

# DESPITE FEARS TRAVELERS FLOCK TO SOUTH AFRICAN TOWNSHIPS



One would think that most tourists visit South Africa for its numerous game reserves and golden beaches- but game reserves and beach resorts have little to do with real South African culture. There is a new attraction, the township, a sector of tourism, which has now turned into multi-million dollar business. Even in Cape Town, 25% of last year's visitors made trips away from the glorious beaches to visit the dusty old wind-swept streets, which lie inland.

Visitors have been keen to taste the real inland South Africa and get the chance to imagine what it was like during the times of apartheid. The Soweto, the heart of the anti-apartheid struggle, is now Johannesburg's top attraction. There are tours passing by Nelson Mandela's first home as well as the places of residence of other giant figures in South African history, Desmond Tutu and Willie Mandela. The South African government estimated that 320.000 people went to townships in 2006 alone. It was also stressed that this area of local tourism should be thoroughly and carefully marketed ahead of the 2010 World Cup, to be staged in South Africa.

The rise in township tourism has occurred despite fears of such tours being unsafe. In November 2006, a group of German tourists were mugged whilst on a township tour and a Dutch group come under attack just a few months later outside a restaurant. Armed robberies are similarly frequent amongst locals. Despite such unpleasant events, tour operators and the South African government have made it clear that if visitors make themselves inconspicuous then attack is very unlikely. They are eager to maintain progress in the area of township tourism.

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