



## Readers' Views

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### A thousand ways to invigorate SA tourism

THE new CEO of South African Tourism, Sisa Ntshona, rightly believes that tourism can boost South Africa's economy — but not until the government sincerely believes in it and marketing efforts are not sabotaged by visa regulations introduced by the Department of Home Affairs, "Tourism can reboot SA's economy" (December 4).

Ntshona also states that the government and all South Africans should be educated about the importance of tourism and its impact on the economy.

Twenty years ago, the Tourism Education Trust produced informative books to do just this for pupils and people intending to work in the tourism industry.

An estimated 200 000 youngsters from primary to high school benefited from the project which, because it did

not receive government recognition, was entirely financed by donations from the private sector and businesses allied to tourism.

The "Tourism and Travel" books published by Collegium Press were based on outcomes-based education, so when private funding dried up and the Education Department abandoned OBE, this enormously beneficial project ended after 16 years.

The good news is that if Ntshona is serious about tourism education for all, the publications produced by the Tourism Education Trust could easily be updated and made available.

And while he's about it, perhaps Ntshona could also investigate and improve the total shambles in domestic tourism caused by the failure of local and district municipalities to financially support community tourism organisations tasked with

marketing their areas and providing information to visitors. — *Dick Jones, former administrator of the Tourism Education Trust, Howick*

THE capital cost of creating a new job in the tourism sector is very low. This has been put to good use by countries like Thailand, Spain and Cuba, to their immense benefit.

Sure it is elitist — just like diamonds are — but this applies only to the users of the product. The suppliers are anything but, and are widely distributed throughout the economy.

There have been complaints from the industry that the Department of Home Affairs is discouraging tourism with stringent visa conditions and lack of capacity at ports of entry (OR Tambo in particular). This is nothing new in the world. There is a constant battle about who should and who should not be

allowed into one's country.

In our case, a shortage of funds has been offered as an excuse for the long queues at OR Tambo. Apparently, the Treasury is keeping the department on a short rein.

The solution is simple. The Tourism Business Council collects a "tourism levy" from its members. The sums involved are quite substantial and are given to South African Tourism to use as it deems fit.

What better place to spend the money than on extra staff at OR Tambo, which will have the immediate effect of making arrival in South Africa more comfortable for those very important people who spend many billions in our country.

Best wishes to Ntshona in his quest to grow the business here. — *Anton Thompson, by e-mail*

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