

# A pedal-powered partnership

When four stars meets backpackers, entrepreneurship comes to the fore

**C**OLLABORATION is an art in any relationship, particularly in business. So when two established tourism entities in Soweto — Lebo's Soweto Backpackers and the Soweto Hotel on Freedom Square — identified the potential to expand their service offering while entrenching Soweto's positioning as a uniquely South African tourism destination, a partnership was born.

The partnership, with the support of the Gauteng Tourism Authority, has resulted in the extension of Lebo's Soweto Bicycle Tours, offered by Lebo's Soweto Backpackers, from Orlando West and surrounding areas in Kliptown, home of The Soweto Hotel on Freedom Square. The tours are an innovative way of exploring Soweto with experienced local guides who lead tourists on a physical and emotional journey through one of SA's most famous townships in an engaging, fun way.

From last month the bicycle tours started from the hotel, Soweto's first to be granted four stars.

"We are thrilled to be able to offer



BRANCHING OUT: Thumbs up to the new partnership from Lebo Malepa.

our guests experiences such as the bicycle tours that extend beyond the eat and sleep arena that is generally synonymous with hotels," says the hotel's GM, Lindiwe Sangweni-Siddo.

The timing of the launch coincided with the 91st birthday of one of Soweto's most celebrated former residents, former president Nelson Mandela, on July 18. "Madiba is indelibly linked to Soweto, and Kliptown in particular, as this is the birthplace of the 1955 Freedom Charter which is honoured by the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication and the Kliptown Museum, both of

which are adjacent to the hotel," says Sangweni-Siddo. "In the spirit of the camaraderie and the ideals of that era, we are continually committed to developing and supporting local business and communities."

Since it started in 2005, Lebo's Soweto Bicycle Tours has grown from strength to strength with help from the community and increasing international awareness.

Says Lebo Malepa of Lebo's Soweto Backpackers: "This growing demand has been key in extending these living history tours to other parts of Soweto,



PEOPLE POWER: Hotel general manager Lindiwe Sangweni-Siddo sets out on a tour of Freedom Square. Pictures: MUSA RAPULENG

We have also had long-standing associations with youth NGOs in the area and rely on the support of the community. Being able to explore and develop new opportunities within Soweto is core to our business model and ensures that we remain authentic and truly South African." All guides are locally sourced and Lebo's Soweto Backpackers and the bicycle tours are certified by Fair Trade in Tourism SA.

Fisokuhle Mbatha, tourism development manager at Gauteng Tourism Authority, says: "As we gear up for the Soccer World Cup, the province's

tourism offerings will play a significant role in maximising the length of visit and how much tourists spend. Ensuring that top quality tourism attractions are available and meet all our requirements is a key driver in our Gauteng Tourism Development Strategy."

To book a bicycle tour contact The Soweto Hotel on Freedom Square on 011 527 7300 or reservations@sowetohotel.co.za, visit [www.sowetohotel.co.za](http://www.sowetohotel.co.za) or contact Lebo's Soweto Bicycle Tours 011 936 3444 or [lebo@sowetobackpackers.com](mailto:lebo@sowetobackpackers.com) or visit [www.sowetobackpackers.com](http://www.sowetobackpackers.com).