

SA's art and culture takes to the streets in New York

In a month-long partnership with Citi Bike which will see South Africa's unique art and culture taking to the streets of New York City, South African Tourism's US office is taking an innovative approach to grow the SA's arts, culture, and heritage offering by encouraging New Yorkers and visitors to the city to travel to South Africa.

Bringing a taste of SA to NYC

The partnership, in conjunction with South Africa's national airline South African Airways (SAA), will include thirty South Africa branded Citi Bike docking stations across the city showcasing the variety of safari, adventure, and cultural experiences holidaymakers can have in South Africa, while the pièce de résistance will be an original art mural dedicated to world-renowned South African artist, [Esther Mahlangu](#).



Esther Mahlangu cuts the ribbon to officially open the mural to the public

Speaking from the sidelines of the official mural ribbon-cutting ceremony in which Esther Mahlangu was present, Bangu Masisi, President of South African Tourism's Americas Hub had this to say: "We're excited to collaborate with Citi Bike this summer to bring a taste and lively sights of South Africa's arts and culture to the streets of NYC. That this mural is located in New York City is a befitting tribute to one of South Africa's most revered matriarchs of our arts and culture – Esther Mahlangu. Through this immersive partnership, we hope to further inspire today's discerning world traveller to discover South Africa and raise awareness for its variety of experiences - from the world-class safari and outdoor adventures to art, culture and beyond," says Masisi.

The mural paying homage to Esther Mahlangu is located on Franklin Street and West Broadway Citi Bike station in Tribeca. It was created by Imani Shanklin Roberts, the up-and-coming New York-based visual artist - whose works feature a strong Afrocentric perspective on identity.



Imani Shanklin Roberts and Esther Mahlangu

“We are proud to be associated with and show support for young up and coming artists who lend their talent to showcasing our national assets. Esther Mahlangu is renowned the world over for her unique, colorful and geometric paintings which have inspired international brands and artists of many backgrounds across the globe. Her work has also done an amazing job of showcasing our cultures and will provide New Yorkers this summer with a sight of South Africa’s vibrant Ndebele culture,” says Masisi.

“ We’re so proud we could help make this amazing work of public art happen w/ [@SouthAfrica](#) & [@flySAA_US](#)
<https://t.co/bWLHy6NM1A> pic.twitter.com/nAjuzrdRkf— Citi Bike (@CitiBikeNYC) [September 17, 2017](#) ”

Growth in tourist arrivals from US

Tourist arrivals to South Africa from the United States were at an all-time high in 2016, with more than 345,000 Americans visiting the country to enjoy its authentic travel experiences. In the first half of 2017 (January to June), 179,002 Americans visited the country, marking an increase of 9,6 percent from the same period last year. A consistent marketing presence combined with the ongoing and reliable support from South African Airways who offer daily non-stop flights from New York to South Africa are two of the key factors attributed to this growth.

“Partnerships and collaboration with all stakeholders who are in tourism or related to the sector, are integral to the work we do and to ensure a broad reach of our mandate. This is just as important as finding innovative and new ways of heightening awareness around South Africa that tantalises consumers to want to know more and visit,” says Masisi.

South Africa-themed block party

On 16 September, Citi Bike and South African Tourism co-hosted a South Africa-themed block party adjacent to the art installation, where riders were able to take a rest from their blue bikes to enjoy South African food like Boerewors Rolls - South Africa’s answer to gourmet Hot Dogs. The party included a pop-up food truck, face painting, and music. Travel ambassadors were also on site to share information about the South African vacation package.

Citi Bike members can also access a special vacation package created by South African Airways Vacations. The package will allow travellers to experience the culture of Johannesburg and historic Soweto by bicycle, followed by two nights on safari at Kwa Maritane Bush Lodge in the Pilanesberg National Park.

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