

Durban beaches closed due to contamination

Amid the unexpected shutdown of six well-frequented beaches in Durban at the height of the holiday season, prominent players in the tourism sector are pressing the government for swift intervention.

The Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (Fedhasa) and Satsa, representing inbound tourism, are urging the eThekweni municipality to urgently tackle the water quality issue that led to these closures. Recent assessments conducted by both the municipality and Adopt-A-River have unveiled disturbingly elevated levels of E. coli.



Source: oldeani0 via [Pixabay](#)

"Closing prime tourism beaches now deals a huge blow to hospitality businesses and tourism operators in prime beach areas," said Brett Tungay, Fedhasa East Coast chairperson, adding the repercussions are profound. "It comes at a time when they rely on the influx of tourists to bolster their businesses.

A blow to local businesses

"The closure of these beaches sends ripples throughout our broader economy, affecting jobs and local communities. We cannot afford to miss the economic opportunities this season traditionally brings." He added that until the city can address the water quality issues, many small businesses face prospects of lower profits, potential closure and lay-offs this season.

The tourism industry in the region has faced persistent water contamination issues after the catastrophic April 2022 floods, which KwaZulu-Natal premier Sihle Zikalala said led to "unparalleled" destruction to infrastructure. Before the floods, five beaches in eThekweni, including Ushaka, North, Point, eManzimtoti and uMhlanga Main, held full Blue Flag status.

Urgent action needed on infrastructures

David Frost, Satsa CEO has called for urgent action from the city to address sewage infrastructure issues, saying: "We ask the eThekweni municipality to provide clarity and assurances on sampling schedules and reopening timelines. This must be treated as a critical priority. Tourism is a key economic driver. Therefore, we cannot afford to lose out on economic opportunities that the peak season brings."

While the beach closures in Durban present a temporary challenge, Fedhasa and Satsa emphasise that Durban remains a vibrant tourist destination. This is thanks to the resilience and passion of local tourism stakeholders and KwaZulu-Natal's diverse offering of experiences.

Tungay said: "Durban has confronted setbacks before by rallying around our community's spirit, and we will do so again. We remain wholly committed to welcoming visitors to experience everything that makes Durban such a uniquely thrilling and memorable destination."

Diverse offerings

He added that KwaZulu-Natal has something to offer every type of traveller. "Beyond Durban, KwaZulu-Natal offers bush, mountain, and game park experiences in areas like the Drakensberg Mountains, Midlands, and greater Zululand regions. The province is also home to over 400km of magnificent coastline beaches to discover and many unaffected beaches in the Durban area can still be enjoyed."

He went on to highlight that in addition to working urgently to solve the water pollution issues and return the beaches' Blue Flag status, this holiday season still promises visitors a wealth of vibrant cultural, culinary, sporting and entertainment offerings that have long cemented Durban as a favoured South African holiday destination.

The groups are advocating for regular communication about the progress in addressing the water quality crisis and infrastructure repairs. This transparency, they said, is crucial for restoring confidence among tourists, hospitality stakeholders, and investors. Their call to action, the group said, emphasises the need for long-term solutions to protect Durban's reputation as a top tourist destination and ensure its beaches' health and safety.

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