

Redefining "travel"

 By [Phindiwe Nkosi](#)

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Tourism Month (September) is creating quite a stir. The buzz words are "get out and travel" and travel writers' suitcases are packed and ready to go. Give me, but a moment to explain the reality out there, be it an isolated case or the norm; let's just leave it as "my" reality.

I held a newborn lion cub in my arms and stroked its belly to help it digest milk. Its look resembled that of a newborn baby in that there was no fear in its eyes, just a dependency that looked up to whoever was there to love it and reassure it that it was safe. I looked an elephant in the eyes for minutes and exchanged only that which silence can immortalise. I dined at a five-star guest house and watched boats docking in the nearby dam.

That's what I did, but the sad reality is it remains with me. In many instances, just outside these venues were locals who had never seen real lions or had the leniency of being invited onboard a party boat on a dam. There are several places where international guests far outnumber locals because they have the bargaining power of the stronger currencies.

The gist of the matter is not everyone will win a competition travel voucher for two or get invited to a five star establishment which opens itself up in the hope of securing a good review. Perhaps we need to stop and ask, can the layman reading this truly afford this or am I simply creating a fantasy world unobtainable to the masses? How can one link it and make it applicable for not just the loaded readers, but the regular guy wishing to fully embrace the hype of "Tourism Month" and explore their wonderful country of South Africa?

Identify the destination

It took me a couple of personal road-trips to identify that the destination is not always that which you think it is. In fact, sometimes you go on a road-trip in search of that something more, but then realise you are actually the one that is now pursued.

It can be the sunset commanding your soul to silence or a tree in the middle of nowhere that makes you stop to take a picture. It is not always a "tourist attraction spot", but that which finds you and you just know, you are no longer travelling, but have arrived.

Speak to the locals

We often think the trip is "out there". That's groupthink at its best! Sometimes, the real attraction is right at your doorstep. While driving from the North West to Gauteng, I stopped to see fish hung on the fence by the road. There was a braai (barbeque) and you could get yourself freshly caught fish for R25.

There were many locals there and they were welcoming of visitors who stopped to look at their merchandise and fish. You could sit on the rocks and eat your fish while listening to local laughter and pleasant company. I told my friends about this delightful place by the road and they in turn told theirs. What a refreshing concept of "local travel".

Do something brave

Get out and do something new. Be brave! Live for a moment. Leave the curtains open to feel the sun on your face in the morning. Splash in water puddles after the rain, buy a souvenir even if you live in the area, greet a stranger... There are many ways of touring your world anew.

Attend a festival

There are many festivals in spring. Some are annual events and yet others take place at local malls and parks. There are markets where you can get round about anything from biltong to local performers and lots in between.

Make a detour

Exchange your annual time share and go to a different location. Rather than your typical "pizza day", go somewhere else and experience a different setting.

Have a cup of tea at that tea garden establishment you have always wanted to see. Smell a wild flower by the side of the road. Buy fish instead of pork. Take the earlier bus, enjoy that evening walk. After all, a little change is apparently as good as a holiday!

ABOUT PHINDIWE NKOSI

Phindiwe Nkosi has a decade of experience coupled by a Masters Degree in Communication Management from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her experience ranges from working as a journalist, international news anchor, travel writer, speech writer, marketing and communications manager, editor, blogger, foodie and ghostwriter. She is also the founder of Travel Anthem and freelances for clients across South Africa, UK, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Zimbabwe and more. Email her at phindiwe@communicationanthem.co.za for your writing and blogging needs.

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