

Standard Bank's inaugural nature-conservation loan powers Wilderness' market expansion

Within its capacity as both the sustainability-structuring agent and sole lender, Standard Bank has offered customised financing to facilitate and bolster Wilderness (formerly Wilderness Safaris) in its efforts to rapidly expand into new markets.



Source: Supplied.

With the overarching goal of conserving more extensive land areas, this collaboration has resulted in the successful conclusion of Standard Bank and Wilderness's inaugural nature-conservation financing venture

Wilderness is an Africa-based conservation and hospitality company with a mission to protect, explore and expand the world's wilderness through its innovative approach to ecotourism.

Its impact-framework is built around three pillars, namely to educate communities through school curriculum and infrastructure, empower local communities and small businesses with sustainable employment in the tourism ecosystem, and to protect human-wildlife co-existence, and wildlife security programmes.

Keith Vincent, Wilderness chief executive officer says the nature conservation financing provided by Standard Bank contributes to the ethos of the organisation. "Our strategy is to ensure the world - through sustainable conservation tourism - will always have a version of its iconic wild places that are unfenced, untamed and unpredictable.

"Our shared African vision and commitment to contributing to a sustainable continent (and ultimately planet) made Standard Bank the right partner for us. At Wilderness, our mission is to double the amount of land we help conserve in the next decade. We believe that with the support of our guests, partners and greater collective it is achievable: a vision we'll never stop striving to achieve," says Vincent.

Sustainable conservation leadership

Brydone Graham, head of corporate financing solutions at Standard Bank's corporate and investment banking (CIB) division, says: "Wilderness presents such a unique opportunity for Standard Bank to support

key partner in the conservation of our continent and to drive its growth in a sustainable, inclusive manner.

“Africa houses significant examples of the globe’s most valuable biodiversity. Protecting this biodiversity in a sustainable and inclusive manner for local communities is a cornerstone for a prosperous future for Africa as a whole.”

Concluding on Standard Bank’s part, Graham noted, “Our unique and vast African footprint allows us to efficiently provide long-term, flexible funding across the continent, and when Wilderness approached us, we were ready to provide a solution to support its conservation ambitions. It’s part of our vision to not only encourage sustainable use of the environment, but to create intra-African business and economic integration too.”

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