is changing rapidly. University students are one of the most connected groups and it's important that we are able to share a business angle on how they can use the internet in their future tourism roles. It's been great to have Cape Town Tourism and South African Tourism support the idea that we must expose and involve tomorrow's tourism leaders in our online case studies from today", said the E Tourism Frontiers CEO.

Go to [www.capetown.travel](http://www.capetown.travel) for more information.

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