

# Profile

Welcome to the 2003 Tourism Month School competition winning case study in South Africa ▪ A case study on **sustainable tourism** developed by Schoonspruit High School in Klerksdorp, in the North West Province of South Africa.

## Case Study: South Africa

### **Sustainable and Responsible Tourism in the Vredefort Dome in the North West Province of South Africa.**

#### Introduction

The following case study was conducted in the Potchefstroom- Parys- Vredefort- area in the North West province of South Africa and situated on the NIZ treasure route. South - Africa is a land of visual diversity and compelling, unforgettable beauty. All the landmarks, both natural and man-made, tell the story of a country with a fascinating heritage, richly endowed by nature and only partially tamed by man. For the tourist, South Africa offers a dazzling variety of attractions: from sandy beaches to arid bushveld, from tropical wetlands to spectacular mountain scenery. Whether you wish to laze in the sun, swim, track the Big Five, hike along the coast or in the mountains, see wild flowers in profusion, savour good food and wine or simply take in the history and culture of one of the world's most talked-about societies, South Africa has something special to offer you!

The North West Province is one of the most diverse Tourism destinations in South Africa. Here you will find some of the finest wildlife reserves, cultural sites, archaeological treasures and entertainment resorts in South Africa. It is an ideal getaway destination for international visitors seeking a wilderness or cultural experience.

Here travelers can discover the world's oldest Tourist Route, where travelers have explored for over two million years and that is effectively the heritage of every person on the planet. The "Heritage Route", is literally scattered with traces of Iron- and Stone Age settlements and is a unique tourist experience that is unparalleled in its significance and diversity. With its unique Icons, such as Magaliesberg and Hartbeespoort Dam, the Pilanesberg National Park, Madikwe Game Reserve, Mafikeng Museum the Taung Heritage Site, Lesedi Cultural Village and of course the Vredefort Dome - situated in the beautiful outcrops near Parys in the Free State and Potchefstroom in the North West Province - tourists will be left with a combination of experiences.

#### Magaliesberg & Hartbeespoort Dam



## Pilanesberg National Park



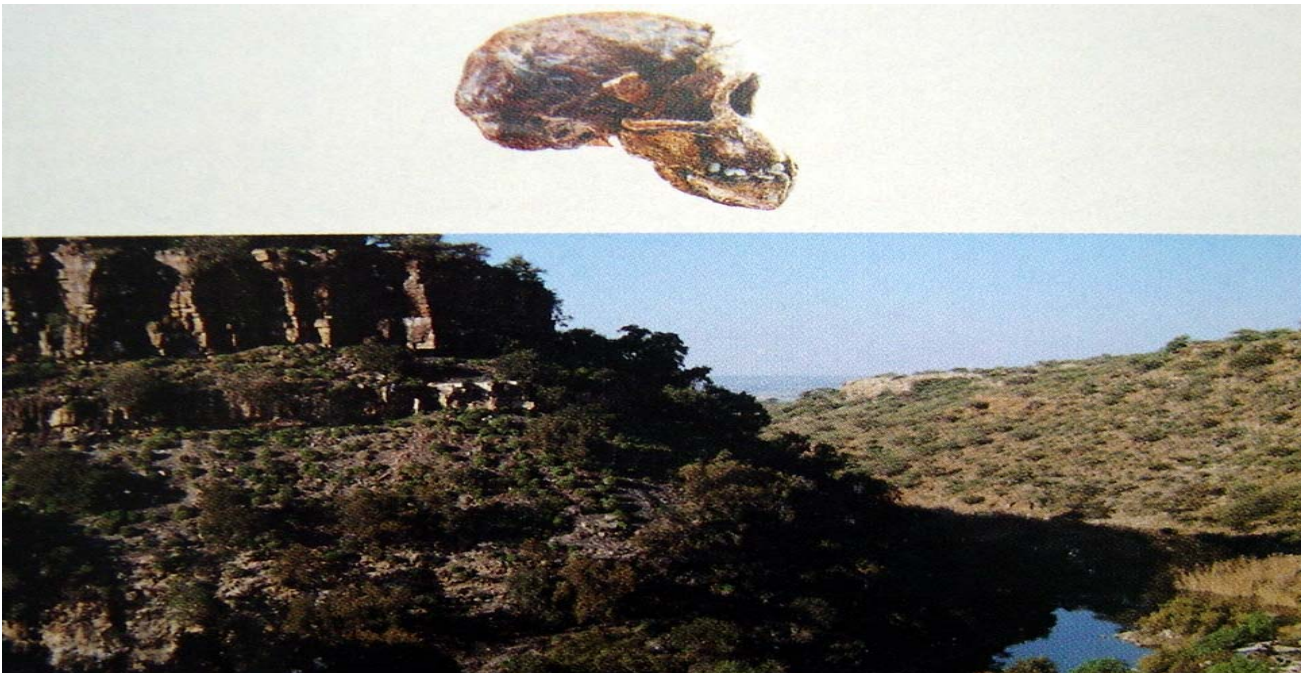
## Madikwe Game Reserve



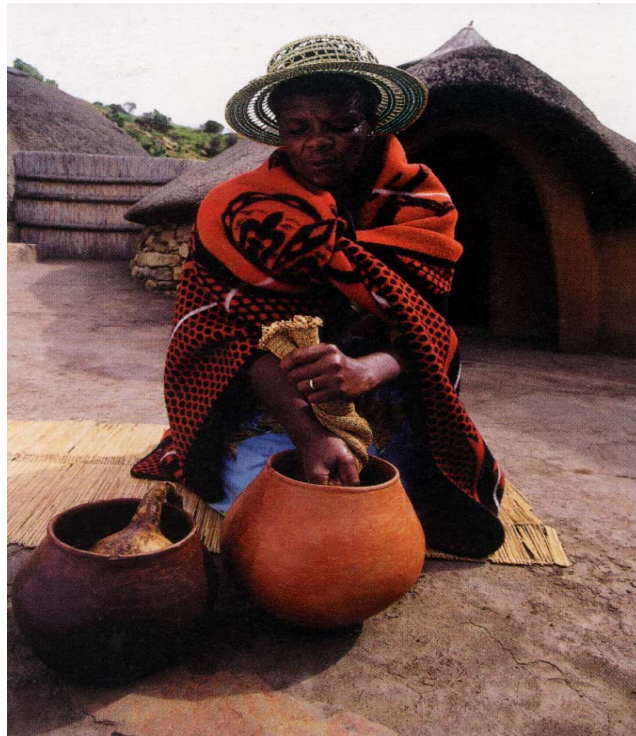
## Mafikeng Museum



## Taung Heritage Site



Lesedi Cultural Village



Vredefort Dome



Tourism is the fastest growing industry in South Africa, with the potential to create jobs and address poverty. Tourism depends heavily on the environment, which must be managed in a sustainable manner. This means that tourism development must meet the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs. We must look after our environment, be responsible in the way we go about things so that future generations also have the privilege to enjoy a better quality of life through increased socio-economic benefits and improved environment. It is all about providing a better life for all. One such an area, with a lot of potential to develop as one of South Africa's top Tourist Destinations and that can provide a better life for all, is the Vredefort Dome.

## Target area: The Vredefort Dome

The world famous Vredefort Dome is situated in the North West and FreeState Province (latitude - 27,00 longitude 27,50) of South Africa. The Vredefort Dome represents a unique, geological phenomenon of international significance. The Vredefort Dome is not only the world's largest and oldest impact crater (+/- 200 million years), but also the best recognizable and easiest accessible structure of its kind. It is the only impact crater that can be seen from space. Geologists have found evidence that the cause of this upliftment was an extreme impact event, caused by an asteroid some 10 kilometers in diameter. The original crater, now eroded away, is estimated to have been 250 - 300 kilometers in diameter. Some 70 cubic kilometers of rock would have been vaporized in the impact.



*Earth Sciences and Image Analysis Laboratory,*  
*NASA Johnson Space Center (Image STS51I-33-56AA)*

Pictured above is a higher resolution view of the Vredefort hills from space. The Vaal River meanders through the hills, flowing from north-east (upper left) to west (centre right). Parys (the "Paris of South Africa!") lies on the loop of the river, protruding within the ring of hills. Vredefort is close to the geometric centre of the hills.

Only the north-western half of the structure remains visible. The south-eastern half was flooded by the sediments of the Karoo Super group, which cover the Free State province.

The Vredefort Dome has been universally recognized and is in the stage of being declared as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) World Heritage Committee. The Dome displays exceptional scenic diversity, with remarkable animal and plant life. The impact of the meteorite created a unique geological structure, with several micro-habitats and climates that hosts more than 400 different bird species and is labeled as an 'IBA' (Important Birding Area) of South Africa. Over 99 plant species can be found and a large variety of game is commonly spotted in the Dome.

For cultural reasons we need to preserve the Dome because a number of remnants of settlements; dating from the early Stone Age, through the centuries, up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have been identified through aerial photographs. Stonewalls in different floor patterns were found – presumably occupied by Sotho people. Later, ruins (askoppies) were attributed to Tswanas. The area lends itself to the establishment of terrain museums. Near de Wetsdrif are examples of rock art by the Khoi San, and stone tools have been found as well. There are also remnants of Iron Age activities, as well as remnants of early white settlements. These areas are still preserved and accessible.

The tourism potential in the Vredefort Dome is astronomical. The Dome meets the needs of a lot of different tourists. The Dome's huge variety of guest houses, holiday farms and resorts gives the tourists an array of activities to choose from. This include: white water rafting, hiking trails, canoe trips, horse riding, rock climbing, abseiling, mountain biking, fly fishing – just to name a few. Other activities include team building, conference facilities, traditional Witblits tasting, safari drives, youth camps and a wedding village.

What does the Dome offer?



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With the infrastructure that already exists, the Dome offers a lot of activities and if responsibly developed, it can become one of South Africa's most popular tourist destinations.

## Conclusion

The Vredefort Dome is unique for several reasons:

- \* the most important being that it is one of three sites in the world where the earth was struck by a meteorite,
- \* resulting in an area of unique beauty comprising different types of landscapes.
- \* This area is presently a relatively unspoiled tourism destination, but there are problems affecting sustainable tourism in the Vredefort Dome that must be addressed.

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