

Tsodilo Hills

A signature destination and experience

Brand proposition and communications guidelines



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Introduction

The Tsodilo Hills, recognised as one of the great natural treasures of Southern Africa, has the power to deliver transforming visitor experiences by taking visitors and all who live and love the place on a journey of discover in this ancient and awe inspiring place

We recognise that each visitor will experience the beauty and power of these hills in their own way. The enigmas of the ancient rock art will spur their imagination, questions will be asked, perceptions altered, connections made, and each will emerge transformed and inspired by their visit

This document is designed to assist us to protect and manage our communications and help all Tsodilo Partners share a common understanding of how we share this precious place with our visitors.





Tsodilo Hills, the Mountains of the Gods, an UNESCO World Heritage site

For more than one hundred millennia people crossed the Kalahari's gently rolling, tree covered dunes to arrive in this sacred place. They came to hunt, gather, drink water, celebrate, dwell, mine, trade, dance, heal and mourn and left behind their stories. With over 4,500 rock paintings in 400 different locations Tsodilo offers its visitors the privilege of a unique insight and record of ancient human history.

Today the Tsodilo Hills is recognised for its outstanding beauty and is one of the two UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Botswana. It is known by many names, including Mountains of the Gods, Louvre of Africa, the Whispering Hills, and the Copper Bracelet of the Kalahari.

In the copper glow of the sunset these hills radiate an awe inspiring light that can be seen for miles across the rolling landscape.

The goal for Tsodilo now is to attract the attention and interest of the many international tourists seeking authentic and cultural adventures and experiences.

Development of tourism at Tsodilo will provide much wanted sustainable local employment and therefore the community is at the centre of all our development and communications





Tsodilo Hills

More and more consumer research shows that people who travel want more out of life and their time away. They do not want to simply see things; they want to be engaged and to feel immersed while travelling. A Tourism Product is what you buy, a Tourism Experience is what you remember.

Branding Tsodilo as an experience makes it a destination. It is the alchemy of the people, the culture and the geography that gives all involved with Tsodilo the opportunity to communicate and deliver a truly unique and long lasting experience.

Marketing Tsodilo as a Tourism Experience rather than a Tourism Product will be key to competing on the global stage.

Branding the Tsodilo experience creates an emotional connection that is sharable and enduring

PULL:

Experiential tourism draws people in to the Tsodilo heritage, nature, culture and history– it's about the story of the place and its people



UNIQUE & STRONG MEANING:

It creates a very personal, unique and individual experience for each visitor
People create meaning through this direct experience.



SHARE:

This meaning creates long and lasting impressions and shareable memories which contributes to the successful development of the Brand Experience



How does Tsodilo fit in with Botswana tourism experiences and communications?

Tsodilo Hills must be positioned as the signature, iconic, and must do experience within the existing tourism propositions – Wildlife and Safari. Specifically we should seek to promote Tsodilo Hills as a key experience in the wider NW Pan handle area.

Tsodilo has the power to deliver a visitor experience that transforms peoples perceptions about themselves and the world around them . Therefore the Botswana brand can build and expand the narrative to appeal to the different segments as well as interest groups that can be drawn to Tsodilo





What does Tsodilo offer?

The Tsodilo Hills offers:

- A location which is sensation-rich, and instils a sense of wonder, beauty and appreciation
- An ancient beautiful landscape that has attracted visitors and settlers for millennia
- Evidence through the landscape and ancient art stories, impressions of time and history
- Active, participatory and engaged learning

The Tsodilo hills will engage visitors in:

- A series of transformative, authentic, memorable adventures
- Experiences that are revealed over time and engage the senses
- Experiences that are inherently personal and make connections on a physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual or social level.
- Their own immersive journey of discovery of 100,000 years of life, nature and history





Our Vision

Our Vision is what we are working towards, it informs and inspires all that we do.

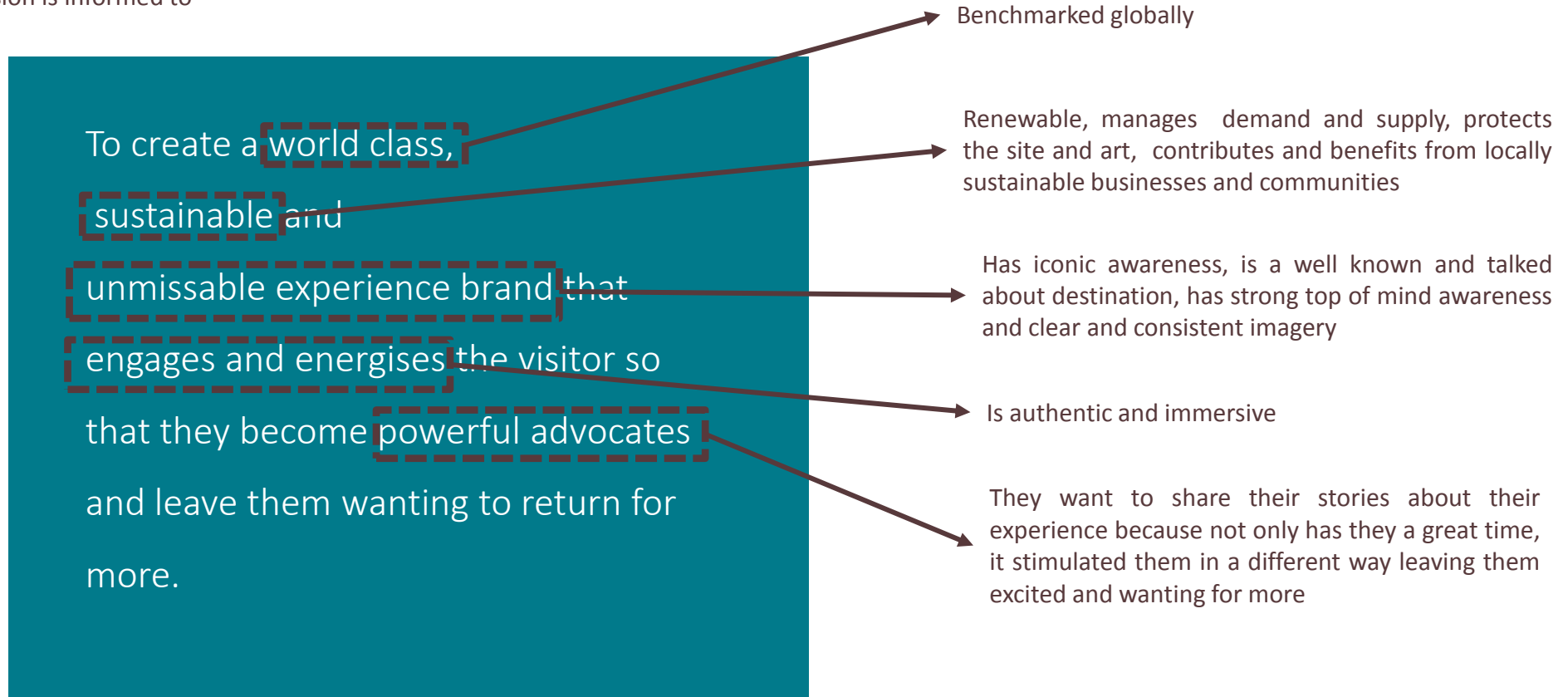
“To create a truly memorable and enriching experience that inspires the senses, uplifts the soul and fires our curiosity, all the while creating a deep appreciation of wonder and mystery of the hills, their ancient past, extraordinary environment and their rich heritage and culture in Botswana”





Our Vision

Our Vision is informed to





To support our proposition

“We recognise that transforming experiences and memories are what our visitors take away with them when they depart the hills. They are not the same people they were when they arrived.”





Our Proposition

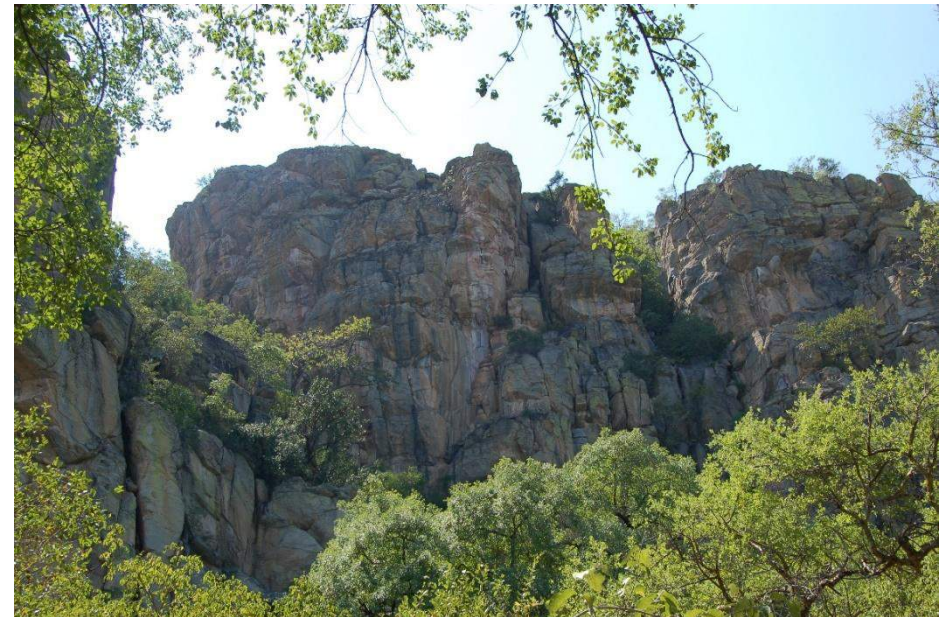
Our proposition expresses what we offer that is unique and of value. It informs all of our communications.

For over a hundred thousand years Tsodilo has attracted travellers and explorers to the hills, they have provided a home, refuge, a place to live and worship. Now they draw all into a truly unique experience within a destination that offers many layers and insights in all that is wondrous in Africa

Within these Hills we find ourselves part of something greater than ourselves, a place and a presence: powerful, enduring, mystical and enriching. Where we look upwards to a breath-taking vista and inwards to our own souls.

Find your way to where the spirits and people of the past connected within these mountains and hills.

Climb the hills, be with nature, have the adventure. Or just stop, take time out to a place where we find ourselves, afresh, anew.





Our Values

Our values are what we stand for. Brand values guide and motivate our attitudes, actions and relationship with visitors, community, our partners and each other.

Truth - *a distinctive experience, true to its own heritage, people and place. We invite people to discover our stories, our art and culture in these hills of outstanding natural beauty.*

Wonder - *for over a hundred thousand years these hills have inspired awe and wonder. Their form and colour, the light and magnetic power are amazing and they continue to astonish and inspire. And to cause people to stop and think. To stand right in the heart the hills, to pause and admire, to breathe in deeply and to wonder.*





Brand Personality

Our personality informs the manner in which we engage with each other and how we communicate.

Welcoming & Honest We are welcoming and warm. We want to create connections with people and share all that is great about Tsodilo Hills and destination. We understand that in communications less is more. We use straightforward language and simple visual elements to communicate quickly and clearly. We use 'we' and 'our' where appropriate and recognise the role played by our partners. Where possible, we try to use photographs that involve community and visitors sharing and enjoying the wonder of the place

Proud - We are passionate about what we do and are eager to encourage people's interest and curiosity about our ancient rock art, our mountains, our stories. We use words and ideas that convey our ancient culture and are inspiring, that go beyond the ordinary but are not over the top. We are not afraid to use wit or humour or words that evoke emotion. We use photography and imagery that showcase the hills, the art the beauty at their best, which are powerful and awe-inspiring.

Respectful - We acknowledge the heritage and culture associated with our hills and understand our role as custodians and guardians of the art and the place. We respect our visitors and our communities and treat those we work with, as colleagues and partners, as we'd like to be treated ourselves. We also recognise our role in safeguarding the natural world around us. We use language that is assured and authoritative, especially in the context of protecting this precious place. We do not use any photography that trivialises this in any way.





Our Stories - What do we share about Tsodilo?



The most successful places stake a claim that cuts through the 'noise' of the competitive environment.

They do this by agreeing and telling a "shared story" ... a story that goes much further than simply marketing communications, and is at the heart of destination development



Our Stories - What do we share about Tsodilo?

- ✓ How the Hills came about
- ✓ An Ancient people and past, connections with others
- ✓ Community at the heart of the hills, life in the past and today
- ✓ Great Travelers and explorers who discovered the hills and their mysteries
- ✓ Sprits and legends
- ✓ The journey to world recognition (UNESCO)
- ✓ A special place (Flora, Fauna , Life) Animal stories





Our Stories - What do we share about Tsodilo?

An Ancient people and past, connections with others

Seventy thousand years ago Neanderthals wandered the plains of Europe, Homo Erectus – a distant cousin of modern humans – inhabited Asia, and our ancestors – Homo Sapiens – were hunter-gatherers on the savannahs of Africa. What was life like for them? The Tsodilo Hills offer a window into the world of these ancient people.

The Tsodilo Hills, rising proudly and unexpectedly out of the Kalahari, are visible for miles across the flat, shrub covered landscape. Emitting a coppery glow in the sunset, the Hills – or “Copper Hills” as they are known locally – would have been a beacon calling out across the desert. At the Hills arriving travellers would have discovered a maze of tunnels and caves to provide shelter for the various activities of daily life. Three of these shelters, the ‘White paintings Shelter’, ‘Depression Shelter’ and ‘Rhino Cave’ were used extensively and numerous artefacts and Stone Age tools have been discovered there. Today we can visit these three locations, stand where our ancestors stood, and discover what their daily life was like for them.

The White paintings shelter was used as a base for daily life. It contains numerous fragments of pottery, beads made from ostrich eggshell, and tools for fishing and hunting. The Depression Shelter was the ‘factory’ of Tsodilo, probably used for woodworking and hide scraping as numerous tools have been discovered there. The Rhino cave was the cultural hub of Tsodilo, where our ancestors performed rituals and possibly ‘scarified’ tools to the gods. The cave is littered with brightly coloured points made from chalcedony, jasper, and chert. These precious stones are found over 50km from the Rhino cave and tell the story of a deeply ritualistic people who selected and carried large brightly coloured stones for 2 to 3 days to be intricately and carefully carved into points within the cave. These points were never used – they were burnt and smashed, possibly to appease the stone ‘snake god’ which can be found within the cave. It has been suggested Shamans used the hidden chamber behind the cave to speak to awed spectators. We may never know why these ancient people engaged in such ritualistic behaviour, but the cave itself, and Tsodilo as a whole, offer a fascinating insight into the life of our ancestors at the cusp of their expansion out of Africa.



Our Stories - What do we share about Tsodilo?

Spirits and Legends

According to local legend we are all from the Tsodilo Hills. The San people tell stories of how the earth came to be populated with Red people (the San), Black people (Bantu), and White people. In these stories God lowered the animals and Red & Black people down to earth on a rope. As the earth was young the rocks were still soft and so the footprints of the first humans and animals were imprinted on them. Today we can visit the site where God lowered man and animals, and see the imprints made by them as they took their first steps across the new world. At the Creation Site it is also possible to see camelthorn trees – in legend these trees transported the children of the Red people far away to a distant land where they turned in to White People.

After God made the first people at Tsodilo he showed them how to populate the earth. The legend goes that three boys and three girls met at the foot of the Tsodilo Hills and God told them that they must have children. The first people said they did not know how so God molded the earth to show them what to do. The molded rocks can be found at the 'Creation of Sex' site in the Hills. God then saw that his people were thirsty, so he made the Python spring, a water hole hidden deep within the caves of Tsodilo and guarded by a magical python. The python guards the hole against all predators with paws, so the first people could relax and enjoy a drink of water without fearing attack by lions or other wild animals. God then created the rain clouds and placed them within the Tsodilo Hills. Today the San believe that their Shamans can travel to another dimension, catch animals, lead them across the sky, and kill them above the parched lands to create rain from the Tsodilo Hills.

The legends of Tsodilo are not limited to stories of god and creation – the San believe deeply in the power of their ancestor's spirits and pray to them to help with hunting at the Ancestors Cave. Travelers visiting the Hills must show respect through careful washing and devout submission before entering – the San can tell many stories of travelers who were not respectful and paid the price. Visitors should be careful of the Sangunguzi, a monster which has only one eye, one leg, and a body like a stick and is rumored to lead travelers astray.



Who will come?

- ✓ Visitors and groups visiting Botswana / mobile safari – add on Tsodilo
- ✓ Special interest Market (Academic, Educational, Nature, spiritual and wellbeing)
- ✓ The Adventure seeker – North America and Europe
- ✓ The Culturally Curious market segments in Great Britain, Germany , Sweden, Norway , France





What will they do?

Good level of fitness required

Hike the Male Hill & Discover Tsodilo's Stone Age history at the White Paintings Shelter

Waking up before sunrise, you will hike up the mountain to see beautiful views of the Tsodilo and the Kalahari desert as the sun is rising. On the descent we will stop off at the White Paintings Shelter and learn about the Stone Age people who lived there.

Some fitness required

Female Hill Lion Trail & Stone Age mine

Named after the famous lion painting, the lion trail is a three hour guided walk which begins at the Tsodilo museum. Walkers will see the lion painting, the 'Dancing Penises', and the White Painting Shelter. Your guide will tell you the local stories about the paintings, and there will also be the chance to visit a pre-historic mine used in the Stone Age.

Easy

Museum

A self guided tour the Tsodilo museum. Learn about the history of the site and see Stone Age artefacts from over 70,000 years ago.

Easy

Cultural Exchange

Visit the San or Bantu people, the two distinct tribes living in Tsodilo. Visitors will be invited to share a meal with the tribe and listen to their stories about Tsodilo. Dance, partake in local craft, and even stay the night* to fully experience Botswana culture.

*Please let your guide know you would like to stay the night in advance

Easy

Night Safari

A night safari offers you the chance to see the most interesting animals at Tsodilo as the majority of wildlife is nocturnal. Adventurers will see aardvarks and pangolins, small mammals like the civet and springhare, packs of hyenas and jackals, medium wild cats like the genet and serval, and perhaps even be lucky enough to glimpse their larger cousin, the leopard.

Some fitness required

Bushcraft

Discover the secrets of survival from Botswana's Bushmen. Learn which plants will quench your thirst, how to collect and prepare edible nuts, fruits, and roots, and which flora are used for medicine and magic by the Bushmen.



What will they do?

Good level of
fitness
required

Female Hill Rhino Trail

If you only have time to do one hike at Tsodilo the Rhino Trail is for you. Beginning at the White Painting Shelter, a guided tour of the Rhino trail will allow you to see examples of every style of art in Tsodilo. Hikers on the four hour trail will see the White Painting Shelter, the Rhino Cave & Stone Snake, the Van der Post panel, and the Place of Origin. Your guide will tell you the local stories about the paintings and rock carvings.

Easy

Painting

Take inspiration from the rock art and beauty of the Tsodilo Hills and paint as our ancestors once did. Please ask your guide for the best place to source local art supplies.

Good level of
fitness
required

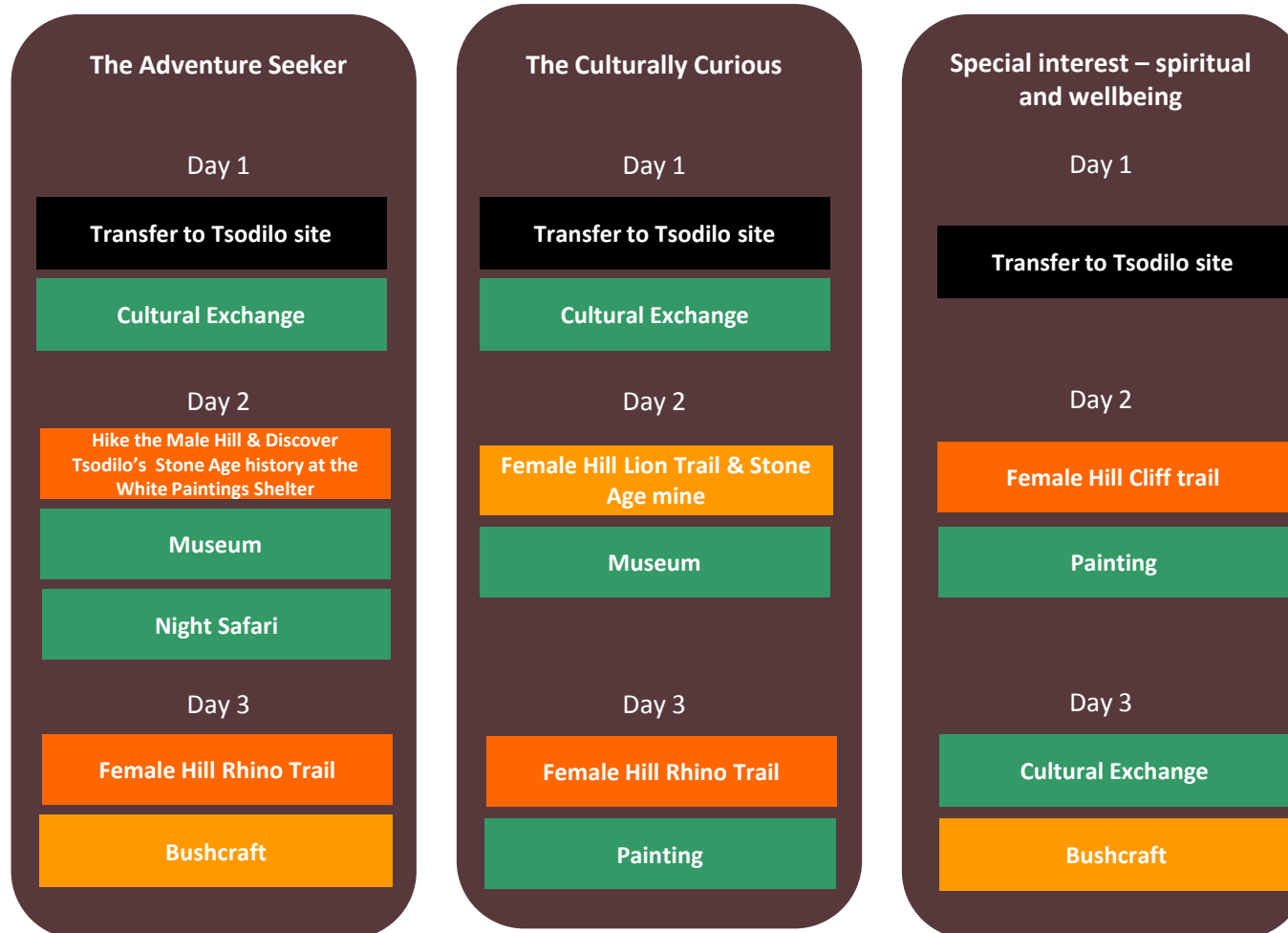
Female Hill Cliff Trail

This difficult but rewarding trail offers visitors access to sites not normally visited by tourists. Starting below the Python Well your guide will take you up the western side of the Female Hill. Hikers will see the First Sex site, pre-historic specularite mines , and the Rhino Cave & Stone Snake.



Example Itineraries

Activities can be selected to create itineraries tailored to different consumer market

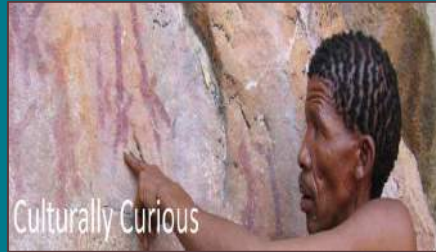


We want people to say

"I did the Tsodilo Hills"



Unifying truths for all



Authentic Experiences
 Desire to get away from it all
 Enjoy their own personal adventure
 Connect with people and be engaged with their stories and
 energised by a fresh perspective on their own lives



Contact information

For further information please contact BTO and the Department of National Museums and Monuments.

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This Project was funded by the EU under the PSDP and implemented by International Development Ireland (IDI) Ltd. The Project was supervised by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, managed by CDE, and monitored and evaluated by BOCCIM.