

Cape St Francis Beach

Bigger tourist trade & improved property market with Blue Flag status



Cape St Francis' beautiful, pristine beach - Photo Zuri Roos

By Bev Mortimer

Steps are being taken to lead Cape St Francis' Beach to receive the coveted Blue Flag status next year.

Already this pristine beach at the second most southerly tip of Africa has the honour of being in a pilot status for a Blue Flag beach.

A Blue Flag beach boosts tourism growth as it is a form of quality assurance for visitors, especially the overseas

market.

Pilot status enables the municipality to develop the Cape St Francis beach in line with Blue Flag requirements.

The municipality is currently going all out to obtain Blue Flag status for Cape St Francis by the 2017 summer season, the municipality told St Francis Chronicle in reply to questions.

This top beach status will also present

opportunities to work with experts in the field of coastal and environmental management, which means management practices in place at local Blue Flag beaches are comparable to the best in the world.

Kouga has one Blue Flag beach at present - Dolphin Beach at Jeffreys Bay. Currently St Francis Bay has a badly eroded beach.

So it is great news that at least one St Francis village will have a beach rated among the best in the world.

In her first State of the Municipality address this month, Executive Kouga Mayor, Daphne Kettledale said: "We have set our sight on obtaining Blue Flag status for Cape St Francis beach and we are already putting in place all that is required, with the support of the Department of Environmental Affairs Working for the Coast programme."

"We have succeeded in improving our Blue Flag beach, Dolphin Beach at Jeffreys Bay, year after year with special focus having gone into making it fully accessible to our disabled residents and visitors."

"These efforts have not gone unnoticed, as reflected by the top spot we have occupied for two consecutive years in The Herald newspaper's annual beach review."

It is not plain sailing to receive a Blue Flag status though. A number of things have to be in place before the tiny hamlet

of Cape St Francis can have its beach earn royalty status.

The main things will be new ablution facilities closer to the bathing area, a first-aid room and lifeguard hut, plus a boardwalk to make it easier to access the beach. The beach and facilities also need to accommodate disabled people - that is it must be 'disabled-friendly'; for one, the municipality will need to ensure there is dedicated parking for disabled visitors.

Work on developing and grooming Cape St Francis is being done in conjunction with Working for the Coast programme of the Department of Environmental Affairs and the Cape St Francis community, which has also played a proactive role in looking after its beach and village.

Most people contacted by St Francis Chronicle for comment, including the head of the local St Francis Tourism, said they were delighted at the news. This heralds more tourists to St Francis in the future which will have major beneficial spin-offs, such as higher demand for holiday homes and improved beach amenities and facilities, for the area, was the majority consensus.

Local tourism head, Peet Kemp, says Blue Flag status will be a jewel in our crown of gems for St Francis. "St Francis Tourism is buzzing with excitement. A Blue Flag beach is in our reach. We should all work together to get it and keep it" he said.

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