

Sun International bets on high spenders for income

By [Ngobile Dlodla](#)

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Gaming and hotel group Sun International is expanding its timeshare units by building 58 luxury villas for R295m (\$16.55m) at its Sun City resort, as the hospitality industry readies for a full recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic blow.



People are seen at the entrance of the Sun International's Times Square Casino ahead of its opening, as South Africa eases some aspects of a stringent nationwide coronavirus disease (COVID-19) lockdown, in South Africa's administrative capital Pretoria, June 29, 2020.

REUTERS/Siphwe Sibeko

Travellers, largely free of Covid-linked restrictions, are spending again on hotels, airplane tickets and gambling. That trend has so far shown no signs of slowing down, especially for high-end spenders, even as some worry about high inflation and the potential for an economic slowdown.

Bookings and income have bounced back from April 2020 lows, getting above 2019 levels in recent months, Sun International's CEO Anthony Leeming told Reuters at the launch of the new Lefika villas in Sun City.

"We wanted to really attract international travellers back and the top-end (tourists), so had to fix the product up," Leeming said.

Attracting high-end spenders

Johannesburg-based Sun International, which also owns the high-end Maslow hotel and GrandWest Casino, said the new villas will attract about 400 new high-end spenders to the popular resort based in the mining North West province.

Big lodging companies are counting on timeshare, a holiday ownership club model, for growth because they often provide stable income during a downturn given the length of membership ranging from five to 10 years.

The development represents Sun International's first significant expansion at Sun City resort since 2004.

Mark Pitchers, development manager at Sun International told Reuters that major refurbishments and developments worth R1.1bn are underway at the resort, which include the planned second phase expansion of the holiday villas, potentially building a sports complex and a high-performance centre to attract international teams doing training.

"There's a lot of people who are interested in coming here to bring sports events in Sun City," Pitchers said.

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