



Tourism that cares:

Protecting people, culture and nature



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD



Responsible Tourism
Cape Town



Responsible tourism is at the heart of Cape Town's visitor economy. It means welcoming the world while protecting our environment, celebrating our cultures, and creating opportunities for communities. By travelling responsibly, visitors help sustain jobs, grow businesses, and safeguard the beauty and heritage that make Cape Town a world-class destination. – Ald. James Vos, Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Growth

What is Responsible Tourism?

Responsible Tourism means making tourism more sustainable by reducing negative impacts and increasing social, economic, and environmental benefits. It creates better places to live and visit, ensuring tourism supports community well-being, protects the environment, and drives inclusive growth – in line with South Africa's NTSS (2017-2026), Cape Town's Tourism Development Framework (2024), and the national Tourism White Paper (2024).

Core principles of Responsible Tourism

Minimise negative social, environmental,
and economic impacts.

Generate lasting benefits for local
communities and residents.

Provide fair access to opportunities and
decent work within the tourism sector.

Involve local people in decision-making
that affects their lives and futures.

Conserve and celebrate natural and cultural heritage.

Deliver authentic and meaningful visitor experiences.

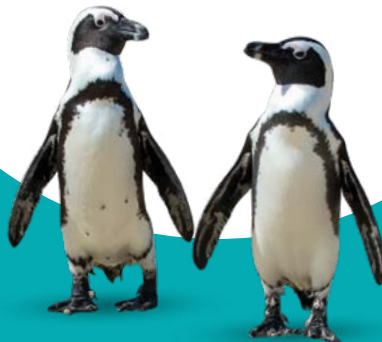
Ensure universal accessibility, including
for persons with disabilities as well as
those with mobility challenges.

Promote respect, cultural sensitivity,
and inclusivity.



Responsible Tourism vs. Sustainable Tourism

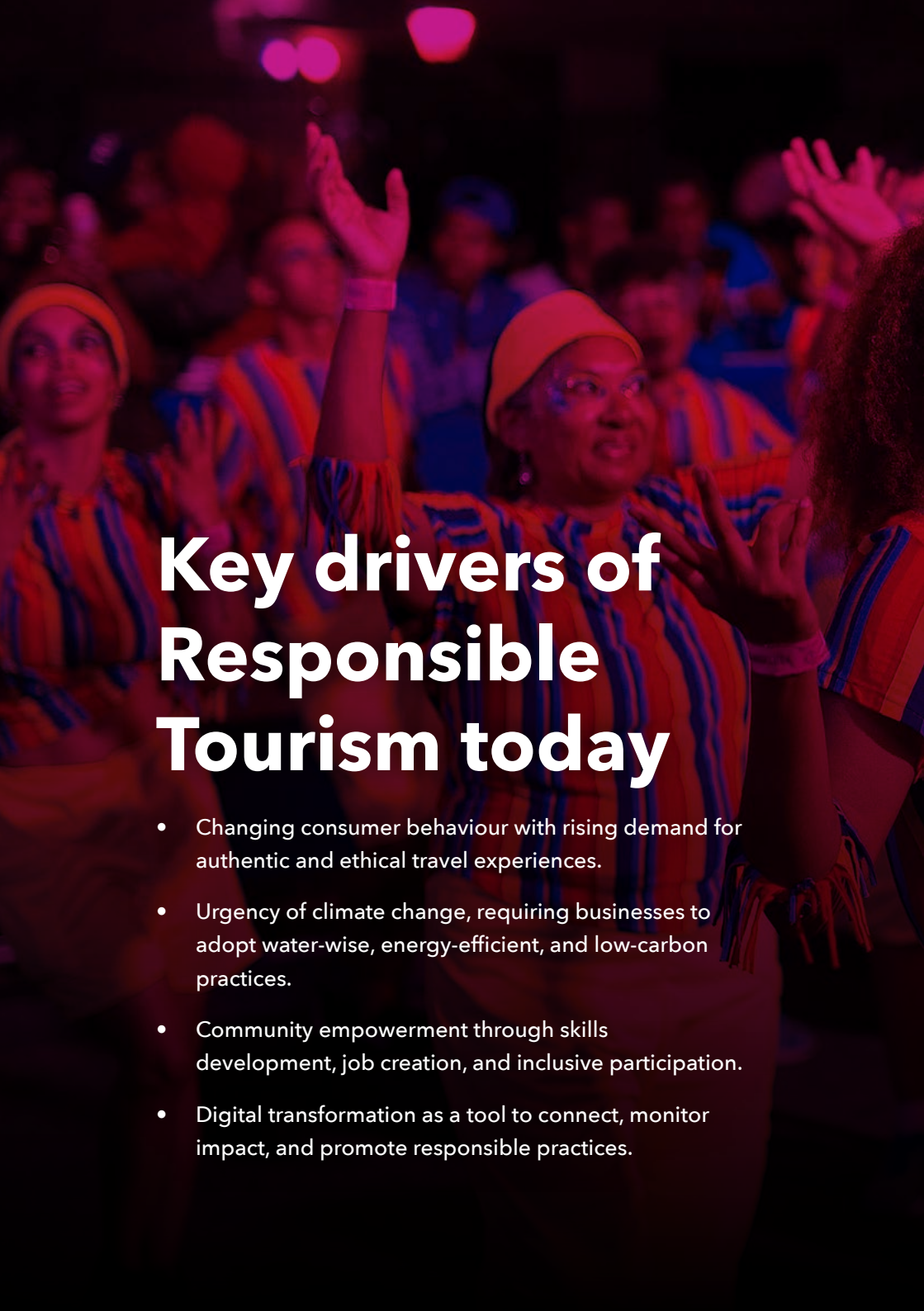
Responsible Tourism and Sustainable Tourism share the same ultimate goal of long-term sustainability. However, Responsible Tourism places stronger emphasis on accountability – ensuring that every actor, from businesses to individual tourists, takes ownership of their impact.



Why Responsible Tourism matters today

- Protect Cape Town's biodiversity and fragile ecosystems.
- Ensure tourism revenues support small businesses, women, youth, and township enterprises.
- Create authentic, inclusive visitor experiences that reflect Cape Town's cultural diversity.
- Reduce carbon emissions, conserve scarce resources, and support climate resilience.
- Position Cape Town as a global leader in ethical and sustainable travel.





Key drivers of Responsible Tourism today

- Changing consumer behaviour with rising demand for authentic and ethical travel experiences.
- Urgency of climate change, requiring businesses to adopt water-wise, energy-efficient, and low-carbon practices.
- Community empowerment through skills development, job creation, and inclusive participation.
- Digital transformation as a tool to connect, monitor impact, and promote responsible practices.



How tourism businesses can act responsibly

Assess: Audit environmental, social, and economic impacts.

Plan: Develop a Responsible Tourism Policy aligned with numerous tourism legislation and strategies.

Implement: Apply measures such as local sourcing, resource efficiency, and fair employment practices.

Monitor: Track progress using measurable indicators.

Communicate: Share impact results with stakeholders, staff, and visitors.

Reward: Celebrate achievements internally and seek external recognition or certification.



Examples of Responsible Tourism in action

- Community-based tourism initiatives offering authentic experiences and creating jobs.
- Eco-conscious accommodation establishments reducing waste, saving water, and using renewable energy sources.
- Cultural tourism programmes supporting local artists, heritage sites, and storytelling initiatives.



Responsible Tourism and the City of Cape Town

Cape Town has consistently positioned itself as a global leader in Responsible Tourism, building on the 2002 Cape Town Declaration, the City's Responsible Tourism Policy of 2009, and successive Tourism Development Frameworks since 2009.

Under the proposed Tourism Development Framework (2025-2029), Responsible Tourism is identified as a cornerstone of Cape Town's tourism development and market positioning. The framework emphasises the following key focus areas:

Policy and practice – ensuring global competitiveness and best practice action plans for implementation.

Advocacy and promotion – positioning Cape Town as a leading Responsible Tourism destination.

Coordination and partnerships – adopting a holistic government and public/private partners approach.

Universal access – positioning Cape Town as an inclusive destination by improving accessibility and informing people accordingly.

Community engagement – strengthening awareness of tourism's benefits among Cape Town's residents and promote equitable participation.



The future of tourism

Responsible Tourism is not optional – it is essential for the resilience and inclusivity of Cape Town's tourism sector. By working together, government, businesses, communities, and visitors can ensure that tourism leaves a positive legacy for current and future generations.

UNWTO's global commitment to Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

In alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UNWTO emphasises that tourism can be a powerful tool for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The organisation has launched the Tourism for SDGs Platform, an online initiative designed to promote greater engagement of the tourism sector with sustainable development. This platform allows users to access a wide range of resources, add their own initiatives, and share content related to tourism and sustainable development.

Additionally, UNWTO's One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme is guided by the One Planet Vision for a Responsible Recovery of Tourism. This vision builds on the principles of Sustainable Tourism and aims to foster a responsible recovery of the tourism sector, ensuring that it contributes positively to the environment, society, and economy.

These global perspectives from the UNWTO highlight the importance of integrating sustainability into tourism practices to ensure that the sector contributes positively to the achievement of the SDGs and the well-being of communities worldwide.





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