

Tourism News

SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

South African Tourism's flagship awards to once again reward service excellence and innovation

Outstanding businesses in the tourism industry are invited to enter the 5th annual Lilizela Tourism Awards, with submissions opening on 1 March 2017.

The latest instalment of the annual prestigious Lilizela Tourism Awards for accommodation establishments and other tourism-related products and services will once again toast the best of the best when the provincial awards ceremonies take place in September 2017, culminating in the star-studded national awards function in Johannesburg in October.

The Lilizela Tourism Awards are an initiative of the National Department of Tourism and are spearheaded by South African Tourism.

South African Tourism Chief Executive Officer Mr Sisa Ntshona said: "The criteria for the awards are constantly being refined, through ongoing consultation and feedback surveys, to ensure that hospitality establishments, venues, service providers and tourism attractions meet industry and traveller requirements. Because of the annual review that will follow each awards ceremony, entries will open in March from this year onwards."

Ntshona said that as a result of the most recent review, sustainability and contribution to inclusive growth have become important considerations in the adjudication process.

"South African Tourism's main objective is to work with the industry in contributing towards inclusive growth while helping to grow new players into the industry. The importance of transforming tourism and its feeder industries cannot be understated. This is why the awards are encouraging tourism businesses to embed a culture of inclusion in their DNA. Tourism has, more than any other sector, the potential to act as an engine for growth in South Africa. This includes the potential to create employment, generate foreign exchange, encourage entrepreneurship and act as a driver for other sectors of the economy," Ntshona added.

Furthermore, the awards will see more changes being implemented next year. "We have found through our interactions with the industry that there is a growing need for sustainable and responsible practices in all tourism enterprises," said Ntshona.

"For this reason, from 2018 onwards we will be introducing specific sustainability criteria for the Lilizela Tourism Awards, to coincide with the intended Responsible Tourism recognition measures that are to be introduced by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa during the course of 2017. If tourism product owners place

more focus in minimising their environmental impacts, it will add to South Africa's attractiveness as a progressive, world-class tourism destination."

Tourism businesses - ranging from accommodation establishments and tourist guides to visitor attractions - may enter the 2017 Lilizela Tourism Awards in a range of categories, which will be judged by a panel of industry professionals as well as by a public vote. These categories include service excellence, universal accessibility, the Minister's Award for innovation in tourism, and the Emerging Tourism Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

"South Africa boasts a wealth of tourism jewels in its crown," said Ntshona. "Through the annual Lilizela Tourism Awards, we hope to showcase these beacons of excellence and motivate them to continue delivering exceptional, authentic, memorable experiences to local and international travellers."

"Hospitality can be a challenging and highly demanding industry, and we want industry players to know that we value their efforts in helping South Africa to grow and diversify our tourism sector," concluded Ntshona.

Entries for the 2017 Lilizela Tourism Awards open on 1 March 2017 and close on 31 May 2017. Visit www.lilizela.co.za for more details, or follow @Lilizela_Awards on Twitter.

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South African Tourism is the national tourism agency responsible for the marketing of South Africa as a preferred tourist destination. It is headed up by Chief Executive Officer Mr Sisa Ntshona