

Tourism's fair game

Finalist — Drivers of Change: Civil Society Award: **Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa**

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The tourism industry accounts for about 10% of global GDP and, with air travel becoming more affordable, it is growing every year.

Yet it remains a sector in which exploitation is rife. "There are very poor working conditions in the sector globally, very poor wages, long hours, overtime," says Jennifer Seif, executive director of Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA).

Although child labour is not a big problem in South Africa, it is a major concern in other destinations, she says.

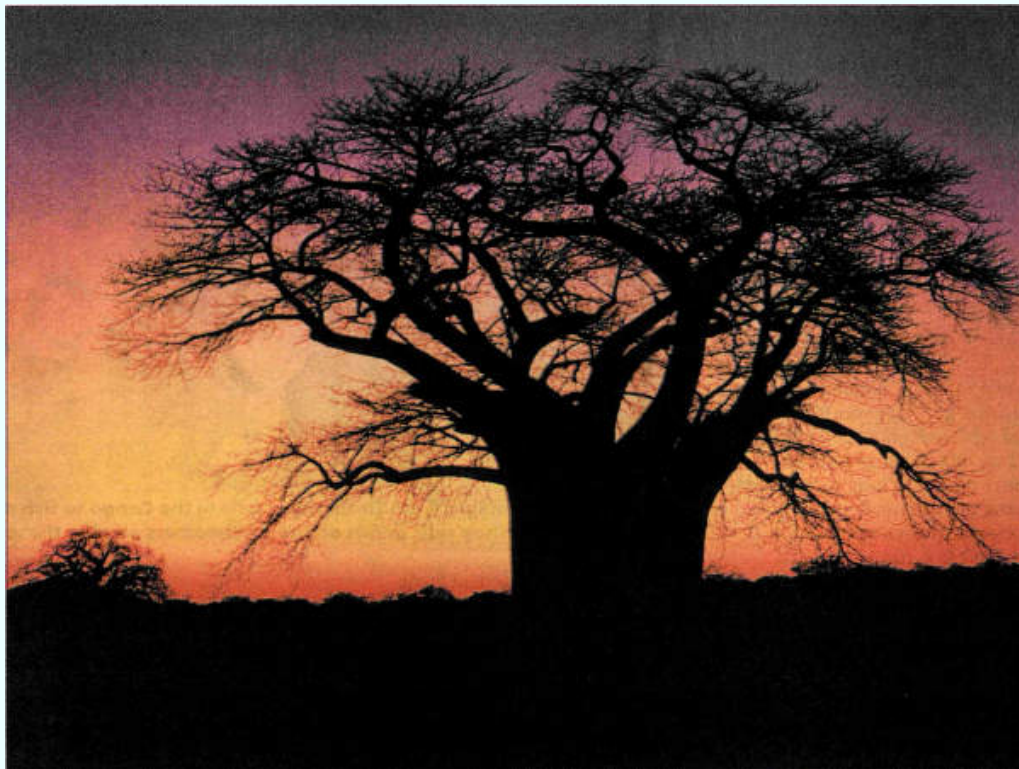
Through its work, FTTSA is bringing the benefits of the global growth in demand for fair trade products to the tourism industry in Southern Africa. This is charting a new growth path in the fair trade market.

Although the fair trade concept dates back to the 1960s, it revolves mainly around food products and, more recently, goods such as clothing and carpets.

"People were still focusing on physical goods when they considered purchasing ethical products. And then attention started to shift to the services sector and to tourism," says Seif.

FTTSA developed a set of social, economic and environmental standards against which it assesses and certifies tourism businesses. Businesses that want to be certified must not only comply with all labour and environmental laws, they must also encourage transformation and gender equity, ensure the rights of disabled and HIV-positive people and conduct themselves ethically.

To encourage sustainable tourism practices, FTTSA encourages businesses to invest in local communities.



Some safari lodges in the Kruger Park have received the Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa certification

particularly for procurement.

"Fair trade is focused on people. This is important because tourism is a people-based sector; it's a service sector," says Seif.

Working with a small budget and eight permanent staff members, the organisation has certified more than 50 businesses since 2003, ranging from safari lodges in the Kruger Park to backpackers in Soweto.

More recently the organisation has been looking at partnering neighbouring countries to develop the South African Development Community (SADC) as a responsible tourism destination.

It has been advising the international Fair Trade organisation on

developing a worldwide tourism certification.

"South Africa is leading the world in terms of how one measures fair trade tourism services across the whole supply chain. I think that could have a huge impact globally," she says. "We're demonstrating to the tourism industry that there is a market demand for this kind of responsible behaviour and that you can get commercial success by operating ethically. That's the kind of change we're trying to drive."

The Drivers of Change judges praised FTTSA's certification programme, commenting that it was an innovative facility and "an excellent promoter of sustainable tourism".

