

Airbnb and partners to grow inclusive tourism in the Waterberg

As part of a three-year commitment to empower a new generation of entrepreneurs through inclusive economic recovery in South Africa, Airbnb is expanding its Entrepreneurship Academy to The Waterberg



Source: Supplied

In support of the President's District Development Model – a pilot project designed to bring together government and private partners to tackle poverty, inequality and unemployment at the District Municipality level, and to facilitate its work in the region, Airbnb has signed local partnerships with the Waterberg District Municipality, The Biosphere Reserve and the Lapalala Wilderness School.

Local partnerships have also been signed with the Waterberg District Municipality, The Biosphere Reserve, and the Lapalala Wilderness School. The programme will promote the region to help build the local tourism economy, develop skills for local families to open their homes and benefit from tourism growth and the biodiversity economy, and help to grow tourism in a sustainable way and while protecting the environment.

The **Airbnb Entrepreneurship Academy** is a skills development program for women and youth in township and rural communities who are interested in tourism. The Academy gives attendees the skills, practical tools and support they need to use technology to access and succeed on the Airbnb platform as tourism entrepreneurs. The Academy will be primarily focused on women and youth in rural and township areas within the district.

The expansion of the academy comes as a new survey of 1,800 South African hosts and guests on Airbnb highlights - for the first time - how the cost of living crisis is driving people to become Hosts on Airbnb. Half of hosts across South Africa say they host to afford the rising cost of living, and over a third say the additional income helps them make ends meet. Last year, Hosts in South Africa collectively earned over R2bn.

By working together with government and partners, Airbnb will help to build a foundation in The Waterberg - a relatively under-touristed part of South Africa - that can drive inclusive economic recovery, and shine a spotlight on the region as a destination for local travellers seeking unique stays and experiences.

The Waterberg region is an area designated a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO and is known for its nature and conservation as well as having sites which evidence humanity dating back three million years. Tourism has been earmarked as a key driver of economic growth for the region.

Empowering a new generation of tourism entrepreneurs

The first Airbnb Entrepreneurship Academy Bootcamp was held in Modimolle in the Waterberg Region from 31 May to 1 June, attended by 25 tourism entrepreneurs across the district.

Velma Corcoran, regional lead for Middle East Africa at Airbnb, says: "As the cost of living crisis bites, it is critically important that we continue to lower the barriers to becoming a tourism entrepreneur to ensure that everyone can benefit from tourism. We're truly excited to be working collaboratively with such strong partners at a local level, looking to embrace the changes in travel. We believe that The Waterberg is a pilot region for this way of working, which we will aim to scale to and activate in other areas, in order to create a more diverse and inclusive tourism economy."

Preciousstone Raputsoa, district municipal manager for the Waterberg, says: "The District Municipality is excited to see our collaboration with Airbnb yield concrete results, to activate and support inclusive tourism in the Waterberg in support of the District Development Model. This delivery also indirectly responds successfully to the devastation to the tourism industry caused by Covid 19, and we look forward to growing and scaling this collaboration."

Leticia Mahlatji, Waterberg Biosphere Reserve coordinator, said, "One of the key goals of the reserve is to find opportunities to support people living within the reserve with livelihoods, skills and job opportunities in order to grow the local economy - while ensuring that the negative impacts on the environment are kept to a minimum and ecosystems remain intact. It is a pleasure to work with Airbnb on this strategic project which we believe supports our mission."

To learn more about the Africa Entrepreneurship Academy or to become a partner organisation, visit the [program website](#).

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