

#VISITGAUTENGNEWZ

Official Destination Gauteng
Tourism Trade and Media
Newsletter



TOURISM



GAUTENG
it starts here

First Timers in Gauteng Edition 2026

FIRST TIMERS IN GAUTENG EDITION 2026

WELCOME TO GAUTENG, A PROVINCE THAT WELCOMES NEW BEGINNINGS

The start of a new year often marks important decisions about where to live, work and build a future. For many South Africans and Africans, that decision leads to Gauteng. As the economic heart of the country and a gateway to opportunity, the province continues to attract those seeking growth, independence and progress.

Destination Gauteng proudly welcomes all first-time residents who have chosen the province as their new home and a place of possibility.

Gauteng continues to attract job seekers, entrepreneurs and first-year students because of what it offers and how it moves.

A strong consumer market, respected tertiary institutions, established industry linkages and a fast-paced urban lifestyle combine to create an environment where ambition is supported and progress is possible. This is a province where careers are developed, skills are strengthened and ideas gain momentum.

Beyond opportunity, Gauteng offers a way of life shaped by diversity and shared experience. Long after the gold rush, the province remains a meeting point of cultures, creativity and energy.

From heritage landmarks and cultural spaces to culinary experiences, sporting events and vibrant public places, newcomers are welcomed into a province that is open, dynamic and easy to explore.

As the year unfolds, the months leading up to March set the tone for what lies ahead. A full calendar of sporting, music and cultural events introduces first-timers to the vibrant city region they now call home.



20 MUST-EXPERIENCE ATTRACTIONS IN GAUTENG FOR FIRST TIMERS



Apartheid Museum, Johannesburg

An immersive space that reflects South Africa's past and the journey toward democracy.



Gold Reef City Theme Park, Johannesburg

Entertainment and history come together at this former gold mining site.



Maboneng Precinct, Johannesburg

A creative inner city area shaped by art, cafés and contemporary culture.



National Zoological Garden, Pretoria

A long standing attraction and one of the largest zoos on the continent.



Cradle of Humankind, UNESCO World Heritage Site

A place to explore the origins of humanity at one of the world's most important fossil sites.



Constitution Hill, Johannesburg

Once a prison, now home to the Constitutional Court and a symbol of justice and freedom.



Soweto Guided Tour

A meaningful introduction to Vilakazi Street, township life and lived history.



Union Buildings, Pretoria

An iconic national landmark set within gardens overlooking the capital city.



Lion and Safari Park, near Hartbeespoort

A chance to experience wildlife just beyond the city limits.



Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria

A prominent heritage site offering expansive views over the city.



Hartbeespoort Dam and Cableway

A relaxed outing with scenic views of the surrounding mountains.



Lesedi Cultural Village

An introduction to African traditions through storytelling, dance and food.



Johannesburg Botanical Gardens and Emmarentia Dam

A peaceful green space enjoyed by walkers, families and picnickers.



Freedom Park, Pretoria

A reflective space that honours South Africa's shared and diverse history.



Montecasino, Fourways

A popular destination for dining, entertainment and social gatherings.



Melrose Arch, Johannesburg

A modern precinct known for shopping, restaurants and urban energy.



Hector Pieterse Memorial and Museum, Soweto

A moving tribute to the youth of 1976 and their role in shaping the nation.



Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden

Known for its waterfalls, walking trails and natural beauty.



Dinokeng Game Reserve

A malaria-free Big Five safari experience within easy reach of Gauteng.



Cullinan Diamond Mine

A historic site where one of the world's most famous diamonds was discovered.

GAUTENG SCHOOL AND EDUCATIONAL TOURS

From Human Origins to Human Freedom

Gauteng Province continues to position itself as a destination that combines education, safety, and meaningful engagement for young learners.

The **Gauteng School and Educational Tour Programme** offers a structured experience aligned with CAPS and IEB curricula, ensuring that learners benefit academically while exploring the province's rich heritage and natural assets.



The programme supports Natural Sciences, Life Sciences, Social Sciences, History, Geography, and Life Orientation learning areas. Recommended tour periods align with South African school holidays in March, June or July, September, and December.

Estimated tour package costs range between **R3,500 and R6,500** per learner.



The tour provides learners with the opportunity to explore:

- The **Cradle of Humankind** and human evolution
- **Mandela legacy** sites and South Africa's democratic journey
- Nature reserves and biodiversity conservation



QANTAS LAUNCHES PERTH TO JOHANNESBURG ROUTE

The **Gauteng Tourism Authority** has welcomed the launch of the new Qantas Airlines Perth to Johannesburg route, strengthening Gauteng's international air connectivity and reinforcing its position as a gateway into South Africa.

Operated by the Airbus A380 and flying up to six times per week, the service introduces approximately 130,000 additional seats annually.

This milestone strengthens Gauteng's reach into the high-value **Australian** outbound market and enhances business travel and trade opportunities.



ADVANCING TRADE PARTNERSHIPS AND MARKET ACCESS IN 2026

The Gauteng Tourism Authority will continue to leverage strategic partnerships and targeted trade platforms in 2026 to unlock new market opportunities and deepen international relationships.

India Roadshow participation from **9 to 12 February** will showcase Gauteng's diverse tourism offering, while the **North America** Virtual Roadshow from **24 to 26 February** will further extend international engagement and demand generation.



MEETINGS AFRICA TURNS 20

In 2026, the MICE industry celebrates 20 years of Meetings Africa; two decades of a proudly Pan African platform that has helped the world see our continent through the lens of excellence, reliability and partnership. We marked more than an anniversary, but a promise: 20 years ahead of shared prosperity, visitor economy growth, and the building of an Africa we all want.

From the inaugural event in 2005/2006, Meetings Africa has grown in step with this momentum; from early editions hosting around 1,500 delegates, 82 hosted buyers and close to 90 media representatives, to today's scale with over 385 international hosted buyers and 3000 exhibitors, media and participants from across the continent and the world. The story is not just growth in numbers but growth in confidence, capability, convening power and quality African connections.

For Gauteng, tourism is not merely a tally of arrivals or marketing impressions. It is jobs for young people in our townships, new markets for small enterprises, revitalised heritage sites, thriving creative industries, large participation of new players, and improved livelihoods for women and youth-led township businesses and entrepreneurs.

It is a safer, more connected city region that works in harmony with neighbouring destinations, provinces and countries. It is inclusive participation and spatial justice - deliberately activating all five regional corridors of our province.

It is a pride in place, a new frontier for accelerated shared growth and reindustrialisation as we position Gauteng as Africa's commercial and cultural heartbeat.



Meetings Africa aims to continue to spotlight Africa's diverse destinations and unique offerings for business events by unlocking Africa's Opportunities Through Quality Connections. The event serves as a platform for business deals, knowledge sharing, and cross-sector partnerships, with a strong emphasis on enabling meaningful networking opportunities to support industry growth.



JOHANNESBURG CITY SIGHTSEEING CELEBRATES 13 YEARS

The City Sightseeing open-top red bus continues to enhance Gauteng's visitor experience. Operating in more than 100 cities worldwide, the Johannesburg service was launched in January 2013 and has since expanded to include additional stops along the Johannesburg-Soweto route.

These stops include the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Melrose Arch, Soccer City, South African Hall of Fame Museum, and Soweto Brewing Company at Ubuntu Kraal. This expansion further supports township tourism, promotes heritage engagement.



GAUTENG'S SOLD-OUT SEASON



Sporting and musical events are consistently selling out across Gauteng, driving record attendance, visitor spend and economic growth.

Hospitality, accommodation, transport services and SMMEs benefit from increased foot traffic and extended stays.

This momentum reinforces the Stay Another Day tourism message and positions Gauteng for a strong financial year ahead.

Gauteng is ready to welcome you. Stay another day, explore more, and experience why we are the home of sold-out culture, unbeatable vibes and endless opportunities.

**#Gauteng #GPLifestyle #SportingGP #MusicalGP #VisitGauteng
#StayAnotherDay**

LIV GOLF POSITIONS GAUTENG AS A GLOBAL EVENTS DESTINATION

LIV Golf will host its first South African event at Steyn City, Johannesburg from 20 to 22 March 2026. Golf tourism remains a high-value segment, with visitors staying longer and spending more across accommodation, dining and leisure experiences.

Hosting LIV Golf strengthens Gauteng's premium global events positioning and supports growth across the tourism value chain.



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As Gauteng continues to expand global connectivity, strengthen trade partnerships and host world-class events, the province remains focused on inclusive growth, innovation and measurable impact. Through destination marketing, business events and lifestyle experiences, Gauteng reinforces its position as South Africa’s leading gateway and a province that continues to move forward with confidence.



ORLANDO PIRATES-AMSTEL NAMING RIGHTS DEAL MARKS A NEW ERA IN SPORTS BRANDING AND DESTINATION MARKETING

The newly announced naming rights partnership between Orlando Pirates Football Club and Heineken South Africa’s Amstel brand, renaming Orlando Stadium to the Orlando Amstel Arena is more than a commercial deal. It represents a strategic shift in how South African cities, sports brands, and corporate partners leverage iconic public assets to shape identity, stimulate economic activity, and strengthen tourism.



At a time when global sports organisations increasingly use naming rights to modernise infrastructure and secure long-term revenue, Johannesburg has positioned itself at the forefront of Africa’s sports-business evolution.

A Deal Rooted in Heritage and Modern Strategy

The Orlando precinct carries deep historical significance for the club and for South African football. Aligning the stadium’s identity with its home team enhances authenticity and strengthens emotional resonance among supporters. This gives the partnership credibility—something naming rights deals often struggle with.

The stadium, like others including FNB, Rand, and Dobsonville, is publicly owned by the City of Johannesburg but operated by Stadium Management South Africa (SMSA). This model reduces pressure on public finances while enabling clubs and sponsors to fund improvements through structured commercial agreements.

Global Context: A Proven Model



The Orlando Amstel Arena deal follows global precedents where stadium naming rights have transformed clubs and cities alike:

- **Spotify Camp Nou (Barcelona)** funded major renovations and integrated music culture with football.
 - **SoFi Stadium (Los Angeles)** became one of the world's most advanced sports venues through a record-breaking long-term deal.
 - **Allianz Arena (Munich)** and Emirates Stadium (London) are now inseparable from their cities' global identities
- These examples show that naming rights have grown into powerful tools for city branding, tourism, and economic regeneration.

Benefits for Johannesburg and Gauteng

A strategically executed naming rights partnership has broad socio-economic implications:

1. Tourism & City Branding

Stadium names become shorthand for cities—the identity travels globally through broadcast, social media, and major events. Orlando Amstel Arena strengthens Johannesburg's claim as Africa's sports and entertainment capital.

2. Infrastructure Upgrades

Such agreements often finance:

- stadium renovations,
- digital upgrades,
- improved accessibility, and
- ESG-aligned features like renewable energy systems

This reduces reliance on municipal budgets while improving visitor experience.

3. Sports Development

The deal presents new opportunities to

- expand youth academies,
- invest in grassroots football,
- support the development of a formal Orlando Pirates Ladies team, and
- uplift local talent in Soweto and surrounding communities.



Fan Experience: The Modern Expectations

Sports fans today expect immersive, connected environments. The partnership enables:

- upgraded hospitality zones,
- enhanced digital ticketing,
- branded fan-experience activations, and
- a more modern match-day atmosphere.

These improvements deepen emotional loyalty and increase stadium footfall.

Alcohol Sponsorship

South Africa's ongoing struggle with alcohol abuse makes responsible branding essential. Campaigns that promote moderation, road safety, and youth education are vital to ensuring public support and social alignment.

Risks and Ethical Considerations

No naming rights deal is without complexity. Key concerns include:

Heritage and Identity

Some may argue that renaming a historic venue compromises cultural legacy. Clear communication, heritage preservation, and community engagement will be crucial.



Brand Reputation

If either party faces reputational crises, stadium identity may be affected. Long-term contractual safeguards and strong brand governance will help mitigate these risks.

A Pathway to Sustainable Impact

If managed with ESG sensitivity, community investment, and a focus on shared value, the Orlando Amstel Arena could become the benchmark for how African cities and clubs use naming rights to balance commercial opportunity with public interest.



The deal has the potential to expand Gauteng's sports tourism footprint—possibly anchoring a broader Gauteng Sports Tourism Route that connects heritage, entertainment, and live events into a compelling visitor experience.



This is more than a renaming. It is a blueprint for how partnerships between sport, business, and government can stimulate inclusive growth, strengthen social identity, and elevate Johannesburg on the global stage.



TUNE INTO THE GAUTENG LIFVE PODCAST

Stay connected to the pulse of the province with the **Gauteng Lifve Podcast**. From tourism and business to culture, events and community stories, cross the province.

Gauteng Lifve brings you real conversations with the people shaping Gauteng's growth and identity. Each episode features insights from industry leaders, creatives, entrepreneurs and change-makers driving impact across the province.

Whether you are in tourism, business, government or simply passionate about Gauteng, this podcast keeps you informed, inspired and engaged.



Subscribe, watch and listen to the latest episodes here:

- <https://www.youtube.com/@GautengLifve>

Join the conversation. Experience Gauteng through the voices that move it forward.



FOLLOW THE FLAMINGO TO SHARPEVILLE THIS HUMAN RIGHTS MONTH



This March, Sharpeville invites South Africans to reflect, engage and celebrate through the return of the SINAM 1960 NPC Human Rights Month Programme, taking place from 19 to 21 March 2026. Now in its second year, the programme continues its bold declaration: “Sharpeville is NOT a Massacre.” Rather than remembering the past as a single tragic moment, the initiative reframes Sharpeville as a living space of dialogue, development and cultural pride.

A Symbol of Renewal

At the centre of this year’s theme is an unexpected guide — the Flamingo.

Once a seasonal visitor to Leeukuildam, known locally as Dlomo Dam, flamingos became a lasting symbol of resilience and renewal within the community. Although they no longer gather there, their spirit lives on. This year, organisers invite visitors to quite literally “follow the flamingo” back to Sharpeville.

Day One: Golf for Community Development | 19 March

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Day Two: Rights on Paper, Rands in Pockets | 20 March

On 20 March, the focus shifts to youth empowerment through the Tlong Sekolong Human Rights Dialogue, hosted in partnership with North-West University Vaal Campus. Marking 30 years since the signing of South Africa's Constitution, this year's dialogue asks a critical question:

What have constitutional rights translated into for young people economically?

Under the theme "Rights on Paper, Rands in Pockets," the panel will explore youth participation in education, employment and entrepreneurship, featuring representatives from NSFAS, the NYDA, a Sharpeville community representative and an academic voice from North-West University.

The session begins at 14:00 and is open to the public. **Register here:**

<https://sinam.org.za/tlong-sekolong-lecture/>



Day Three: Put Yourself in Their Shoes | 21 March

Human Rights Day begins at 07:00 on Zwane Street outside the Old Sharpeville Police Station, a UNESCO-recognised Mandela Legacy World Heritage Site.





A Block Party Finale

The commemorative weekend concludes with the SINAM Block Party at 8770 Sefatsa Street. From 10:00 until late, the streets will come alive with music and celebration, featuring performances by JustSam, DJ Pearl and internationally recognised house DJ Harrison Crump.

Tickets are available via WebTickets:

<https://www.webtickets.co.za/v2/event.aspx?itemid=1588719001>

SHARPEVILLE
is NOT a
MASSACRE

Participants will take part in the Heroes Fun Run (8km) and Fun Walk (5km) under the moving theme "Put Yourself in Their Shoes." Registration costs R60, with proceeds supporting ongoing community development programmes.

Register here:

<https://sinam.org.za/heroes-fun-run-walk/>



The SINAM Human Rights Month Programme presents Sharpeville as more than a site of remembrance. It is a space of dialogue, sport, heritage and celebration. A community reclaiming its narrative while building opportunity for the next generation.

EXPLORE GAUTENG AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Looking for events, hidden gems, restaurants, accommodation and experiences across Gauteng? The Visit Gauteng App puts everything you need in one place.

Whether you are planning a weekend escape, searching for what's happening near you, or exploring new places to visit, the app gives you instant access to:

- Upcoming events and festivals
- Top attractions and heritage sites
- Restaurants, lifestyle spots and nightlife
- Family-friendly activities
- Business and leisure travel options



You can browse by category, search by location, and stay updated with the latest happenings across the province.

Business owners can also register and list their offerings directly on the app, connecting with travellers and locals looking for experiences in Gauteng.

Download the Visit Gauteng App today and start exploring.

<https://app.gauteng.net/>

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TOURISM TAKES CENTRE STAGE IN GAUTENG'S 2026 STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS

During the State of the Province Address, the Premier touched on the impactful move of Gauteng international arrivals from 2.6 million in the previous year to 3.8 million international arrivals this year.

This surge translated into a record-breaking R41 billion in international tourism revenue, far surpassing the target of R29 billion. The premier indicated that the province will continue to amplify the Visit Gauteng Zwakala campaign, projecting to generate R23 billion in revenue from both foreign and domestic sources, contributing directly to provincial economic growth and supporting jobs in hotels, restaurants, transport, entertainment and associated sectors. Air connectivity continues to support international tourism growth.

Gauteng was able to secure 3 of the 4 targets of opening new air routes during this financial year – namely FlyGabon, Qantas Airlines and United Airlines. These routes provide access to three strategic markets including Central Africa, North America and Australasia. The Inaugural Gauteng Investment Conference attracted R312 billion in investments. Today R73 billion is now moving from commitment to implementation, creating 114 000 in jobs.



In particular The Vaal SEZ and the Lanseria Smart City will have direct impact on the visitor economy.

The Lanseria Smart City has secured R4 billion for Cradle Film studios, which is set to become the largest film production facility on the continent. The project is expected to create 15 000 jobs, including 10 000 in film production.

EMPOWERING TOURISM SMMEs AND ELEVATING EVENTS IN GAUTENG

The Gauteng Tourism Authority, through its Tourism Sector Support Unit, continues to prioritise the development and sustainability of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises within the tourism sector.

SMMEs remain the backbone of the tourism industry. They create jobs, stimulate local economies and drive inclusive growth across the province. For this reason, Gauteng Tourism has intensified its support to help small tourism businesses move from basic survival to becoming efficient, competitive and market-ready enterprises.

The support focuses on three key pillars: market access and visibility, capacity building, and quality assurance. The objective is to ensure that tourism businesses are fully prepared to take advantage of both domestic and international opportunities.

Business Development for Tour Operators

A targeted Business Development programme for tour operators focused on three essential skills required for long-term success:

- Professional Packaging – equipping operators to bundle travel services into attractive, high-quality visitor experiences.
- Smart Costing – strengthening pricing strategies to ensure profitability while remaining competitive.
- Deal-Making – building confidence and negotiation skills to secure sustainable business partnerships.



Upskilling Professional Conference Organisers

To strengthen Gauteng's business events ecosystem, the Tourism Sector Division implemented a Professional Conference Organisers Upskilling Programme. The training modules focused on:

- Market research and opportunity analysis in the conference and events sector
- Strategic digital marketing and brand positioning
- Client relationship management and strategic partnerships
- Innovative, sustainable and technology-enabled conference services

Professional Conference Organisers who completed business development and in-service training were provided with market access to Meetings Africa 2026. A total of 10 SMMEs, including PCOs and tour operators, were granted exhibition space, enabling direct engagement with buyers, partners and global stakeholders.



Supporting quality events and destination competitiveness

Gauteng's events support strategy, including financial support to event organisers, is driven by a clear objective: to ensure that the destination consistently delivers quality events and experiences to both local and international visitors.

By investing in enterprise development and strengthening the events value chain, Gauteng Tourism is not only enhancing destination competitiveness but also ensuring that tourism growth translates into real opportunities for small businesses across the province.

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