



04 June 2021

AIRBNB'S VISION FOR INCLUSIVE TOURISM RECOVERY

Nombulelo is a grandmother and pillar of her community who lives in Langa and shares her home on Airbnb. Her success has secured her status as an Airbnb “Superhost” - recognising those who provide the very best hospitality to their guests. When the pandemic struck and she was no longer able to host, she struggled to pay bills with only her pension. To make ends meet and support her community she joined [Airbnb's community initiative to sew face masks](#), to earn a little money and help her community protect itself. Like many other Airbnb hosts, Nombulelo is looking forward to the day when visitors return, and she can get back to what she does best: welcoming them to Langa.

I've had the privilege of listening to Hosts and tourism entrepreneurs across the country, from vibrant townships and rural provinces to world class destinations like Cape Town, and have been inspired by their resilience, entrepreneurship and passion for their communities in the face of profound challenges.

While the full return of international travel is still uncertain, Airbnb supports and welcomes the Department of Tourism's move to reset tourism with a focus on sustainability and inclusivity, and believes now is the time to stand up and take action to support hardworking South Africans just like Nombulelo. We will only see tourism recover sustainably and for the benefit of all if we all work together: government, private companies and communities.

Today, we are unveiling our vision for how Airbnb and our community can play its part in building a better and more inclusive tourism industry in South Africa.

Firstly, we need to drive a genuinely inclusive tourism recovery by breaking down the barriers to becoming a tourism entrepreneur. Airbnb was founded on the simple principle of enabling anyone to share their home or host an Experience, and more than four million people worldwide are doing just that.

Airbnb data shows in South Africa around four in ten Hosts use earnings from hosting to help afford their home*, and are proud that Airbnb provides a platform that gives all South Africans



the opportunity to participate in tourism, make some extra income, and support their communities.

As part of our [commitment to inclusive tourism in 2017](#), we introduced the [Airbnb Academy](#), working with partner organisations, including Africa Ignite and Tourism KwaZulu Natal, to encourage local people in townships and rural communities to become tourism entrepreneurs.

To date, more than 200 emerging entrepreneurs from township and rural communities across the country have completed the programme mostly women and young people, who have gone on to earn more than R3 million by Hosting on Airbnb. We want to build on this work, and help address systemic barriers these communities face as a result of the legacy of Apartheid.

Secondly, as tourism recovers we need to ensure that it grows beyond the traditional hotspots. A great place to start is here at home, enabling South Africans to reconnect with everything we have to offer.

Airbnb is seeing major shifts in the way we travel, with people embracing local, affordable travel to connect with family.** We want to support this growing demand for domestic travel, and Airbnb has already partnered with tourism organisations including [Wesgro](#), Western Cape Government, [Tourism Kwa-Zulu Natal](#) and South African Tourism to promote new ways for South Africans to explore our country, including remote working holidays. So far domestic travel has grown to 70% of bookings on Airbnb in South Africa in March 2021, up from 40% in March 2020*** - new revenue streams which can provide a lifeline to local Hosts and communities.

At Airbnb we know that encouraging tourism in local communities not only benefits Hosts, but also encourages guest spending in local shops and restaurants. According to an Airbnb survey of guests in 2020, over half spent more in their destination as a result of saving money on Airbnb****. That's why Airbnb worked with Hosts and partnered with Snapscan to launch [Support Jozi. Shop Local](#), investing half a million Rand to encourage visitors and locals alike to spread the benefits of tourism and put money back into small businesses.

Thirdly, the tourism recovery needs to be underpinned by a smarter approach to regulation - taking this opportunity to bring in clear and sensible rules that enable entrepreneurship and support a diverse tourism economy.

Airbnb has long backed the need for clear and sensible rules for the short term rental industry in South Africa, and believe establishing **a national registration system for short-term rentals** can help build sustainable economic growth.



We know from the hundreds of agreements Airbnb has signed with authorities around the world and the wide ranging system of rules that have been introduced, that good rules not only benefit Hosts who list their properties on Airbnb, but also their communities.

First we're calling for a clear, legal and industry-wide definition of short term rentals, which legitimises hosting and removes unnecessary red tape, to encourage and enable entrepreneurship from everyday South Africans.

With a clear definition of short term rentals, and the role they play in South Africa's tourism industry in place, Airbnb is committed to supporting a simple, smart online national registration system - enabling Hosts to share their registration number on our platform for full transparency to all stakeholders. This would give governments data to enforce smart regulation, offer transparency to communities, while empowering tourism entrepreneurs to grow their businesses.

Achieving this kind of enabling framework will need strong partnership with government. Airbnb is committed to working with governments to help maximise the benefits of tourism for all. South Africa is no exception.

Airbnb launched the [City Portal](#) in South Africa in September to give local government access to valuable data so they can see the latest travel trends, and have data sharing partnerships in place with South African Tourism, Wesgro, Tourism KZN and the Western Cape Government.

Around the world Airbnb supports Hosts to help them understand their tax obligations as a way to ensure wider communities can enjoy the benefits of tourism, in addition to the general economic activity created by travel.

Airbnb is working alongside The South African Revenue Service and has built a [Responsible Hosting page](#) and dedicated [tax guide](#) for Hosts in partnership with local firm, Tax Tim.

Finally, a sustainable and inclusive tourism recovery needs to start with safety.

All visitors need assurance that their accommodation will be safe and clean. At Airbnb, the health and safety of our community is one of our key priorities, which is why the [Airbnb Enhanced Clean](#) protocol, endorsed by the World Travel and Tourism Council, was introduced, empowering Hosts to provide safe, clean accommodation.



Airbnb also partnered with [SweepSouth](#), an on-demand booking service for domestic workers and other service providers in South Africa, to train Hosts, cleaners and domestic workers in the enhanced cleaning protocols.

A global crisis such as the pandemic causes us all to consider new ways forward. So much has changed around us, but the power of travel and tourism to connect people and bring economic benefit to local communities will be undimmed. But harnessing its power in new ways - to support diversity, inclusion, empowerment and entrepreneurship - will take new approaches from everyone.

While we have already taken steps to drive inclusive recovery, we know we can do more. That's why we are looking forward to engaging with all tourism stakeholders on our shared goal of economic recovery that benefits all South Africans, especially those who have struggled to benefit from tourism, wherever they live and whatever their background. Hosts such as Nombulelo will be among the first to welcome visitors back to South Africa, and we want to make sure she, and others in our community, can continue to do what they do best.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Velma Corcoran'.

Velma Corcoran
Regional Lead, Middle East Africa

*Airbnb 2020 survey conducted between Feb 1, 2021 to Mar 3 showing 2021 Homes Hosts who hosted their home during 2020

**[Airbnb report on Travel and Living 2021](#) - published 24 May 2021

***City Portal data March 2021

***Airbnb 2020 survey conducted from Feb 1, 2021 to Mar 3, 2021 Homes Guests who went on a Trip during 2020