

NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

Explore Nelson Mandela University Tourism

TOURISM DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER 2025



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1. LEARNING AND TEACHING

TOURISM DEPARTMENT



Events Management module activities

Under the leadership and guidance of *Mr Athi Ndita*, this module requires students to prepare, organise, and stage a small to medium-sized event or function in the appropriate sequence and with a view of demonstrating the learning outcomes. In this academic year (2025), the class was divided into two groups and two event themes were decided upon. One group was allocated the theme fitness and health, where they prepared and hosted a hiking event at the Grysbok nature reserve and hiking trail. This event was hosted on the 19th of May 2025, and it was a great success. This event had notable sponsors, including red bull, and refreshments like energy drinks, water and fruits were provided to the participants.

The second group organized an event under the theme of Mental health awareness. The students partnered with Emthonjeni student wellness clinic and hosted an event on the 20th May 2025. The event was well attended, with guest speakers from Emthonjeni, as well as testimonial from some of the speakers invited. The primary motive of this event was to encourage students who may be going through a tough mental phase, to reach out through the correct channels where they can be able to receive help. This event was also a great success, with notable sponsorship of refreshment including an assortment of fruits and water.

1. Madibaz Hike Fest

The Madibaz Hike Fest was a student-led outdoor event hosted on 19 May 2025, at the Grysbok Hiking Trail, a popular outdoor educational trail offering visitors the chance to engage with wildlife and environmental sustainability. The goal of the event was to promote health, wellness, environmental awareness, and student community engagement. Designed for Nelson Mandela University students, this event provided a safe and enjoyable experience while highlighting the beauty and biodiversity of the Grysbok Nature Reserve. What set the event apart was its sustainability focus, structured team collaboration, and social media-driven marketing strategy.

University students face a lot of pressure as they balance academics, deadlines, and the ups and downs of student life. This event emerged in response to the increasing need for mental and physical wellness initiatives among university students. With so few chances to get outside and enjoy nature, our team identified this hike as an ideal way to relieve stress, promote health, and create a sense of community among students. The Grysbok Trail offered a safe, scenic space on campus that supported our goals and made our event successful.

“ One of the key lessons we learned was the value of early and clear communication, both within the group and with external stakeholders like Dr. Landman, sponsors, and our lecturers. Leveraging social media also proved highly effective in engaging students and generating excitement for the event. We gained firsthand insight into logistical planning, risk assessment, and the impact of detailed preparation on overall event success ”



2. We Listen, We Don't Judge

"We listen we do not judge" is a popular saying on social media around sharing unhealthy habits in a safe space. The main goal is to remind people that in the communities we are in they have a safe space. We felt it fitting to name our event "We listen, we don't judge," as we acknowledge the diverse ways in which mental health affects us and the different ways in which we choose to deal with it. Our event focused on stress management, as poorly managed stress can have significant implications on one's mental state. Our event is about cultivating a safe space for tourism students to help them manage stress. Stress management is not only crucial for navigating academic stress, but the tourism industry will also require them to perform well under pressure and in stressful environments. We hope this event gives students tools they will use now and into the working environment; to manage stress effectively, become resilient and be able to recognise unhealthy coping mechanisms. The event intended to share information on various mental health counseling platforms that the students can conveniently reach out to.



3. International Learning and Teaching week

The Tourism Department actively participated in Nelson Mandela University's International Teaching Week, held from 20 to 25 October 2025. The event provided a dynamic platform for academic exchange and collaboration, attracting scholars from diverse disciplines. A highlight of the week was the presence of guest speaker Prof. David Mkwambisi from Malawi, who shared valuable insights on developing conceptual frameworks for research students. His sessions fostered engaging discussions among faculty and students, enhancing the department's international outlook. Discussions also focused on innovation and how students can grow their own innovative and sustainability practices.



4. Bar and Beverage seminar

In the Events Management module, one of the key learning outcomes focuses on Bar and Beverage service delivery, where the students are familiarised with the rudiments of excellent bar and beverage service. The Kelway Hotel in Humewood was the host of the 2025 Events Management's Bar and Beverage seminar, where our students were taught various topics including bar inventory control, responsible alcohol service, bar health and safety, mixing and pouring techniques and other related topics. The seminar was followed by an experiential learning exercise in the hotel's bar section, where the barman demonstrated various techniques to prepare mocktails (non-alcoholic cocktails), and the students were afforded an opportunity to smell different types of spirits that can be used in preparing alcoholic cocktails. This exercise was crucial for our students, as it paved the way to their next task, which required them to prepare and present their own favourite non-alcoholic beverage, drawing from the lessons learnt in the seminar. This initiative was a great success and well done to the TEHM201 class of 2022.



2. RESEARCH

Journal articles:

- Mr Philasande Runeli and Dr Lynn Jonas published a paper entitled: "Empowering coastal communities through participatory blue tourism: a case of Nelson Mandela Bay, South Africa in the *Journal of Tourism in Marine Environments*"

Conference presentations:

- Mr Helly Sibuyi attended and presented at a research conference on 30 June-04 July 2025 from Faro, Portugal. Paper entitled: "Climate change impacts on delivering quality hospitality experience in protected areas"
- Dr Lynn Jonas attended and presented at a research conference on 01 – 02 May 2025, hybrid in Rome, Italy and won Best Paper Award "The potential for maritime tourism: an African perspective"
- Masters student Ms Mhlali Mbangeni (Supervised by Drs Lynn Jonas & Rosemary Manyevere) attended and presented at a research conference on 23 – 25 April 2025, East London, South Africa "Strategies to improve coastal and marine tourism in Gqeberha"

Rural Tourism and Endurance Sporting Events

Prof Hugh Bartis and his MCom student, Masibulele Tabata, visited Willowmore on 9 August 2025 to observe the Trans Baviaans Mountain Bike Marathon. The 230 km race, involving about 1,300 cyclists, began in Willowmore and ended in Jeffreys Bay after a challenging route through the Baviaanskloof. Winners completed the course in just over seven hours. The event is known for testing endurance across rugged terrain and stunning natural landscapes. Tabata's dissertation examines the critical success factors of the Trans Baviaans Marathon – the first study of its kind focused specifically on this endurance event. The event is known for testing endurance across rugged terrain and stunning natural landscapes. Tabata's dissertation examines the critical success factors of the Trans Baviaans Marathon – the first study of its kind focused specifically on this endurance event.



3. ENGAGEMENT

IMEX-MCI-MPI Future Leaders

Challenge

The IMEX-MCI-MPI Future Leaders Challenge is an international competition involving Tourism, Hospitality, and Event Management students from the Higher Education sector in Southern and Eastern Africa. Students from the Technical, Vocational and Education (TVET) Colleges are also included. The winner of the South African competition is normally invited to IMEX in Frankfurt, Germany.

The South African leg of IMEX-MCI-MPI University Challenge was held from 24-26 February 2025. The event coincided with Meetings Africa 2025 that was held from 24 to 26 February 2025 at the Sandton International Convention Centre (SICC) in Johannesburg. Students were also able to attend on the second day of the exhibition. The Nelson Mandela University were represented by BCom Honours in Tourism students Hishaam Langson, Mhlali Tyali, and Margaret Khanyile. Prof Hugh Bartis accompanied the students.



G20 Hackathon

Launched by the Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, the hackathon was formed not only as a competition but as a legacy project that connects government, academia, and industry to build inclusive, tech-driven solutions for the benefit of communities and the tourists. The minister launched the Hackathon in the run up to the G20 summit that took place in Johannesburg, South Africa from 22 to 23 November 2025. The G20 Hackathon was hosted at the Sabie River Resort and the Kruger national Park (KNP) in Mpumalanga.

The event brought together young students from 21 South African Higher Institutions (both public and private) offering Tourism Management, Hospitality and Computer science. Each institution had brought an average of two (2) students. Additionally, selected students had to be on NQF levels 5-8. A total of 48 students were divided into seven (7) groups ranging from 6 to 7 members. Groups were formed using gender, geographical spread, institutional diversity to ensure each group had a well-balanced team to ensure a fair and just competition. With the support of Mr Helly Sibuyi, students were able to attend the event and student Mr Hishaam Langson was part of the group that came in third place taking away a cash prize of R104 000.



Tourism Society

The Tourism Department's academic society, under the leadership and guidance of Mr Simphiwe Dube in Gqeberha and Ms Shameelah Ismail in George, hosts multiple functions throughout the year in order to engage students on a practical, industry level, as well as various academic related activities. Through the society, the following events were hosted:

George Campus events:

The George Tourism Society aligned their events with the international tourism theme of *"Tourism and Sustainable Transformation."*

Pepsi Pools Hike - Environmental Awareness & Outdoor Education

The first activity of 2025 was a hiking excursion to the scenic Pepsi Pools in George on 23 May 2025 at 14:00. The hike provided society members with an opportunity to connect with one another, combining experiential learning with outdoor adventure while promoting awareness of the importance of environmental conservation, particularly the biodiversity surrounding the university. Students stepped out of their comfort zones to engage with the outdoor classroom, exploring the local flora, fauna, and brown waters of the Pepsi Pools.

The hike started from the Admin Building on the George Campus departing at 14:00. As part of the hiking excursion, members participated in a fun scavenger hunt, where they had to identify plant and animal species along the trail. The excursion ended with a refreshing dip in the brown waters of the Pepsi Pools, giving everyone a chance to relax and enjoy the natural beauty of the area. Members returned to campus and arrived back at around 17:00.



Mandela Day - Community Engagement & Tourism Education

In the spirit of Mandela Day, the Tourism Society visited the Inkubeko Youth and Science Centre in Thembaletu on Friday, 01 August 2025 from 14:00 to 17:00. Inkubeko, a project of the Isisombululo Community Improvement Programme NPC, is a community-based organisation serving the youth of Thembaletu and the wider Garden Route District. With a mission to stimulate interest in science, technology, engineering, art, mathematics and innovation (STEAM) among youth, the visit provided an opportunity to raise awareness not only about tourism, but also to demonstrate how tourism interconnects with STEAM disciplines, presenting diverse career pathways and opportunities. The day was dedicated to education, inspiration and community upliftment, with a focus on empowering local youth through tourism awareness. This initiative aimed to give back to the community by sharing their passion for tourism, and what better occasion than Mandela Day 2025. Approximately 40 Grade 10 to 12 learners from local schools participated in the day's activities.

The programme featured an interactive workshop introducing learners to tourism in the Garden Route. Through multimedia presentations, lively discussions and hands-on activities, learners explored local attractions, cultural landmarks and the many career and entrepreneurial opportunities in the tourism sector. One of the highlights of the day was a video on space tourism, screened in the Inkubeko Planetarium, which sparked curiosity about the role of science and technology in tourism. Many learners enjoyed the experience, with some commenting that they never knew space tourism even existed. The day ended with an interactive game that tested learners on everything they had learned. It proved to be the high point of the event, with enthusiasm, excitement and laughter filling the room as groups competed for prizes. Each learner also received a food packet, donated by Soft Landings, a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO).



Strategy Workshop with Garden Route District Municipality - Industry Collaboration & Student Development

The TOSO Executive Committee met with the Garden Route District Municipality on 07 August 2025 at the NMU George Campus to introduce themselves and present the Tourism Society. This engagement served as an opportunity to initiate a connection with the public sector and foster future collaboration and support. The Strategy Workshop was initiated by the TOSO Executive Committee as an opportunity to gain support from the municipality, foster collaboration and explore possible opportunities for NMU tourism students.



Career Week at Inkubeko Youth and Science Centre - Career Awareness, Youth Empowerment & Skills Development

The TOSO was invited to participate in and exhibit at the Career Week held on 17 October 2025 at Inkubeko Youth and Science Centre in Thembalethu. This event provided an excellent opportunity for the Tourism Department to promote the tourism programme offered on the George Campus and to raise awareness about the field of tourism. The event aimed to expose learners to a broad spectrum of career paths and provide meaningful insights into various industries. Career Week featured exhibition stands where organisations engaged with students, offered career guidance and showcased opportunities across different fields, particular in the sciences. On a broader level, it also provided an opportunity for the Tourism Society members to represent their university and promote the value of studying at Nelson Mandela University.



SANParks Garden Route National Park - Experiential Learning & Nature Based Tourism

The Tourism Society (TOSO) visited the Garden Route National Park in Wilderness on Thursday, 30 October 2025 between 10:00 and 16:00. The day was dedicated to the outdoors, environmental awareness, and nature-based tourism activities, allowing members to enjoy the park's offerings, explore its landscapes and wildlife and learn about its conservation initiatives. The activities are intended to teach members about nature-based tourism activities, which involves tourism centred around natural environments, ecosystems and wildlife. The excursion gave members the opportunity to observe, enjoy and study nature through recreational activities such as hiking, canoeing, birdwatching and painting wildlife and landscapes, in that way connecting members directly to natural environments.

The focus of the excursion was to enhance members' understanding of nature-based tourism, exposing them to what makes South Africa, and more specifically the Garden Route unique. While members learn about sustainability in the classroom, they are rarely given real-life scenarios, and this excursion aimed to provide exactly that. Members were exposed to tourism activities focussed on the natural environment, wildlife and ecosystems. The excursion also allowed members to learn about the park's sustainable tourism practices, conservation initiatives and rich biodiversity. The best way for members to learn about nature-based tourism is to experience it first-hand through activities such as hiking, birdwatching, canoeing and painting. These experiences also contributed to stronger teamwork and fostered personal growth among members.



Gqeberha Campus Events

Tourism Imbizo - Connecting Students with Industry and Local Government

The Nelson Mandela University ("NMU") Engagement Office and Tourism Society in collaboration with the Gqeberha, Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Agriculture ("EDTA") office, jointly hosted the Tourism Imbizo. The two-day event convened government leaders, academics, tourism operators, entrepreneurs, and community stakeholders to address the challenges and opportunities facing the local tourism sector. This event was aimed at bridging the gap between the Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism sector and students. The Imbizo was held under the National Tourism Month theme, "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation" and served as a strategic platform to activate the city's Tourism Master Plan, promote inclusive growth, and strengthen cross-sector collaboration. Attendees were encouraged to appreciate the value of trained guides in making tourism both informative and enjoyable, while understanding the responsibilities and consequences that come with the role. What was a takeaway was also that community-led tourism is not only about attracting visitors, but also about ensuring that the benefits flow directly to the people who live in those communities. Digital marketing in tourism not only drives visitor interest but also contributes to increased bookings, revenue growth, and long-term sustainability of tourism in Nelson Mandela Bay.



Educational Hotel Tour - Connecting Students with Industry

The Tourism Society, in collaboration with the Nelson Mandela University SRC. The event invited learners from a local well-known school, which is Khumbulani High School. This event also brought unity amongst us as the Tourism Society, Khumbulani High School learners as well as the NMU students that were able to make it. The main aim of the event was to inspire and empower NMU Tourism students and Khumbulani high school learners by exposing them to the world of tourism, hospitality, fostering mentorship and academic curiosity. This initiative was not just an educational experience; it was a chance for NMU to demonstrate leadership in community engagement.



Grysbok Hiking Trail - Member Engagement

The Tourism Society hosted a hiking event at the Grysbok Trail, located at the University's South Campus. This was one of our first outdoor activities for the year and we opened RSVPs for 50 participants, and all available spots were filled quickly, showing strong student interest and support for the event. The purpose of the event was for the executive committee to connect with members and to engage with students on an informal basis.

4. COLLABORATIONS

The Tourism Society and Events Management module students jointly participated in the inaugural Africa Coastal Marine and Maritime Tourism Alliance Trade Market and conference that took place in Gqeberha on 14 – 16 April 2025. Students participated as attendants and hosts, Social Media coordinators, Floor Coordinators, VIP Lounge Attendants, Exhibition Area Attendants, and some were assigned to be part of the Project Management team.

The organisers' feedback about the students:

“ To our awesome Nelson Mandela University Volunteers, you guys absolutely rocked it! From early morning registrations, to holding it down at the info desk, running around the venue with a smile, keeping things smooth behind the scenes (and on stage), you were the heartbeat of the ACMMTA Trade Market 2025. We saw the passion. The hustle. The teamwork. The leadership. You didn't just assist – you owned it! Your professionalism, energy and eagerness to learn brought life to this event and reminded us that the future of tourism is in excellent hands. Whether you're in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, or Maritime Studies, just know this: you made your mark. And we hope this was more than just an experience – it was a launchpad. Because you didn't just show up, you showed off! ”

5. PERSONALIA/CONGRATULATORY WORDS

1. **Ms Cashas Brandt** welcomed baby Zeek on 11 February 2025. We wish him a healthy life and may he bring his family much joy.
2. **Mr Helly Sibuyi** was granted the opportunity to travel to **China to participate in a seminar** titled: “Airport Economic Zone Development in Free Trade Port for the English -Speaking “Belt and Road” Countries (04 Nov to 17 Nov 2025).



3. **The Tourism Department** took home an award as the **second-most interactive stall at Open Day 2025** – George Campus.



6. WORDS OF APPRECIATION FROM STUDENTS

"We would like to express our sincere appreciation for your guidance and support throughout our research journey. You have made this process truly enjoyable and rewarding, and we have learnt so much under your supervision. **Your patience, encouragement and constructive feedback have greatly contributed to our growth and understanding.** We are genuinely grateful for the time and effort you dedicated to helping us improve."

"I wanted to express my sincere gratitude for your teaching and mentorship throughout our time together. Although we didn't exactly get off to a great start, **your guidance and support ultimately helped me to achieve my goal of earning a distinction.** There were moments when I felt overwhelmed and doubted my ability to succeed. However, your extra materials and teaching methods made a significant difference in my understanding and confidence."

7. WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2026

- Tourism Society new **Executive Committee** has been appointed and we are looking forward to the great events that are lined up for 2026.
- The **2nd Annual Africa Coastal Marine and Maritime Tourism Alliance Trade Market** and conference that will take place in Gqeberha in March 2026.
- **Top Achievers Awards:** The Department of Tourism is proud to announce the revival of the Top Achiever Awards in 2026, under the leadership of Ms Brandt, recognising outstanding academic performance across our Tourism and hospitality programs. After a period of inactivity, this renewed celebration once again honours students who have demonstrated exceptional dedication, commitment, and excellence in their studies. Award categories include the Top 2nd and 3rd-year Diploma in Tourism Management achievers from both the George and 2nd Avenue Campuses, as well as the Top 2nd and 3rd-year achievers in the BCom Tourism and BCom Hospitality Management programmes. The reinstatement of these awards reflects the department's commitment to celebrating academic excellence and inspiring students to continue striving for success.

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