

# Nama lodge shines

*Community !Xaus Lodge earns certification from Fair Trade in Tourism SA*

**Tumo Mokone**

TOURISM Indaba 2011 in Durban kicked off with the announcement that !Xaus Lodge was the newest member of the Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA) family and the second Northern Cape business to become FTTSA-certified.

!Xaus Lodge, meaning "heart" in Nama, is a community-owned lodge in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, 60km from the Mata Mata border post with Namibia. It is also wedged between Namibia and Botswana.

The luxury lodge offers guests a full-service experience including all meals, wilderness walks with trackers, game drives and opportunities to meet local San artists while they create their traditional crafts. The lodge is located on a 50 000 hectare concession within the park that was awarded to the Mier and Khomani San communities through a historic land claim settlement.

The lodge is now operated under a management agreement with a private partner, Transfrontier Parks Destinations.

The FTTSA certification process examines social, economic and environmental performance, seeking a balance of all three principles of sustainable development.

FTTSA certification is offered on a voluntary basis to providers of tourist accommodation, activities, attractions and volunteer programmes in South Africa.

This cost-effective quality management system addresses 14 operational areas of a tourism business.

While !Xaus Lodge is an attractive destination for international and local tourists alike, it is also



**HEART OF THE BUSH:** The magnificent !Xaus Lodge in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

Picture: SUPPLIED

an asset that the beneficiary communities can be proud of.

Community members are involved in various capacities throughout the business' operations. This includes direct employment and as suppliers of beautiful craft whose business has grown through direct access to and interaction with guests.

Of course, being a wholly community-owned lodge, an additional direct financial benefit

accrues through levies that are paid out to both the Khomani San and Mier communities.

A good example of how this pride-in-action plays out in the workplace is the Kalahari cuisine menu developed for the lodge by Mier community chef Ellen Bok and her team.

Chef Ellen takes pride in sharing home-cooked Mier meals and the menu is personally introduced to guests.

Last year Bok, who is also part of the management team, represented !Xaus Lodge and the community when she accepted the 2010 Imvelo Award for Best Practice Economic Impact at Fedhasa's annual awards ceremony in Johannesburg.

In the words of Eleanor Muller, marketing representative for !Xaus Lodge: "All !Xaus Lodge stakeholders are delighted with the FTTSA certification, because

it provides expert confirmation that how !Xaus Lodge operates meets international best practice in Fair Trade standards.

"This is particularly important because !Xaus Lodge is positioning community-based tourism as a competitive product within the commercial tourism industry. The opportunity to be associated with other like-managed operations is of great benefit to !Xaus Lodge."