

INSIDE SOME OF SOUTH AFRICA'S AIRBNB HOMES

From its 2008 beginning in San Francisco, Airbnb has now spread to more than 35 000 cities in 192 countries around the world. **Eugene Yiga** spoke to three of South Africa's highest rated hosts to learn what it's like to open up your home to strangers.

GUY AND TANYA SPILLER, JOHANNESBURG

When filmmaker Guy Spiller had a few projects cancelled and needed to find another income stream, he turned to Airbnb.

"My wife, Tanya's 91-year-old father, had mentioned Airbnb when we visited him in the Drakensberg at Christmas, so I looked it up online," he recalls. "We had a few vacant rooms in the house as some of our children had left home in the last few years, so it was easy to start."

Since joining in March 2015, Airbnb has worked well for the Johannesburg couple. Besides making some money, they've met some amazing people.

"The most unusual guest was Mark," Guy recalls. "He was on a world tour and spending a week in 52 different cities! He makes a video blog of his travels and his hosts. He filmed me showing a client a video I had made, us playing tennis, him getting a violin lesson from Tanya, and a family celebration."

One challenge for Guy and Tanya, who host an average of four to five people each month, is matching guests with particular attractions that they would appreciate. It's also tricky to find a balance between excitement and safety. Still, the two find it amazing that, despite all the different people from all the different places, they seem to share similar core values.

"We love meeting interesting people from all over the world in a relaxed atmosphere," Guy says. "It has given us a fresh focus on Johannesburg and what it has to offer, as we continually see the city from our guests' point of view."

To view this home:
www.airbnb.com/rooms/5321398



Cozy art-deco inspired lounge



MARK AND LIZ BEARD, KNYSNA

After being told their place was “too nice” to let people sleep on their couch for free, Mark and Liz Beard joined Airbnb in December 2012.

“Since we support previously disadvantaged kids with their education costs, a Canadian guest suggested that we look at Airbnb so we could charge for our accommodation and use the funds for charity,” recalls Mark. “We did and have never looked back.”

Not only does this give the couple the chance to do what they love by sharing their space, but the experience also lets them learn from the people they host. In return, they are uplifting the most deserving and needy of children from the proceeds. Some of the charities include Newkidz (www.newkidz.org.za), Epilepsy SA South Cape Knysna Branch (www.epilepsy.org.za/scape), and Youth for Christ (www.yfc.org.za/knysna).

“We love learning and exchanging experiences and culture with our guests, who we hope will always leave as friends,” Mark says. “Airbnb has introduced us to some of the most considerate, kind, and honest people we have met in our entire lives. We can only offer our deepest gratitude to our many guests.”

To keep up with the demand of hosting about 200 people a year in their two listed apartments, Mark and Liz hired another housekeeper and gardener. They also go out of their way to stock their self-catering flat with food so that guests don’t have to bring any when they first arrive.

“We are so grateful for the opportunity that we have assisted our friends with unique spaces to set up an Airbnb,” Mark says. “We have also derived great satisfaction from watching them enjoy the income and experiences that Airbnb offers.”

To view this home:
www.airbnb.com/rooms/774674

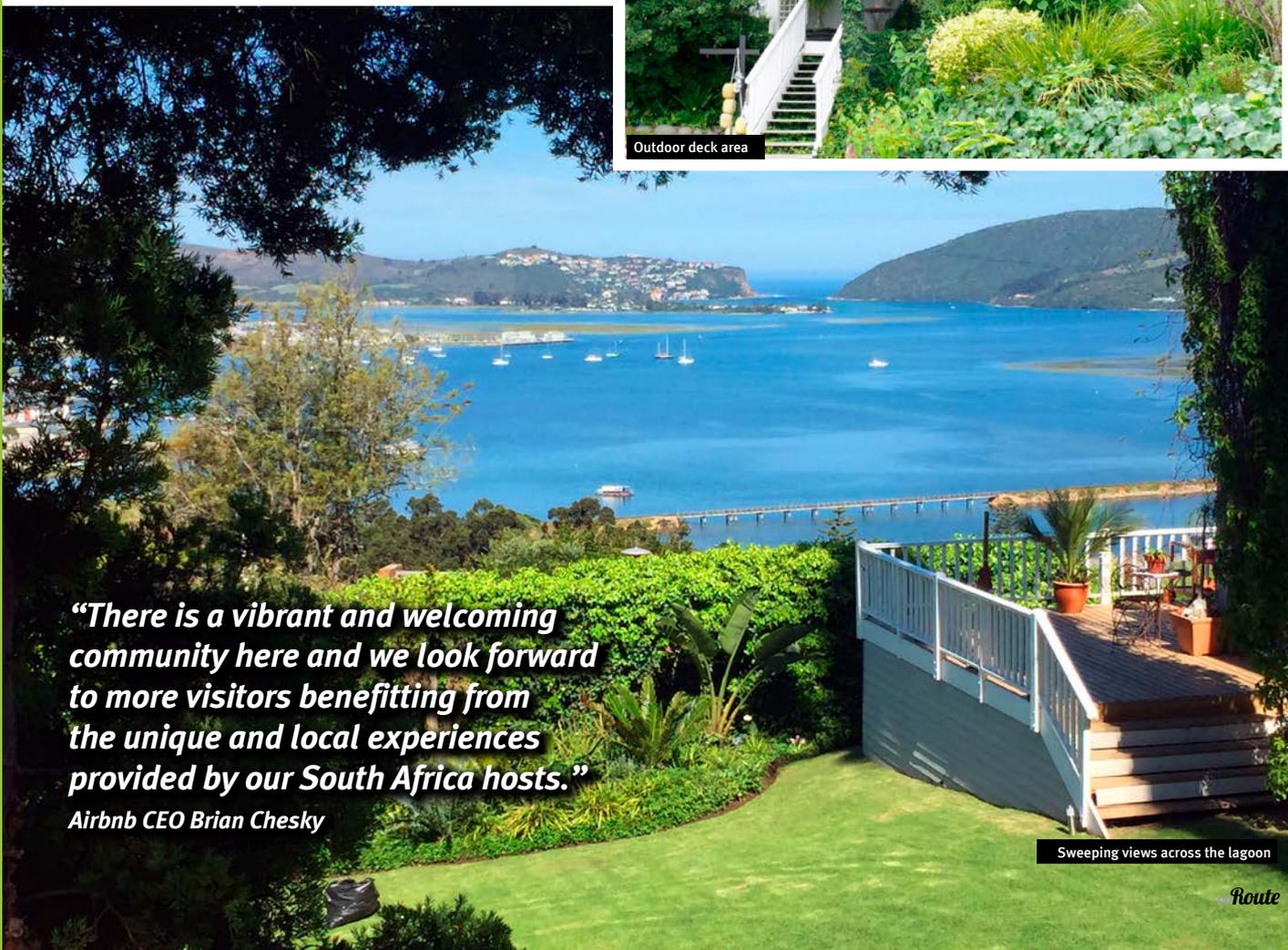
THE RISE OF airbnb

There are more than 1.5 million homes available through Airbnb worldwide and more than 45 million people have travelled with the service globally. Some notable statistics reflecting Airbnb’s growth in South Africa over the last 12 months:

- South Africa is currently the largest market for Airbnb in Africa with 9 400 homes listed, an increase of 138%.
- South Africa is becoming an increasingly popular global destination, with the number of people staying in places booked through Airbnb in South Africa increasing by a staggering 257%.
- South Africans are embracing the service as well, with those using Airbnb to travel increasing by 163%.
- While most South Africans that have used Airbnb have travelled within the country, the most popular international destinations include the US, Italy, France, and the UK.



Images courtesy of airbnb



“There is a vibrant and welcoming community here and we look forward to more visitors benefitting from the unique and local experiences provided by our South Africa hosts.”

Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky

www.onrouteimg.co.za



Modern sitting area with fireplace



Clean understated bedroom

VOURN SMALL, CAPE TOWN

For fifteen years, Vourn Small of Green Point in Cape Town ran a successful coffee shop. She was busy seven days a week and loved being a confidante for her regular customers.

"I became more than a coffee shop owner," she says. "I had to be a marriage counsellor, a psychologist, a financial advisor, a shoulder to cry on, a good friend, and a lot more."

However, when she retired, she missed the contact with other people. And so, finding her life feeling a little empty, she decided to join Airbnb in June 2014. The number of guests varies with the season (and peaks from November to April) but she now hosts about 150 people a year.

"One of the strangest visits without a doubt was a beautiful lady who arrived with a large hire car packed from trunk to front," Vourn recalls. "She told us she had been married to a Sultan and that she was accustomed to having 24 handservants. Which was quite believable when we found ourselves peeling a banana for her to eat and emptying the bath after she bathed in milk!"

This fascinating guest had the most amazing stories to tell. And there have been many more fascinating stories from the people Vourn has hosted: doctors, nurses, professors, teachers, bankers, lawyers, pilots, models, authors, journalists, hippies, and some others she might be leaving out.

"It's been the most amazing experience," she says. "I've met the most incredible people and now have friends in more than 30 countries around the world. The best is that they are they are mostly here on holiday. So instead of listening to people's problems, I share their happiest moments."

To view this home:
www.airbnb.com/rooms/3268957

HOW TO BE A WINNING HOST!

"Provide complimentary snacks and drinks on arrival. It's not a lot of money to invest in creating a great stay and a happy guest. Also, spend some money on décor and keep your place spotlessly clean." ~ Mark and Liz Beard

"Just be who you are. It would be a pain to become all formal and business-like with guests. After all, Airbnb is often more about meeting people than providing a bed." ~ Guy and Tanya Spiller

"Because many have been given loads of information before they arrive, don't impose your ideas on things to do. It's their adventure. And if they need your help as a guide, they will ask." ~ Vourn Small



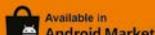
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