

Cultural tourism in Limpopo Province - Nyani Tribal Village

Nyani Tribal Village is a Shangaan cultural village in Limpopo Province. Axon Khosa and his family started to rebuild the village in 1994 in the traditional Shangaan style and it was opened for tourists in 1996. The village was built on Axon Khosa's grandfather's land and is a family business. It is managed by Axon Khosa who employs a number of family members some of whom live there permanently.

Nyani Tribal Village is an insider tip for independent travellers. There are not many tour operators coming in and the experience is a personal one where exchange takes place between local people and visitors. Some tour operators like Wagon Trails and Bundu Bus bring in tourists regularly but these are small groups consisting of 8-15 people. They are offered a down-to-earth African experience with a guided tour, a traditional Shangaan dinner, dancing and an overnight stay in one of the huts. Nyani Tribal Village is one of few cultural villages where local people benefit directly through cultural tourism.

“Preserving our culture”

The village is not only a tourism business but also a village built by Shangaan people for Shangaan people and anyone interested in their culture. It is a project to encourage people from rural townships to remember their roots, culture and old values while they adapt to a modern lifestyle. Axon Khosa and his family created a place where traditional Shangaan life can be practiced and experienced by everybody.

Children from the surrounding villages and schools, at times as many as 40 - 50 at a time, come to Shangaan village for weekends to be educated about Shangaan culture. According to Axon Khosa this is done free of charge and is financed through tourism.

He states that through diminishing culture also traditional values like the respect towards elders is lost. He also sees this as a reason for the growing amount of beggars and crime in South Africa. The decay of traditional family structures and the value of family bonds are also important issues. Nowadays young men are less and less likely to take responsibility if their girlfriend becomes pregnant. As a result, many children grow up without their father and end up living on the streets and begging for food.

At Nyani Tribal Village the children practice Shangaan traditions and gain cultural knowledge to pass on to younger generations. They learn through practice. The main goal is to support the children. They are the future of this culture and also of South Africa. The children and the people who are working there also meet people from various countries and are able to learn about other cultures and the world around them. Therefore the project and the cultural village are widely accepted in the surrounding communities.

Tour and evening show- a personal experience

Visitors to Nyani Tribal Village are welcomed by one of two guides. They show people around the village and provide an introduction about the history and background. First you pass a termite hill, which provides the raw material for the Shangaan huts, and then you enter the village from the back entrance, which is the original entrance in these kinds of villages. Visitors are greeted with a welcome song and drumming. Then the guided

tour goes on with a description of the kraal and the holy tree which are always situated in the centre of a Shangaan village. Afterwards the guests sit down in the hut of the chief's first wife. The guide describes the process of building the huts and of the creativity that is required in the designs and materials used. He also shows how fire was made and how carefully natural resources were used in former times. For example, the use of cow dung on the floor of the huts as well as an indoor fireplace helps to keep poisonous snakes and insects away. Another important building in the village is the „function room“. The visitors are introduced to this newly built hut where the workshops are held. As the guide leads them through the classroom, he also gives examples of educational games and activities used to teach the children basic moral and traditional values. Then he talks about the meaning of the other huts and the visitors participate in activities like, stamping mealies, making straw mats and sisal threads, etc. The position of the traditional healer (sangoma) is also described and their role in modern societies is discussed.

After this 1 hour tour through Nyani Tribal Village you are offered a traditional dinner which is prepared by the women. This meal consists of mealie pap, cabbage, chicken and gravy, which is prepared in the traditional Shangaan way. Soft drinks and beers are also available. After dinner everybody meets up in the kraal, where the boys will have already made a campfire. They perform a dancing show – presenting different Shangaan dances and singing traditional songs accompanied by drums, a kudu horn and rattles. The women sing in the background while the young boys dance around the fire. After the performance the visitors are asked to participate. They learn a basic Shangaan dance and everybody dances and sings together. Some tourists perform dances and songs from their countries spontaneously and most of the evenings end with everybody sitting around the fire, telling stories from their countries and listening to Shangaan myths and legends. The tour and evening show provide the guests a clear perception of Shangaan culture. They learn about traditional and modern life, about lost values and the difficulties of Shangaan life in a changing world. Interaction takes place and the tourist experiences a mind-changing night in a cultural village which provides local people with a living.

Contact

Tour bookings can be made with Axon Khosa (manager).

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Prices

Tour (ca. 1 h): 50R

Tour + lunch: 85R

Evening show (tour, dinner, dance): 125R

Evening show + overnight stay: 150R

Evening show + overnight stay + breakfast: 175R

Directions

- Coming from Hazyview, pass the Orpen Road (Orpen Gate into Kruger Park)

- Turn to the R40 to Hoedspruit and then right into Guernsey Road

(many signs for game reserves but no sign for Nyani Tribal Village!)

- After 10 minutes there will be a sign on the left, indicating the entrance to Nyani Tribal Village.