

# Airbnb suits SA's personal hospitality style

 By [Cari Van Wyk](#)

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Community-driven hospitality company [Airbnb](#) offers travellers unique experiences around the world while simultaneously providing people with a way to monetize their extra space. Airbnb is growing in popularity in SA with thousands of homes listed across the country. Airbnb recently rolled out with an [updated app](#) to encourage travellers to live like the locals. We spoke to Nicola D'Elia, general manager - Middle East and Africa at Airbnb to find out more about the South African Airbnb market.



Nicola D'Elia

## ■ **What makes the South African market ideal for Airbnb offerings?**

**Nicola D'Elia:** I am in love with South Africa because of its natural beauty, the incredibly hospitable people and the lifestyle that really has something to offer to everyone. And that's the experience our hosts can provide to guests. They can show visitors to South Africa, the hidden spots in neighbourhoods that they might not get to see if they travel in a more traditional way. Personal hospitality has a long history in South Africa and the Bed & Breakfasts are world renowned – Airbnb is the digital version of that, safe, easy and convenient and with a network of more than 20,000 homes to choose from in South Africa alone.

## ■ **Airbnb [officially launched in SA](#) in July last year? How has the Airbnb market in South Africa grown since then?**

**D'Elia:** Airbnb has been available in South Africa right from the start when the three founders offered their airbeds for rent in 2008. I am not sure when the first South Africans travelled the world staying in an Airbnb or when the first South African host opened their homes to guests – but awareness was most likely rather low for a time. That has changed luckily and growth is very dynamic by now. The number of homes being shared in South Africa has almost tripled in the last year alone. Also, more and more South Africans choose to stay in an Airbnb when they travel – this number has grown by almost 350% in the last year.

## ■ **Any notable trends that stand out for SA Airbnb offerings?**

**D'Elia:** While most of our Airbnb listings are in Cape Town which is a very sought after destination especially during the summer months, I am very excited about the growth in cities like Johannesburg and Durban. The number of guests staying in an Airbnb when they travel to Durban has grown by more than 500%, for example. As Airbnb strengthens its offerings in the business travel segment less touristy destinations experience a surge in bookings.

▣ ***What are the greatest benefits Airbnb has to offer for clients/customers?***

**D'Elia:** Airbnb is good for the hosts and good for the guests. Hosts are able to make an extra income while doing something they love – showcasing their home, their hometown, meeting strangers that can turn into friends. And guests get to experience a city like a local, they benefit from their hosts' tips and insider knowledge, all the while staying in a place that most likely has more style, space, and character than other accommodation options.

▣ ***For whom is participation on the Airbnb platform ideal?***

**D'Elia:** With more than two million homes in more than 34,000 cities in more than 190 countries, it is no overstatement to say that Airbnb really has something to offer for everyone – from luxury penthouses in cities like Cape Town, London and New York to more affordable options. We offer large properties that are perfectly suited for families or groups of friends traveling together as well as romantic treehouses perfect for a couple on honeymoon. The beauty of Airbnb is that it makes travel unique and fun and offers great value for money.

▣ ***How would you encourage people to utilize Airbnb for their under-utilized spaces?***

**D'Elia:** I want to encourage people to just give Airbnb a try – hosting is something that needs to be experienced really. We hear from a lot of our hosts that they started having guests through Airbnb with a specific goal in mind, maybe they were saving money for a trip or for a special purchase. But even after they have reached that goal they continue hosting just because it's a rewarding experience to showcase one's hometown, to make visitors feel welcome, to feel like traveling without leaving your own home. And the extra income from an underutilized space is also welcome to pay the bills or take a vacation.

▣ ***The most interesting/favourite/unique Airbnb listing in SA according to you?***

**D'Elia:** I personally would love to stay in this [houseboat in Knysna](#) - it looks peaceful and fun. The reviews are fantastic, the hosts seem to be very accommodating and it would be perfect to get away for a few days.

▣ ***Which other African markets show growth and potential for Airbnb?***

**D'Elia:** There are many places in Africa that show great potential and I am confident that we will see similar growth all over the region once awareness grows. So far Morocco is the second biggest market after South Africa, but many other places with amazing natural beauty would be perfect as Airbnb destinations.

## ABOUT CARI VAN WYK

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

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