

Travellers will become more responsible in 2010

In this month's consultant's corner column, Helen Turnbull, Chief Executive of Serendipity Africa and a responsible travel specialist, talks about the environmental management of the World Cup and what direction the responsible tourism movement is heading in this year.

IN the lead up to this "first for the African continent" soccer World Cup event we had a rather slow and laborious start, but at last the pieces of the big jigsaw appear to be coming together.

In the Western Cape particularly there is a strong environmental component to how the event is being managed, and nationally a business strategy to ensure that our people at all levels can be part of and reap tangible benefits from the event. But more generally what is the future of "responsible tourism" in 2010—and how will it influence South Africa?

It is true that governments across the world are recognising tourism as the path to economic recovery, provid-

ed it is managed responsibly.

There are some interesting developments indicating that the global recession has provided a new platform for socially and environmentally sensitive tourism, with the following influences being seen as important when travellers choose a destination: a low carbon footprint; "roots" travel (searching for ancestral origins); travel philanthropy (leaving a

positive legacy in the communities visited); and, perhaps the most important of all, "dream travel"—the desire to make more meaningful connections with local people, embracing the culture and heritage by getting involved.

These dynamics all hold huge potential for the industry here at home and can create the opportunities we need to secure future busi-

ness.

Actually, what we have in South Africa is already

"...the global recession has provided a new platform for socially and environmentally sensitive tourism."



▲ Helen Turnbull

the genuine article. We do not need to embellish or manufacture the product; it is the reality all around us. Never mind "100% Pure New Zealand"—what about "100% Authentic South Africa"?

We can all try harder to identify and package the treasures that are out there beyond the traditional, and learn to tell their stories with the emotion they deserve.

And why should we do this in 2010? Because in reality, the grass is definitely greener on this side.