

Social impact experiences show that tourism can be powerful

According to the 2019 Travel Trends Report by the UK travel trade association ABTA, 45% of British travellers feel the social and environmental sustainability credentials of their tour operators, accommodation, and other travel suppliers are important. This is a doubling of the 2014 figure (24%).



Image via [Airbnb](#) - Guga S'thebe, a cultural centre run by the City of Cape Town in Langa township.

In addition, more tourists opt for holiday experiences that directly contribute to and improve the wellbeing and socio-economic position of local communities through volunteering. The world's largest student and youth travel company, STA Travel, for instance, reported an 11% year-on-year growth of its voluntourism products.

These days, local and international travellers want more from their summer holidays and mid-winter escapes than a room with a view, good food and a few fun-filled attractions. A growing number of tourists prefers to use their annual leave to do all of this whilst connecting with local communities, giving back and making a difference. It is against this backdrop that Airbnb developed the Airbnb Social Impact Experiences, which allow for organisations to promote good causes and to generate income for non-profits.



Airbnb Experiences a new stream of revenue in Johannesburg

4 Jul 2018



South Africa illustrates the success of these types of activities well. "The Airbnb report called *Airbnb in South Africa: The Positive Impact of Healthy Tourism* shows that almost one-third of all bookings of Airbnb Experiences in South Africa are Social Impact Experiences," says Velma Corcoran, the company's country manager for sub-Saharan Africa.

She explains that Airbnb's Social Impact Experiences include anything from learning to surf at the Roxy Davis Foundation, which teaches people with disabilities from vulnerable communities how to surf, to taking part in a traditional beading workshop in Langa, one of Cape Town's oldest townships.

"Not only do you get to really interact and learn about these incredible organisations when you do these Experiences, but the best thing about booking these types of activities is also that the money you pay stays in and directly benefits the community."

Growing small-town tourism

"According to a new analysis of internal data, host and guest activity has generated just over R10bn in economic impact in South Africa last year. Whilst major tourist hubs such as Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban top the list in terms of accommodation and Experiences bookings, smaller towns are growing in popularity," says Corcoran. "This is because more and more visitors, both locals and internationals, are after off-the-beaten-track destinations."

This has resulted in the success of Social Impact Experiences in these small towns and less obvious tourism regions, from a tractor-drawn tour of the countryside in Bergville, KwaZulu-Natal to guided bicycle tours of Khula village in Saint Lucia, also in KwaZulu-Natal.

"All the money these Experiences generate goes straight to organisations like Africa!Ignite that are dedicated to empowering communities who need assistance the most and building our country from the grassroots level up," says Corcoran. "The concept of Social Impact Experiences shows that tourism can be a powerful vehicle for rural development."

Airbnb has chosen not to deduct any service or booking fees for Social Impact Experiences; listing them on the Airbnb platform is completely free of charge for not-for-profit organisations.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>