



CANOPY TOURS CELEBRATES 10 YEARS IN THE TREETOPS

South Africa's popular nature adventure activity 'Canopy Tours' celebrates its 10 year anniversary since setting up the first treetop tour in Africa in October 2001.

Canopy Tours® consists of several long cable slides that are joined together by platforms built high within the canopy level of a forest. Slides of up to 175m long provide unforgettable rides and spectacular views. The platforms can accommodate up to ten people at a time and all provide a unique perspective on the surrounding environment.

The concept originated in the lush rain forests of Costa Rica where adventurous biologists, desperate to study the diversity of animal life that habituates the upper canopy level of forests, devised a system of cables and platforms that would allow them to explore this previously inaccessible ecosystem. After constructing a canopy tour in the cloud forests of Costa Rica civil engineer Mark Brown returned to South Africa in 2000 to begin the search for the country's largest trees. These were found in the Tsitsikamma Forest along the popular Garden Route and in partnership with Ashley Wentworth of Stormsrivier Adventures the internationally acclaimed and multi award winning Tsitsikamma Canopy Tour® was opened as Africa's first Canopy Tour in October 2001.

Canopy Tours ® believe strongly in the principle of community involvement and upliftment and have employed and provide skills training for members of the surrounding communities to work as Canopy Tour guides. This generates far reaching benefits for the communities around each Canopy Tour site and ensures that clients are contributing not just to the conservation of our South Africa's forests but also to the upliftment of the local habitants. Canopy Tours have created approximately one hundred and fifty full time jobs to date.

A Canopy Tour is a fully guided nature experience, where guides not only ensure the groups safety but also provide a fun and informative narration on the surrounding trees, birds and forest ecology. It is the highlight of most holidays! There are currently six Canopy Tour locations in Southern Africa:

The Tsitsikamma Canopy Tour ® takes place in the magnificent Tsitsikamma Forest with most of the platforms built around giant Outeniqua Yellowwoods up to 700 years old. Standing within the crown of these giants and looking down at the lush forest floor thirty metres below is an unforgettable experience. Hold your breath as you slide from tree to tree through the forest, stopping at each new platform while your guides tell you a little more about the surrounding ecology. If

you are fortunate you will spot a pair of Knysna Loeries or the brilliant red plumage of the elusive Narina Trogon.

The Karkloof Canopy Tour ® has been built in a spectacular valley of the mistbelt podocarpus Karkloof Forest Reserve. The tour includes long swooping slides over the treetops of the forest, stops below a 15m waterfall and takes in wide views across the Karkloof valley. This was the second canopy tour built in South Africa and has been designed for the more adventurous nature lover. Expect to hear the loud calls of the Samango monkey, see a rare orchid or catch the flash of an Emerald cuckoo as it flies past.

The Magaliesberg Canopy Tour ® takes the whole canopy tour concept one step further as eleven platforms have all been individually designed and built within the cliffs and rock faces of the ancient Magaliesberg Mountains. This tour takes people on a journey through the ecology and geology of one of the oldest mountain ranges at the world - estimated to be 2,500 million years old. The Magaliesberg Mountains are home to a wide variety of plant, animal and birdlife – watch out for the shy klipspringer jumping from rock to rock below you or look up to spot an endangered black eagle circling above.

The Magoebaskloof Canopy Tour ® is a recent addition to the Canopy Tour group and opened in December 2008 between the towns of Haenertsburg and Tzaneen in Limpopo province. This new canopy tour may well be the most spectacular as it traverses down a deep narrow gorge crossing three magnificent waterfalls that each tumble nearly 20m into the river below. Cliffside platforms provide birds-eye views of the waterfalls and gorge and allow clients to experience this previously inaccessible environment for the first time. The river gorge is adorned with wild flowers and orchids, and provides the perfect setting to see a host of colourful butterfly species.

The Drakensberg Canopy Tour ® is set within the towering cliff faces and trees of the beautiful Blue Grotto forest in the central Drakensberg and promises an unforgettable adventure as you glide along a series of eleven steel cables and platforms built within and above the upper forest canopy level. A first for South Africa, the Drakensberg Canopy Tour includes an elevated rockface walkway which offers clients uninterrupted treetop views over the forested valley below. The tour includes spectacular slides over the forest combined with the enjoyment of tranquil surroundings and bird sightings from each of the platforms.

The new Malolotja Canopy Tour ® is situated in the pristine Malolotja Nature Reserve in north western Swaziland alongside the popular Piggs Peak route. The reserve boasts an abundance of game animals and birdlife and is well known for the prolific display of wildflowers in spring. This tour is set in one of the last truly remote mountain wildernesses left in Southern Africa and takes place alongside the rocky crags and sheer mountain slopes of the reserve.

Canopy Tours ® depart every half an hour from 8am to 3pm and are conducted in most weather conditions. Suitable for anyone between the ages of 7 and 70 Canopy Tours ® are great for nature lovers, families, corporate groups and thrill seekers alike. With six official Canopy Tours around the country there's always one nearby! Group sizes are generally 8 people per group, but larger group bookings of up to 150 people per day can be handled.

To find out more please visit www.canopytour.co.za