

# Mpumalanga tourism gets a lift

A 51-metre glass elevator will provide a whole new perspective on God's Window, one of South Africa's most well-known natural beauty spots.

The ride will be the main attraction at the R40m Graskop Gorge adventure centre development, situated one kilometre out of Mpumalanga town on the R533 towards Hazyview, and forms part of the Lowveld's Panaroma Route.

As the glass cubicle descends down the cliff wall, it will offer 360 degree views of the gorge, waterfall, trees, birds and sky.

The centre, which is expected to open towards the end of the year, will incorporate a restaurant, bar and shops at the top of the gorge, with a children's play area and look-out points.

## Hands-on environmental tourism

The development will also have an educational element. An elevated forest walkway will be built at the bottom of the gorge. It will have two suspension bridges that cross the river and will include interpretation boards.

The company responsible for helping bring the Barberton Makhonjwa Geotrail to life, Hamilton-Fynch, has been contracted to provide environment interpretation boards.

“The project is an opportunity to explain the origin of the Blyde River Canyon; the biodiversity significance of our forests, and the smaller, generally unappreciated organisms that live there; and the importance of the escarpment catchment to water supplies for communities and wildlife downstream, all the way to the Indian Ocean,” says Karl Lane from Hamilton-Fynch.

The development is being done by the Graskop Gorge Lift Company, owned by Lowveld businessmen Oupa Pilane, James Sheard and Campbell Scott. Nelspruit-born Pilane is the current president of the Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism, while Sheard and Scott developed the Long Tom Toboggan and Skyway Trails, respectively.

The adventure centre is a public-private partnership with the Thaba Chweu municipality through its local economic development agency Thaleda, and the National Empowerment Fund is a shareholder.

“The Graskop Gorge adventure centre will serve as a major tourism node on the Panorama Tourist Route,” said Mpumalanga premier, David Mabuza in his State of the Province address in February.

The second phase of the project will include a 40-bed boutique hotel.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>