

Trends in local SA travel

By [Kerry Hayes](#)

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South Africans are increasingly exploring their own country, which offers a diverse range of destinations and activities just a few hours' drive, or short flight, away.



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Local travel trends

Trends in the local travel scene over 2019 are much of an extension of the previous year, with a few major trends to note.

1. Bush, beach and berg

Sthembis Dlamini, SA Tourism's chief operating officer, says: "South Africans want bush, beach and berg experiences wherever they go, with beach leading the way. KwaZulu-Natal beaches remain very popular with domestic travellers, who also love social activities including spending time with other people, whether it be indoors as would be the case with a braai (barbeque) or outdoors when having a picnic."

2. Solo travel

An increasing number of travellers are electing to travel alone, a trend that is driven significantly by the millennial generation, who are independent and adventurous and expect instant gratification in their travel needs and expectations of a destination or experience.

The advancement of mobile apps and enhanced online search and bookings capabilities are making finding places to visit alone (or in small groups), and completing accommodation and experience bookings, quick and easy. This increases the attractiveness of local travel for millennials, who then post and share information about their travels on social media platforms – which are followed by their peers, and seen as first-hand 'reviews' and 'recommendations'.

3. Bleisure and extended travel

Extending a business trip by a few days to see the local sights while in a different part of the country allows domestic travellers to see more of their own country. Often, a traveller will complete the business portion of a trip, then either extend

the trip on his or her own to see the local sights, or be joined by his or her family. This is practical in the sense of capitalising on flights already in place for the business trip.



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4. Experiential travel, and responsible tourism

Travel is becoming more about the full experience of the journey as opposed to the destination. Travellers are seeking experiences that have meaning and create memories, from cultural and heritage experiences that speak of the traditions and history of a destination, to adventure activities or travel with a purpose where tourists can get involved in local conservation efforts and contribute to a greater cause while travelling.

5. Adventure travel

"Adventure experiences are very popular. There has been a rise in the number of people wanting to experience more of Mpumalanga, for example, as the province provides both bush and berg experiences and has a number of adventure spots," says Dlamini.

South Africa has a wide range of adventure experiences, including safaris, canopy tours, quad biking and hot air ballooning.

6. Off-the-beaten-track

Travellers are no longer content with visiting well-travelled destinations, but rather want to enjoy new and authentic travel experiences. "In all the nine provinces, there is an array of hidden gems that add to the country's variety and colourful experience," says Dlamini.

She shares some of the hidden gems that travellers can explore:

- Makgabeng Farm Lodge in Limpopo
- Vomba Tours and Transfers in Mpumalanga
- Zimasa Travel in the North West
- Workshop Ko Kasi in the Northern Cape

'Hidden gems' can also come in the form of experiences, and Dlamini suggests a few:

- Horse riding with Leratong Tourism
- Hole In The Wall in Eastern Cape and Drifters Raceway in East London
- Potluck Boskombuis in Graskop, Mpumalanga

7. Technology and tailored experiences

Technology and mobile apps are bringing control of the travel experience into the traveller's hands. Purchasing behaviour is being influenced by websites aggregating the best deals and prices from thousands of booking websites, and tailoring options based on a traveller's search history and preferences. This has made travellers more price conscious, allowing destinations that offer the best value for money to benefit.



Top 10 attractions and experiences for SA travellers

SA Tourism suggests that the following are popular for SA travellers:

- Visiting and swimming at the Durban beachfront in KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape.
- Going shopping in various malls with Gauteng malls being top of the list.
- Visiting entertainment centres and casinos.
- Going on a game drive at the Kruger National Park.
- Whale-watching in the Western Cape.
- Visiting Sun City resort.
- Visiting the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town.
- Lifestyle events related e.g. concerts and festivals.

Packaging is key

Products and experiences are being packaged to promote value for money and meet travellers' evolving needs, to encourage them to travel and explore their own country, says Dlamini. One of the projects that SA Tourism and its partners are working on is the Sho't Left campaign, which includes examples of packages being put together.

SA ticks all the boxes in terms of affordability, conservation tourism experiences, uniquely South African culinary scene, culture and heritage, and excellent adventure offerings.

ABOUT KERRY HAYES

Kerry Hayes is a senior account manager at Irvine Partners. She used to be the Editor of Tourism Update, a tourism news publication reporting on tourism-related news across southern and East Africa. She has worked in the publishing industry for over a decade, with editorial experience in the décor and design, food and wine, motoring, marketing and social media, and travel and tourism industries. Hayes holds an Honours degree in Marketing Communications.

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