

Tourism gets affected by protest action



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HAZYVIEW – Tourism, especially transport to and from Kruger Gate and Sabi Sand Game Reserve has been severely affected by service delivery protests in the region.

Unfortunately that is something the local tourism industry will have to tolerate at least until the coming elections. This is the view of local tourism organisations.

“It is inevitable that it will continue until May,” said Hazyview Chamber of Tourism and Business (HCBT) chairman, Chris Harvie.

“We have to understand the issues these communities are complaining about and from our side we also encourage authorities to give attention to their complaints.”

This was echoed by Tom Vorster of the Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism (KLCBT), who said tourists have missed flights, buses had to turn around and local operators suffered because tourists now preferred to fly directly into Skukuza or the private game reserves.

“That way they do not see or experience the rest of Mpumalanga and perceive the province to be ‘behind a fence’,” he said.

“It affects freelance transport operators the most because they hardly get work any more.”

The R536 was blocked at Mkuhlu most of Monday and Tuesday.

Visitors to the Kruger National Park were not that badly affected because they had been advised by SANParks to use Phabeni Gate for entrance to the park.

Self-drive tourists travelling by road to southern Sabi Sand were advised by its management to avoid Mkhuhlu by entering Kruger at Phabeni and coming out at Paul Kruger Gate again, to use Shaw’s Gate into Sabi Sand.

Newington Gate was advised to be avoided. Visitors to Djuma, Arathusa and other camps in the north were unaffected and could gain access via Acornhoek.

Protests included marches to the municipal offices at the Newington and Belfast four-way stop on Monday morning and on Tuesday the R536 was blocked again. Protesters moved to different locations on the road through Mkuhlu.

Due to a police and fire brigade presence, the road was opened later on Tuesday morning, but travellers still found it difficult to negotiate the road due to debris such as stones and branches.

Local WhatsApp and online groups run by different tourism operators and traffic and security groups kept road users informed.

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-newzealand-shootout/new-zealand-police-hunt-active-shooter-after-gunman-opens-fire-at-mosque-idUSKCN1QW05Y>