



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

## **RELIGIOUS TOURISM - AN ELEMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT**



**~A CASE OF THE HIDDEN GEMS OF KWAZULU NATAL - THE EXTRAORDINARY TRAPPIST MISSION STATIONS~**

Department:

Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs

Directorate:

Tourism Development

Sub-directorate:

Tourism Planning: Research, Policy And Measurement

Document title:

Religious Tourism

Sub-title:

An Element Of Cultural Tourism Development & Management

Submitted by:

Tourism Research, Policy and Measurement

Approved by:

Name: Ayanda Zodi

Designation:

Director: Tourism Transformation

Signature:



Date:

15/03/2021

**Department:**

**Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs**

**Directorate:**

**Tourism Development**

**Sub-directorate:**

**Tourism Planning: Research, Policy And Measurement**

**Document title:**

**Religious Tourism**

**Sub-title:**

**An Element Of Cultural Tourism Development & Management**

**Submitted by:**

**Tourism Research, Policy and Measurement**

**Approved by:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Designation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# CONTENTS

---

1. INTRODUCTION.....	Page 4
2. DEFINITIONS.....	Page 6
3. RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN SA.....	Page 8
4. RELIGIOUSLY MOTIVATED TRAVEL & RURAL TOURISM.....	Page 8
5. RELIGIOUS TOURISM IDENTIFIED AS A NICHE IN KZN.....	Page 9
6. CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM-THE LINK.....	Page 10
7. FAITH AND FESTIVALS IS KWAZULU NATAL.....	Page 11
8. CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT.....	Page 12
9. RELIGIOUS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT.....	Page 13
10. WHAT STRENGTHENS SUCCESSFUL ROUTE TOURISM IN SA.....	Page 13
10.1.A model of route development in KZN.....	Page 15
11. ROUTES AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION.....	Page 17
12. STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL ROUTE DEVELOPMENT & POSITIONING.....	Page 17
13. THE MAGNIFICENT TRAPPIST LEGACY OF KZN.....	Page 18
14. THE HIDDEN GEMS OF KZN-THE EXTRAORDINARY TRAPPIST STATIONS.....	Page 20
14.1.The Trappist Network Mission in KZN.....	Page 21
15. THESE BUILDINGS OFFER GREAT TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES.....	Page 23
16. PROSPECTS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KZN.....	Page 24
17. RELIGIOUS TOURISM ACTIONS PROPOSED FOR KZN.....	Page 27
18. CONCLUSION.....	Page 28
19. Gallery: Some religious sites of interest in KZN.....	Page 30

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

---

Religious tourism has economic benefits for the tourism industry as it benefits local economic and social development.

It is also commonly referred to as faith tourism, for pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure (fellowship) purposes. There are a number of religious events taking place throughout the world daily. These events tend to highlight the seriousness of people engaging in religious tourism. The peak season for religious tourism in South Africa (SA) is the Easter season.

During this season a large number of people come as far as from Southern Africa visiting different regions of SA including the KZN Province. Tourism is one of the world's leading industries in the global economy and is mostly promoted for its economic benefits across all countries.

The sheer importance of tourism has led to it gaining greater political significance, with the creation of a separate Department and Ministry of Tourism in 2009, in line with the objectives stated

in the White Paper on the Promotion and Development of Tourism in South Africa.

Tourism has been integrated into local economic development (LED) of almost all the municipalities and has been included in the National Development Plan (NDP).

This gives premise to many tourism concepts including the significant religious spaces which provide cultural and cross-cultural significance of many faiths as part of social, tradition and culture with substantial inter-relationship with South African society in the national history making religious tourism one of the very important sectors of consideration by all destinations with rich religious histories and sites such as KwaZulu-Natal.

People usually travel away from their places of residence for different reasons; each reason of travel is categorized into a type of tourism. For example, extended family voyages or club voyages are categorized as social or group tourism; Travelling for business and conferences has been termed economic or business tourism; Travelling for political events is named political tourism; Travelling across international borders for the purpose of receiving medical

care is referred to as medical tourism; Trips by athletes as well as visitors of sporting events are termed sports tourism and THAT VOYAGE WHOSE PARTICIPATION IS MOTIVATED EITHER IN PART OR EXCLUSIVELY FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS IS TERMED RELIGIOUS TOURISM.

Religious and spiritual tourism refers to travel for religious or spiritual purposes, such as undertaking a pilgrimage and visiting sacred sites. Also known as sacred or faith tourism, it is one of the oldest forms of tourism. The Specialist niches of religious tourism are:-

- Pilgrimages
- Visiting sacred site
- Church, mosque and temple tourism
- Travel for the purpose of mission or worship

A pilgrimage is a trip to a religious or spiritual place with the aim of experiencing religious or personal enlightenment. Secular pilgrimage, such as visiting nature as a source of spiritual inspiration is not included. The visiting of sacred sites includes important sites from ancient religions, like native burial grounds. Tours with the

aim of visiting monuments, such as churches, temples and mosques attracts mostly non-believers. Travel for the purpose of mission or worship are trips for the purposes of worship, performing holy rituals, spreading faith, being involved in charity, or volunteering from a religious perspective and are closely related to pilgrimage.

As set out in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Master Plan, the development of niche tourism products holds a number of benefits, including: the opportunity to diversify the tourism economy through the creation of new markets; generate higher revenues per visitor, in terms of foreign exchange earnings and consumer spending. Although niche markets are often smaller in size than mainstream tourism markets; they generally provide greater growth potential than mainstream tourism.

The development of this document was undertaken to provide insight into the religious tourism concept as an element of cultural tourism development and management in KwaZulu-Natal a well as to provide guidance and recommendation on the subject of the religious tourism niche.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

<b>Religious Tourism</b>	A form of tourism that is conducted at religious sites and often includes aspects of religious worship.
<b>Religious Tourist</b>	Someone who engages in tourism but does so at religious sites.
<b>Rural Tourism</b>	Tourism activities occurring in rural areas based on tourist consumption of products in rural areas
<b>Cultural Tourism</b>	cultural aspects which are of interest to the visitor and can be marked as such, including the customs and traditions of people, their heritage, history and way of life
<b>Responsible Tourism</b>	tourism management strategy in which the tourism sector and tourists take responsibility to protect and conserve the natural environment, respect and conserve local cultures and ways of life,

and contribute to stronger local economies and a better quality of life for local people.

**The pilgrimage tourist** Enjoys sightseeing, traveling, visiting diverse places and, may travel by land, air or sea to a desired destination. Once there, they may stay for one or many nights and buy local memorabilia eat at local restaurants and experience the unique culture and virtually act like every other tourist, except that they are primarily spiritually motivated. This therefore includes tourism that is inspired by spirituality and religiousness and it is generally associated with religious heritage sites. The religious desire to travel is one of the oldest motivations.

**Route Tourism Development** The world's best hope to secure sustainability in travel and tourism is Route tourism is thus described as a

market-driven approach for tourism destination development. The concept of tourism routes refers to an “initiative to bring together a variety of activities and attractions under a unified theme and thus stimulate entrepreneurial opportunity through the development of ancillary products and services”

**Abbey**

An abbey is a type of monastery used by members of a religious order under the governance of an abbot or abbess. Abbeys provides a complex of buildings and land for religious activities, work, and housing of Christian monks and nuns.

**Abbot**

From the Aramaic Abba meaning "father" is an ecclesiastical title given to the male head of a monastery in various western religious traditions, including Christianity. The office may also be given as an

honorary title to a clergyman who is not the head of a monastery. The female equivalent is abbess.



### 3. RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

---

The growth of tourism in South Africa after the end of apartheid can be associated with the growth of various forms of special interest tourism.

Religious tourism as a form of special interest tourism is possibly the most important contributor of tourism geographical dispersion in South Africa. South Africa's religious tourism is dominated by Christian religious pilgrimage.

Religious pilgrimages produce positive spin offs for many destinations in South Africa, which may not be regarded as traditional tourism destinations. Religious-linked domestic travel continues to dominate domestic tourism expenditure.

The existence of several African Initiated Churches such as the Zion Christian Church and the Nazareth Baptist Church attract several million worshippers during their religious pilgrimages, attracting worshippers beyond South Africa.

Robben Island, which is a shrine for the anti-apartheid struggle, has a glorious Muslim resistance history, which is yet to be exploited by the Robben Island Museum.

### 4. RELIGIOUSLY MOTIVATED TRAVEL & RURAL TOURISM

---

Religiously motivated travel is considered as one of the oldest and most widespread reasons for travel. There are a number of destinations that have become renowned for their religious tourism resources and attracting large volumes of visitors daily.

Sacred places such as shrines, temples, churches, landscape features and ceremonial events are among the most ancient in religious tourism.

Similar to other countries, millions of people in South Africa also travel to places of spiritual significance such as religious sites for religious reasons.

The priority areas of South Africa at the national level include rural development. Rural tourism is one of the pathways in which rural development can be achieved.

Religious tourism is also considered by the government as a strategic activity for employment and generation of value to host economies. In particular the socio-economic impacts of religious

tourism include influx of people and related social challenges, impacts on local communities and cultural values.

The priority areas of South Africa at the national level include rural development. Rural tourism is one of the pathways in which rural development can be achieved.

Religious tourism is also considered by the government as a strategic activity for employment and generation of value to host economies. In particular the socio-economic impacts of religious tourism include influx of people and related social challenges, impacts on local communities and cultural values.

## **5. RELIGIOUS TOURISM IDENTIFIED AS AN IMPORTANT NICHE MARKET IN KZN.**

A Tourism KwaZulu Natal (TKZN) research paper and the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Master Plan identify religious tourism as an important niche market, especially when considering that the province receives huge numbers in domestic and international visitors during the Easter seasons. However, whilst places of worship are busy during religious holidays, they are also worthwhile venues for tourists to explore year round.

Visitors can visit the many mission stations scattered across the province, some examples of these KZN religious sites of interest include:

- The Centocow Mission in Underberg,
- The Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre at the Durban Jewish Club
- A quiet moment at the Buddhist Retreat Centre near Ixopo,
- The Jummah Mosque in Durban.
- Riechenau Trappist Mission, near Underberg

There are many others in the province which are good choices to add to any itinerary. The tourism market is very diverse and can be divided into many segments, all of which share similar consumer behaviour patterns. Several of these market segments are also referred to as niche tourism. A niche is a market segment, usually with a well-defined product that can be tailored to meet the interest of the consumer.

## 6. CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM – THE LINK

---

The pilgrimage sites attract masses of pilgrims like they did in ancient times, the difference now is that pilgrims are not only interested in visiting the holy place but also interested in every aspect that surrounds the way to that place, becoming a religious tourists or people on holiday interested in some religious activities.

Most of the time, it can be observed that tourists share the same attitudes as pilgrims - Reflecting on life, seeking transcendental values, emotional, mental or spiritual path-, therefore, it could be said that pilgrims are partly tourists and that tourists are partly pilgrims. The motivation that pushes the pilgrims to perform the pilgrim route to any religious site is two-pronged, i.e. The Devotional and the Cultural motivation.

There are many business opportunities a pilgrimage route offers to cities and villages near by the route, the only thing to do is to give answers to some important marketing questions like:

- What new forms of consumption can be created?
- Is there any target market for heritage and cultural tourism that can be promoted?
- Which needs – motives a pilgrim has during the route and in the religious site?
- How to improve visitors' satisfaction with the experience in order to extend their stay?

Once these have been answered, new small and medium enterprises can be created and existing ones supported to satisfy pilgrim travellers needs linked to particular religious or pilgrimage tourist route.

KZN has significant buildings that are not only centres for gathering of a particular religion but are architectural wonders and tourism attractions

**Additional to the significant buildings, there are smaller pilgrimages, particularly within the Roman Catholic Church, that take place to various shrines in KZN**

Religion, history, geography and the clash of European and African cultures somehow manage to get involved in a multiple-narrative pile-up in the dusty, desolate roads of southern KwaZulu-Natal.

In terms of cultural tourism South Africa is certainly no slouch. Several iconic destinations such as KwaZulu-Natal's battlefields of Isandlwana and Blood River, Sterkfontein's Cradle of Humankind and the Iron Age marvel of Mapungubwe immediately spring to mind. Yet these are merely the tip of the iceberg of landmark locations that tempt the taste buds of the intrepid traveller. The country has more unexpected sources of interest to those determined to remain far off the beaten track.

---

## 7. FAITH AND FESTIVALS IN KWAZULU-NATAL

---

In KwaZulu-Natal, Hindu devotees and Jewish mamas, Muslim scholars and Christian worshippers, African traditionalists and Buddhists are a friendly, fascinating and rich diversity of people who happily co-exist side-by-side making the province the vibrant, interesting and somewhat complex region that it is.

Throughout KZN, there are beautiful temples, mosques, churches and shrines you can visit and a number of colourful and fascinating festivals of both faith and food at which visitors are always welcome.

Visitors can take an amazingly interesting tour of the many mission stations dotted about the province, most being off-shoots from the lovely Trappist Mariannahill Monastery outside Durban.

Visitors have access to the Holocaust Centre at the Durban Jewish Club and can always pop in for an excellent cup of coffee at the adjacent Garden of Remembrance and attend Hindu Diwali celebrations during this Festival of Lights or the colourful Holi Festival of Colours celebrating the arrival of spring. On the first Sunday of the New Year, visitors can follow the Shembe faith pilgrimage up the Holy Mountain of Nhlankazi and at any time take a quiet moment at the Buddhist Retreat Centre near Ixopo. A tour of the lovely Jummah Mosque where visitors can learn something about the Islamic faith and fascinating architecture is also a recommended KZN experience.

## 8. CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

---

Many countries in Europe and Asia are highly manipulating the religious tourism sector for their economic and socio-cultural development. However, in many countries including South Africa, religious tourism remains undeveloped due to a number of challenges.

Religious tourism is unambiguously considered as one of the development options for remote and isolated religious areas in various nations, South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal included, but, religious tourism is not clearly studied and identified as a capable development option for our country and its provinces that are rich in religious tourism like KZN.

Problems like poor infrastructure, hassling, begging, heritage trafficking, limited community participation, cultural degradation, and lack of attention to the sector by the government administrations are adverse factors which confront religious tourism development in many areas. Hence, far more productive and corrective measures are required to reduce development

obstacles and to enlarge the potential of this niche are required from all tourism stakeholders.

The tourism industry plays multiple roles in the economy, socio-culture, and environment of all countries in the world. The most widely recognized outcomes of tourism include providing employment, incomes, taxes revenues and foreign exchange.

Religious tourism as any other type of tourism is volatile in nature that anything can affect it. Changes like global economic downturns, inflation, currency fluctuations, disease or viruses, and political unrest all hamper religious tourism development.

However, the UNWTO once denoted that, despite the numerous negative impacts of globalization, terrorism, racism, economic recession and possible self-imposed limitations on travel due to concerns for climate change, religious tourism is and can be a greater force for peace, solidarity, and integrity of the world.

Some other factors that affect religious tourism include political instability, other political obstacles, financial problems, environment and health factors, marketing, services and poor infrastructural and facilities factors.

## 9. RELIGIOUS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

---

Religious tourism is one of the oldest types of tourism worldwide. Mankind for thousands of years has taken long journeys in order to observe religious practices. Some scholars in the religious tourism subject state that careful marketing of religious sites is vital because spirituality is a multi-dimensional concept based on dimensions such as religion, quality of life and wellness, which are all closely related.

Consequently, spirituality needs to be carefully marketed and a tourism perspective highlighting segmentation is considered to be a suitable method to adopt. Sustainable development of religious tourism with education and training given their rightful place are the keys to safeguarding the vast cultural heritage of any destination.

## 10. WHAT STRENGTHENS SUCCESSFUL ROUTE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SA

---

In several parts of the world, the concept of rural trails or heritage routes has been used, particularly in the context of promoting rural tourism. Routes seem to be a particularly good opportunity for the

development of less mature areas with high cultural resources that appeal to special interest tourists, who often, not only stay longer, but also spend more to pursue their particular interest.

Routes appeal to a great variety of users such as overnight visitors that visit the route as part of a special interest holiday or day visitors that frequent the route (or part of it) on excursions. The essential concept of route tourism is simple, namely that of the linking together a series of tourism attractions in order to promote local tourism by encouraging visitors to travel from one location to another.

The development of tourism routes offers opportunities for the formation of local development partnerships. Some of the best and most successful examples of such 'rural routes' are the development of wine or food circuits, which have been widely researched in Europe, North America and Australasia.

In South Africa, considerable activity surrounds the development of 'route tourism', involving linkage of the tourism resources of a number of smaller centres and collectively marketing them as a single tourism destination region. For many South African small towns, route tourism is a vital component of local economic

development. Wine tourism routes are one of the most well-known examples of the strong and growing interest in special interest destinations in South Africa, however, as successful as they are such routes are product orientated and currently offer little opportunities for linkages with non-wine suppliers.

In general, routes are initiated with one or more of the following objectives in mind:

- To diffuse visitors and disperse income from tourism;
- To bring lesser-known attractions and features into the tourism business/ products;
- To increase the overall appeal of a destination;
- To increase length of stay and spending by tourists;
- To attract new tourists and to attract repeat visitors; and
- To increase the sustainability of the tourism products

In principle, the tourism route concept is seen as a very effective method of tourism distribution, especially of tourists travelling by road (driving, hiking and cycling) within a given geographic area.

The attractiveness of any route is its perceived “distance” in terms of the Geographical distance between the generating region and the

tourism destination. This means the actual travel distance, the willingness of the tourist to cover this distance might be considerably different for various segments and is determined by the “appeal” and attractiveness of the product.

Travel time needed to cover the geographical distance is also a factor, this is the possibility to cover the distance as part of a “day-tripping” excursion, or conversely the need to plan a longer trip and design a route that has sufficient attractions to appeal to longer staying visitors.

The third factor to an attractive route is the amount of money needed by the tourist to cover the distance, this refers to how much a market segment is willing to spend on reaching and travelling the route and it depends whether the route offers value for money and if there are sufficient attractions that would entice visitation.

The other factor is Cognitive distance between the generating region and the destination. This is the perception of travel with regard to the tourism product and route as being similar or distant to the home environment.

Routes can either be “product” or “theme” based. The not so recent study by Emerge Centre for Innovation –Africa (ECI-A) “Africa on routes and community-based tourism” states that routes are developed across the globe on various scales such as across countries as in the examples of the Silk Routes in Eastern Europe and the Camino de Santiago in Western Europe.

Terminology used to describe the concept also varies greatly such as “themed routes”, “trails” and “tourism byways”.

Trails usually refer to the concept on a smaller geographical scale, which indicates the ability of visitors to engage in the attraction on foot, bicycle, or horseback. In Australia and the United States, the route concept is linked to a market-driven term called “drive tourism” which is used to encourage visitation to attractions that are dispersed over larger distances, hereby making rural destinations more attractive to self-drive tourists, e.g. the Queensland Heritage Trails in Australia. Route tourism is essentially a market-driven approach for tourism destination development.

---

## 10.1. A Model of Route Development in Kwazulu-Natal

---

The Midlands Meander Route in KZN brings together a variety of activities and attractions under a unified theme and thus stimulate entrepreneurial opportunity through the development of ancillary products and services.

The Midlands Meander is a route tourism destination with its core product offering being arts and crafts, agricultural produce and a scenic rural environment.

The majority of tourism establishments on the Meander route are small and focused on personalised services. The general tourism market demand for the Meander is seasonal and corresponds to school holidays and the area is mostly attracting the domestic leisure market.

Most tourism business operators in this region affiliate to the Midlands Meander Association (MMA) which is one of very few successful private sector driven and funded destination management organisations in South Africa. The Midlands Meander Route as a brand is well-recognised and is generally



perceived as a good tourist destination. The primary motivation for consumers to visit the Midlands Meander Route is to get away from the city, be surrounded by beautiful scenery and experience something different. The Destination is also used as a stop-over en-route to other destinations.

Tourism in the area is governed by a strategic planning process with good management structures, product diversification, good financial income through membership fees and selling of advertisement space on their famous brochure.

The Meander route example shows that a clearly identified unique selling point is very important to establish a route and create a clear brand within the industry and tourism markets.

Successful route development also requires a wide range of complimentary products that individually add value to the generic product. The establishment of a competent destination management organisation like the MMA is crucial and such an organisation should have the ability to draw members with specific and related professional skills and to mentor others for sustainability. All decisions require transparency and should always carry the interest of the members and region in general.

Though there is some existing literature on routes tourism development, there is no "how to" manual explaining the steps that should be followed when developing a route. This leaves the rich cultural and heritage resources of KZN yet to be effectively preserved and turned into tourist attractions that earn revenue and create employment.

In-depth research on the performance of tourism products within tourism routes with an aim to gain a better understanding of the impact, drivers, challenges and potential of route tourism in local economies remains crucial.

Though religious tourism has multiple benefits that could change religious villages, these are not forthcoming unless proper control mechanisms are established and applied. Thus as things stand, religious-based tourism might lead to the deterioration of priceless heritage, degradation of culture, pollution of the environment and so on. Therefore, policymakers should manage the existing drawbacks of religious tourism development; identify new ones through case based research. Whilst working towards enhancing these areas, conserving their precious resource legacies is also very crucial.

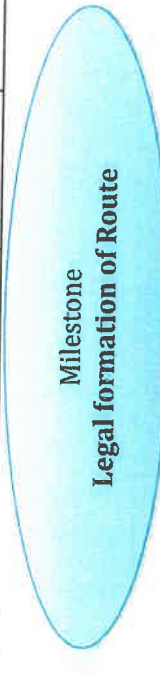


## 11. ROUTES AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

New Tourism routes have the potential to lead to the development of local enterprises, increasing the demand for goods and services of the poor, and contribute to the much needed employment.

The recognition of the importance of tourism as a potential driving force in the socioeconomic development of third world countries suggests that tourism development can be an avenue toward a growing sphere of trading opportunities and accordingly, one of the most effective methods to avoid the risk of increased marginalisation from the global economy.

## 12. STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL ROUTE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT & POSITIONING

When a new route destination is developed, it is usually unrecognised in the market place with only a small number of visitors to the area and limited tourism infrastructure. During this phase committed leadership is required to see the potential and develop a vision for the region.

1.	Research & conceptualisation	2.	Audit of tourism products & services	3.	Identify unique features, experiences that can be offered in the region	4.	Develop a strategic plan combining markets & offerings	5.	Determine potential size of membership, investigate legal structure suitable for management of the route
									
7.	Develop a clear branding identity for the region	8.	Develop an operations plan to take care of day to day functions	9.	Plan the finances of the management organisation	10.	Think long term- identify and draw upon resourceful people in the region to assist with strategy	11.	<b>Route establishment phase completed</b> Period: year1-5
<b>DESTINATION GROWTH PHASE</b> Period: year 5-20				<b>MATURE DESTINATION</b> Period: year 20+				<b>RE-EVALUATION</b>	

The establishment and conceptualisation phase of a route contains steps which could take between one and five years to complete. Meticulousness and all-inclusiveness are required during the establishment and conceptualisation phase to ensure the desired long-term effects.

The development of a tourism route must be conceptualised based on solid market research which identifies key target markets and their requirements. Market research must be conducted on a continuous basis to ensure that the latest tourism trends are included into objectives and strategies for the area. When budgets are tight, it is necessary to align the destination to a local, regional or provincial tourism authority or link to a local university to provide students or volunteers to assist with market research.

Certain functions, such as macro planning, are better suited to be fulfilled by the public sector. Design and implementation of funded programmes to complement macro planning initiatives is a function that should reside within the public sector and is extremely important for the success of destination development initiatives.

### **13. THE MAGNIFICENT TRAPPIST LEGACY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

---

One of the remarkable tales of KZN are that of the Mariannhill Monastery, its constellation of mission stations dotted around central and southern KwaZulu-Natal, and the man who built them.

The story begins in 1880 when Franz Pfanner, an enigmatic Austrian monk of the even more enigmatic Trappist Order of the Catholic Church, arrived in what was East Griqualand (now southern KwaZulu-Natal).

Pfanner's decision to join the Trappist order and the effect this had on his life and the course of history is an ironic one. Since he was a child, Pfanner had suffered poor health and when he encountered the Trappists with their uncompromising regimen of backbreaking labour and extreme frugality, he was convinced this would finish him off. In short, he joined the Trappists to die.

Yet, miraculously, the hard, punishing life of the Trappist was just the tonic for Pfanner, who ended up living into his 79th year.

Pfanner disagreed with his order in Europe as he wanted to be able to train and educate local people; and in order to do so, he had to contravene the vow of silence and speak to people. The Vatican created a new order, the Congregation of Mariannahill Missionaries, so that he could be separated from the original order. Pfanner dedicated his life to others, lived simply and frugally, and is an inspiration to many even to this day.

His focus in life every day was to pray and work and he was personally responsible for many buildings as his order believed in the value of physical labour.

The monastic motto of 'Ora et Labora', meaning to work and pray, was strictly adhered to by Pfanner. He was able to work with others such as the Sisters of the Precious Blood to assist communities around the mission stations and provide much-needed spiritual guidance.

Together as missionaries they left a valuable legacy of social upliftment for rural communities and many projects were completed by them.

Each mission has a school and three have hospitals. The artistic detail and craftsmanship can be seen at each mission station, in the buildings, the churches and murals that adorn the chapel walls.

Pfanner moved to a farm near Lourdes mission after his troubles with the Vatican and unwarranted expulsion, but soon left there to establish a mission at Skimpers Nek Mountain which he called Emaus.

He died on 24 May 1909 and his body was taken to Mariannahill monastery where he was buried; but prior to burial his heart was taken out and buried in the grounds of Emaus.

He must have been loved by both communities and highly respected for them to have done such a thing. At Emaus he walked up a hill every day and created the Stations of the Cross to contemplate on this walk, so it seems fitting that his heart is buried there.



## Reviews

TELL ME YOUR STORY by Ruda Landman (Trafalgar, R250)

Landman is recognised as one of South Africa's greatest interviewers. So it's a treat to be served up a collection of interviews with achievers such as actor John Kani, Mami Khanyo and Angel James, all of whom open up on how their feelings about the country has changed, what they are contributing, and how it affects those they love.

landslide and supper. Von der Heyde has turned it to a calmer aspect. Trappist mission stations in KwaZulu-Natal. These are often breathtaking landmarks, but the story behind each is a very human tale of struggle, toil and even monks being sent themselves in multi to thwart religious persecution.

This useful guidebook even includes directions to and GPS coordinates for the sites mentioned. Von der Heyde's plan that these buildings offer great tourism opportunities that are mostly still to be realised.

TRUMPET & TRAGEDY: TRAPPIST MISSIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

by Nicky von der Heyde (Campanile Press, R200)

After runaway bestsellers with her books on South Africa's

The KZN land was good, the Umhlatuzana River had fresh water and on 21 December 1882 they bought a part of the Zeekoegat Farm from the Land Colonization company. There were discussions about what the new monastery would be called. "Mary Ann Hill. They eventually agreed and declared that it will be called "Mariannhill".

In 1883 Father Francis returned from Europe with 34 new recruits. After three years there were 150 monks and after ten years there were over 250 men. They encouraged the local Shozu people to settle on the mission teaching them modern farming methods and establishing a monastery school for their children after the chiefs asked them to teach the children how to read 'the flies on the paper'.

In 1885 Mariannhill became an Abbey and Francis Pfanner was elected as the first Abbot of Mariannhill. He knew that he would have to make changes to the customs of his order if they were to be effective missionaries so he advertised for nuns from Europe to join the Abbey as helpers.

In August, the arrival of the first five female mission helpers arrived from Europe. They were the foundation of the new missionary

Father Francis Pfanner with a team of about 30 monks from Maria Stern arrived in South Africa at Dunbrody in the Eastern Cape. Due to drought and unsuitable land, the mission there was a failure and they then travelled west of Durban to look for a farm which was on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1882.

## 14. THE HIDDEN GEMS OF KZN - THE EXTRAORDINARY TRAPPIST MISSION STATIONS

Sisters of the Precious Blood and to this day they still serve in Mariannahill monasteries. Any contact with women was forbidden by the Trappist order and the consequences were enormous.

In 1886 the Zulu Chief Sakayedwa in the Polela Valley near Underberg invited the monks to build schools within his community. The Abbot saw it as a challenge and purchased land to set up a new mission.

It took the first nine monks fourteen days to get there from Mariannahill in six ox wagons which contained prefabricated living quarters manufactured at the Mariannahill Monastery to be used for accommodation, as well as food supplies, building materials and tools. In 1887 the mission was named Reichenau after a Benedictine monastery situated on the banks of Lake Constance in Germany.

In contravention of their order, the Trappists had become missionaries and evangelists. It soon became apparent that in order to spend every night under a Trappist roof in order to perform their seven hours of divine office, they would need to establish a network of mission stations each within a day's ride of each

other. In the next few years they established numerous missions which are commonly referred to as the Mariannahill sister mission.

## 14.1. The Trappist Network Missions in KZN

20 Mariannahill Missions were built between 1886 and 1901 each with a unique church and a self-sustaining farm. The first mission built being Reichenau near Underberg.

Mariannahill (KZN) Network Mission by Abbot Francis Pfanner and Trappist Monks			
1882-1887	1888-1893	1894-1896	1897-1901
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mariannahill Monastery</li> <li>• Reichenau</li> <li>• Einsiedeln</li> <li>• Mariathal</li> <li>• Oetting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kevelaer</li> <li>• Lourdes</li> <li>• Centocow</li> <li>• Maria</li> <li>• Ratschitz</li> <li>• St Michaels</li> <li>• Mariazell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emaus</li> <li>• Maria Telgte</li> <li>• Maria Hilf</li> <li>• Clairvaux</li> <li>• Citeaux</li> <li>• Maria Trost</li> <li>• Hardenberg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maria Linden</li> <li>• Himmelberg</li> <li>• Maristella</li> </ul>

In 1891, the German Trappist Monks who were based at the neighbouring Mariathal Mission, purchased land from the King family near Ixopo and set about establishing a mission supply farm

which would produce all the food needs for the recently built St Mary's Seminary. They named the farm 'St Isidor'. After the sponsor saint of farmers, and turned it into a thriving and busy little haven which consisted of well cultivated crops, a maize mill, a double storey dairy and hayloft, a brick factory, a piggery, a chapel and also accommodation for the hard-working brothers and sisters. 'St Isidor' soon became an important source of fodder and field crops for the surrounding missions, the local hospital and the 'Little Flower' school.

For more than 100 years, St Isidor farm was the main provider for the neighbouring seminary, the 'place of learning' for the young priests-in-training. The farm had developed into a self-sufficient one, where brothers and sisters lived harmoniously in the peaceful surroundings.

By 1996, very few young men were choosing to train as priests at the seminary and the farm was struggling financially. It was time to recognize that the original purpose of this historical farm had been fulfilled, and so the Catholic Church reluctantly decided to sell.

In September of 1996, the farm was bought by neighbouring farmers David and Cheryl Biggs who have renamed it 'King's

Grant' but retained the name 'St Isidor' for the mill and chapel and lovingly restored the old mission and converted it into a welcoming guesthouse with conference and wedding facilities. This is another very historical site with great history of the Trappist monks.

However, history tells us that Abbot Pfanner's drive and ambition to change the lives of rural African people and the dispensations he gave to his monks, which went against many of their rules, caused conflict within his beloved contemplative order and resulted in him being disposed as Abbot and banished to the far away mission of Emaus.

Here he hewed steps out of the rocks on the side of the mountain behind the mission, erecting a cross at the top which he called his Calvary. He erected the Stations of the Cross on the way to the top and climbed the steps every day until, in his eighties, he could no longer walk. His missionaries would not stop their missionary work or return to Europe.

Eventually, in February 1909, Pope Pius X decided to separate Mariannhill and all its missions from the Trappist order. Those who wanted to stay with the order could go back to Europe but none returned.

A new order was created - the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill (CMM). Shortly after the creation of the CMM, on 24 May 1909, Francis Pfanner died at Emaus.

## **15. THESE BUILDINGS OFFER GREAT TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES.**

---

The monastery churches are architectural masterpieces of KwaZulu-Natal, a legacy of Trappist monks from central Europe who, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, were responsible for an explosion of missionary activity previously unknown. Until now, the Trappist churches have remained “hidden jewels”, set in remote and splendid countryside.

Mysterious and magnificent, they are waiting to be discovered and appreciated.

KwaZulu-Natal has lots of religious tourism resources which can enable the province to become one of the most important religious tourist destinations in South Africa. Some of the most important ingredients for religious tourism development in KwaZulu-Natal include:-

- The welcoming and warm nature of its people,
- Religious infrastructure,
- Religious festivals,
- The Rich Roman Catholic history,
- Many religious groups living in harmony and
- Government willingness to support religious tourism potential

Besides the art, the churches that exist in KZN are full of tangible heritage. The heritage is one of the most important potential aspects that attract visitors to these sites. It is believed that both the tangible and intangible heritage in each of the churches in KwaZulu-Natal offer a big potential for religious tourism development.

There are many religious festivals and holidays in the year calendar which KwaZulu-Natal could utilise as additional means to obtain the much needed tourist inflows and which could boost religious tourism development, if only they could be properly managed.

Developing the religious festivals would enable the hosting town to attract a high number of domestic and international tourists which



in return would lead to a greater economic return to the host town as well as the country's GDP.

Some of these religious holidays include:-

- Mary, Mother of God (Catholic)
- Epiphany (Christian)
- Maha Shivaratri (Hindu)
- Ash Wednesday (Christian)
- Holi (Hindu)
- Purim (Jewish)
- St. John Baptist de La Salle (Catholic)
- Holy Week (Palm Sunday & Good Friday :Christian)
- Pesach/Passover (Jewish)
- Ramadan (Muslim)
- Easter Sunday (Christian)
- Ascension Day (Christian)
- Novena of Prayer for Christian Unity (Catholic)
- Eid-ul-Fitr (Muslim)
- Diwali (Hindu)
- Christmas (Christian)

There are many other important celebrations in Christianity and several world religions.

## 16. PROSPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KZN

---

- Pilgrimage Tourism has emerged as an instrument for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development.
- Pilgrimage Tourism promotes international understanding and gives support to local handicrafts and cultural activities. It has the potential to become an important segment of the country's economy, especially in terms of its contribution towards foreign exchange earnings, generation of additional income and creation of employment opportunities.
- Religious based tourism attracts great numbers of domestic visitors but some sites do attract international markets and this would need to be investigated further to determine a strategy that best suits the KZN tourism dynamics in as far as religious tourism is concerned.

- The provincial and local governments can invest in developing infrastructure close to religious destinations in areas where there is potential for religious tourism to flourish, areas of important research including market research would need to be identified and relevant studies be conducted to determine the status quo and prospects of religious tourism in identified destinations in KwaZulu-Natal, for example, areas like the Harry Gwala District which have rich catholic based attraction sites which are yet to be explored and enabled to reach their full tourism potential and community beneficiation.

- For significant positive impact of religious tourism and any other specific pilgrimages that exist in KZN to be realized in the local economy, serious discussions should be initiated within the District Municipality or host destinations in an effort to empower more local people ownership of pilgrimage related businesses, in particular transport businesses in order to generate income and employment, especially in rural municipalities.

- Residents of the host rural communities of the annual religious gatherings generally perceive that positive impacts of the religious gatherings do outweigh the negatives, and would therefore generally like pilgrim population to grow annually, however, based on this generic perception, it is recommended that, for residents' wishes to be realized and for this religious tourism to flourish in these areas where they are held, the provision of basic infrastructure including water, sanitation, accommodation and access roads to the pilgrimage site which are usually found to be inadequate, requires the intervention of provincial or local municipality to provide these basic services. Communities, congregants and overseers of the places of worship are generally not against the integration of religious activities with the tourism activities as long as this will grow the local economy, benefit community members through various structures and the actual pilgrimage sites.

- For KwaZulu-Natal as a province, very few studies have shed some light on the economic, social and religious benefits that accrue from development and promotion of religious

tourism. If travels to faith based camps, holy places and religious conventions are encouraged by government at all levels, the religious tourism potential of the province will not only be brought to the lime-light, but will also help in securing a prominent position for KZN on the religious tourism map.

- With the assistance of relevant bodies within the province, studies that investigate the socio-economic impact of specific religious tourism events and activities on the local tourism industry and surrounding rural communities in District Municipalities where there is potential for this niche need to be conducted to ensure that informed decisions are taken towards the development of religious tourism in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

- In the interest of cultivating and growing the KZN religious tourism niche, exchange programmes in Religion and Culture need to be considered in religious denominations where these seem to exist as one of the ways in which

religious tourism can bring in international visitors and currency into the province of KZN.

- Tour operators and the DMO would need to be involved to ensure proper religious tourism packaging and marketing. The ultimate goal for the province should be to create and invest in religious tourism destinations or routes that can be easily packaged and sold to ensure their sustainability. Strategic development and marketing of these sites will help boost visitor numbers.

- Setting up experiences that create added value to a product or service, such as including stories, music, food and other aspects associated with the destination is crucial. To achieve this kind of a niche product, it is recommended that attraction sites and destination managers engage a broad range of stakeholders in developing, promoting and managing tourism.

- Religious tourism destinations that are already active need to consider inviting bloggers or social media influencers free of

charge to their destinations to reach a larger public as well as to ensure that they keep their own social media channels up to date.

## **17. RELIGIOUS TOURISM ACTIONS PROPOSED FOR KZN PROVINCE**

Due to the enormous global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, tourism will be different in the future and that is guaranteed, however, this is an ideal opportunity to re-think the products and services that the province is currently offering and diversify where needs be, taking into consideration that any planning and development takes time.

Now is an opportunity to reflect, research, conceptualise, do studies, engage stakeholders, seek investment opportunities and eventually develop sellable routes in relation to the religious tourism niche and others that might have potential to succeed in the province.

### **Actions**

- Identify a region in the province for a religious tourism route development pilot project.
- Identify areas that need special expertise including route packaging, market research, route mapping, GPS coordination, etc. so that such is properly budgeted for and properly implemented.
- Identify destinations that do have religious tourism activities and develop programmes that can assist tourist guides through a particular municipality.
- For successful routes, ensure that they are well documented and marketed by assisting municipalities in any way possible including market sourcing.
- Where there are existing trails, identify possible areas of development by conducting a needs analysis that does not exclude the community and ensuring that such needs are met, these may include but are not limited to signage, route marking and eatery provision along route.
- Identify other activities besides trails, e.g. look into villages along the route to gorge homestay potential linked to religious tourism.
- Engage any associations that operate in the religious tourism space with regards to market sourcing and more
- Identify and assist religious tourism sites with infrastructure enhancement and other relevant areas that the province might invest in.

## 18. CONCLUSION

---

Religious tourism is a niche within the segment of cultural tourism, comprising four specialist niches: **pilgrimages, visiting sacred sites, church, mosque and temple tourism, and travel for the purpose of mission or worship.**

Travellers who visit religious sites can be divided into two main target groups: believers and non-believers. Both are important target groups, but they require different approaches.

Believers seek spiritual support or reinforce their religious beliefs. Often, they undertake a pilgrimage for religious reasons or for the purpose of worship. Most religious tourists are very motivated to travel, so they are willing to spend more money than the average traveller. This inherent motivation also makes religious tourism less vulnerable to economic lows. Believers like to travel in groups of like-minded people.

Non-believers are attracted to sacred sites, churches, mosques, synagogues and other places of worship, not because of their religious value, but for their cultural significance, architectural importance, aesthetic beauty or historic value. Non-believers may

be religious, but religion is not their main purpose for traveling. Some non-believers who seek self-improvement by travelling to religious sites require some form of catering geared to offering a spiritual experience with the destination

Religious tourism can be considered as a high-quality form of tourism because of the positive payback for the destination's culture and society. This form of tourism helps to raise awareness of people's common heritages, which helps with their preservation in addition to the financial gains that can eventually be reinvested into conservation of the local culture and religious heritage.

Religious tourism is a great source of community empowerment and development as well. The interest of tourists in local values and communities helps in developing a sense of empowerment and pride in the local community, its culture and history.

Naturally and if well developed and marketed, religious tourism also contributes to regional economic increase, employment and better quality of life.

Religious sites and places of worship are important meeting grounds for different kinds of visitors and hosts. Tourism breaks

down cultural and religious barriers. This results in better cross-cultural understanding, which improves social cohesion.

Tourism businesses should appreciate and understand possible conflicting ideologies, underlying deeper meanings and forms of interaction with religious sites, which may conflict with the socioeconomic and political norms of the parties concerned. In order to maintain religious tourism sustainably, two criteria must be met:

- preservation of the religious sites or monuments
- upholding respect to local traditions and religious practices

The main reason for making a trip can be religious, but visiting a religious site or place of worship can also just be part of another trip, or it can provide additional attractions to a specific destination. The level of religious tourism can be anything from small scale, visiting specific places of worship (temples, altars, churches, mission stations, etc.), to medium scale, such as visiting Mecca, Jerusalem or the Vatican, and even large scale, such as visiting Israel as a whole.

As there are many forms and levels of religious tourism, tourism developers, marketers and all stakeholders involved need to look at what is already available nearby to see if something can be added to it.

There doesn't necessarily have to be a religious site nearby to justify a religious tourist attraction, looking for any artefacts or other historical facts and products that relate to the place and focusing on that is also important. A good international example is the England programme called 'champing', which means camping in churches.

However, it must always be remembered that different religions have different values, rules and standards. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge and respect those differences, as well as to give everyone the freedom to think and express what they want whilst working towards developing any new religious tourism activities.

There is a great need of creativity in terms of possible streams of revenue. Amongst the many goods and services related to religious or spiritual tourism, consideration of souvenir items, religious books, outlets for halal or any other speciality food, faith-based music, spiritual or faith-based centres in local communities should be made.

Religious sites and routes are to be developed, such that they are easily accessible for people with reduced mobility and upfront mentioning in case any places prove difficult for some people to access is always crucial.

## 19. Gallery of some religious sites of interest in KZN

---



Assegai - Church of The Redeemer Lutheran Church



Assisi Mission - South Coast



Clairvaux Trappist Mission 1896



Durban Presbyterian Church built in 1886



St Thomas Anglican Church



Maris Stella Trappist Mission - Portshepstone



All saints Church - Sea view, Durban



Our Lady of Mercy Church - PMB

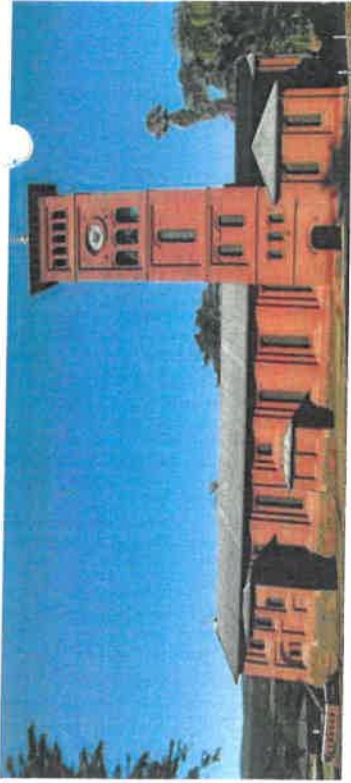


Sacred Heart Convent - Ixopo

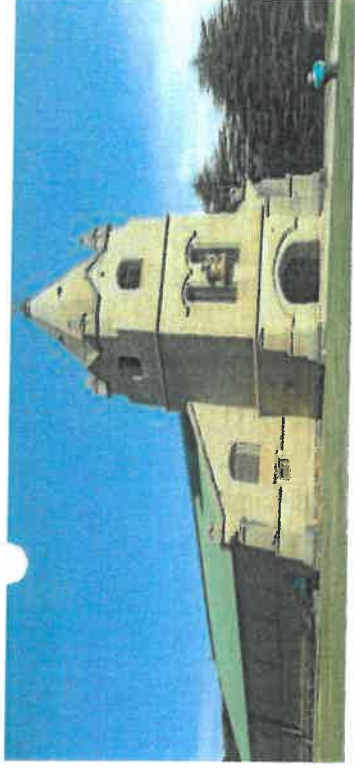


Oetting Trappist Mission





Centocow Trappist mission



Reichenau Trappist mission



Maria Teigte Trappist mission



Lourdes Trappist Mission



Mariannahill Trappist mission



Kevelaer Trappist mission

## INFORMATION SOURCES

---

- Tourism routes as vehicles for local economic development in South Africa: The example of the Magaliesberg Meander, Urban Forum, 18, in press, by Rogerson 2007
- Pilgrimage and tourism at Santiago de Compostela. Tourism Recreation Research by Solla 2002
- [www.asiarooms.com](http://www.asiarooms.com)
- The Calendar of Religious Festivals and Supplement 2019
- AmaWalkers Camino (PTY) LTD, The Abbot Pfanner Trappist Trail
- Churches, Missions & Monasteries - KZN\_ A Photographic and Historical Record files, KZN PR
- Religious Tourism Study-TKZN
- Pilgrimage routes of French catholic mission in Thailand
- Cultural and Religious Tourism Management in European cultural routes
- Religious tourism as a sociocultural phenomenon of the present- CY-ICER 2014