

Entries open for Lilizela Tourism Awards

The Lilizela Tourism Awards programme was launched at INDABA 2013, to recognise tourism businesses that set global benchmarks for excellence in the travel and tourism trade. Entries for the awards are still open.



In recent years, there have been a number of distinct and different tourism awards all managed and delivered by different entities. The Lilizela Tourism Awards will combine all the awards under one umbrella, one brand name and ultimately, one owner.

"We are a destination which prides itself on being universally benchmarked and we have numerous players in the sector who can attest to that. As a result, there were many different organisations running separate awards all aimed at acknowledging and awarding 'the best' in the industry," explains Thulani Nzima, South African Tourism chief executive officer.

"A decision was taken to incorporate all the existing tourism awards under one national banner. The programme is led by the National Department of Tourism (NDT) and managed and delivered by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA), the only official and formal quality assurance body for our industry and a business unit of South African Tourism," says Nzima.

Five inaugural award categories

The Lilizela Tourism Awards will initially focus on five categories: Service Excellence; Emerging Entrepreneur; Tourism Responsibility and Sustainability; Universal Accessibility; and the Minister's Award. In time, there will be up to 18 different categories incorporating the widest berth of tourism offerings.

"For people with an interest in tourism, to have five award categories for an industry as varied as ours seems unfair. Rest assured this is only for the inaugural awards. Next year, we will announce an additional number of categories to make the awards criteria as extensive and inclusive as possible," says Nzima.

Entry is free but each category, based on its particular business requirements, will have criteria specific to it and the adjudication process will be supported by the relevant industry association. A rigid requirement is that businesses must be based in South Africa and must have been in operation for a minimum of one year. All accommodation establishments must be graded by the TGCSA.

As an added benefit, all entrants will receive a digital toolkit complete with marketing collateral they can use across their respective digital platforms. The toolkit will arm business owners with information on how to market their business to potential guests, garner votes (for the Service Excellence Awards, which is the only category reliant on guest ratings) and create their own excitement about involvement in the Lilizela Tourism Awards.

"The digital toolkit will help the trade while at the same time, creating awareness about the Lilizela Tourism Awards among consumers. We are excited about this value-added benefit available to all who enter," says Nzima.

A closer look at the award categories:

1. Minister's Award:

This award will recognise a tourism business or personality who has set the benchmark here at home and globally, and whose work pushes this industry closer to the National Tourism Sector Strategy 2020 vision. The recipient will be chosen by the Minister of Tourism at his discretion. Entries close on 25 June 2013.

2. Lilizela Service Excellence in Accommodation Award:

This award is only open to graded establishments and is the only one of the categories reliant largely on guest feedback. The Accommodation sector will be recognised during this first year, with the other service providers and operators to follow next year. People may vote online on www.lilizela.co.za. Establishment owners are asked to encourage their guests to vote for them in order to further their chances of winning. Entries close on 25 June. Public voting closes on 5 July.

3. Lilizela Eteya Award (Emerging Tourism Entrepreneur of the Year Award):

This award recognises black-owned SMMEs that have achieved notable success since starting up. Entries for 2013 are closed.

4. Lilizela Universal Accessibility:

This award is for facilities and services at accommodation establishments and MESE venues which are accessible for people with physical limitations. The standard criteria are those used by the TGCSA that were introduced with the normal quality grading criteria back in 2010. Entries close on 25 June.

5. Lilizela Imvelo Award:

This award will recognise the business that best incorporates the three development and sustainability pillars into their business operating models and the IMVELO brand will be incorporated accordingly. Entries close on 19 July.

For further information on the awards, go to www.lilizela.co.za. For further information on grading, go to [the Tourism Grading Council's website](#).