



JANUARY 2018 – NEWSLETTER

Dear Partners in Travel,

Best wishes for 2018!

The year started in a frenzy and it is an indication of the buoyant state of the tourism industry in South Africa. 2017 was one of the best years for inbound tourism to the region in recent times. Numbers from most source markets were up and it looks like the trend will continue into 2018. A currency that could be described as weak or undervalued, the perception of South Africa as a globally safe (i.e. terrorism free) destination and negative factors affecting key competitor countries all played a role in this.

Although we expect 2018 to stay positive, overconfidence is at one's own peril – the country avoided a massive political disaster in December with the new ANC leadership election but it has resulted in a significant strengthening of the ZAR against most currencies and many competitor destinations are on the rebound. South Africa and Southern Africa however remains a superb tourist destination and we believe it will always remain popular as a long-haul destination.

2018 is also significant for Royal African Discoveries as the company will celebrate its' 20th anniversary later in the year. I can't believe that it is already 20 years since I started the company – it feels like yesterday and I sometimes have to remind myself we're now regarded as one of the larger and more established DMC's in the industry.

We've however never lost the drive for service excellence and the dedication to personalized service we established in those early years. Being the 'new kid on the block' makes you hungry and aggressive but also instills the need to be 'lean and mean'. Characteristics we still have but tempered by the need to invest and create infrastructure that enable us to take care of our expanded client base and maintain the highest service levels.

Twenty successful years also brings a solid reputation and track record, valued relationships with our clients (and suppliers) and a team with significant experience and knowledge of our key source markets (which in many instances are unique and challenging compared to competitor DMC's who focus on the mature source markets in Europe and North America). We've definitely reached a maturity and stability recognized and valued by the industry. In that regard 'walking away' from certain types of business which will negatively affect our ability to take care of our key accounts and which doesn't contribute to our continued growth don't make us any less aggressive.

None of this would have been possible without the continued and valued support of our clients. Many of the relationships have grown over many years and evolved into a partnership which focuses on mutual benefits. We have immense appreciation of the partnerships and value not only the commercial aspect of it but also the personal side which includes many friendships and warm respect.

A HUGE THANK YOU to all our business partners for their continued support over the years. We look forward to many more years of this but also growing some of our new and more recent client relationships in a similar manner.

Pieter and I will be in India in middle February for the annual South African Tourism road show. We look forward to personally see many of our partners in this market. India has played a significant part in our success and growth over the years and will remain close to our hearts and in the business future.

I'll be heading over to the Nordics and Central Europe around the ITB period and will update our partners there on my schedule closer to the time. We've invested significantly over the years in these markets and regions. They have shown remarkable growth in recent years and are now a core contributor to our growth and success. We look forward in maintaining this trend especially now that South African Tourism is finally starting to invest in the Nordics too.

This year we will also be participating in both the luxury travel shows that take place in South Africa. We look forward to interacting with luxury travel buyers at 'ILTM Africa' in April and at 'We are Africa' in May.

We had conducted Royal African Discoveries roadshows through South East Asia during the past 2 years and plan to do so again this year after the incredible response we've had (not only from the market but also our supplier partners we've introduced to this region). South African Tourism now also sees the region as an investment region and we would like to dovetail with possible events they're planning. Dates are not finalized yet but we'll most likely be in the region in early August with our roadshow event.

As usual we'll keep our partners up to date on our various sales visits throughout the year.

Most people might be aware of the serious drought situation in Cape Town after the news coverage it received lately on International TV news networks. Although it is a serious issue of concern we would like to highlight the facts and therefore include excerpts from the press release from WESGRO, the tourism authority for the region.

Dear Tourism Partners

Come and enjoy Cape Town and the Western Cape, but be mindful of the drought

Come enjoy....

Cape Town and the Western Cape are open for business in spite of the current drought. Visitors are arriving in a place with a significant breadth and depth of experiences and exceptional beauty. However, as beautiful as it is, the Western Cape is a water-scarce part of the world (much like Southern California and Western Australia) and is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and is susceptible to periodic droughts.

At present the Western Cape is experiencing a significant drought. This is a 1 in 1000-year occurrence. To counter the short-term effects of the drought and the possibility of running out of water, the City has put in place a number of initiatives to increase the supply of water and make provision for extreme water shortages.

There are still many places across the Western Cape that are not as severely affected by the drought such as the Garden Route and the Cape Overberg.

...but be mindful

Below average rainfall over a number of years has forced everyone who lives in or visits Cape Town to rethink their water usage behaviours. Responsible consumption of water is the new normal – not just in Cape Town but in many other water-scarce places in the world.

Some parts of the tourism and hospitality industry have proactively adjusted how they utilise water to reduce their consumption – giving guests peace of mind that every drop is being used responsibly.

In the event of what the City of Cape Town refers to as 'Day Zero', there will be available water for tourists and locals' critical needs. This is considered to be water for personal hygiene and consumption. 'Day Zero' is when the City of Cape Town cuts the regular flow of water.

'Day Zero' is a projected date that is entirely dependent on current rates of water consumption: if all stakeholders adhere to the required water savings target, 'Day Zero' can be avoided.

Much like a local, tourists need to treat this scarce resource with the utmost respect.

Frequently asked questions

If tourists visit Cape Town / The Western Cape will there be water?

•*There is adequate water for tourist essential needs such as washing, using the toilet and other daily hygiene. At present water restrictions are in place in Cape Town, and residents and tourists are requested to adhere to them.*

How widespread is the drought in South Africa?

- The drought and resultant water restrictions are mostly isolated to parts of the Western Cape Province – particularly the City of Cape Town and surrounding areas.
- Places like The Cape Overberg and The Garden Route are less impacted by water restrictions. It's important to remember that South Africa in general is a water-scarce country.

Will tourists have access to drinking water?

- Yes.

Will tourists be able to bath, shower or use a swimming pool?

- At present, tourists will be able to shower and maintain daily hygiene. Mandated guidelines suggest a shower of no longer than 2 minutes. The use of baths is entirely discouraged. Some swimming pools at hotels have been converted to salt (ocean) water.
- In the eventuality of Day Zero, it will be necessary to contact your service provider to determine what measures are in place to continue the supply of water.

Will restaurants and bars still be in operation?

- In the event of 'Day Zero' - yes. Many parts of the hospitality industry have proactively implemented water savings and water augmentation solutions to ensure ongoing availability of water in their establishments.
- Restaurants and bars are not currently negatively influenced but must still comply with water restrictions.

Which tourism activities could be impacted?

- Tourists will still be able to access and enjoy primary tourism attractions such as our iconic Table Mountain, Cape Point and Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.
- Specific river-based experiences may be impacted.

We look forward to sharing exciting developments and updated with our partners throughout this special year at Royal African Discoveries.

Keep an eye on your inbox for some 20th Year celebration news.

**Tourism Greetings,
Johan**

SITE INSPECTION REPORTS:

Although we're not including detailed site inspection reports in this newsletter, the team visited a number of properties over the last few months and we will give feedback on a request basis. Some of the properties visited include: Sabi Sabi Selati; Sabi Sabi Bush; Sabi Sabi Little Bush, Nottens Bush Camp; Mala Mala Rattrays; Lion Sands Ivory; Parfuri Camp; all the Kapama Game Reserve lodges, Protea Kruger Gate; Protea Hazyview; Hallmark House and The Palace of the Lost City.

PRODUCT NEWS & UPDATES:

- **RHINO RIDGE SAFARI LODGE** – On January 8 a fire broke out in the change rooms adjacent to the swimming pool and spa at Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge, Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. The lodge continues to operate as usual. In a press release, the lodge said: "Fortunately, the fire was quickly contained and only the change rooms and toilets have been affected. The deck, swimming pool and spa area have not been affected and are fully operational." However, the change rooms and toilets at the swimming pool are unavailable until further notice.
- **LION SANDS** - Lion Sands River Lodge is re-opening on the 1st May 2018 on the banks of the Sabie River.
- **TINGA LODGE'S HI'NKWENI VILLA** - The new Hi'Nkweni (pronounced Hing Kweni) Family Villa at Tinga Lodge was launched in August 2017. Not only does the lodge lend itself, in both atmosphere and architecture, to the family traveller (specifically with younger children), but this exclusive and self-contained Villa will also come with its own safari vehicle and Field Guide, giving guests the flexibility to craft their own experience.
- **LE FRANSHOEK HOTEL** - The hotel has opened up a new Restaurant called Le Verger Restaurant. Le Verger is open Wednesday to Sunday from 12:00 to 18:00.
- **SINGITA** - Unveiling - Singita Sweni Lodge. Set within a 33,000-acre private concession in South Africa's iconic Kruger National Park, the reinvented Singita Sweni Lodge is a hidden jewel that provides a bold, new African context for contemporary design. Casually glamorous, the new-look lodge features a base spread

of neutral tones to bring in light, which is reflected by gold and bronze ore, polished mud, gleaming recycled timbers, richly hued marble and splashes of vibrant colour that give a dramatic feel to the space.

- **BUSHTRACKS AFRICA AND THE VICTORIA FALLS HOTEL** are proud to introduce **THE VICTORIA**. The first upmarket cruise in both Victoria Falls and Livingstone that can access the lower part of the Zambezi River and the body of islands that form the entrance to the Victoria Falls. Take a river safari downstream towards the smoke that thunders, all the while lounging in comfort with a drink in hand. While a Victoria Falls Hotel chef prepares sushi and other gourmet canapés. The Victoria bears the mark of exclusivity in cruises for the region; it is jet propelled and specially designed to safely navigate the shallow waters just above the falls. Elephants are frequently seen crossing this section on the same route that David Livingstone took when he first discovered and named this exceptional waterfall.
- **ROVOS RAIL** - In July 2019 Rovos Rail will set off on a new 15-day trip across Tanzania, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. This inaugural trip sets off on July 16, 2019 from Dar es Salaam (a city familiar to Rovos Rail as it has been running its 15-day Cape to Dar trip since 1993), and includes a game visit in the Selous Reserve, a fly-in two-night safari in the South Luangwa National Park (Zambia) and a city tour of Lubumbashi (DRC). Thereafter, it joins the Benguela line for short walking tours detailing Angola's recent history with journey's end in Lobito. The voyage is available in reverse departing from Lobito (Angola) on August 2, 2019.
- **GRASKOP GORGE LIFT** opened 18th December 2017. The main, elevated walkway at the bottom of the gorge is 500 metres long and includes two suspension bridge crossings. The walkway will allow visitors to explore the unique forest environment, waterfall and stream and will be enhanced by a number of interpretive displays that give context to the ecosystem.
- **SUN CITY** has decided to close the Animal World facility due to the perception of the general public about keeping animals in cages. As an environmentally responsible company, they have re-homed all the domestic animals to a local farm, where they will enjoy the freedom of the open veld. The animals will be closely monitored and be given the attention that they have become accustomed to.

SPECIAL OFFERS:

Please note that all special offers are subject to specific terms and conditions which are available on request.

- **PEARL VALLEY** is offering a Stay 3 Pay 2 promotion that is valid from 1 April – 31 October 2018.
- **THE PRESIDENT HOTEL** in Cape Town has a pay3/stay4 winter promotion for FIT's from 1 June to 30 September 2018.
- **FANCOURT** on the Garden Route in Knysna has a Stay 4 nights and only Pay for 3 offer. Applies to all room types and is valid from 10 April 2018 to 31 May 2018.

As always please contact us should you have any questions or if you need more information.

Yours in Tourism,

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