

2017/18 season will see 62 Blue Flags fly in SA

As announced at the national Blue Flag launch - hosted by the Kouga Municipality at Dolphin Beach, Jeffreys Bay, in the Eastern Cape - the forthcoming 2017/18 South African Blue Flag season, officially opening 1 November 2017, will see 44 beaches, seven marinas and eleven sustainable tourism boats collectively fly 62 blue flags.

Earlier this year all applications for the Blue Flag eco-label were reviewed through a rigorous multi-stage approval process involving both national and international assessments, by a South African and international jury panel.



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Highest number of Blue Flag sites in Western Cape

The Western Cape has achieved the highest number of Blue Flag sites, with 28 of the beaches, all eleven boats and six of the seven Blue Flag marinas falling in the province. This shows an increase of three Blue Flag boats from the previous season and one additional marina.

KZN again has nine Blue Flag beaches for the 2017/18 season. Seven beaches and one marina have been awarded the eco-label in the Eastern Cape, which is on par with the previous season.

Additional 22 beaches potential Blue Flag sites

An additional 22 beaches across the three provinces will participate in the pilot programme. This is an important developmental stage for potential Blue Flag sites, during which WESSA works with beach managers and Tourism Blue Flag Beach Stewards towards the longer-term goal of achieving full Blue Flag status.

Internationally, over 4,400 beaches, boats and marinas currently hold Blue Flag status in 46 countries.

The value of Blue Flag to the environment, tourism and economic development

Speaking at the event, Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Tokozile Xasa thanked WESSA for the work the organisation is doing through the Blue Flag programme. She said that the department is looking to attract five million tourists to South Africa over the next five years, and Blue Flag must be used as a selling tool to bring these visitors to our shores and to ensure that visitors have a positive experience in our country. She added that by entering into a partnership with WESSA in

2016 to implement the Tourism Blue Flag project, the department is utilising the Expanded Public Works Programme to ensure that jobs are created for young people in the tourism industry.



WESSA CEO Dr Thommie Burger, Ted Knott from the City of Cape Town and Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Tokozile Xasa (Image Supplied)

The annual Blue Flag Awards also celebrate the sustained partnerships that WESSA has built with key municipalities around the country, who have recognised the value of Blue Flag not just to environmental management and education, but also to tourism, economic development and job creation.

Their commitment to the programme is evident in the fact that 25 beaches have been on the programme for five or more consecutive years, while eleven beaches have achieved Blue Flag status for more than 10 consecutive years. Dolphin Beach, which provided the backdrop for the season launch, celebrates a remarkable 16 consecutive years on the programme this year. Humewood Beach in Port Elizabeth along with Grotto Beach in Hermanus has participated for all seventeen years that the Blue Flag programme has been running locally.

Says Vincent Shacks, WESSA ecotourism manager: “Blue Flag is an excellent example of what is achievable when the government, both local and national, partner with civil society. Not only does the programme encourage adherence to very high, international standards for beaches, boats and marinas but it has also created an excellent platform from which to develop young and enthusiastic, sustainable tourism ambassadors.

Through the Tourism Blue Flag project, the National Department of Tourism has partnered with WESSA to demonstrate its commitment to the development of South Africa’s youth. Over the past year, these Blue Flag “Beach Stewards” have played a critical role in the maintenance of the Blue Flag standards at our beaches as well as conducting valuable environmental education activities and campaigns all along our beautiful coastline.”

Blue Flag programme continues to grow

Since its launch in 1987, the Blue Flag programme has continued to grow, not only regarding the number of member countries and sites involved but also in its range of expertise within marine and freshwater environments. WESSA is proud to have been the national implementing partner for Blue Flag in South Africa since 2001.

Dolphin Beach in Jeffreys Bay provided the ideal setting for the 2017/18 Blue Flag launch. The wide, sandy beach makes it popular with families, while its legendary surfing spot “Supertubes” has given the beach international fame. The Executive Mayor, Cllr Elza van Lingen, who delivered the opening address at the event spoke about the value which Blue Flag adds to tourism, adding that while Kouga Municipality only has one beach on the programme their approach is to raise the standard of all Kouga beaches to that of Dolphin Blue Flag Beach.

[The full list of 2017/18 Blue Flag Beaches, Boats and Marinas.](#)

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