

take a shot'left to unique Northern Cape

Although the Northern Cape makes up about a third of the country's landmass and is slightly larger than Germany, it is home to only 2.2% of South Africa's population. Mmatšatši Ramawela, chief executive officer of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa says "The Northern Cape is arguably underrated and under-visited, although it has a multitude of attractions."



Northern Cape roadside farmstall, Heksie

"The region is probably best known for the Namaqualand's phenomenal display of wildflowers during spring, which attracts both domestic and international visitors alike, and for the Richtersveld, a UNESCO World Heritage Site," says Ramawela.

Since 2009, the Succulent Karoo Protected Areas have been on the tentative list for UNESCO World Heritage status – unsurprising given that this is the world's only arid hotspot and home to an incredible wealth of biodiversity, including about a third of the world's succulent plant species. The Northern Cape also boasts the world's largest telescope - the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), as well as two sites that formerly appeared on the UNESCO tentative list, the Namaqualand copper mining landscape and the mines of Kimberley.

The province's government announced in May that it would be allocating R53 million for the development of tourism in the region, with Mac Jack, MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism noting that this has been a resilient sector within a difficult economic landscape. "Tourism is an obvious source of economic growth potential for the Northern Cape," agrees Ramawela. "Its unique attractions make it a compelling destination for both local and international tourists".

Finders Keepers reaches Northern Cape

TOMSA has teamed up with the Sunday Times [Finders Keepers](#) competition in a bid to stimulate domestic tourism (as well as offering readers the chance to win R1 million), and this week the team reached the Northern Cape, set on highlighting the province's "hidden gems". Along the way, the TOMSA Sunday Times Finders Keepers team stayed over at the Protea Hotels by Marriott in both Upington and Kimberley, and found a number of notable places to eat, including the boutique Kimberley Anne Hotel, the historic Rhodes Dining Room at the Kimberley Club, and Die Werf Lodge in Keimos.

In Kimberley, the TOMSA Sunday Times Finders Keepers team visited the McGregor Museum, dedicated to subjects as diverse as botany, geology, local history and rock art, and the Big Hole Museum, which provided insight into Kimberley's famous diamond industry.

The spectacular falls in the Augrabies National Park near Kakamas - a "national treasure" and home to a variety of wildlife - were a particular highlight that the team explored both on land and water, hiking and white river rafting amid a plethora of bird and animal life.



Augrabies rafting

In Upington the team were greeted by the amazing contrast of the red sand of the Kalahari Desert when it meets the beautifully laid vine that has led to the region between Springbok and Upington being named the Green Kalahari.



Green Kalahari canoeing

The team sampled wine tasting at the Orange River Cellars (one example of the region's newly developing wine tourism industry), tasted dates in Keimos (famous fruit of the Northern Cape) and made several surprising discoveries at the Kalahari Oranje Museum. They were also enchanted by the slow passing of time in Pella, marvelled at the old waterwheel of Keimos, and basked in the hot springs of Riemvasmaak - the ideal antidote to a cold winter night - before reaching the astonishing plant life and sun-baked stillness of the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park.



Orange River Cellars wine tasting

“The landscape and sheer wealth of unusual plant and animal life that inhabit the region are just one aspect of what make the Northern Cape a phenomenal destination”, says Ramawela. “We want South Africans to discover just how amazing their own country is and to take a shot left to the Northern Cape for their next outing – because we have a beautiful country.”

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