

CPT Tourism provides support for tourism SMMEs

In response to the growing number of new businesses' failing, Cape Town Tourism's annual Board Development Fund (BDF) will once again provide tourism businesses in Cape Town with the support that they so need. Every year, the Cape Town Tourism board hands over what would be their board payment and pools it into a fund to support tourism businesses.



From left to right: Brett Hendricks, Alderman James Vos and Nicolene Mhlanganyeli.

The tourism body's board of directors established the fund in 2013, waiving their monthly board remuneration to instead support and develop tourism businesses.



Supporting local tourism SMMEs during lockdown

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Board chairperson, Brett Hendricks says that providing support for local enterprises during this critical time is crucial. "We all know that a few months ago, travel came to a complete standstill. Tourism businesses are now embarking on the slow journey to recovery, facing minimal visitor numbers and depleted cash reserves. Initiatives to support SMMEs now could be the difference between closure and survival.

"Our aim with this fund is to ensure the longevity and sustainability of these businesses. The tourism industry is a key contributor to the economy, creating countless jobs and providing opportunities and income for many other sectors."

Sustainability of SMME tourism businesses

Enver Duminy, CEO of Cape Town Tourism explains: We established the BDF to support SMMEs carefully chosen through an internal selection process.

"Benefits of this programme include customised business interventions designed around the specific needs of each business. The programme supports the sustainability of small to medium tourism businesses and creates a marketing and media platform which improves the profile of these businesses. We also support them by connecting them to our Cape Town Tourism members, partners and executive leadership."

This year's BDF recipients are iKunjani Travel & Tours and Jeep Tours Cape Town.

Nicolene Mhlanganyeli of iKunjani Travel & Tours, says: "This award will enable us to aggressively market our business and the services we provide so as to be continuously at the top of our prospective clients' minds," adding that plans are in motion to expand the business's current product offering across all nine provinces in South Africa.

Established in 2017, iKunjani Travel & Tours is a women-led tour operator specialising in authentic cultural adventures that are customised to travellers' needs. The business offers a variety of shuttle, booking and tour services, with a strong focus on showcasing the rich tapestry and diverse cultural heritage of South Africa. Tours are currently available in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape.

Mhlanganyeli and her business partner started iKunjani when they identified a demand for authentic township tours in Cape Town that share stories of the city's unique culture. They also wanted to use their business to help others in the communities of South Africa.

"Being a small business owner means being part of a solution and being an innovator that will inspire other young black women from previously disadvantaged backgrounds to dare to dream. It means being actively involved in creating jobs and assisting in developing the economy of South Africa. It means being able to give the next person an opportunity to put bread on the table for their family to survive during these challenging times." says Mhlanganyeli.

Lizanne Gomes, the owner of Jeep Tours Cape Town, started her business three years ago when she realised that her hobby was in hot demand. Having been a part of the "Jeep lifestyle" for years, she spent her weekends exploring Cape Town by Jeep when she moved to the city.

"What I do on my tours today, I did for fun before I started my company. We used to go to Atlantis Dunes and other locations and pack a picnic. People always asked me if they could join. From there, I did research into international markets and realised there's a lot of demand for such adventure trips," Gomes explains.

Gomes says that becoming a board fund recipient has been a fantastic morale boost. Being recognised as a business worth funding and investing in also made her feel proud and validated the hard work she put into starting the venture. "It's wonderful to know that my vision is shared by industry leaders. If they see value and potential, it makes you feel confident that you are growing a business that has a future," says Gomes.

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The pandemic understandably dealt both businesses unexpected hardships. Moving forward, the plan is to create more jobs and expand the iKunjani Travel & Tours product offering – promoting a culture of being a tourist in your own country

and exploring communities through flexible payment options to make it possible.

Gomes says business has only recently started up again, having had no tours for nearly six months. To keep the Jeep fleet operating, Gomes obtained an essential service permit to do charity work delivering food and supplies wherever it was needed: "I'm very passionate about animal charities, so we'd collect pet food and deliver it to organisations because, when people could barely go to the shops, the animals were suffering."

The idea was to keep busy initially, but she continues to do drives to support charities. For now, she says: "We're just in survival mode. Every booking gives us hope. Our focus is to remain positive because we know that travellers won't stop visiting Cape Town. We are a destination on everyone's bucket list, we just need to be safe in our approach so our travellers feel confident when choosing to visit us."

Mitigating lockdown impact

"As Cape Town Tourism, we have been working together with other sectors in trying our best to contain the negative impact of lockdown on the local economy and saving jobs that we have been steadily growing across Cape Town. Our main focus is how best to move from crisis into recovery by adjusting our plans to be ready to welcome visitors back and assure them that Cape Town is a safe and healthy destination," concludes Enver Duminy.

The annual prize sets each business up for the year ahead with an R50,000 cash injection as well as marketing support and an extensive mentorship programme.

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