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Calabash Tours is a dynamic company that offers ground-breaking tours covering both the historical heart of the city, the vibrant black townships and the Xhosa culture. The "Real City Tour" gives an overview of the social history of the city. Visitors discover the real essence of South Africa by taking an unforgettable 'roller coaster' ride tour that reveals the inescapable contrast between social deprivation, but at the same time highlights the inspirational stories and successes of the present.

This informative city tour includes insight into the lives of the early Settlers, and explores the harsh legacies of 'Apartheid' that have shaped our history. At some levels the country still remains surprisingly divided and this journey into the past, present and future aims to narrow that divide and clarify misconceptions.

The company was established with the aim of offering tourists an alternative to the glossy, pre-packaged "bus window" view of South Africa. Most coach tours will bring visitors from monument to monument, never touching on the unwritten history of Port Elizabeth-hotbed of political and social resistance to Apartheid.

Calabash Tours is a commercial venture with a strong social agenda that is founded on developing the communities that guests visit. Working closely with the Calabash Trust, Calabash ensures that local, and often-disadvantaged communities benefit from the visits made by clients through services provided either by community projects or black owned township businesses.

Calabash Trust has many programmes in nearby townships benefiting children and youths including an education trust, food provision, cultural exchange and furniture provision. Calabash has a policy of making township tours accessible to Port Elizabeth residents. In turn, learners from township schools are taken to various mainstream tourist attractions in the area.

The Calabash staff complement is drawn from local communities. Calabash Tours has a number of tour guides from the township community and most guides were previously unemployed. Procurement is another area that Calabash has identified for its potential to contribute to the local economy. Calabash tries to purchase all goods from businesses within a 50km radius and supports informal traders.

"By becoming part of FTTSA we can link with other tourism organizations and share experiences and best practices."

Paul Miedema, Owner/ Manager of Calabash Tours



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