

Cape Town creates events buzz to battle the slow winter months

While Cape Town is abuzz with thousands of local and international visitors from November to April - with a particular visitor frenzy during December - the Cape's winter months are a lot quieter. This seasonality has been a thorn in the side of tourism businesses for many years.



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Beyond the obvious impact on revenue – which creates a sustainability risk for many service providers – the effect is seen in other ways: gauging how many staff one can keep on during the slow period, the brunt on incomes for families if jobs are cut, the turnover of staff resulting from more experienced people finding permanent work elsewhere, and so on.

“There’s no question that we have to work hard and be innovative in our efforts to address the negative impact of seasonality,” comments Cape Town’s Mayor, Patricia De Lille. “This is why the city has established a partnership that brings together a number of organisations with a focus on promoting tourism in the city. Fedhasa, Wesgro, Cape Town Tourism and Accelerate Cape Town are working together to find ways such as putting together unique travel packages and events to attract visitors during the quieter winter months in order to combat the impact of seasonality on the local tourist industry.”

Prolonging the high season

Measures to address seasonality by these industry bodies have already had a positive impact, especially in terms of prolonging the high season, says Wesgro’s Chief Marketing Officer, Judy Lain. “The high season now extends over a longer period than previously,” she says. Traditionally, December and January were the peak season months, but we are now experiencing significant visitor numbers from about October until April, and this certainly benefits service providers in the tourism industry. No doubt, this follows the improvement in air access to the city, as well as successful marketing initiatives.”

Some of the ways these organisations have come together to address seasonality include partnering to establish a new golf festival, focusing on promoting winter events, attracting business tourism with conferences hosted during winter, driving campaigns to encourage increased domestic travel to the city during June to August and positioning Cape Town as a Halal-friendly destination to draw a greater number of Muslim tourists to the city.

A new golf festival

Golf enthusiasts will be attracted to the inaugural Cape Town Golf Festival during August 21 – 26, 2017. According to Jeff Rosenberg, chairman of Fedhasa Cape, this initiative was as a result of the initial discussions that took place between De Lille, and Fedhasa, in an attempt to create new events to be held particularly in the winter months.



Cape Town to combat tourism seasonality with golf festival

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This year 120 keen golfers will have six days together to enjoy their passion and to experience the Cape countryside. Tournament Director, Reg Ferreira, comments: “The beautiful locations - stunning sea views from both the Milnerton and Clovelly golf courses, the iconic Table Mountain within good sight from Milnerton, to the delights of green vineyards around Durbanville – are bound to appeal to golfers from all over the world.”

The Cape Town Golf Festival is a prime opportunity to showcase that outdoor activities are just as enjoyable during winter as during any other time of the year. According to Enver Duminy, CEO of Cape Town Tourism, the view that the winter months are undesirable for a visit to Cape Town is misguided. He explains that “Firstly if one looks at the average number of days of rain during the winter months, it’s clear we do not have constant rain and gloomy days during the cooler months of June, July, and August. In fact, statistics show that the average number of days of rain is about nine per month, which means that a visitor could well enjoy a week’s stay in the city without feeling a drop.”

Winter events

The city’s events calendar also serves to bring more visitors here. For instance, wine-lovers and foodies are spoilt for choice with the Taste of Cape Town Festival, the Riebeeck Valley Olive Festival, and the Franschhoek Bastille Festival. Nature-lovers have whales visiting and the wildflowers every year. Similarly, for those with an interest in culture and literature, a visit during the Suidoosterfees or the Franschhoek Literary Festival makes great sense.

Various bodies regularly identify opportunities for new events that will bring visitors to the city. The City of Cape Town recently secured the National Judo Ranking Event, which took place in early May, bringing over 1,000 visitors here. According to Dr Theuns Vivian, head: destination development for the city: “We now have a good chance of securing the next SA championships for Cape Town.”

Conferences in winter

There is also an opportunity to look beyond leisure tourism only. “Business tourism is generally very profitable, so we need to tap into this even more,” explains Ryan Ravens, the CEO of Accelerate Cape Town. “With so many top-notch conference facilities available, attracting conferences during the winter months is a priority.”

Winter Campaigns

The [Love Cape Town City Breaks](#) campaign is geared to attract more visitors to Cape Town during the quieter period. Information has been put together to cater for particular preferences, such as outdoor experiences, sport, food, shopping, etc. “These ideas are great for locals, as well as visitors,” Duminy explains. “For those needing to fly in from elsewhere – Johannesburg, Durban, and Namibia – special discounted packages are offered by kulula and Flight Centre.”

Halal partnerships

With South Africa ranked as the fourth destination globally to attract Muslim visitors and the Western Cape being the

preferred province for leisure tourism, Wesgro in partnership with dNata Global launched a Ramadan Campaign at the end of May targeting the following regions in the Middle East: Dubai, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Also with the Muslim traveller in mind, Cape Town Tourism has partnered with CrescentRating, the world's leading authority on halal travel and a globally recognised independent rating and accreditation service for halal-friendly travel services. CrescentRating has run workshops and training sessions to create awareness and help prepare businesses to unlock the potential within the halal travel market. CrescentRating is presently conducting audits of Cape Town's facilities as well.

Initiatives such as these are crucial in limiting the negative impact of seasonality. Creative thinking, coupled with the will to make an impact, are core to turning the tide on seasonality.

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