

The fifth Lilizela Tourism Awards honours the best in local tourism business

The fifth annual Lilizela Tourism Awards lit up the Sandton Convention Centre on 29 October, and featured a cross-section of South African tourism accommodation establishments, visitor experiences, tour operators, tour guides, emerging entrepreneurs and small businesses, which were toasted alongside several industry luminaries during an impressive awards ceremony that saw performances by the likes of Yvonne Chaka and Mafikizolo.

Media personalities Masechaba Ndlovu and Thapelo Mokoena were programme directors for the evening. The national Lilizela Tourism Awards were the culmination of the nine provincial ceremonies held across the country, which rewarded establishments in each of those areas.



Empowering business communities

Tourism minister, Tokozile Xasa paid special tribute to South Africa's small tourism businesses. Some of the SMMEs that were finalists or scooped awards on the night had been beneficiaries of the National Department of Tourism's market access and enterprise development programmes.

"You add diversity and new flavours to our tourism offering and you contribute to social cohesion and empower communities. You are entrepreneurs who are contributing to our economy, by creating jobs that feed families and nourish communities. You are the living embodiment of the inclusive, transformed economic growth that our country aspires to," said Xasa.

In addition to the awards handed out in a number of categories, Xasa also announced an unprecedented multiple recipients of this year's Minister's Award to mark the five-year anniversary of the Lilizela Tourism Awards – the award recognises proudly South African organisations or individuals who, through sheer dedication and passion, have excelled in positioning the country as a tourism destination of choice, contributing to the vibrancy and growth of the sector.

This year's recipients of the Minister's Award are:

Pioneers of township tourism

- Sheila Sekhitla owner of The View Guest House.

- Lily Mokoena owner of the Gaabo Motho Cultural Village.
- Lolo Monica Mabitsela owner of Mama Lolo's Breakfast.
- Siza Mzimela an aviation expert with over twenty years of industry experience.
- Francina Zana owner of Exclusive Hospitality Concepts
- Vijayluxmi (VIJI) Pillay a professional tourist guide and tour operator
- The late Sindiswa Nhlumayo was honoured posthumously for her immense contribution to the tourism industry.



Xasa also unveiled a new public participation category for the Lilizela Tourism Award 2018, the We Do Tourism Award, where, in the spirit of asking South Africans to rally around tourism as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth, South Africans from all walks of life. Xasa also inducted Esther Mahlangu, South Africa's world-renowned Ndebele artist and industrial design trailblazer, into the Lilizela Hall of Fame for being an exemplary global ambassador for South Africa's indigenous arts and cultural heritage.

Tourism sector forges ahead

South African Tourism's chief executive officer, Sisa Ntshona, noted that it had not been an easy year for tourism, with natural disasters, a sluggish economy and other factors making the operating environment a difficult one to navigate. "Despite these setbacks, our tourism industry has forged ahead with remarkable resilience and has insisted that it will be business as usual. You are true examples of what it means to 'do tourism' – our movement that encourages South Africans to place tourism and the broader tourism economy at the heart of all they do. You are helping us to stand tall and proud as a tourism destination," said Ntshona

With one of South Africa's largest tourist entry port, OR International Airport named after the late OR Tambo, a leader, unifier and advocate for social justice who would have turned 100 on Friday, Xasa acknowledged his contribution to South

Africa and appealed to the tourism sector to band together.

Xasa called on larger players to mentor and motivate start-ups, and for more young people to be brought into the sector while empowering women leaders. “We are all in this together. If South Africa can present a unified yet diverse and vibrant tourism offering to the world, then the sky is the limit for our industry.”

Visit Lilizela Tourism Awards for [the full list](#) of winners.

The awards are adjudicated through public votes and by a panel of industry judges and are audited by Grant Thornton.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>