

DID YOU KNOW?

Given South Africa's diverse culture and history, and her spectacular natural resources and wildlife, it is not surprising that the country boasts eight World Heritage Sites

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South Africa's World Heritage Sites are: Richtersveld, iSimangaliso, Cape Floral Kingdom, Cradle of Humankind, Mapungubwe, Robben Island, Drakensberg, Vredefort Dome



Take a hike on the Dome crater

Rugged terrain makes Vredefort Dome one of the country's premier adventure tourism sites

THE topography changes quickly as you approach the Vredefort Dome. That's not surprising because it was snacked by a rock the size of Table Mountain travelling at 36 000km/h. Ouch!

Luckily there were no humans around 2 023 million years ago because if such an event happened today, we – and almost every other life form on planet Earth – would not survive.

In fact, we can pretty much say if it wasn't for the "world's greatest known single energy release event", which caused devastating global change, including major evolutionary changes, humans would not exist in their present form. Scientists say the impact would have instantly vaporised about 70km³ of rock and may have increased the earth's oxygen levels to a degree that made the development of multicellular life possible. At that stage, water-dwelling slime was about the extent of life on Earth.

Scientists say the entire cataclysmic event may have lasted about 10 minutes – but the molten rocks would have taken millions of years to cool. The reason for the dome shape rather than a huge hole is that the Earth "bounced back", causing a dome in the middle of a ring of displaced rock. Over millions of years the dome eroded and it's only possible to get a real sense of how it looks by viewing satellite photographs, which can be seen on the Nasa website. The original crater was 250km to 300km in diameter.

These mind-boggling statistics and the rugged terrain make the Vredefort Dome one of the country's prime adventure tourism sites, with numerous tour operators and accommodation facilities catering for campers, hikers, rock climbers, cyclists, canoeists and white water rafters.

Teambuilding is big at the Dome, with almost every establishment from pondok to palace boasting an obstacle course in its back yard.

The Dome, part of which is a World Heritage Site, straddles the Vaal River, and the Free State and North West provinces. Only 120km southwest of Johannesburg, it's an easy drive on the N1.

Hiking trails in the Dome offer a real ecotourism experience. They



ROCKY MOUNTAIN: Hikers walk past rock formed over millions of years after the cataclysmic comet that hit the Earth at Vredefort more than 2 billion years ago.

Pictures: JEREMY SHEPHERD SMITH



PAY DIRT: The entrance to one of the disused gold mines that are scattered all over the area.

are offered by a number of operators and range from a few hours to a few days. Day and overnight routes are available on a variety of terrains and vary from educational, but easy, eco to more dif-

ficult mountain trails over several days. Interesting sights such as undamaged Bushman rock paintings, abandoned gold mines and remains of stone villages from the Iron Age can be seen.



MERRILY, MERRILY: Gently goes it down the Vaal.

One can also combine hiking trails with canoe trips.

The landscape also sustains a variety of natural habitats, including a unique wild olive forest and more than 400 bird species. For

the young at heart or seriously active, the region is great for outdoor and adventure activities with great horse riding, hiking, abseiling, rock climbing, mountain biking, fishing and paddling. – 701068

Entrepreneur makes adventure his own business



DIVE IN: Make your passion your work, says Kagiso Legobe.

TOUR operator Kagiso Legobe started his company, Kay Zee Gee Tours in Potchefstroom in 2009. He offers adventure tours and team building, having been passionate about adventure since high school when he was introduced to hiking, camping and game parks.

In 2001, Legobe responded to an advert for US camp counselors and spent the next three years working at summer camps for kids in that country. Each time he came home, he enrolled in an adventure course at the University of the North West until he had enough credits for an adventure sports instructor certificate.

He was promoted to sports instructor and took children hiking, abseiling, rock climbing and mountain biking. Armed with his certificate, Legobe went to the UK in 2004 and worked as an adventure specialist in various recreation centres across England. He also studied towards a diploma in the science of exercise.

He joined the North West department of sport as an adventure recreation coordinator, organising indigenous games, teaching children to swim and leading adventure programmes for youngsters. He held holiday camps, approaching various government departments and municipalities for funding.

In 2009, demand for Legobe's adventure services grew, so he began operating full time, mainly in the Vredefort Dome and

Mpumalanga areas. He offers learnerships to tourism graduates and motivational talks to schoolchildren to encourage an interest in tourism.

As the winner of the emerging tourism entrepreneur of the year award (Eteya), he learnt a lot about marketing, publicity and how to run a business.

"Since then I've been booked almost every week. Schools come for leadership development and the demand for tours has increased. I am also partnering with Protea Hotels and Peermont Global to run holiday programmes for kids," he said.

His advice to other emerging entrepreneurs: "While it may be a scary decision to get into business, go for it. SA needs young entrepreneurs willing to take a chance. Choose something you're interested in so you don't get bored or discouraged and be careful not to get yourself into too much debt. Reinvest early profits back into the business, rather than being tempted to go out and buy that jazzy car."

The Tourism Enterprise Partnership (TEP) is a partner in Eteya, which aims to develop and sustain SMMEs in the tourism sector and enhance job creation.

TEP CEO Dr Salifou Siddo said: "TEP is committed to ensuring our valued SMME entrepreneurs are effectively supported in their long-term commitments to servicing the South African tourism industry." – 701068

Time for the Joburg Shopping Festival

IF THERE'S one thing Joburg knows how to do, it's shop and the Joburg Shopping Festival is taking place at eight shopping centres in Rosebank, the inner city and Woodmead, from September 17-25.

The Joburg Market and the Bryanston Organic and Natural Market are also participating.

Festival partners include SAA, freight service UBag, six Johannesburg hotels and Welcome Tourism Services, who have worked together to create a variety of packages for aspirant visitors and shoppers.

These packages can be accessed via the Welcome Tourism Services website, www.welcome.co.za, and Johannesburg Tourism Company's website, www.joburgtourism.com. Lindiwe Kwele, CEO of Johannesburg Tourism Company, said: "We're delighted that Johannesburg is continuing to champion a spring shopping festival throughout the city, and I trust this initiative will grow into a significant Joburg calendar event."

Initiated by the city's department of economic development, in partnership with the travel, retail, logistics and media industries, the festival is a tourism and

retail event that takes place every September. The aim is to highlight the retail infrastructure and services available in Johannesburg, in order to attract more visitors from Africa and neighbouring provinces into the city for shopping, entertainment, sightseeing, golfing, spa and medical treatments.

The festival is designed to promote the city's status as the continent's premier destination for retail and wholesale shopping, and to showcase the many other festivals and entertainment that the city offers during September. Johannesburg has world-class retail trade and hospitality products, including more than 80 shopping centres, malls and big wholesale trade outlets, African and international brands presence and a high concentration of three- to five-star hotel brands and restaurant facilities.

The participating shopping centres are The Zone @ Rosebank, The Mall of Rosebank, The Firs, The Bryanston Organic and Natural Market, Joburg Market, Carlton Shopping Centre and the Woodmead Retail Park. More than 300 retailers will be offering shopping packages at these centres. – 701068

For more info, visit www.joburgshoppingfestival.co.za.

Kudu Awards are now open



KUDU YOU PICK: Select your conservation candidate.

NOMINATIONS for the seventh annual Kudu Awards are now open. Members of the public may nominate individuals, groups or companies they believe have made a significant contribution towards conservation in the available categories.

The Kudu Awards had grown into a successful and critical milestone on the South African National Parks (SANParks) annual events calendar, said SANParks.

The Kudu and Chief Executive's Awards, as they are called by SANParks, continue to honour and celebrate contributions and achievements by external stakeholders and SANParks' employees, who play a significant role in

the conservation of our biodiversity and cultural heritage, through their support and know-how.

Candidates can be nominated according to four categories: corporate contribution to conservation, environmental media contribution to conservation, community contribution to conservation and environmental education/capacity building.

Nominations must be in by September 16.

The nominations forms, which provide more comprehensive details on each category, are available on www.sanparks.org or contact Christinah Chauke on 012 426 5020 or email christinahc@sanparks.org

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Kenya expects 1.2 million tourists

INTERNATIONAL tourist arrivals to Kenya are expected to hit a record 1.2 million by the end of the year.

Tourism has been bolstered by the soaring number of holidaymakers from emerging markets of Eastern Europe and Asia, reports the daily Nation newspaper.

Last year, tourist arrivals were the highest ever at 1 095 945 compared to 952 481 in 2009.

Hotels at the coast, lodges and camps in Maasai Mara and the Tsavo National Park are packed with guests as holidaymakers pour in for beach, wild safaris and conference tourism.

The country has also gained popularity with the arrival in recent times of international celebrities such as Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho, US tennis player Serena Williams, Hollywood stars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie and Britain's Prince William and Kate Middleton, among others.

Kenya Tourist Board (KTB) managing director Muriithi Ndegwa said the board's diversification of source markets had paid dividends as a large number of tourists arrived from China, India, Middle East, Russia and South Africa.



ATTRACTION: The Kenyan Maasai tribe, wearing their traditional clothing, gather together to do their traditional jumping dance for tourists.

"Our target was to achieve a 10% growth in the tourism industry this year.

"Hopefully we shall surpass last year's record of 1 095 945 arrivals," Ndegwa said.

Mombasa and Coast Tourist Association chairperson

Mohamed Hersi agrees the industry is likely to eclipse last year's record arrivals. "All hotels in Malindi, Watamu and the South Coast that had closed for the low tourist season in May are back in business as Italian and Germany tourists are pouring in," he said.