

# How women are making it in SA tourism

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), women make up the majority of the tourism workforce in most regions of the world. However, in many countries equality is yet to be seen in senior positions in companies - in status or in pay.



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Women fill just 44% of skilled posts - comprising managers, professionals and technicians) - a figure that has remained mostly unchanged for 15 years; and although the South African Constitution's Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill calls for equal representation in decision-making positions, Statistics SA says that women "remain relatively underrepresented in positions of authority and power".

Here, three women the South African tourism industry share their tips for other women to find the success they want, in tourism or any other career path.



## **Judiet Barnes - Thebe Tourism Group (TTG) Marketing Manager and Kruger Shalati general manager**

"You need a passion for what you do to succeed in tourism – a love for people and places and a desire to give visitors the best experience and service despite what your role in the business is," says Barnes.

Barnes herself started at TTG as a marketing manager reporting to the general manager of marketing, before taking on a more strategic role and managing the marketing roll-out for the Cape Point concession. She then got involved in business development, with a focus on unique product conceptualisation and tenders. Now, she is taking the opportunity to head up the new Kruger Shalati concession.

"I am a firm believer in that skills can be taught, but the right attitude is the most vital part of what you are doing. The hours are long and you are constantly away from home, but there are few careers as rewarding as tourism. The diversity in roles in the industry is vast, with opportunities in many

fields of tourism – attractions, hospitality, food and beverage services and everything else.

"You must be prepared to work hard, constantly improve yourself, and always consider products or experiences through the eyes of guests or visitors. Basically, if you eat, sleep and breathe tourism, you will have a long and fruitful career in this sector," adds Barnes.



### **Siphesihle Penny Ndlela - Founder and CEO of Soul Traveller Tours**

"You have to think of the customer's experience at every level and link that to your brand promise. To do this successfully, you have to believe in yourself and trust in yourself and your expertise," says Ndlela.

As the founder and CEO of Soul Traveller Tours, a member of TTG and the first group travel tour operator in the country focused on the domestic market, she believes brand management is crucial for success in the tourism industry.

"Consistency is absolutely key. You should never compromise your long-term vision. Get the right customer base to support and amplify your brand. To ensure this, you must be consistent and mindful of your customer's needs," explains Ndlela.

"Most importantly, be passionate about your business. I believe passion is what sustains and motivates yourself, and your team. Any person that has an experience of your business can feel that passion. The tourism industry is very personal and you are dealing with people in a vulnerable space so the energy with which you engage is critical."



### **Celeste Bell - Cape Point general manager**

"Don't be afraid to start at the bottom, but never allow others to hold you down. Use every situation as valuable experience towards your next promotion," says Bell.

Speaking from experience, Bell worked her way to the top in tourism. She started out as a general assistant at Cape Point before being promoted to supervisor in 2004, and worked her way up the ladder, having held positions as maintenance administrator, safety officer, stock controller and deputy manager. In 2013, she became the first person of colour to hold the position of general manager of Cape Point.

Bell advises to: "Broaden your horizons through new experiences. Learn a new language, study customs and traditions, and always stay up to date with tourism trends."