



Convene in Cape Town

The gem of the Western Cape shines with eco-conscious corporate events.

BY ELYSE GLICKMAN

WATER
VIEW:
*Cape Town
Waterfront*

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TOURISM

EVEN THOSE WHO HAVE NOT VISITED South Africa know Cape Town as a chic, lifestyle-driven destination that sells itself. It is the gateway to the lush Winelands anchored by Stellenbosch and Franschhoek, home to breathtaking Table Mountain, the starting point for a day at the thought-provoking Robben Island and, of course, a departure point for luxury safari camps and outdoor adventure.

Since the election of Nelson Mandela as president in 1992, Cape Town evolved into a diverse, cosmopolitan city of 4.52 million residents. Its arts and culture landscape — as colorful and dynamic as the views from Table Mountain — features a healthy assortment of jazz clubs, art galleries and architecture as well as globally renowned chef-driven restaurants, distilleries and festivals. Beyond its long-standing “it” factor as a leisure destination, it also serves as South Africa’s legislative capital and an expanding business hub, offering endless possibilities for one-of-a-kind events.

In addition to its two main convention centers (Cape Town International Convention Centre and Century City Conference Centre), more than 130 venues host events and meetings, each with its own distinctive personality. They run the gamut from high-end hotels to museums and historic castles (The Castle of Good Hope), an internationally prominent

sports stadium to fashionable beach clubs and centrally located spaces like The Lookout Waterfront.

Statistics reflect this optimism and energy. According to WESGRO (which encompasses the Cape Town & Western Cape Convention Bureau), 1.6 million visitors came to the Western Cape in 2016, which climbed to 1.7 million in 2017 and increased by 0.2 percent in 2018. Those visiting the Western Cape for business activities comprised 10.4 percent of visitors in 2017 and 11 percent in 2018. More than 150 hotels operate in Cape Town and its environs, offering an estimated 20,000 guestrooms.

On arrival at Cape Town International Airport (about 12 miles from city center), visitors find access to ground transport simple and convenient, with taxis, MyCiti bus service and a rail network doing their part to cut carbon emissions and leave fewer cars on the road. Travelers also rest easy about safety and value for the dollar given the favorable South African rand exchange rate and substantial local and national government investments to ensure every visitor feels secure and



FRESH PERSPECTIVE:
*People on Table Mountain
overlooking Cape Town*

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UNIQUE VENUES

The visually arresting Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art impresses with its permanent collection of contemporary African artists and visiting exhibits. However, its otherworldly interior, powerful acoustics in the BMW Atrium and cathedral-like architecture make it unbeatable as a statement-making venue for business events ranging from presentations to performances and cocktail parties. Its restaurant on Level Six flows into a dramatic rooftop terrace where guests can take in an astounding sunset and daytime views.

zeitzmocaa.museum

At Babylonstoren, near Franschhoek, choose from the deluxe menu of traditional and nontraditional winery activities to provide the perfect self-contained Western Cape Winelands experience for a pre- or post-conference retreat. Sustainability is front and center, from wine tastings and tours of its exquisitely organized gardens to photography classes, bird watching, fishing, bike tours, rowing and canoeing on its reservoirs. Consider a tea ceremony in its Healing Garden; the spa with its boutique of homespun goods; and two excellent restaurants, Babel and The Greenhouse, noted for its gravity-defying cheese, charcuterie and condiment platters tailored for everybody's wine preferences.

babylonstoren.com

welcome.

Thirumerni Naidoo, business development manager, Cape Town & Western Cape Convention Bureau, stressed making those pieces come together in an environmentally sound way has been a top priority for the past decade. Even before the 2018 Western Cape water crisis and rising public concern over protecting South Africa's natural resources, sustainability and best environmental practices have been a part of every conversation, especially when working with overseas companies and planners.

"Our goal is to not only connect those attending conventions from abroad and South Africa," said Naidoo. "Our concept of sustainability ties into promoting integrated management of natural resources and ecosystems. [We want to accomplish] meeting the needs of the present without compromising meeting the needs of future generations."

Case in point is the 121,000-square-foot Cape Town International Convention Centre, opened June 2003 and expanded in 2010. Management places its sustainability objectives as one of its biggest selling points for planners and companies in and outside of South Africa. Since 2009 it has followed the directives of the Nurture Our World Committee, constituted of regional executives in a variety of industries, to not only establish best environmental practices but also assist prospective clients in the best ways to green their events.

For starters, the facility offers a variety of conference packages as a base from which to build a bespoke meeting or conference. This, in turn, ensures a productive and unforgettable experience for attendees that will also be green, reducing their environmental impact and carbon footprint. To expedite the process, a downloadable checklist on the website helps planners get the most desirable results.

Opened in February 2016, the Century City Conference

Centre offers prospective clients a sustainability proposition intended to be future-proof, from the construction materials used to build the complex, hotel and adjoining businesses and residences to an over-arching environmental strategy that encompasses transport, health, energy, water and waste management for up to 1,900 event-goers at its more than 20 venues. As the center and surrounding community continue to grow, with the Century City Hotel Bridgewater the latest hotel to open, contractors are encouraged to make use of locally sourced materials to ensure maximum local economic benefit as well as reducing environmental impact.

"Greenhouse gas emissions, water conservation and the welfare of our visitors have been a consideration in the design of the entire project from the groundbreaking to the present day," said Glyn Taylor, co-CEO, Century City Conference Centre. "We are committed to working even harder to minimize our impact on the environment. This not only means everyday measures like using recycled water in our restrooms but also providing guests water-saving awareness tips in the hotel's reception area. Things like this not only help replenish the local water table, but with additional bio filters added to our adjoining canal, the directives also improve biodiversity and cleaner air."

Organizations like GreenCape also promote a more economically sound business landscape by providing guidance to South African companies of varying industries and sizes, connecting them with nearby communities and philanthropic entities. Those coming in from abroad, meanwhile, can use this site as an information source to gain greater insight into the region's ongoing efforts to protect the environment and natural resources.

In a city offering one-stop shopping for convention experiences, planners find it easy to blend distinctive local flavor with conscientious and environmentally innovative business practices.