

G20 2025: South Africa's defining test for global-grade hospitality

When South Africa hosts the G20 Summit in November 2025, we won't just be welcoming world leaders — we'll open our doors to global scrutiny. With over [R1.2bn](#) in direct tourism revenue projected, the hospitality sector is not just preparing for a spike in demand, but for a defining test of its readiness and resilience.

By [Sandra Kneubuhler](#) 13 May 2025



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This is our moment to lead. But are we ready?

Hospitality with competitive edge

South Africa's edge isn't found only in its accommodations, natural beauty, or infrastructure. It's in our people. Our service culture is built on genuine warmth, cultural intelligence, and a deep pride in showcasing our country to the world – a form of hospitality that cannot be scripted or scaled artificially.

This is more than anecdotal. South Africa was recently ranked the world's [friendliest country](#) – a sentiment echoed in the [International Tourism Performance Report](#) – a signal that our people-first approach is cutting through. That matters at an event where thousands of international guests will be watching not only what we offer, but how we offer it.

A workforce that reflects the world

South Africa's hospitality workforce is another major asset. While many global destinations face [talent shortages](#), our sector benefits from a young, diverse, and well-trained pipeline of professionals. This diversity isn't just socially valuable – it's operationally strategic. It enables frontline teams to intuitively connect with guests from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds, offering a level of service that's

empathetic, agile, and globally attuned.

Pressure points: Infrastructure and security

That said, we must confront our vulnerabilities with the same level of intent. Infrastructure – particularly power and water supply – remains under pressure. Industry bodies like the Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (Fedhasa) have rightfully flagged these as threats to long-term growth.

Encouragingly, many hospitality providers have already invested in mitigation strategies: solar, generators, water storage, and other solutions to ensure operational continuity. Ahead of G20, this must shift from early adoption to an industry standard.

Security is another critical area. Delegates and international media will expect seamless safety, both personal and logistical. Hotels must continue reviewing their on-site risk plans, from mobile patrols to access control, theft prevention, and visible staff training. We cannot afford a gap between perception and reality.

Sustainability can't be an afterthought

Sustainability will be a central theme of the summit, and our sector must walk the talk. The average hotel guest generates [13.8kg](#) CO₂ per stay - [equivalent](#) to driving a typical petrol car for 56km, charging over 1,100 smartphones, or burning 7kg of coal – a sobering metric.

This demands action: energy-efficient infrastructure, locally sourced supply chains, greywater harvesting, carbon offsetting, and greener transport and event models. These are not marketing claims – they are now baseline expectations.

Hotels and venues must hardwire sustainability into every part of the guest journey, not just to meet international standards, but to contribute meaningfully to global environmental goals.

Rising to the moment and beyond

I believe South Africa's hospitality industry is well-established and fully equipped to deliver on the scale and sophistication demanded by an event like the G20 Summit. We are not just ready; we are eager to provide world-class experience that reflects the best of who we are.

To me, success means delegates departing with their expectations not only met but surpassed, moved by the breathtaking landscapes, yes, but even more so by the authenticity, professionalism, and heartfelt welcome extended by our people.

But the G20 Summit represents more than a moment in the spotlight. It's a catalyst to future-proof our sector. By continuing to invest in infrastructure, safety, and sustainability, we can position South Africa as a go-to destination for global events, driving long-term economic and reputational value far beyond 2025.

The G20 Summit is not just a moment to impress – it's a moment to reposition. South Africa's hospitality industry has the talent, the leadership, and the capability to deliver an event of world-class calibre. But its true legacy will depend on whether we use this momentum to solve long-standing issues and embed lasting change.

If we do, G20 2025 won't be remembered only for the leaders it hosted, but for the global confidence it

unlocked in South Africa's hospitality sector.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sandra Kneubuhler, Managing Director for Africa, Radisson Hotel Group.

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