

# GAUTENG - LEADING BUSINESS TOURISM DESTINATION?



Gauteng means Place of Gold and alludes to the discovery of gold in Johannesburg in 1886. It is the smallest province in South Africa and occupies only 1.4% of its territory. The province is divided into six regions - Tshwane (Pretoria), Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni (the East Rand), the West Rand (Mogale City and Magaliesberg), Metsweding (Cullinan) and Sedibeng (Vaal). Gauteng is highly urbanised and has a population of 8,837,178 (2001 South African National Census).

Gauteng is considered an economic hub of South Africa. Even though it is the smallest province, it creates 38% of the country's gross domestic product as well as 60% of its fiscal revenue. It contributes heavily in the financial, manufacturing, transport, technology and telecommunications sectors but its wealth comes mostly from mining.

The number of tourists visiting this destination is steadily growing. In 2006 more than half of the seven million foreign tourists entering South Africa visited Gauteng. Among the major attractions are the Sterkfontein Caves, where a number of early hominid remains have been found. Nearby is Maropeng, a state-of-the-art incentive facility that can accommodate up to 500 delegates. There are 3 restaurants, a luxury boutique hotel, an outdoor events amphitheatre seating 5000 people, and other attractions.

The Gauteng Tourism Authority wants to strengthen the province's position as the country's leading business tourism destination. Cawe Mahlati, CEO of the authority, claims that Gauteng is a highly professional and advanced sector in terms of hosting meetings, incentives trips, conferences and exhibitions. Ms Cawe Mahlati says that there are more than 430 conference facilities and over 40 international airlines that link the province to major centers worldwide. She said that one of her organisation's strategic priorities was to increase local and international business tourism to Gauteng Province, which hosts an average of 13,000 events annually.

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