

Tourism safety of utmost importance

MBOMBELA - Over the past two weeks Kruger Lowveld Tourism has received reports of overland trucks being robbed at gunpoint and transfer vehicles with visitors being caught up in protest action on the roads within the Kruger Lowveld region, it reported in its newsletter this week.

"It was only due to tip-offs from third parties that we become aware of these incidents."

It said it realised that these are sensitive issues and service providers are scared of damaging their reputation, incidents such as these harm the tourism industry as a whole, the chamber said in a statement. "Victims will go back to their home country and relate their traumatic experience to friends and family, which translates into less bookings to South Africa.

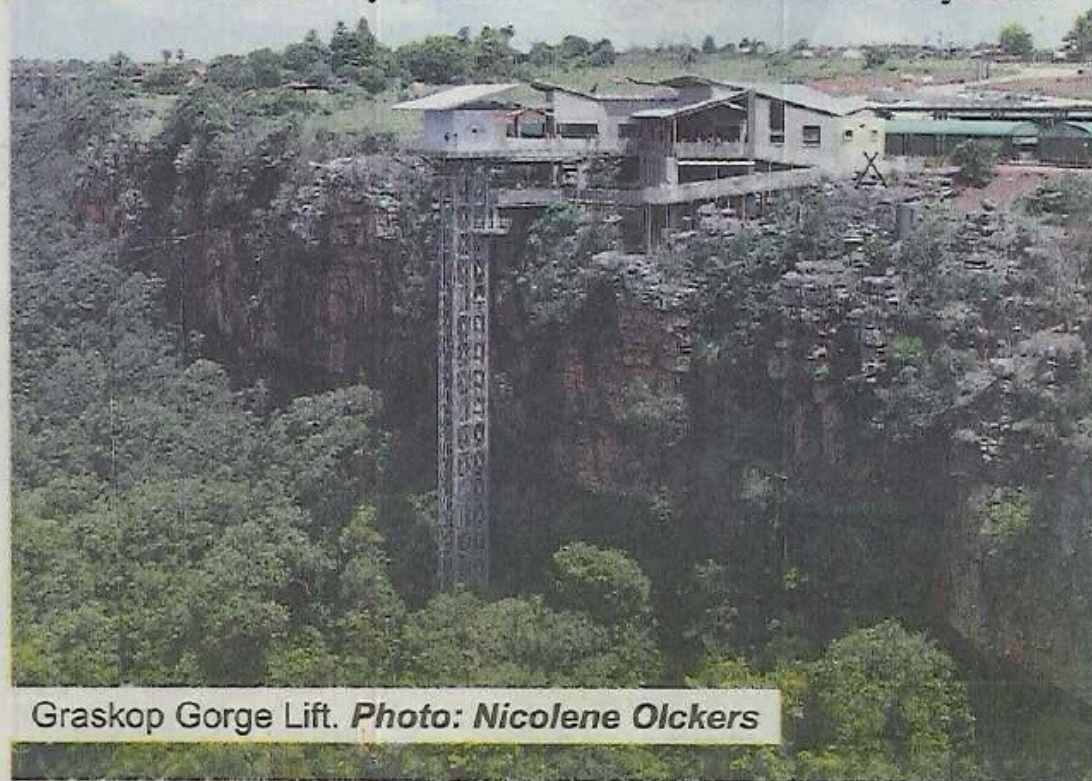
"It is crucial that authorities be made aware of every incident

where a tourist is harmed or threatened, so that they can intervene and deploy additional law-enforcement resources to affected areas."

It said that the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) has prepared a Draft Tourism Safety Plan which will hopefully be implemented and circulated widely to the industry in the province shortly.

"In several recent incidents, the MTPA has acted swiftly and called upon the necessary resources to support victims and advise law enforcement officials."

Incidents can also be reported online to the tourism safety initiative (TSI), an initiative of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa which will ensure that incidents are dealt with at the highest levels of government. For more information, visit the TSI's website at tourismsafety.co.za.



Graskop Gorge Lift. *Photo: Nicolene Olckers*