

# going local responsibly

BY MICHELE BEATHAM

Do the terms fair trade, eco and sustainable tourism evoke images of primitive facilities far from civilisation, where cold-running water is considered a luxury and the closest thing to romance is sharing your sleeping bag with the local arachnid and insect populations? Think again.

Whatever your idea of the perfect holiday – whether the sights and sounds of nature or the buzz of urban culture – it is possible to holiday in style and meet the criteria of responsible tourism.

While the Fair Trade movement dates back to Europe in the 1960s, formalisation in South Africa is far more recent, with Fair Trade in Tourism certification launched in 2002. A year later the first four certified establishments were announced and as at September this year, the number had grown to 59.

## SO WHAT EXACTLY IS FAIR TRADE IN TOURISM?

Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA), a non-profit organisation that promotes sustainable tourism development, endorses establishments that meet stringent criteria under six basic principles: fair share, respect, democracy, reliability, transparency and sustainability.

These include safe working conditions and practices, gender equality, protection of young workers, understanding and tolerance of socio-cultural norms, conservation of

biodiversity and natural resources, recycling consumption of water and energy, as well as reducing, reusing and recycling waste. Other criteria could include capacity building, partnerships, and support of historically disadvantaged entrepreneurs.

For travellers, FTTSA offers advice and tips for responsible travel, provides links to operators and activities and of course showcases certified accommodation.

And when it comes to responsible travel, one of the easiest ways is to go local; reducing travelling distance reduces emissions, we experience the breathtaking beauty of our own country and our hard earned money directly benefits fellow citizens.

Certified establishments in any of six provinces include backpackers' lodges such as Lebo's in Soweto, Coffee Shack in the Eastern Cape or The Backpack in Cape Town.

If game viewing appeals, the Kruger Park offers a number of certified lodges, as does Amakhala in the Eastern Cape or Madikwe in North West Province.

Plan an interactive tour with Andulela, or one with no limits through AWOL. Opt for ocean adventures from Plettenberg Bay, or wander the mazes at Soekershof.

All of us seek peace whilst on holiday, but by travelling responsibly, we get the added benefit of peace of mind.

Visit [www.fairtoursimsa.org](http://www.fairtoursimsa.org) for a full list of establishments and operators.