

Press Release :

For immediate release

VISIT KNYSNA RETURNS FROM SUCCESSFUL VAKANTIEBEURS TRAVEL EXPO IN NETHERLANDS

Colleen Durant, General Manager of Visit Knysna, the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) for the Greater Knysna Area and a unit of WESGRO as contracted by the Knysna Municipality, has just returned from what she termed a “very successful *Vakantiebeurs* tourism exhibition in Utrecht, the Netherlands”. *Vakantiebeurs* is a 5-day travel expo that attracts trade, tourism business operators on the first day and then the public consumer on the following days. Other local products in attendance at this year’s expo included Elmay Viljoen Bouwer of Blackwaters River Lodge whose participation was supported by the National Department of Tourism, Ypie Kingma of Destination Garden Route whose product offering included Mount Knysna, Madison Manor, Wayside Inn, Quintet of Cuisines and Alfred Lor’s photographic tours, and Kyra Buhlmann of Sugarbird Portfolio representing Ocean Odyssey and Somervreug Guest House.

Elmay, who is no stranger to trade shows but attending her first consumer show, commented “through this experience I came to realise what a strong brand **Knysna** is. Even though most people could not pronounce the name properly, they certainly knew of the destination.”

Ypie’s comment of her attendance was “I was so proud to represent the Garden Route at this international expo that was celebrating its 50th birthday this year. It is always busy and fruitful”.

Colleen agreed with the above and stated that the reason she found it so successful was that “being on the South African Tourism stand, it was the furthest hall for attendees. However, this did not deter the visitors to our stand. The exciting part for me to experience was that everyone who stopped at the Visit Knysna stand had either booked their flights to South Africa, some had also booked accommodation, whilst others were in the planning stages and hence their attendance at the expo - to get the input in order to go home to plan their itinerary. These people are travelling to our country, self-drive option. This gave opportunity to influence their itinerary and encourage them to stay longer in our area.”

Those interacting at the stand were mostly self-drive, but the surrounding stands were also continuously busy : those platforms were the tour operators that are selling travel packages to Southern Africa, groups and / or self-drive options. “It was also encouraging that most did not ask the otherwise always first question of safety and security. They are coming and also understand, as they have been told by many, that they will inevitably visit South Africa again and again, which so often happens with this market : they fall in love with South Africa”, said Colleen.

Photo (L – R) : Kyra Buhlmann, Ypie Kingma, Elmay Bouwer Viljoen and Colleen Durant.

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