



Tholakele Linda



Hendrik Engelbrecht

## ECO-EVERYTHING AT SPIER

*While eco-tourism might be about being kind to the earth, it's also very much about people*

It's no surprise that Spier won gold at the African Responsible Tourism Awards 2016 in the category of Best Accommodation for Responsible Employment. It's dedicated to developing the skills and knowledge of its employees, who also commit to becoming eco-warriors. Spier has a philosophy of sustainable tourism, with a major focus on finding ways to reduce water usage. There are numerous environmental and social initiatives on the go at any time, but one that stands out is its involvement in the Tree-preneur project (an initiative by an NGO called Wildlands).

The premise is simple: participants (some coming from the Cape's poorest communities) are taught to care for indigenous trees and plants. They're given seedlings to look after and once these have reached 15cm, they can be exchanged for vouchers to buy clothing, food, agricultural goods and even educational resources. The Tree-preneur project has been running since 2009 and has created a local network of participants. Spier employee Lesley Joemat is passionate about it and has built a personal relationship with growers, providing support and encouragement, as well as soil, containers, soil and compost. For Joemat, the project's ultimately about changing the lives of people – and there are several success stories attesting to this, like that of 12-year-old Karel Julius, a Grade 6D pupil at Klapmuts Primary School who's been a Tree-preneur since 2015 and has bartered 120 trees in exchange for his beautiful new Qhubeka Buffalo bicycle. Then there's 49-year-old Tannie Babs Visagie from Heather Park, who's bartered 5 600 trees since she joined the project in 2011 and runs a food kitchen for orphans in her community, using her Tree-preneur vouchers to buy supplies. She's grown 500 spekboom trees that can be seen from the verandahs at the Spier Hotel.

The hotel was also the first in the country to be awarded Fair Trade in Tourism accreditation and continues to set an example for the local industry. For its employees, surrounding communities and guests alike, everything's coming up roses (or spekboom trees).

Spier is situated along the R310 in Stellenbosch.  
Visit: [www.spier.co.za](http://www.spier.co.za) – **Denise Slabbert**



Leefreght Souls

## TOURISM

# A FORCE FOR GOOD

In African culture, a calabash is an important item – and for locals in the Eastern Cape, the Calabash Trust is equally significant. This non-profit organisation is the philanthropic arm of Calabash Tours, a Port Elizabeth-based company founded in 1997 and awarded Fair Trade in Tourism accreditation in 2005.

For over a decade, Calabash has worked with township schools and rural communities. Its vision is to create "empowered, confident and resilient communities taking charge of their own lives, utilising local resources and working together towards social, environmental and economic equality and justice".

It achieves this in many ways: environmental good practice (including permaculture design, water harvesting and community resource development), storytelling (including theatre, music and visual art) and volunteerism (for HIV/Aids care and primary school education, among other causes).

"Seeing how township kids respond to our volunteers motivates me," says co-founder Paul Miedema.

"I hope our work enables people to flourish in their own space and to create connections with those from different backgrounds. These connections are magical. People continually surprise me in a positive way – and that keeps me going."

Visit: [www.calabashtours.co.za](http://www.calabashtours.co.za) – **EY**

