

# SA tourism's best to be honoured at 2019 Lilizela Tourism Awards

To mark the launch of this year's Lilizela Tourism Awards, media, government representatives and industry stakeholders gathered at the Sun International Time Square Arena and Maslow Hotel in Pretoria on 14 August to be a part of key event announcements - including the date of the national awards ceremony, which is set to take place on 9 November 2019 at the Sun Arena.

The awards, now in its seventh year, will allow hospitality and tourism businesses the chance to compete against each other and gauge how they fare against similar businesses in the industry, therefore boosting South Africa's already high quality tourism offerings.



Image Supplied.

Over a thousand entries have been received for the 2019 Lilizela Tourism Awards.

According to Darryl Erasmus, the Tourism Grading Council's Chief Quality Assurance Officer, the awards present graded partners and service providers the opportunity to gain the exposure they deserve. "It is not compulsory to grade accommodation and venue establishments in South Africa yet we are blessed to have well over 5,000 graded entities around the country. The Lilizela Tourism Awards is our opportunity to recognize and celebrate the individuals and businesses who make South Africa the amazing destination it is."

He added that the awards provide businesses with the opportunity to gauge themselves against their peers. "Many operators want to know how they are doing compared to others who operate in similar categories. People also like to be recognised. People thrive on competition and these awards give products the opportunity to measure up against their competitors and learn from each other. The destination benefits."

South African Tourism Acting CEO Sthembiso Dlamini said the Lilizela Tourism Awards and the work that the TGCSA does has elevated the South African tourism industry. "Since its inception in 2000, the TGCSA's grading standards have upped the game for many hospitality establishments and tourist attractions."

"And even today, it continues to push the bar of excellence higher for the tourism industry. It had recently enhanced its grading system, introduced new categories, a 5-star premium level for ultra-luxury establishments and brought in 17 accolades to recognised and provide differentiation for niche products and services," said Dlamini.

Before the national Lilizela Tourism Awards takes place, its provincial legs will be sweeping across the country throughout September. **The dates are as follows:**

- Northern Cape - 05 September
- Mpumalanga - 06 September
- Western Cape - 13 September
- Free State - 13 September
- Limpopo - 17 September
- Eastern Cape - 19 September
- Gauteng – 19 September
- North West - 25 September
- KwaZulu-Natal - 26 September

## **South African hospitality outdoes most of the world**

In Erasmus' experience, South Africa's hospitality standards are far ahead of many other global destinations that he has visited. "South Africa is really fortunate with owners and operators that ensure the foot we put forward is the best one. We outperform many destinations by far in terms of quality offerings. And we can attribute it to the long-standing partnerships with our members and the industry at large."

The TGCSA's grading standards are some of the most developed in the world. It has set an example for other African countries that are looking to enhance their tourism industry and its offerings. The TGCSA publishes its grading criteria openly online and neighbouring countries are actively utilising these standards for their own quality assurance initiatives. "We are without question a benchmark for the continent," said Erasmus.

He added: "In many instances, tourists who travel to South Africa often use the opportunity to visit neighbouring countries in the SADC region. It is critical for the success of tourism in the region that our SADC counterparts are also recognising

the importance of a quality visitor experience in the success of the region as a tourism destination. We are partnering with many neighbouring countries to aide them on their quality assurance journeys."

Bheki Dube, owner of Curiocity Backpackers who has won in the four-star backpacker category at the Lilizela Provincial Kwa-Zulu Natal Awards, said his accolade has assisted in putting the backpacking and hostel category back on the tourism map. He credits his win to his group's ability to keep the standards of quality high. "As hospitality owners, we can get caught up in the day-to-day running of the business and often forget the quality. We value the annual visit from the TGCSA as it helps focus on our quality standards. So Curiocity Backpackers always has to ask how to do I change certain things differently and better."

Ivan Dinkelmann's Lanseria Country Estate won the Gauteng Provincial Lilizela Award for three-star establishments. He said the business is all about service excellence and getting good service ratings online. "We are always trying to improve and bring in new activities as part of the service such as quad biking and spas."

Judge for the Lilizela Tourism Awards ETEYA category, Rebecca Kambule said that she will be looking for attention to detail and a brand that can compete with anyone internationally. "We look for excellence, the best of the best in the industry. You have to deliver the services to the best of your abilities, superseding everyone."

She added that businesses need to show that they are adding value to nearby communities. "You have to display that you are innovative and display that business brings value to your communities by creating jobs over a period of time."

Kambule said that the calibre of entries has increased with the competition getting tougher as the more businesses are starting to see the value of the awards.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>