

About Blue IQ City2City

Gauteng: Home of Champions

Gauteng has long been touted as the Home of Champions. Our claim to being South Africa's home of champions has again been reaffirmed by the crowning of SuperSport United and Mamelodi Sundowns as the Premier Soccer League champions and the Nedbank Cup respectively. Our strategy to host competitive sport will receive a further boost next month when we host UEFA and English League champions Manchester United during the Vodacom Cup Challenge. This year's Vodacom Challenge tournament seems to be generating interest beyond the borders of South Africa. A number of English football fanatics are reportedly planning to travel to South Africa to support Manchester United.

The hosting of other major events this year will showcase our province and provide much needed support for the development of sport. These events, including SoccerEx and the Confederation Cup in 2009, will provide an opportunity to hone our skills to host major events ahead of the Soccer World Cup in 2010. Next year we will welcome teams that will be participating in the FIFA Confederations Cup including Espana, the newly crowned European champions. These high level international events help to enhance the socio-economic growth of our province and create a lasting impression of the province's global competitiveness. The City2City marathon will compliment these events and ensure that on a year to year basis we are able to attract more and more runners to our Province.

Endurance running Endurance running is currently highlighted by two ultra-marathons, both of them world-renowned events. The Comrades Marathon is run annually between the capital of Kwazulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, and Durban. The distance can vary slightly from year to year, but it usually is in the region of 90 kilometres. The race attracts approximately 13 000 runners, and the route is lined by great numbers of cheering supporters. Since the introduction of prize money, the Comrades has also drawn some of the world's top ultra-distance athletes. SA's second ultra-popular ultra-marathon is the 56-kilometre Two Oceans Marathon. Its greatest draw card is an extremely picturesque route that winds along the coastline surrounding Cape Town. The Two Oceans, like the Comrades, also manages to pull top professionals from overseas.

The Blue IQ City2City Marathon hopes to attract scores of runners not only from within our provincial borders but also runners nationally and internationally. The intention of the race is not to compete with any of the other long distance endurance races but rather to compliment them in making SA a sports tourism destination.

The 50km distance makes it the third longest distance after the Two Oceans and Comrades races. Its prize money of R1.3million however makes it the richest ultra marathon challenge in Africa. Many national and internationally acclaimed ultra marathon runners have already expressed their interests in taking part in this race.

City2 City envisioning the Global City Region

The race between Tshwane and Johannesburg also ties in with the Global City Region vision, as expressed by the Gauteng Provincial Government. While this year's inaugural race is between two major metropolitan areas within the province, future races will see the inclusion of Ekurhuleni and other centres as well.

Heritage, Culture and Sport a winning recipe for City2City

The marathon held in September is also a deliberate attempt to build on the activities being planned for heritage Month. The City2City Ultra Marathon is not only about running but also about people from diverse communities and lands coming together to share in the joys and tribulations involved in this endurance race. It also about showing the connectedness of the major metropolitan areas in the Province, in people, technology and infrastructure.

Blue IQ and City2City Sports Tourism

The City2City marathon is also a prelude for Blue IQ into Sports Tourism. This is a recent mandate being given to Blue IQ to investigate different sporting interventions that can be used to inject additional growth into the economy.

Sport tourism is a multi-billion dollar business, one of the fastest growing areas of the \$4.5 trillion global travel and tourism industry. By 2011, travel and tourism is expected to increase by more than 10 percent of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The economies of cities, regions and even countries around the world are increasingly reliant on the visiting golfer and skier or the travelling football, rugby or cricket supporter. In some countries, sport can account for as much as 25 percent of all tourism receipts. Sport tourists are passionate, high-spending, enjoy new sporting experiences and often stimulate other tourism. Their direct benefit to a destination is cash - their indirect benefit can be years of follow-on tourists. Sport tourism as a tool, can achieve many things – grow the economy, create thousands of new jobs and even help change cultural perceptions. World-class venues and supporting infrastructure, top international events, and Gauteng's passion for sport combine to make the province a huge draw-card for sports fans. More than 10% of foreign tourists come to South Africa to watch or participate in sports events, with spectators accounting for 60% to 80% of these arrivals. Gauteng being the Home of Champions needs to capitalise more on these figures and with events such as the City2City marathon, it can begin to just that.