

Mafefe Tourism Centre

-Pre-Feasibility Study-

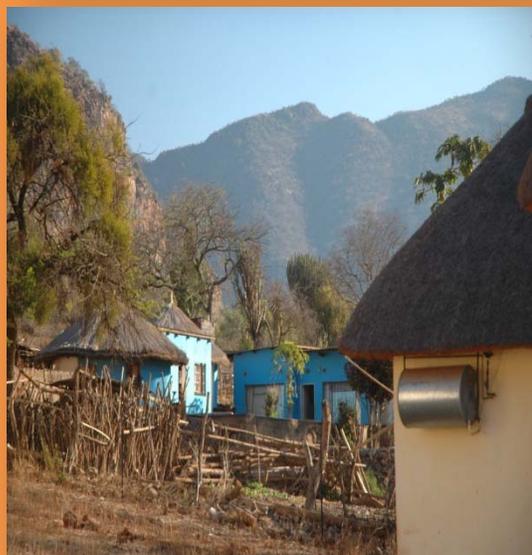


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1. Introduction

This report is a pre-feasibility study for the proposed development of a tourism centre in Mafefe. The Capricorn District Municipality had a vision of a tourism centre in Mafefe, in view of the beauty of the natural environment of this area. They constructed a centre consisting of various rooms and a stage area, as well as chalets with all the needed utilities. This structure is completely unutilised at the moment and presents ample opportunity for further development. The tourism industry is one of the fastest growing industries internationally and is currently regarded as the second fastest growing sector in the South African Economy (DEAT, 2006).

2. Development Concept

This section provides an overview of the project and a description of various elements that are part of the development concept. Broad guidelines are provided for the purpose of directing the development of the project.

2.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The existing structure and its surrounds should be further developed as a **tourism information and interpretation centre** and a **community-based tourism initiative** with a strong focus on combining heritage with cultural activities and nature-based tourism activities. Current facilities should be upgraded in order to cater for the needs of the main target groups.

It is imperative that development should not be too commercialised, blend in with the environment and remain rustic. The rural environment with rustic facilities is part of the appeal to ensure unique and authentic visitor experiences.

2.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the project is to:

Further develop the centre and its surrounds in order to draw more visitors to the area and to encourage them to stay longer in the vicinity by providing interesting and interactive displays, activities, etc.; while ensuring benefits to the local community and preserving heritage resources.

The objectives of the project include:

-  To expand the current attraction to increase visitor numbers.
-  To create employment and skills development opportunities e.g. tour guiding, the management of the project, etc.
-  To link with other tourist attractions and places of heritage interest in the area.
-  To provide opportunities to locals with regard to the sale and the production of arts, crafts and souvenirs, the provision of food and beverages to visitors, etc.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

The ***Responsible Tourism Guidelines***, published by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) in 2002 is the most recent addition to the South African tourism development policy environment. According to these guidelines, responsible tourism development should be economically, environmentally and functionally sustainable. It is imperative that the responsible tourism guidelines be taken into account when planning for and developing tourism attractions. Responsible tourism development is a more sustainable approach to tourism development that focuses on the enhancement of both the natural and cultural environment. Responsible tourism guidelines relevant to the development include:

-  Development of partnerships and joint ventures between the local communities and other stakeholders are imperative.
-  Community members or representatives should have ownership of and be involved in the management of the development.
-  Procure locally produced goods and services wherever quality, quantity and consistency permit e.g. building materials, arts and crafts, food and beverages, etc.
-  Recruit and employ staff from the local community if and when possible. The local community should benefit from job-creation opportunities e.g. the construction of facilities, craft production, management of tourism facilities, etc.
-  Provide skills training to local people e.g. train local guides to be part of the project.
-  Ensure the preservation of cultural, heritage and natural resources for future generations, educational and tourism development purposes.

2.4 PROJECT DETAILS

Three development areas have been identified in connection with the development of the centre and its immediate surrounds:

-  Interpretation Centre development
-  Accommodation
-  Natural attraction development

2.4.1 INTERPRETATION CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

The following suggestions are made in order to improve the current facilities and activities:

-  A well functioning booking office needs to be set up.
-  A part of the existing structure should accommodate a shop selling local arts, refreshments, postcards, other souvenirs e.g. T-Shirts, key rings, etc.
-  Basic landscaping with paths and benches outside.
-  Talks needs to be arranged in the staging area e.g. storytelling by locals a few times a week or month, drumming sessions or demonstrations, daily talks by local guides, etc.
-  Kiosk selling refreshment and basic supplies for hikers or 4x4 tourists.
-  The training of locals in the fauna, flora and animal life e.g. birds of area in addition to heritage and history is essential.
-  The use of traditional and natural building material and local labour should be perpetuated.
-  Provide a security guard to monitor the Interpretation Centre and surrounding area.
-  Provide a maintenance person in order to maintain all facilities.

2.4.2 ACCOMMODATION

The suggestions for the accommodation area are focussed on extension of the current facilities by adding a communal kitchen and gathering area in the form of a 'boma' with an area for a bonfire and camping stands for tents.

A description of suggested facilities follows:

-  It is suggested that enough accommodation be provided in order to accommodate groups. Some huts should also have double beds accommodating couples.
-  'Braai' areas need to be erected.
-  Camping stands for tents need to be laid out.
-  A communal kitchen and gathering area in the form of a 'boma' could be built.
-  Walking paths needs to be provided.
-  Provide authentic and functional landscaping.
-  Huts could also have a cooking area inside and be reflective of traditional culture. Persons staying overnight will then have the option of having a traditional meal cooked in their huts by local women at an additional cost.
-  It is suggested that local art work and traditional craft be used to decorate the huts.

2.4.3 NATURAL ATTRACTIONS DEVELOPMENT

In order for the proposed developments to be feasible more visitors need to be drawn to the area, this will also ensure increased opportunities and benefits to the locality. Nature-based activities thus need to be provided to diversify the tourism product offering that will appeal to different target groups i.e.:

international and domestic visitors and backpackers, as well as special interest groups. A combination of nature-based activities with cultural and heritage resources are proposed:

- 📄 Guided walks to the Mafefe Miraculous Tree
- 📄 Guided day nature hikes with a focus on bird watching, fauna, flora, etc.
- 📄 Guided day hikes to natural attractions such as caves, waterfalls, etc.
- 📄 Development of two or three day guided hikes.

Important considerations with regard to the proposed activities include;

- 📄 Paths should be laid out for all day and multi-day hikes.
- 📄 Guides needs to be trained and accompany the nature and adventure hikes.
- 📄 Safe parking for cars needs to be provided.
- 📄 Overnight huts need to be provided for the multi day nature hike i.e. two huts/tents at two sites.

A few suggestions regarding possible future development include:

- 📄 Investigate other adventure tourism options e.g. rock-climbing, abseiling, etc. to be offered.
- 📄 Train locals as adventure activity facilitators.
- 📄 Support arts and craft projects and link to proposed activities.
- 📄 Investigate the feasibility of educational programmes with related activities for school groups. Funding should be sourced in order to subsidise local and regional school groups to visit the centre e.g. transportation costs, etc.
- 📄 Also afford local residents the opportunity to visit the cave; this will foster a sense of ownership and pride among locals regarding their heritage.

2.4.4 CONCEPTION LAYOUT



The figure shows the suggested layout for the Mafefe Tourism Centre, as discussed above.

3. Market Analysis

3.1 SUPPLY ANALYSIS

The supply analysis gives an indication of the tourism facilities in the Mafefe area, as well as facilities and infrastructure currently available at the Mafefe Tourism Centre.

3.1.1 TOURISM FACILITIES IN THE AREA

Tourism facilities in the area are poorly developed. The centre has a remote location and road and other infrastructure in the area and at the centre is in a poor condition. There are three nature reserves in close proximity to the site:

-  Lekgalameetse Nature Reserve
-  Wolkberg Nature Reserve
-  Bewaarskloof Nature Reserve

Opportunities exist for combining nature-based activities with cultural and heritage resources in the area in order to draw feasible volumes of visitors to the area. Natural, cultural and heritage resources and linkage opportunities in the area include:

-  Mafefe Miraculous Tree
-  Waterfalls
-  Caves
-  Unique butterflies
-  Pioneer graves and Ramulutsi's grave in the Lekgalameetse Reserve
-  Ivory Route

3.1.2 LOCAL COMMUNITY

When visiting attractions in the area e.g. the Miraculous Tree, the tribal authorities should be consulted and appointments should be made in advance to allow time for preparations that need to be made.

3.1.3 FACILITIES AT THE CENTRE

Interpretation or information centre

Apart from the various areas where exhibitions can be held, there is also a conference hall which can accommodate approximately 200 seated people, as well as a breakaway hall which can accommodate 150 seated people. The centre could also be utilised as a bush lodge.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure at Border Cave is limited:

-  Access to the interpretive centre and accommodation via dust road, which encourages the use of sturdier vehicles
-  Electricity at the camp or the interpretation centre
-  Piped water
-  Limited cell phone signal
-  No Telkom lines in the area

Accommodation

Chalets available at the tourism centre consist of a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen. There are also communal ablution facilities available.

3.2 DEMAND ANALYSIS

The types of visitors that Mafefe Tourism Centre would appeal to are:

-  Tourists interested in culture/history/heritage
-  Environmental enthusiasts and outdoor adventure types
-  Bird watchers
-  Photographic tourists

Therefore any development at Mafefe should take into consideration what type of tourists will demand its product and thus have the needs of these types of tourists in mind when developing the centre.

Facilities and services that could be developed at Mafefe Tourism Centre include:

-  Picnic spots & 'braai' areas.
-  Security.
-  Trails with information boards and/or knowledgeable guides.
-  Local arts and crafts.

Furthermore, the following could be done to make the project interesting and unique in order to draw more visitors:

-  Guided birding excursions.
-  Photographic tours.

-  Informative trails and knowledgeable local guides who takes visitors on interesting walks, giving them otherwise unknown local knowledge and anecdotes.
-  Catering done by the local community – expose tourists to local cuisine.
-  Quad-bike rides around the area, stopping off at the local village for lunch with the locals.
-  Overnight stays in the local villages.

Community involvement is essential because it generates jobs and income for the locals. Therefore, it is imperative that the development is labour intensive. Overseas tourists are generally more interested in tourist attractions that have a strong element of local community involvement. The local community could be involved in the project in the following ways:

-  Allow tourists to visit their homesteads.
-  Become trained guides – tap into local knowledge of the environment.
-  Cater for guests with local cuisine.
-  Provide cleaning services.
-  Provide local arts, crafts and bead-work.

The centre could be marketed as follows:

-  Local tourist information centres.
-  Provide brochures at local lodges in the area.
-  Internet.
-  Contact tour operators.
-  Create awareness of Mafefe at tourism indabas.
-  Magazines.

Factors that would contribute to the success of the development are the following:

-  Effective marketing
-  Good service
-  Good management
-  Keep the site rustic, pristine and natural
-  Community involvement – overseas tourists like to see the involvement and success of locals in tourism projects.

3.3 TARGET MARKET

Marketing initiatives should be focussed on drawing international visitors interested in eco-tourism or nature-based tourism and culture and heritage tourism. It is important to identify strategic international markets in this regard. Countries such as Germany; France and Benelux countries are generally interested in eco-tourism or alternative tourism options.

An important target market is special interest groups e.g. groups interested in; bird-watching, nature-based activities, eco-tourism (which includes a cultural heritage interest), etc. Providing activities for these interest groups will diversify the product offering at the centre in order to draw more visitors. This has been kept in mind during the development of the Development Concept for the project.

Practical guidelines specifically to promote the project include:

-  Develop quality and informative brochures.
-  Raise awareness regarding the centre among local accommodation establishments.
-  Place brochures in local information offices, accommodation establishments and other tourism related businesses, as well as nature reserves in the area where domestic and international visitors will be able to access information.
-  Consider the offering of transport linkages e.g. a shuttle service from nature reserves or other establishments to the centre.
-  Co-operate with local, regional and provincial tourism marketing bodies to have information regarding the centre be placed in their promotion materials, maps, booklets, etc.
-  Advertise on appropriate websites
-  Collaborate with the Capricorn District Municipality in terms of the improvement of directional road signage.
-  Plan a special launch of the new Mafefe tourism development and invite persons in the tourism industry, special interest groups and other relevant stakeholder in order to create awareness. The launch programme can include e.g. a month of special activities such as drumming sessions, craft-making sessions, information about the local culture, etc.

4. Potential Impact

The developments proposed and suggestions made will contribute towards the following impacts on the local community, environment, etc. The following benefits are discussed briefly:

-  Economic benefits
-  Social benefits
-  Environmental benefits
-  Sustainability benefits

Economic benefits

-  Employment of locals during construction of facilities.
-  Full time employment – manager, assistant, cleaner, security guide, maintenance person, etc.
-  Employment opportunities for guides that have already been trained.
-  Opportunities to local communities – traditional meals, village-stays, etc.
-  Opportunities for local crafters and SMMEs– decoration of huts, shop at Interpretation Centre.
-  Opportunities with regard to the extension of adventure activities

Social benefits

-  Promotion of a sense of pride and ownership among local residents.
-  Channelling of project income to benefit the community.
-  Participation by locals in the management and planning of the project.
-  Upgrade of infrastructure that will benefit locals e.g. improved roads.
-  Empowerment of historically disadvantage persons, including women.
-  Training opportunities in connection with the project.
-  The provision of enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural and environmental issues.

Environmental benefits

-  Use of natural materials for construction.
-  Small groups (max 12) to ensure low impact on the carrying capacity of the environment.
-  Participation in nature-based activities.

Sustainability benefits

A summary of benefits in line with **Responsible Tourism Development** that promotes sustainability includes:

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-  Low impact developments and the focus on nature-based activities.
-  Involvement of community representatives in planning and management of the project.
-  Economic benefits and employment opportunities created for locals.
-  Eco-friendly practices.
-  Experiential learning, learning about the local culture and interaction between visitors and locals.

5. Potential risks

The potential risks, with regard to the proposed project, are identified and briefly discussed, followed by amelioration strategies.

Nature of the tourism industry

The tourism industry, due to its nature, is a notoriously difficult industry in which to manage an organisation (Fyall & Garrod, 2005). The increasing competitive nature of the market relationships in which tourism organisations find themselves, does not make the management task any easier (Fyall and Garrod, 2005). The tourism product is a complex product that involves input from a wide range of economic sectors e.g. transport, accommodation, catering, retail, etc.

Seasonality of visitor flows

It should also be mentioned that the international visitor flows depend on seasonality. International flows are thus not optimal all year round. Marketing strategies need to be put in place to counter the effects of seasonality on the development.

Decline in visitors to the area

Due to the volatility of the tourism environment, the tourism market is subject to considerable market turbulence. The tourism market is highly sensitive to general economic slowdown (Fyall and Garrod, 2005:143). The above-mentioned pertains to both international and domestic tourists; if there is *inter alia* an increase in crime or an increase in the media coverage of crime or an economic decline, the number of tourists visiting the area is likely to decline. Media coverage of crimes against foreign visitors in South Africa has an adverse effect on visitor perceptions and can lead to a decrease in the number of foreign visitors, especially. Increases in fuel prices, interest rates, inflation etc. results in potential visitors having less disposable income to spend on leisure and recreation activities such day-trips to tourism attractions. This particularly pertains to domestic visitors.

Safety and security

Safety and security remains a major risk with regard to tourism in South Africa. Increasing perceptions by the international community that South Africa is an 'unsafe' destination thus have adverse effects on the tourism industry. The negative image of South Africa has the potential to hamper the development of tourism enterprises, large or small. Asserted efforts thus need to be made towards ensuring that safety and security measures are implemented pertaining to the Mafefe tourism project.

Negative social impacts of tourism

Tourism to the local villages can lead to disruption in the daily lives of villagers. Villagers might also feel that visitors intrude, take photographs of persons who do not want to be photographed and do not honour their culture and traditions. Littering is also a possible negative impact of tourism in the area.

Environmental conservation and resource management

Environmental conservation is an important consideration and every effort should be made to ensure that the environment is protected, the carrying capacity of the area is not exceeded and that environmentally-friendly practices are implemented. It is understood that there are limited resources in the area with regard to water, etc.

6. Funding options

The provincial Department of Arts, Culture and Tourism (DACT) could be a possible source of funding for the project. Table 1 provides an indication of other institutions that can be approached with regard to the provision of funding pertaining to heritage, tourism and/ development projects or initiatives, such as the Mafefe tourism development.

TABLE 1: POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES	
Name of Institution	Description
Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)	The Small Medium Enterprise Development Programme (SMEDP) is a cash grant incentive scheme provided by the DTI, which offers assistance to tourism related enterprises in South Africa. Assistance is provided to either new or existing projects.
	Community Public Private Partnership Programme (CPPP) facilitates communication between resource-rich rural communities and private sector investors and focuses on sourcing viable commercial partnerships. Tourism is considered as a good avenue to revitalise rural economies. www.cppp.org.za .
Industrial Development Corporation (IDC)	The IDC's Tourism Business Unit finances capital expenditure in tourism businesses. The finance extends to capital-intensive tourism project with the potential to significantly impact on the growth of the tourism industry. http://www.idc.co.za/Tourism.asp .
The Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA)	The type of tourism investment supported by the DBSA includes; tourism attractions (natural, cultural or man-made), facilities and services (e.g. accommodation), transport, supportive services (e.g. safety, information etc.), enabling infrastructure and institutional infrastructure (e.g. education and training, capacity building etc).
National Empowerment Fund (NEF)	This fund was established in order to empower historically disadvantaged persons (HDP's) through financing and investment. The fund will only fund transactions where HDP's have an equity interest and are operationally involved at senior management level. The fund will only invest where HDP's are making a significant commitment of their own resources (e.g. financial, skills, etc.)
National Heritage Resources Fund (NHRF)	This financial assistance is provided out of a fund reserved by SAHRA and provides the opportunity for communities to participate in the identification, conservation and management of cultural resources. Assistance is provided in the form of a grant or loan to an approved organization or an individual for any project which contributes to the conservation and protection of South Africa's heritage resources which form part of the national estate. http://www.sahra.org.za/heritage.htm
DEAT Poverty Relief Fund	DEAT's Poverty Relief Fund is aimed at growing tourism market share and investment, protecting and conserving South Africa's environment and building the nation. The fund has certain socio-economic conditions such as, training, benefits and opportunities to HDIs, employment to locals, employment opportunities for women, etc. The cave falls in the Lubombu SDI supported by DEAT http://www.environment.gov.za
Source: DEAT & Tourism Business Council of SA	

General funding considerations by the mentioned institutions involved include that projects should:

-  Contribute to poverty alleviation,
-  Create employment and training opportunities,
-  Promote community ownership and management,
-  Promote the empowerment of women and youth,
-  Promote socio-economic development within communities,
-  Benefit historically disadvantaged or rural communities, etc.

Projects are in some cases expected to contribute a certain percentage of the project capital expenditure cost or are encouraged to enter into partnerships with private sector funders.

It is also suggested that the **memberships** are opened to individuals from the community. This will contribute to a sense of **ownership** within the community and ensure additional funds through annual membership fees or sponsorships.

It is suggested that a main donor or funder be sourced that will provide long-term funding and support during the development and the operation of the project towards ensuring that the project is economically viable and sustainable in the long run.

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