

# **TURNING MINING CONFERENCES INTO TOURISM GOLD**

**DATE :                      MARCH 2016**

Calling together thousands of the most well heeled men (and increasingly, women) in the world, it is often (unofficially) described as the highest density of Hugo Boss suits in the southern hemisphere. And yet the reason for their coming together has absolutely nothing to do with fashion. Quite the opposite, in fact.

Their reasons are much more hardcore and down to earth, literally. They unite to talk the big business of mining.

Defined as the place “*Where The World Connects With African Mining™*”, Mining Indaba, an annual conference dedicated wholly to mining sector professionals mining, is the place where serious business and government leaders come together to engage, exchange, explore and invest in new ideas, new opportunities, new partnerships. For Cape Town and South Africa, it is an annual meeting that cements the nation’s firm position on the continent and world’s mining map. At least for the week.

An event over 20 years old, latest statistics tell clearly the story. As expressed by Mining Indaba on [/www.miningindaba.com](http://www.miningindaba.com), the event reaches across:

- *Representatives from more than 100 countries*
- *More than 45 African and non-African Government Delegations*
- *More than 2,300 international companies with vested interests throughout the African mining value chain*
- *Investors, analysts, and financiers from across the globe: multi-national institutional investment firms, individual investors, portfolio managers, private equity managers, hedge funds, sovereign funds, merchant banks, analysts, and more*

For South Africa, as stated by Kingsley Makhubela, Chief Executive Officer of Brand South Africa,:

*“Mining Indaba enables Brand South Africa and other stakeholders to communicate the competitive strengths of our country. This contributes to positive perceptions about South Africa as an investment destination as well about our attractiveness as a tourism market while also being able to attract skills globally. During Mining Indaba, Brand South Africa also hosted together with the Departments of Mineral Resources and Trade and Industry, an investment seminar which was attended by international business representatives as well as other stakeholders in South Africa.”*

Tourism opportunities at a mining event?

Absolutely. This is the alchemy that occurs when partnerships take place across sectors when major conferences, congresses, summits take place, whatever the season and reason may be. In the case of Mining Indaba, for the city’s tourism industry, it is a business event that has invaluable opportunity to strike tourism gold.

### **THE POWER OF PRESSURE TO CREATE PRECIOUS INDUSTRIES**

The intensity of such highly technical, sector-specific events can make it easy to set aside any value for the Tourism sector. Delegates are in town to work hard. Playing hard is not part of the

agenda, such being the image of such turbo-charged, tightly timed programmes. But like any successful miner, destinations willing to sift through the sand are the ones able to uncover the diamonds.

At Mining Indaba, gems of opportunity are to be uncovered through the over 7000 attendees from across the globe, continent and country coming together. They book, arrive, meet, make business happen. While their focus on results may be appear black and white, the scope for colour is enormous when business cards become curious visitors looking to break bread and toast possibilities as part of the deal.

For destinations wise enough to invest in leveraging the opportunity of these high stress, high yield visitors, the ROI can be staggering. In an event period of just four days, Mining Indaba has yielded, according to the organisers,:

- *R610 MILLION in revenue has flowed directly to the local Cape economy throughout as a result of Mining Indaba (tracking from 2007-2015). This revenue includes hotels, tourism, shopping, golf and more*
- *5,000 direct and indirect jobs have been created as a result of the Mining Indaba (tracking from 2007 through 2015)*
- *20,000 hotel room nights sold across 40 accommodations sites in the immediate cape area*

Close cooperation across the industry is vital to making the event a success for the tourism sector, making the most of delegates both when on-duty and off.

Jacques Thyssen, Guest Experience Manager at the Cape Grace Hotel in the heart of Cape Town's iconic V&A Waterfront, cannot but smile when reflecting on the hecticness within the hotel during Mining Indaba.

*"Mining Indaba attracts so many visitors to the hotel. We operate at high occupancies between 90% and 100% during the week of the Mining Indaba. Guests always invite other delegates from other hotels for meetings, lunches or dinners. We do what we can to respond to their unique business needs during that time, offering extra meeting space to Mining Indaba delegates by converting some of our suites and rooms into meeting rooms, offering express lunches in our Signal Restaurant. Our Bascule Bar usually opens at 10am every day. However, during the period of Mining Indaba, we open from 8am for guests to have an express breakfast and informal meetings. The hotel's success levels during that time can be compared to days such the Festive period."*

But the value of the event does not come purely from the event period alone. A soundbite for future, off-duty travel back to South Africa, the event seeds the visitor connection. Thyssen continues:

*"Sadly, our Mining Indaba guests don't usually have time to explore Cape Town during the course of the event due to their busy schedules. However, we have noticed that they usually return to the hotel with their families during different times of the year."*

*As we keep a comprehensive record about our guests and their requirements, enhancing their experience becomes an easier task upon their return. Essentially, we pre-empt the requests that our guests had during their previous stays and also liaise with them prior to their arrival. This enables us to go the extra mile when arranging their transport, restaurant reservations and Cape Town experiences. We are always looking for new and exciting ways to take their return visit to another level. “*

Makhubela reinforces Thyssen’s approach to guest hospitality for long-term relationship building.

*“South Africa offers very good value for money particularly for tourists with dollar, euro or pound based currencies. This must be leveraged more aggressively. Tourism packages could be tailored specifically for conference delegates so that they fit into their conference programmes while also allowing them to experience our country. We have seen such initiatives prove very successful to South Africa with many conference delegates returning to visit South Africa with their friends and families.”*

At a time when currency values, political crisis and commodity prices are causing havoc, Mining Indaba’s meeting of minds, sharing of thought, and reinforcing of relationships, offers priceless value to leaders across the mining sector, across the world.

For the tourism sector, as with mining, prospecting is a science and an art, with the opportunity to strike gold always just an event away.

- ENDS –