



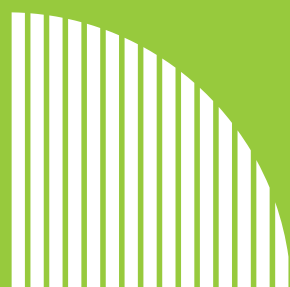
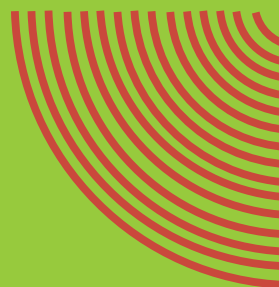
SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

Day 2 | 25 FEBRUARY 2026

DAILY NEWS



of Connecting Africa
to the World



20 Years of Connection, Possibility and Progress

Marking two decades under the banner “20 Years Connecting Africa to the World,” Minister Patricia de Lille hailed Meetings Africa as a bridge “connecting African suppliers with global buyers, connecting destinations with investors, connecting policy with partnership and connecting opportunity with execution”.

During her welcome address on Day 1 of Africa’s premier business events show, the minister said: “Over the past 3 years alone, the economic impact of Meetings Africa on our own GDP has nearly doubled, from R371 million in 2023 to R690 million in 2025. During this period, Meetings Africa has created and sustained over 2 600 jobs. Thank You, Merci Beaucoup for your support in making this event a success and sustaining livelihoods.”

The Minister said it was a show of confidence that in its 20th year, the event welcomes buyers from 53 different countries, over 300 hosted buyers, 325 exhibiting companies, and with more than 6 440 confirmed business meetings taking place over the next two days.

“Each of these meetings represent a connection. Each connection represents possibility. And each possibility represents progress.”

De Lille threw down the gauntlet: “I still think MEC next year we need to push it up to 100



countries from around the world. Let’s double this number.”

Intra-African synergy shines too, with 21 countries represented - yet she urged more, noting Africa’s role as the “anchor of South

Africa’s record-breaking 10.5 million arrivals in 2025.” “I want to say thank you to our African brothers and sisters,” she added

Continues on page 3



AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA

VISIT WWW.INDABA-SOUTHAFRICA.CO.ZA TO REGISTER

11 MAY 2026
BONDAY

12-14 MAY 2026
SHOW DAYS

BONDay : What to expect

TIME	EVENT	VENUE
05:30 - 08:30	MEETINGS AFRICA YOGA	Mushroom Farm Park, Sandton By Registration
05:30 - 08:30	MEETINGS AFRICA FUN RUN	Mushroom Farm Park By Registration
10:00 - 11:00	LEVERAGING MEGA MICE EVENTS TO DRIVE INVESTMENT, TRADE, AND BUSINESS EVENTS GROWTH ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA AND AFRICA	Media Centre, Café Nala, Mezzanine Level Open to media
10:00 - 16:00	EXHIBITION TIMES	Sandton Convention Centre – Hall 1 Open to all attendees
10:00 - 17:00	SUSTAINABILITY VILLAGE	Sandton Convention Centre – Level -2 Open to all attendees
11:00 - 11:30	BOMA TALKS - SESSION 3	BOMA: Shaping Sustainability(Exhibition Level 1, Escalators) Open to all attendees
11:30 - 12:30	FROM EVENTS TO IMPACT: EMPOWERING VTSDS THROUGH BUSINESS TOURISM	Media Centre, Café Nala, Mezzanine Level Open to media
12:00 - 13:30	MEETINGS AFRICA INSPIRATION, GREEN STAND & 20 YEARS RECOGNITION AWARDS	Sandton Convention Centre – Media Centre, Café Nala Open to all attendees
13:00 - 15:30	JOINT MARKETING WORKING GROUP MEETING	Sandton Convention Centre – Committee Room 5 By Invitation Only
15:00 - 17:00	MEETINGS AFRICA CLOSING CELEBRATION	Exhibition 1 Foyer and Maude Street Existing Delegates

* INFORMATION CORRECT AT TIME OF PUBLISHING

Meetings Africa Veterans Reflect on 20 Years



Lance Gibbons, Director, Sola Media

Being part of the media it has been a privilege to help grow the continent's most valued business events meeting. The many event activations evolved in a way to remain current to the industry but one thing stands out above all and that's the hosted buyer programme and the business of the event. Again this year the comments around the value proposition have been celebrated with a strong business proposition wrt to quality hosted buyers. We are looking forward to continued support for MA, celebrating another 20 year milestone.

Miller Matola, CEO, Millvest Advisory

20 years ago when Meetings Africa was starting out I think one of the greatest things was just the networks and the relationships that were built, which in years to come were to translate into big business for South Africa. And I think today in many ways, we are reaping the benefits of those efforts in those early days. And what I always remember is the connections, the people, the relationships which endured even up today. And I think this is what the industry is all about. And for me, it's really gratifying to see how the MICE sector in South Africa and across the continent has grown to where it is today.



Meetings Africa Daily Newspaper Publishers

Publisher Sola Media
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Graphic Designer Talia Adonis
Production Manager Cindy Jarvis
Business Developer Redoh Kimmie
Content Creator Phando Faku
Content Creator Sandile Mthambama
Printers Law Print

SOLA
MEDIA



While still on the continent's growth, De Lille congratulated Rwanda, which has been announced as the host of The International Congress and Convention Association Congress in 2027. "High Commissioner Emmanuel Hategeka, this return of the Congress to the African continent after more than 23 years affirms that our continent is trusted, capable and competitive."

Looking ahead Minister de Lille said South Africa has secured 52 bids for international and regional business events supported through the SANCB's Bid Support Programme. These confirmed business events are expected to contribute nearly R1 Billion to the South African economy and will attract over 33 000 international and regional delegates.

These business events will be hosted in a range of cities and towns, including Johannesburg, Tshwane, Durban, Cape Town, Hermanus, Mbombela, Grabouw, Bela-Bela, Skukuza and Sun City.

The Minister said the SANCB had invested R21.3 million through its Bid Support Programme to secure these MICE events, which are central to the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan.

"Equally important to this plan, is diversifying our tourism offerings. In response, last year we launched the Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit, where we unveiled 8 bankable projects valued at around R1 Billion from both the public

and private sectors. We continue to build the pipeline ahead of our second investment summit later this year in September. "

Yet true progress demands action. De Lille's plea resonates: "It's our duty to help them grow by supporting them," she said, spotlighting sustainable villages and authentic African energy, like the performers' "authentic simplicity of being an African."

During the opening, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) presented its inaugural Global Impact Award to Minister de Lille.

In his address, ICCA CEO Dr. Senthil Gopinath introduced President Marta Gomes and praised Minister de Lille's consistent leadership, strategic vision, and dedication to fostering international partnerships and sector growth. He described her as a standout figure whose progressive approach and relational consistency have earned widespread admiration across the global meetings industry.

Representing more than 1,100 members in 108 countries—including convention bureaus, national tourism organisations, and governments - ICCA highlighted Minister de Lille's significant contributions to policy advocacy, economic development, and the advancement of the MICE sector both in South Africa and internationally.

The award recognises her sustained commitment to elevating the business events

industry and its role in global connectivity and prosperity.

The Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) for Economic Development in the City of Johannesburg, Cllr Nomoya Mnisi lauded Meetings Africa's consistency as proof of Johannesburg's world-class delivery and reliability. "For 20 consecutive years Meetings Africa has called Johannesburg home—that consistency speaks volumes. It reflects trust, it reflects confidence and it reflects our city's ability to deliver a world-class experience at scale."

Highlighting the city's role as Africa's economic powerhouse and a proven host - fresh from successfully staging the first G20 summit on African soil - Mnisi announced Johannesburg's confirmation as Meetings Africa host for the next five years: "This long-term endorsement is a powerful vote of confidence in our infrastructure, hospitality ecosystem and government capability."

Drawing on President Cyril Ramaphosa's emphasis on tourism as a core driver of recovery, job creation and inclusive growth, Cllr Mnisi stressed business tourism's high impact: "Delegates spend more, stay longer and invest deeper. Every conference hosted in our city stimulates value across the supply chain from hotels and restaurants to our tour operators and emerging enterprises."

The address underscored Johannesburg's readiness - world-class airports, smart technologies, hybrid capabilities and vibrant cultural offerings - while committing to sustainability, SMME inclusion and Pan-African alignment with the African Continental Free Trade Area.

In a punchy close, Cllr Mnisi declared: "Johannesburg is open for business. We are ready to welcome the world... May the connections you make here translate into lasting partnerships. May the ideas shared here shape the future of our continent. And in the next 20 years may Meetings Africa be even more impactful than the last."



SHARING OUR CULTURE ABROAD BRINGS TOURISTS HOME, SAY CREATIVES

Creativity has long been celebrated as a form of expression, but today it is increasingly recognised as something far more powerful: a dynamic economic engine shaping the future of destinations worldwide. Cities and countries that actively invest in arts, culture, and creative collaboration are not only strengthening their identities, they are unlocking new streams of tourism revenue, job creation, and inclusive growth.

From vibrant festivals and cutting-edge fashion to music, film, design, and public art, the creative sector has a unique ability to attract visitors and inspire deeper engagement. Travellers stay longer, spend more, and connect more meaningfully with places that offer authentic cultural experiences. The creative economy transforms places into living, breathing stories.

This spirit of possibility was at the heart of a recent panel discussion featuring industry leaders including Preetesh Sewraj, CEO of Loerie Awards, alongside SA Tourism Acting Chief Marketing Officer Thandiwe Mathibela; founder and CEO of Duma Collective Sibu Mabena; actress, dancer, choreographer Bontle Modiselle; and designer, entrepreneur and creative artist Laduma Ngxokolo. Together, they highlighted how intentional partnerships between tourism authorities, government, and the creative industries can elevate cultural assets into economic catalysts.

"When you walk out of the country and go somewhere else, you almost have an obligation to do an ambassador job for your country, and I don't think our country understands the magnitude of the good work that (creatives) put out there," said Laduma.

Thandiwe said: "I think that is a clear illustration of how we can work with the creative industries. So never did he think that he would ever actually have to talk about the country from a tourism perspective.

"All he's trying to do is sell his clothes and his brand and then now he is finding himself having to represent the country. And I do think it's quite important that we acknowledge the role that Laduma played. We do know that a lot of people have recognised your brand and they've gone on to ask about South Africa. So that is actually a clear example."

Sibu agreed saying: "The people who create and the people who export and express it, are the ones who really are the people who get tourists to come here to experience it here in real time."

Meetings Africa Veterans Reflect on 20 Years



Amanda Kotze-Nhlapho, Former Chief Convention Bureau Officer, SANCB

It's always good to look back at an event that has sustained for so long. I believe that Meetings Africa delivered on every aspect of our sector growth, not just for South Africa but for the continent. I believe that we grew leaders that stand tall in global positions and I believe that we will have more leaders in the next 20 years. Meetings Africa for me is not just an expo, it is a platform that was created to work together as Africa to put the best that the continent has under one roof for the world to see.

Hulisani Thabela, Director: Business Tourism, City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality

Celebrating 20 years of Meetings Africa is very special to me because after having served 25 years in this industry I can say that I've grown up with the show. I've been an official at SAT, then served on the organising team behind the scenes, and I've been attending as a delegate for years: exhibiting, marketing destinations, and currently representing the Capital City.

Meetings Africa is an integral part of the meetings industry, and it plays a central part of my career. This is because it's not just a trade show; it's where Africa's business events story and future continues to unfold and I'm proud to have grown with it!



Elmarie Swanepoel, Business Development Manager at CSIR Convention Centre

It's a journey that we all walked with Meetings Africa. And I want to say, go big. 20 years doesn't come around every time. It's an honour to be with them and to take it forward for the next few years, South African business events, the professionalism and the sustainability aspects.

Sandton Convention Centre: World-Class Facilities and Service

Located strategically positioned in the heart of Sandton's CBD, the Sandton Convention Centre (SCC) stands as Africa's leading destination for exhibitions, conferences, corporate gatherings and premier events.

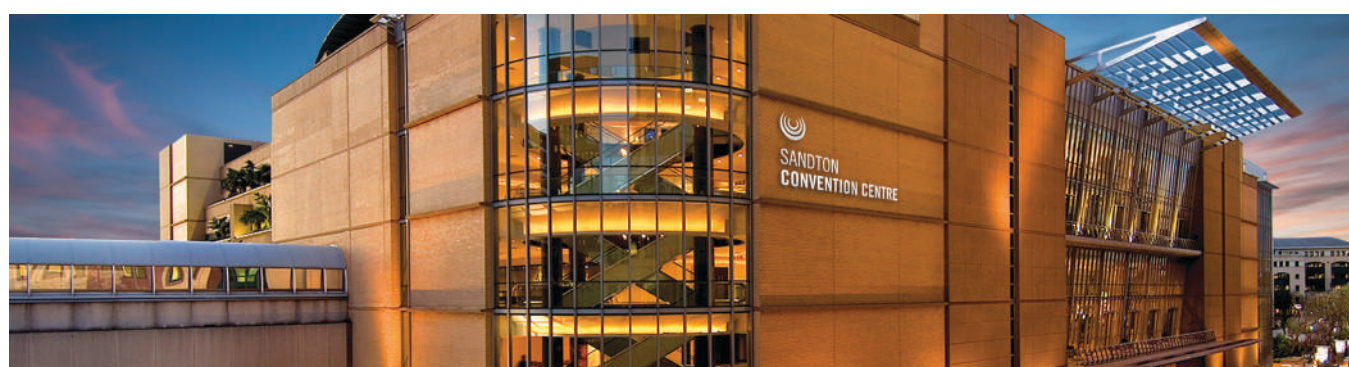
Operated by Southern Sun, SCC forms part of South Africa's biggest hospitality group — giving event organisers the confidence of world-class infrastructure backed by decades of hospitality expertise. Together, this powerful combination delivers seamless service from venue to accommodation, catering and event execution.

With 22,000m² of flexible event space, the centre offers:

- Two expansive exhibition halls
- 15 versatile meeting rooms
- A luxurious Ballroom accommodating up to 2,200 banquet guests
- The Pavilion for up to 4,500 cocktail guests
- Capacity to host over 10,000 delegates per day

From intimate executive meetings of 10 guests to large-scale international exhibitions, SCC provides adaptable, fully integrated solutions designed to scale effortlessly.

As the events landscape evolves, SCC continues to lead. The venue offers advanced hybrid and digital event capabilities, ensuring seamless integration between in-person and virtual audiences. Through strategic partnerships with



leading technology providers, clients benefit from reliable, high-performance solutions that meet global production standards.

The SCC's renowned food and beverage offering reflects global culinary trends, with creative, modern menus designed for today's delegates. From gala dinners to networking lunches and exhibition catering, menus are flexible, inclusive and tailored — with careful attention to dietary requirements and wellness-focused options.

One of SCC's greatest advantages is its integration into Southern Sun's extensive hospitality portfolio. Delegates have access to over exceptional accommodation in the immediate vicinity. This connectivity allows organisers to create fully integrated event experiences, combining venue, accommodation, dining and service under one trusted hospitality partner.

The SCC proudly hosts many of South Africa's most recognised exhibitions and gatherings, including:

- Standard Bank Joy of Jazz

- Hostex
- FNB Art Joburg
- WineX
- Decorex Africa

The centre also regularly accommodates major government and investment summits, attracting thousands of international delegates annually.

For 2026 and beyond, SCC looks forward to hosting your next meeting, conference, exhibition or gala event — delivering scale, sophistication and seamless hospitality in the heart of Sandton. For more information, visit southernsun.com/scc



SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE

Contact:
HOTEL TELEPHONE: +27 11 779 0000
EMAIL: scc.reservations@southernsun.com
GENERAL MANAGER: Shaun Bird

Bunny Bhoola, AfricanLink Tourism

I have been attending Meetings Africa for 20 years, and as the show evolved and people developed and you realise that this was a very important niche area of tourism that contributes so much to local economic development and just the GDP of any city. And a conference delegate that comes into a city brings much more value at certain times, because you are sure that person will be a repeat for that city.



Nasrin Hoosen, Pullman CT

Meetings Africa has been a real highlight for us. I have been part of it both as a supplier and a visitor, and every year it just gets better with the connections, the energy, the opportunities. It truly is a legacy show in our industry.

Belinde Moniez, Infinite Sky Travel and Events

Happy 20th Anniversary Meetings Africa. This annual event has enabled us to connect, collaborate and build long lasting relationships and built our most valuable asset. Creating new businesses and boosting our countries Tourism and MICE sectors. I applaud you.

Nomasonto Ndlovu Beacon Africa Tourism

I was involved in the early conceptualisation stages of Meetings Africa. It has been a constant in my professional journey within the business events sector. Seeing the buyer selection model and the match-making diary system take shape was a standout moment for me. The structured approach to curated appointments fundamentally strengthened the value proposition of the show.

John Arvanitakis Event Greening Forum

So actually a little interesting and without blowing my own trumpet, I was the actual person who conceptualised the name BONDAY, and the ringing of the bell, that was also my idea. It's been an absolutely incredible journey and it's just going from strength to strength. My only small little niggle about is that I'd like to see a lot more sustainability and green in cleaning concepts within the show because I think that's just going to take it to another level and position itself globally above some of the other competitor business tourism shows.

Avis Rebuilding its MICE Mobility Offering

Avis Car Rental are rebuilding their MICE offering completely and want to be the biggest player, says Vinolia Lehodi General Manager: International Sales.

On a buzzing trade floor at Meetings Africa 2026, Vinolia said: "MICE is seeing the biggest growth back in South Africa post-COVID, actually better than how it performed before, so we also want a part of that big pie."

She says Avis is looking to partner with PR companies and PCOs that do MICE holistically, including logistics, accommodation, and then we can come in with our specialties, which is transportation. Regardless of what type of transportation it is, we are a total mobility solution company."

She says: "In addition to our inbound market, we are also focused on promoting outbound people from South Africa going all over the world through us, because it's always easier when you have somebody domestic that you can come back to. So regardless of whether you want a car for one day, you want a car for three days, or for a whole month or three weeks, or even if you wanna lease it for some time, we do have those products on our site."

As a global company, Avis is adept at adapting to the various terrains they operate in.

"As much as we are a global company, in every market we really offer what we know best and what we know sells in our market. For instance, the safari rental, you know, it's a very unique,



beautiful product for the German market, the Swiss market and the French market. But you won't find Avis in other parts of the world offering the products. We always assess the market, follow the trends to see what is in there and we can actually capitalize on that is going to work for us both for the inbound market, for the African market and for domestic."

Vinolia says Avis have a very experienced sales and marketing team at their Meetings Africa booth and around the show. "Anything to do with mobility, we are here for you."



Visti us at Stand number K68



Host Your Next MICE Event at Sea

Designed to inspire creativity and connection, Explora Journeys offers an exceptional setting for bespoke events at sea.



Blending the comfort and intimacy of a boutique hotel with the allure of global travel, Explora Journeys offers an exceptional setting for bespoke events at sea.

The most powerful connections are made where business meets experience. That's why Explora Journeys is perfectly suited for incentive journeys, executive retreats, shareholder and board meetings, C-level leadership offsites, partner and client appreciation events, product launches and brand activations, leadership and team development programmes, as well as private celebrations and milestone occasions.

Elevated Event Spaces That Resonate

With more than 12 indoor and outdoor venues, Explora Journeys provides a balance of vibrancy and privacy. From open-air terraces and elegant lounges to relaxed dining venues and sophisticated social spaces, each setting is designed to foster meaningful connection.

For more focused engagements, modular meeting rooms of up to 92 sqm (990 sq ft) can be configured to suit executive roundtables, strategy sessions or creative workshops. Bathed in natural daylight and equipped with integrated LCD screens and seamless AV technology, each venue supports impactful presentations and effortless event flow.

All spaces are framed by an elegant, cosmopolitan atmosphere designed to inspire creativity, strengthen collaboration and create moments that resonate long after the Journey concludes.

Full-Ship Charters: Exclusivity Redefined

For organisations seeking complete exclusivity, Explora Journeys offers full-ship charters tailored to your exact specifications and



budgetary requirements.

From customised dining concepts and curated shore experiences to branded environments and bespoke itineraries - including journey length - every detail can be shaped around your objectives.

A full-ship charter delivers prestige and privacy, with enhanced security, state-of-the-art AV equipment, dedicated onboard technicians and extensive corporate branding opportunities. Guests enjoy seamless, all-in-one convenience with minimal planning or additional expense.

For a truly distinctive touch, your company flag can even be flown from the ship's mast while in port, a powerful symbol of premium brand presence.

Every element of your Journey, from flights to transfers, is coordinated through a single point of contact, ensuring a streamlined and effortless planning experience.

The Explora Experience

Beyond the conference or event itself, Explora Journeys delivers an immersive guest experience.

With six restaurants ranging from refined fine

dining to a signature steakhouse and all-day dining options, 12 bars and lounges, a spa and fitness centre, curated retail experiences, and a programme of cosmopolitan entertainment and enrichment hosted by accomplished artistes, guests are enveloped in understated luxury.

Across a variety of indoor and outdoor settings, every detail is designed to elevate the experience, ensuring your guests want for nothing.

When the setting is extraordinary, so are the outcomes. Elevate your next event beyond exceptional and out to sea.



Explora
JOURNEYS

Visit us at stand G28
Contact details

Visit: explorajourneys.com

Call: International Toll-free Experience Centre
Number: +41 43 508 6478.

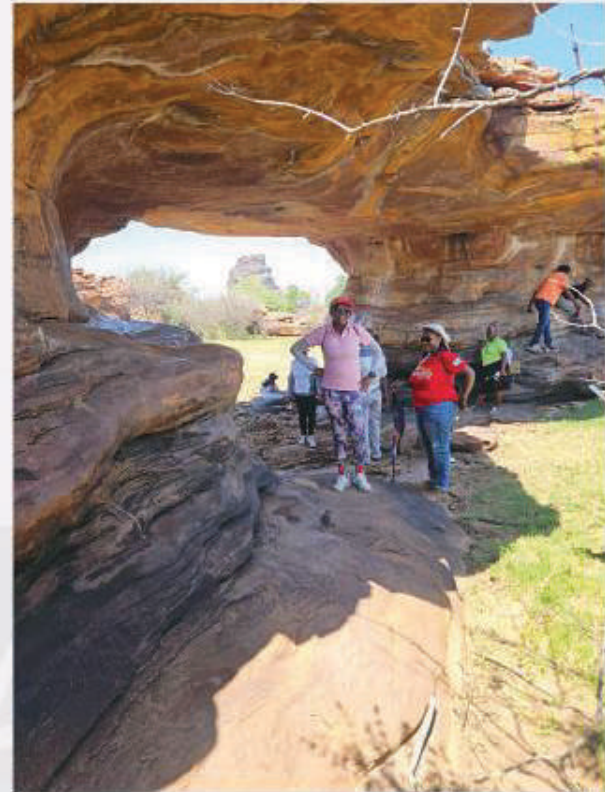
MAKGABENG

Senaabarwana

Cultural, historical, and natural significance

Makgabeng Heritage Site, located in Limpopo, South Africa, is a place of immense cultural, historical, and natural significance. Known for its dramatic sandstone formations, it houses ancient rock art created by the San and Khoi people, some of which dates back thousands of years. The site also reflects more recent historical events, including interactions between African communities and European settlers. Visitors can explore rock paintings, scenic hiking trails, and learn about the region's geological history and rich cultural heritage.

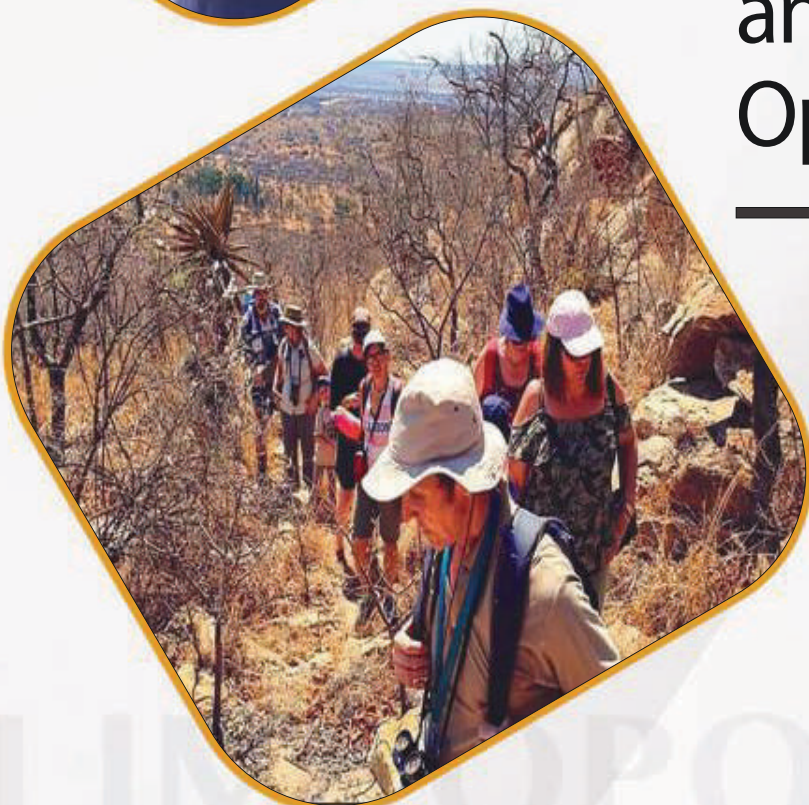
**Contact Jonas Tlouama for a guided experience on
0789544435; 0826230443**



Discovering Heritage and Nature at Bakone Malapa Open-Air Museum

Nestled just outside Polokwane, Bakone Malapa Open-Air Museum offers a rich cultural journey into the lives of the Northern Sotho people, alongside a natural escape. Visitors can explore a recreated traditional village, witnessing ancient crafts like pottery and fire-making, while also enjoying the peaceful hiking trails around the museum. These trails offer an intimate experience with the region's beautiful landscapes, perfect for nature lovers. A visit here seamlessly combines a dive into South African history with the serenity of nature.

Please contact Gideon on 0685622794 for a guided experience.



Gastronomy Africa Announces CSIR ICC as Official Venue for 2026 Conference

A celebratory moment on the trade floor at Meetings Africa 2026 marked the official announcement that the 2026 Gastronomy Africa Conference & Expo will take place at the CSIR International Convention Centre (CSIR ICC) in Tshwane from 3-4 August 2026.

The joint announcement was made by Lance Gibbons, CEO of Gastronomy Africa, Bronwen Cadle de Ponte, General Manager of the CSIR ICC, Eyal Halevy, CEO of Paragon Global, PCO, and partner for the conference at the CSIR ICC stand, where the two companies commemorated the partnership.

Formerly known as the SA Chef Conference and Expo, the Gastronomy Africa Conference & Expo is a groundbreaking B2B event dedicated exclusively to “the business of gastronomy”, with a programme focusing on promoting sustainable growth within Africa’s culinary sector, fostering creativity and innovation in professional kitchens, and leveraging gastronomy tourism to attract both local and international visitors. The expo features suppliers and food service companies across the culinary and hospitality value chain.

Gibbons said: “The CSIR International

Convention Centre in Tshwane responded to our call for bids with a clear understanding of the unique requirements of our conference, which spans the business and creativity sides of gastronomy. This third edition is part of our rebrand to Gastronomy Africa and our expansion into the rest of Africa, and we needed a globally accessible venue that could welcome culinary and hospitality professionals from across the continent with ease. A bonus is that the CSIR ICC is already prioritising one of our conference’s key content pillars: Gastronomy Tourism and how countries can leverage their unique culinary offerings to attract tourists, whether leisure, business or MICE travellers.”

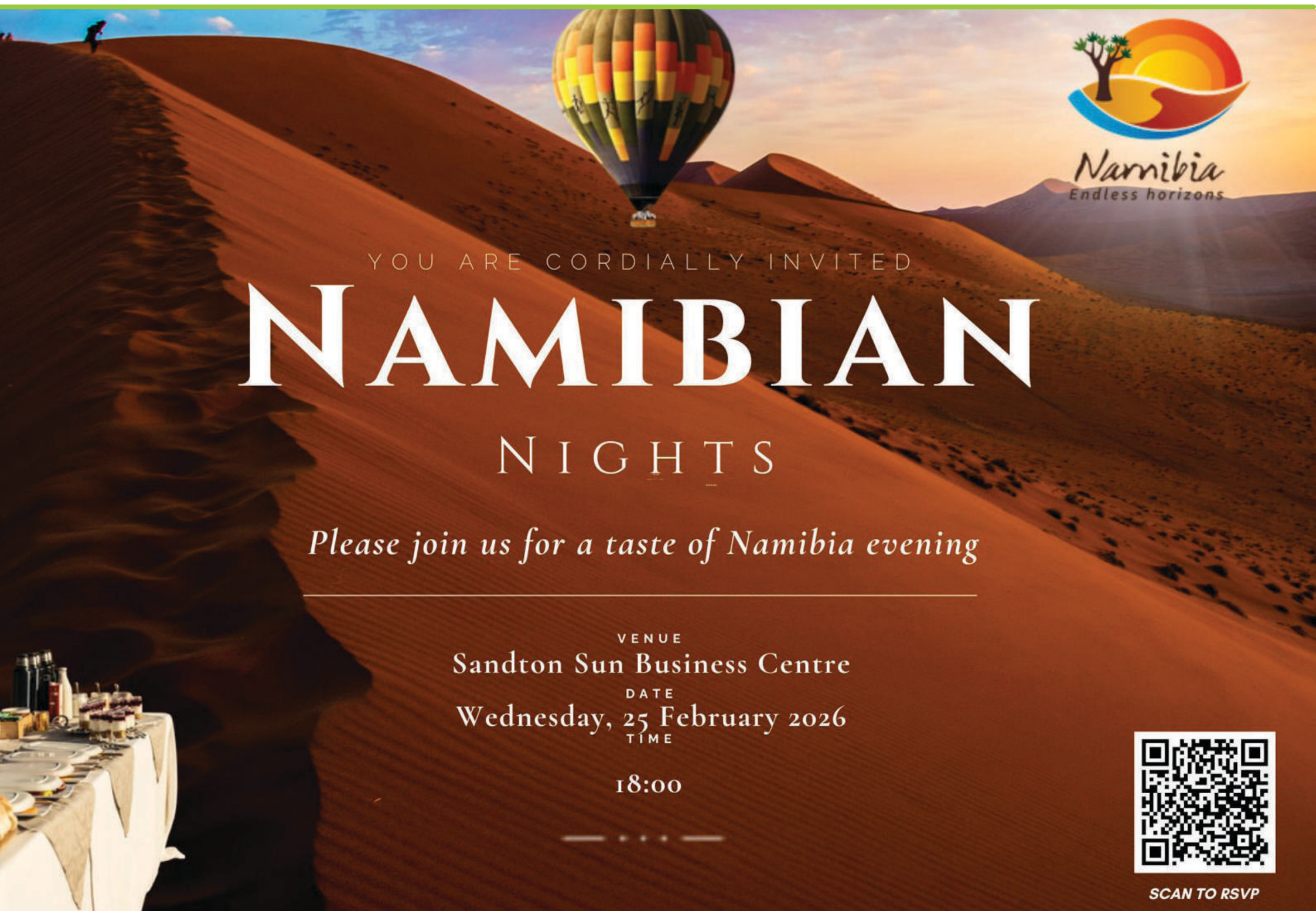
Cadle de Ponte welcomed the announcement, highlighting the broader industry impact of hosting the event at the CSIR ICC.

“We are excited that Gastronomy Africa is hosting its third edition of its conference and expo at the CSIR International Convention Centre. We believe that this conference is important for the South African business events industry so that we can collaborate, learn and innovate regarding sustainability practices in event catering as well as enhancing conference

delegate experiences in an authentic way using food and beverages. We look forward to the conference unpacking how we can utilise food, culture and indigenous ingredients, recipes and traditions as a value add for attracting conferences to the destination,” Cadle de Ponte said.

Further details regarding the Gastronomy Africa Conference & Expo will be announced in the coming months. The organisers look forward to welcoming delegates to the CSIR ICC in August 2026.

Be part of the African agenda to drive tourism, and grow business and the food industry sector. Please contact Heidi Kuyper at heidi@sachefmagazine.co.za.



YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED

NAMIBIAN NIGHTS

Please join us for a taste of Namibia evening

VENUE

Sandton Sun Business Centre

DATE

Wednesday, 25 February 2026

TIME

18:00



SCAN TO RSVP

Skies Open, Africa Wins

The 20th edition of Meetings Africa, held under the theme “20 Years of Connecting Africa to the World,” has spotlighted aviation and seamless connectivity as critical drivers for the continent’s MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) future.

Discussions emphasised how new air routes, partnerships, e-visas, and sustainability initiatives are transforming Africa into a more accessible and competitive global events destination. This year’s Airline Pavilion featuring 16 airlines including Air Algérie, Air Botswana, Air Seychelles, Air Tanzania, AirlinePros, CemAir, Eswatini Air, Ethiopian Airlines, fastjet Zimbabwe, Federal Airlines, FlyGabón, Kenya Airways, LIFT, Proflight Zambia, RwandAir and Uganda Airlines, further drove home the message that connectivity is the gamechanger.

“New air routes and smarter partnerships are unlocking Africa for global events planners,” said Refilwe Fosu-Amoah, Coordinator of the Airline Pavilion at South African Tourism. “From intra-African travel to long-haul access, connectivity is the gamechanger for growing our MICE business.”

Uganda Airlines has been a key contributor to this narrative, particularly through its Entebbe–Johannesburg route. Monica Rubombora, Country Manager for Uganda Airlines in South



Africa, highlighted the route’s evolution: “When we launched Entebbe to Johannesburg about four years ago, we operated three flights a week. Today we operate it daily. That frequency matters for business events because it supports short-stay travel, tighter conference schedules, and flexibility.”

Rubombora emphasized Uganda Airlines’ broader vision: “Our goal is bigger than one route. We want to grow MICE traffic into Uganda and use Entebbe as a convenient gateway for delegates across the region. With 17 destinations on our network, organisers have multiple options to route delegates into Entebbe and connect them onwards.” She noted strong business-related demand on South Africa-bound flights and potential future expansions, such as to Cape Town, contingent on aircraft availability.

On partnering for success, Rubombora advised early involvement: “The best way to partner

with us is to involve us early. If organisers share the dates, the expected numbers, and where delegates are coming from, we can plan properly and make the travel piece smoother.” This includes negotiated fares for groups, advance cargo planning for event materials, and sustainability support through smarter routing and voluntary carbon offsets.

Challenges persist, she acknowledged: “One of the biggest challenges across Africa is simply that the continent is still not well connected by air. Many city pairs are not linked directly... The second challenge is cost. Partnerships via platforms like Meetings Africa provide visibility for better planning and multi-city connectivity.”

Looking forward, Rubombora sees airlines as essential enablers: “Airlines play a big role in making Africa globally competitive for MICE because we are the link that makes a destination practical.”



YOUR ULTIMATE CONFERENCE VENUE ON THE HARTBEESPOORT DAM



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EXCLUSIVE CLIENT FUNCTIONS ★ EXECUTIVE MEETINGS ★ END OF YEAR FUNCTIONS

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HARTIES
BOAT COMPANY

KZN Reintroduces Itself to the World at Meetings Africa

KwaZulu-Natal is using Meetings Africa as a strategic platform to reposition itself in key global and African markets, with a strong focus on business tourism, trade partnerships and long-term growth.

Speaking at the exhibition, Pinky Radebe, Head of PR and Communications for KZN Tourism and Film, said the province's presence is about far more than a stand – it is about reintroducing KZN to the world.

“KZN tour operators, SMMEs and tourism authorities are here to showcase the full depth of our offering. We have products from across the province – from the north to the south, the Drakensberg, the Midlands, northern KZN and the South Coast. This is a collective effort to present a united provincial front,” she said.

Radebe explained that the strategy goes beyond the exhibition floor. Once Meetings Africa concludes, hosted buyers from outside the province, the continent and further afield will be taken on curated itineraries to experience KZN firsthand.

“We are not just exchanging business cards. We are taking buyers into the province so they can

see, feel and experience what we are selling. That is how you convert interest into confirmed business,” she said.

A key focus for the province is strengthening ties with buyers from across the African continent, as well as established long-haul markets such as the United States and the United Kingdom. However, Radebe stressed that Africa remains central to KZN's growth strategy.

“Africa is key to us. We are encouraged that our markets are showing positive yield. There is appetite, there is movement, and there is real opportunity within the continent,” she said.

Meetings Africa, she added, serves as a springboard for Africa's Travel Indaba, which will be held in Durban in May. The work done in Johannesburg lays the groundwork for deals, partnerships and confirmed bookings at Indaba.

“Here we make connections. Business tourism is enhanced through structured engagements. It is not a once-off interaction. It is a pipeline,” Radebe said.

With Africa's Travel Indaba returning to Durban, KZN is positioning itself not only as a leisure destination but as a serious business events hub – ready to compete, connect and convert on a global stage.



Voices from the Floor



Millicent Masago

African Associations Management Company, Kenya

Based in Kenya, we manage associations across Africa. As key MICE contributors, we're here to connect with diverse ecosystems, understand new trends, and collaborate to advance the continent's agenda. Last year at Meetings Africa, we successfully brought a conference to Kenya. We also facilitated the African Association Summit in Pretoria through a connection made here—a beautiful result of our participation.



Ranjesh P Kavil

Protea Hotel by Marriott Lusaka, Zambia (Exhibitor)

We do not have corporate offices all over Africa. So kinds of exhibitions such as Meetings Africa are one of the best places to connect with people, connect with customers and fellow hoteliers. That's why we are here. We hope to expand our sales force over here. We expect to expand our connectivity to all kinds of people looking for different services available. We have so many people coming and talking to us, that is one of the best points.



Dongjun Zhang

Shanghai Xingle Shihua International Travel Service, China

We are a travel agent in Shanghai and we are trying to explore more new business, like MICE and golf tours in South Africa. My goal here is to find some new golf courses and new accommodations and attractions where I can make some new products, like golf tours and incentive groups for Shanghai people. It's my first time here, and so far so good. It's a very good place to be here and I'm glad that I have the chance to be here and see so many kinds of people and they can show me some different products.



Manpreet Singh Sahni

Asian Holidays, India

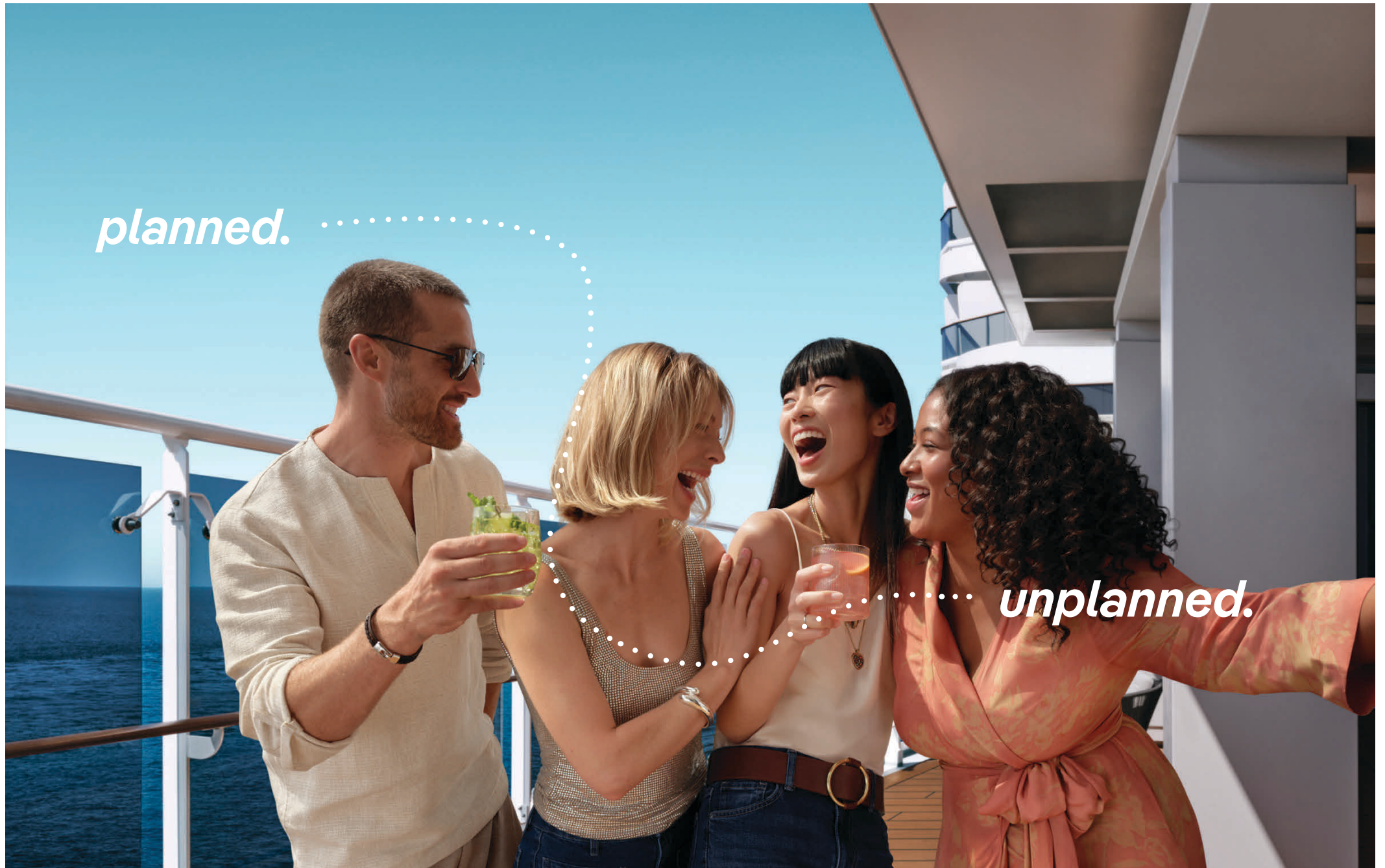
I'm trying to explore South Africa and other African countries which are here, so I think this is a very good platform to look for all these things here. I got to get very good knowledge of everything, what exactly is happening. We are planning to finalize some corporate meets, like for 100 people, 80 people. So few of our clients have asked us for South Africa tours. So our focus is to see what is best for our client and what new thing we can give apart from Johannesburg and, you know, Cape Town.





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