

Dream today, visit Treedom Villas tomorrow



By Evan-Lee Courie

21 Apr 2020

#TheLockdownSeries explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses, how they prepared for lockdown and its impacts on operations and employees, as well as lessons learned that we can take into the post-Covid-19 era.



"We all need to support small businesses and give our economy a jump start when all this is over. Local is lekker!" says Debbie Nortje, founder and managing director of Treedom Villas and Vardos.

Situated amongst nature, on the unspoilt coast of the Garden Route, South Africa, in the little town called Wilderness, [Treedom Villas and Vardos](#) will take your breath away. However, our world has been turned upside by Covid-19 and for now, we can only be mindful of when, how and where we will be able to travel in the future.

Debbie Nortje, founder and managing director of Treedom Villas and Vardos, shares how the coronavirus pandemic and national lockdown has impacted this dream destination...

■ How has Covid-19 impacted your business?

Well, the obvious is the loss of income and postponement of bookings, especially over the Easter school holidays.



#EntrepreneurMonth: Enter the holiday paradise of Treedom Villas and Vardos

Evan-Lee Courie 21 Nov 2019



■ How did you prepare for the lockdown?

I'm not sure anyone was able to properly prepare for this. This has never happened in our lifetime. We didn't stockpile unnecessarily but we did get building supplies in order to keep ourselves busy and to do some exciting improvements.

■ ***What's the biggest challenge you are facing during this pandemic?***

Using our capital which was earmarked for expansion is now being used to pay our staff and survive. Cashflow is a challenge that most businesses are facing.

■ ***What sort of assistance will you need going forward?***

We will need the municipality to approve the expansion of our five Gypsy Wagons so we can continue to expand and get our loan from SEFA (Small Business Finance Agency). Now that lockdown has happened, the municipality is slow which affects us greatly. Delayed approval, delayed loan, delayed expansion.

Treedom needs to expand and continue to create an iconic destination with our Gypsy Wagons which will be affordable and magical for future travellers.

■ ***If you are able to operate, What steps are you taking to continue operating?***

Unfortunately, all tourist facilities are closed and the law is keeping most people at home.

If the lockdown is relaxed to allow some businesses to trade under strict guidelines, Treedom would be ideally placed to accept visitors whilst keeping safety a priority.

- Social distancing is easily achieved here at Treedom as we are in a secluded forest.
- Treedom is a safe destination free from any crowds.
- Food can be delivered which eliminates shopping.
- Treedom has not had any travellers from restricted countries over the past 5 weeks.
- We have lots of activities which require little or no social interaction.
- We welcome families who need a peaceful and safe place to unwind and recharge.

■ ***What measures have you put in place for your employees?***

Our employees live on-site and work continues as usual as we are now able to upgrade and make exciting improvements. We are working together as one big happy family!

■ ***Are you communicating with your customers? If so, how?***

Yes, of course. Our social media pages are very active and our PR is ongoing. We are telling our story and reminding people that this will be over soon and they will be able to return to our improved and upgraded forest sanctuary soon.

“



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#sundayfunday We're all daydreaming of taking that #bucketlist road trip once lockdown is lifted – either as a group of friends, a family or a romantic weekend away for just you and your #love. Dream today and make sure #Treedom is top of your list – come and experience true Wilderness hospitality in a place untouched by the stress of the city <http://www.treedomvillas.co.za/>

A post shared by [Treedom Villas](#) (@treedomvillas) on Apr 18, 2020 at 10:14pm PDT

“ How are you offering assistance to your customers who rely on your services?

Book and pay a deposit now and travel later. We are working on specials and packages which will be released soon.

What do you predict the next 6 months will be like?

Due to travellers taking their holiday money and using it as survival cash, travelling has come to a standstill. But in the same breath, I am hearing good things too. South Africans are going to support each other and travel within SA.

“ We all need to support small businesses and give our economy a jump start when all this is over. Local is lekker! ”



Preparing for a post-Covid-19 era in the tourism industry

Mariette du Toit-Helmbold 25 Mar 2020



Now is the time to innovate and experiment. What is Treedom doing?

We are building a private spa area with a sauna, outdoor showers and - in future - a heart-shaped pool. This is to promote health and add more experiences to our forest sanctuary.

We are also thinking of ways to pivot our business and use our land to be self-sustainable as well as thinking of new ways to generate an income with what we have.

What has been your biggest lesson from all this?

We have learned to use this precious time to better ourselves and our offering to our future guests. Look at how the world is changing and to confirm we are aligning ourselves to the essential human needs.

We are doing this through:

- **Healing** - building our new spa to give our guests immune-boosting and relaxing experiences
- **Healthy body** - expanding our vegetable gardens so guests can eat straight from the land
- **Nature** - spending time in our forest sanctuary surrounded by nature is good for the soul
- **Love** – the vibe at Treedom is all about love and making our guests feel like old friends
- **Time** – the whole reason for Treedom's existence is that we want to be part of the best part of anyone's year, their holiday. We all work so hard for those precious weeks we have with our friends and family doing all the things we love. We make those times special and when our guests leave here, they always say, "We wish we could stay longer".

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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