

# Fast growing wine festival marks start of great events

South Africa's biggest regional wine festival, the Wacky Wine Weekend in the Robertson Wine Valley (4 – 7 June), this week marks the start of Cape Town and the Western Cape's packed winter events season.

Accommodation in and around the main towns of the Valley - Robertson, Bonnievale, McGregor and Ashton - gets booked out earlier every year months before the Wacky Wine Weekend. This illustrates the increasing popularity of the lifestyle festival that has been perfecting the art of unpretentious wine tasting combined with deli meals, farm style living, home-grown music, and great moments with good friends. It is also drawing increasing numbers of especially domestic tourists and spend to the rural tourism gems of Cape Town and the Western Cape.

"Since its inception in 2004, the Wacky Wine Weekend's visitor numbers grew from a mere 2 500 to over 16 000 last year. Spend rocketed from R2 million to R20 million last year, while activities at the event grew from 57 to more than 600," says Itumeleng Poee, executive manager: international and domestic marketing of Cape Town Routes Unlimited, the tourism destination marketing organisation for Cape Town and the Western Cape.

"Although numbers are good, the value of the Wacky Wine Weekend stretches so much further. It showcases the tourism variety of Cape Town and the Western Cape's platteland and the entrepreneurial, creative spirit of its tourism community. It has also changed the perception of the region in a positive way, pushing up the popularity of its wine route

during the rest of the year. The festival reminds people from the Western Cape, and elsewhere in South Africa, of the 'great 101 things to do' in their own backyard," says Poee.

The Cape of Great Events is proud to once again be the host destination for the Wacky Wine Weekend which grows mainly thanks to word-of-mouth advertising (68,9%).

According to an economic impact study prepared by the Centre for Tourism Research for Cape Town Routes Unlimited, the event is regarded by the majority of its visitors as enjoyable (94,6%), well organised (95,2%), offering good service (90,8%) and the locals as friendly (90,3%) – in other words, a first class festival (71,4%).

Ninety percent of the event goers are from

the Western Cape, 7,6% from outside the province, 2,4% international and 17% local. The average age is 44, while the average Wacky Wine Weekend festival goers' group size is five.

"Cape Town and the Western Cape is just as excited about playing host to the rest of the Cape of Great Events' winter line-up. There are events such as the Vodacom Funny Festival in Cape Town (15 June – 19 July); Christmas in Winter in Tulbagh (27 – 28 June); Pick n Pay Knysna Oyster Festival (3 – 12 July); Franschhoek Bastille Festival (11 – 12 July); Isuzu Berg River Canoe Marathon (15 – 19 July); Stellenbosch Wine Festival (30 July – 2 August); and the Clanwilliam Wild Flower Show (27 August – 2 September) – to name but a few," says Poee.