

Sixaba, Zinzi¹ – Tyobeka, Thabelo²

Primitive Pleasures: Historical Pathways in Coastal Tourism Development in the Eastern Cape, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Research on South African coastal tourism has been limited, and the Eastern Cape coast, in particular, remains understudied. This study aims to enhance understanding of coastal tourism in the Eastern Cape by employing a historical approach and drawing on archival materials and existing literature. It examines tourism growth during the colonial and apartheid periods, focusing on the evolution of coastal tourism in Port Alfred and Kenton-on-Sea. The findings reveal that both towns developed as recreational and seaside holiday destinations primarily for the white settler community, with attractions centered around the coastal environment, especially beaches and rivers that supported various activities. The study demonstrates how Port Alfred and Kenton exemplify English-style seaside resort towns. The analysis sheds light on the relationship between colonial tourism encounters and apartheid, highlighting the racial segregation of leisure spaces.

Keywords: coastal tourism, Kenton-on-Sea, Port Alfred, tourism histories, colonial, apartheid

¹ Postdoctoral fellow, Tourism Department, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, South Africa, Email: zinzi.sixaba@mandela.ac.za

² Associate Lecturer, Events and Tourism Management, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa, Email: tyobekat@cput.ac.za

INTRODUCTION

Coastal and Marine Tourism (CMT) is among the fastest-growing sectors in the tourism industry and is recognized as an economic driver that supports local communities and regional income (Suryani et al., 2022). CMT has become a significant force in global tourism, offering both economic benefits and recreational opportunities. It encompasses activities such as beachgoing, water sports, and encounters with marine wildlife, making CMT a key component of the blue economy with notable effects on economic growth and job creation (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019b; UNWTO, 2020). The global rise of CMT has two main impacts: boosting local economies and raising environmental concerns, as damage to marine habitats threatens the sustainability of tourism.

It is stated that “the concept of coastal tourism embraces the full range of tourism, leisure, and recreationally oriented activities in the coastal zone and the offshore coastal waters. These include coastal tourism development (accommodation, restaurants, food industry, and second homes) and the infrastructure supporting coastal developments (retail businesses, marinas, and activity suppliers)” (Hall, 2001, p. 602). Research also shows that CMT plays a crucial role in driving economic growth, creating jobs, and improving community well-being connected to these destinations (Dimitrovski et al., 2021). According to Leposa (2020), CMT is estimated to contribute 26% to the global marine economy, providing approximately 8.6 million jobs. The cruise tourism sector alone supports roughly 1.2 million jobs and adds \$150 billion annually to the global economy (Patterson, 2021).

This study examines the evolution of coastal tourism in Port Alfred and Kenton. It adopts a historical approach and, methodologically, draws on archival materials and existing literature as sources. Specifically, the study aims to demonstrate how colonialism and apartheid affected the development of tourism, emphasizing themes of segregation and the marginalization of indigenous people in these coastal towns. These settlements were selected for examination because of their historical importance as popular holiday destinations for white settlers within the Albany district, which formed part of the Cape Colony. The Albany district was an economic hub due to its developed agricultural sector and its central position between the two major cities, Port Elizabeth (now known as Gqeberha) and East London. Overall, the study seeks to fill a knowledge gap in the historical development of small-town tourism in coastal areas, particularly in the context of South Africa’s history of colonization and apartheid.

LITERATURE REVIEW

International Research on Coastal Tourism

Coastal tourism has long been a central focus of international tourism research, making it one of the oldest topics studied by geographers. It remains a significant aspect of tourism geography (Meyer-Arendt, 2018). Over time, various themes within coastal tourism research have emerged, including the organization of seaside resorts, changes in coastal landscapes, and studies of the environmental impacts of coastal tourism (Meyer-Arendt, 2018). In the Global North, research on coastal development

has primarily focused on Europe, particularly the United Kingdom (Rogerson, 2019b). Studies in this region have explored climate adaptation, sustainable management of coastal tourism, and policy implementation to reduce environmental impacts. For example, the REST-COAST project illustrates how nature-based coastline restoration supports climate change adaptation in European regions, including the Baltic, North, Atlantic, and Mediterranean seas (European Climate Adaptation Platform, 2024). Innovation, new technologies, and strong institutional support often drive coastal tourism growth in the Global North. Countries in this region have well-developed strategies and sustainable tourism policies, resulting in high numbers of international tourists.

Most countries in the Global South are turning to coastal tourism to boost their economies (Meyer-Arendt, 2018). However, coastal tourism in these regions faces challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, financial constraints, and environmental sustainability issues. CMT research emphasizes the importance of sustainable tourism management practices in these areas, particularly regarding natural sites and cultural heritage (Quader et al., 2024). Rogerson (2020) provides an overview of the policy challenges faced by the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), which comprises 21 countries, most of which are in the Global South. IORA members recognize CMT as a vital sector and have developed the IORA Action Plan (2022–2027). Rogerson (2020) notes that although CMT is a valuable resource and offers growth opportunities for tourism, it faces numerous obstacles that threaten its sustainable development. These include inadequate planning for coastal area development and management, governance issues, limited involvement of communities and marginalized groups in policymaking, restricted innovation, access to finance, enterprise development, insufficient data for monitoring, and risks posed by climate change. Globally, the tension between economic gains and environmental challenges underscores the urgent need for sustainable approaches to CMT.

Coastal Tourism in South Africa

In South Africa, only a few studies have been conducted on coastal tourism over the past 20 years (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). Current research on South African coastal regions addresses various issues, with contributions emerging from multiple disciplinary perspectives (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019a). From a policy standpoint, frameworks such as the Integrated Coastal Management Act (ICMA) demonstrate South Africa's commitment to sustainable coastal tourism development. Enacted under the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) of 2008, the ICMA aims to reduce environmental impacts and ensure the sustainable management of coastal resources (Department of Environmental Affairs, 2014). The legislation regulates coastal development and activities to prevent habitat destruction, pollution, and overuse of marine resources, balancing tourism growth with environmental preservation.

Many ecological challenges threaten South Africa's coastal tourism, posing risks to its long-term sustainability (Mgadle et al., 2022). Additional policy initiatives include Operation Phakisa, which focuses on marine and coastal tourism. It is a strategic framework designed to unlock economic potential by improving infrastructure, encouraging sustainable tourism practices, and involving local

communities (DEA, 2014). Operation Phakisa has influenced South Africa's tourism policy, particularly in coastal areas. Launched in 2014, this government program aims to capitalize on opportunities in the ocean economy by promoting sustainable development along the coast, including tourism, marine resources, and infrastructure (Department of Tourism, 2015). The initiative emphasizes the importance of comprehensive coastal zone management, with goals such as job creation, economic growth, and conservation in South Africa's coastal and marine environments. As stated by the Department of Environmental Affairs (2014), a primary objective is to promote the sustainable and responsible use of marine resources, particularly in tourism and fisheries. Furthermore, Operation Phakisa encourages local community involvement in decision-making while prioritizing skill development and training to ensure that tourism's economic benefits are shared fairly (UNDP, 2016). Notably, the Operation Phakisa framework aligns with international sustainability goals, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, which aims to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas, and marine resources for development (United Nations, 2015).

In South Africa, although with limited representation, coastal and marine tourism has been included in historical tourism research. Bickford-Smith (2009) examines the development of South Africa's coastal cities, analyzing coastal leisure spaces, particularly in major urban areas such as Cape Town and Durban. Additionally, Gupta (2015) explores 'leisure port spaces,' which are connected to the historical origins of cruise tourism. The most recent study, conducted in Mossel Bay, Western Cape, investigates local historical changes that have shaped and reshaped this town's coastal settlement. It examines the growth of colonial tourism in Mossel Bay and the city's unique tourism economy during apartheid (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2023). Another area of historical tourism scholarship on coastal tourism focuses on themes of space and place, emphasizing the development of coastal resorts. Rogerson & Rogerson (2020) provide insights into the evolution of seaside resorts in South Africa, with particular attention to Hermanus in the Western Cape.

Racism is deeply rooted in South African tourism (Rogerson, 2024). Research examining the histories of coastal tourism highlights racism and the politics of beaches in South Africa's major coastal cities. Specifically, Rogerson (2017) analyses the segregation of tourism landscapes along racial lines on South African beaches during apartheid. Additionally, Bank (2015) examines the links among landscape, race, and identity in the Eastern Cape, with particular emphasis on city beaches and recreational areas in East London.

In 1652, the Dutch East India Company set up a refreshment station at the Cape, which grew into an important trading hub (Worden, 2012). Coastal cities such as Cape Town, Gqeberha, and Durban developed into economic and cultural centers, reflecting the influence of colonialism and commerce (Bickford-Smith, 2009). From the colonial era to today, coastal regions in South Africa have been contested spaces (Mafumbu et al., 2022). Starting in 1948, apartheid policies segregated access to the coast, reserving many beaches, such as Clifton and Muizenberg in Cape Town, for white people and denying marginalized groups opportunities for leisure. Colonial and apartheid laws were used to forcibly remove and displace Black people from their ancestral coastal lands. For example, along the Eastern Cape coast between the 1890s and 1930s, Black individuals were forcibly removed to make way for holiday cottages and tourism developments such as the Haven Hotel (Wildman,

2005). Similarly, the apartheid government evicted and displaced Black residents from coastal land in Ngqushwa, Eastern Cape (Mafumbu et al., 2022). Furthermore, Bank (2015, p. 2) offers a historical analysis of the Eastern Cape coastline, stating that the “Eastern Cape’s coastline has enjoyed a special place in the imagination and identity politics of white English-speaking people who have looked to the coast as a critical space of relaxation, recreation, and recuperation.” For nearly two centuries, white farmers, traders, and townsfolk from the Eastern Cape interior frequently traveled to the coast for vacations (Bank, 2015). The Wild Coast of the Transkei, in particular, was seen by white visitors as a landscape of exceptional beauty and wilderness, and they built cottages along the coast (Wildman, 2005). These were traditionally simple and modest holiday homes, with families returning year after year, generation after generation, until many were removed at the end of apartheid in 1994.

Tourism analysis in the post-apartheid era has focused heavily on promoting inclusivity and restoring cultural heritage. Therefore, historiographical research on tourism offers important insights into how historical injustices continue to shape modern tourism policies and practices. In this context, this paper explores an overlooked knowledge gap in historical tourism studies by using various archival materials to uncover the histories of tourism development in the coastal towns of the Eastern Cape.

METHODS

Historians’ focus on archival texts and voices offers a valuable model, as these sources help researchers remain close to the “constructedness” of evidence about tourism (Pirie, 2025, p. 459). Expanding coastal tourism research is essential, and this paper contributes to the growing body of work applying historical perspectives to the study of coastal tourism. Methodologically, it combines existing literature with archival sources. Both elements provide historical context for the coastal tourism histories of the resort towns of Port Alfred and Kenton in the Albany District, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Archival sources were obtained from the Cory Library at Rhodes University in Makhanda. The consulted materials included historical books, journals, industry documents, newspapers, letters, and written affidavits. Selection criteria focused on material relevance, the time period, and the geographical area. Data analysis involved organizing the materials chronologically and thematically, guided by existing literature. The study covers the colonial period from the 1820s through the late apartheid years of the 1980s.

RESULTS

History of Albany District

The Albany District was located on the eastern side of the Cape Province. The area was initially called Zuurveld by European colonists. It is known as the most fertile and well-watered land bordering the coast (Philipps, 1834). Multiple conflicts and wars have shaped the history of the Albany District.

Figure 1. Map of the Albany District 1856



Source: Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc. (2025).

Figure 2. Map of the Eastern Cape



Source: SA-Venues.com. (1999–2025).

White colonists took control of the land, and African residents in the area were forced to retreat, eventually becoming labour tenants on white-owned farms within the colony (Crais, 1992). The original inhabitants of the district were the Khoi-Khoi and Xhosa peoples. The dispossession of African people from Zuurveld by Colonel Graham took place in 1811 to establish a British settlers' district (Campbell, 1897). The white population of the Albany District included residents from Grahamstown, Bathurst, Port Alfred, and Kenton, as well as farmers from Salem, Southwell, and Alexandria (Publicity Association, 1928); these towns are reflected in Figures 1 and 2.

The Growth of Port Alfred as a Popular Coastal Town

The discovery of Port Alfred is linked to Portuguese narratives. Portuguese sailors are said to have often visited Kowie for their slave-hunting missions (Turpin, 1964). However, these accounts are questionable, as some suggest that Diaz was the founder of Port Alfred (Grahamstown Historical Society, 1971). Later, a survivor of the Grosvenor shipwreck reached Kowie in 1782. By 1811, the area was settled by white settlers, who named it Port Kowie in October 1821, before it was renamed Port Frances in 1825 after the wife of Colonel Henry Somerset. The name was later changed to Port Alfred in honour of Queen Victoria's second son, Alfred, who visited the district but never the town (Grahamstown Historical Society, 1971; Bailes, 2010). Port Alfred was known by several names, including Kowie Town, Port Kowie, Port Heathcote, Richmond, Victoria, and Port-O-Grahamstown (Bailes, 2010). The small town began to develop in 1915, driven by a boom in land sales and the availability of over 100 building sites, as Port Alfred's European population grew rapidly (Bailes, 2010).

During the late 18th century, Port Alfred had the potential to become one of South Africa's busiest harbors (Grahamstown Historical Society, 1971). There was strong enthusiasm for building a harbor to serve the Albany District settlement, driven by Port Alfred's central location relative to the 1820 white settlers in the Albany region and its position between East London and Port Elizabeth (Langley, 1982). The Albany settlers wanted to create a harbor that would be more accessible than Port Elizabeth (Grahamstown Historical Society, 1971). Reports indicated that the Port Elizabeth harbor could not keep up with increasing trade demands, leading to the proposal that a harbor in Port Alfred would be ideal (Grahamstown Historical Society, 1971). The construction of Kowie Harbour has been described as "the story of the Kowie harbor, sadly enough, is one of wrecked ships, lost fortunes, broken hearts, and disappointment for everyone who had a hand in its affairs" (Turpin, 1964, p. 1) and "...the history of the river has been one of failure" (Turpin, 1964, p. 2). Several companies, including the Kowie Navigation Company, founded in 1843, were formed to develop the harbor (Bailes, 2010). The construction of a stone-lined harbor channel in 1841 allowed high-masted sailing ships to land, boosting the town's economic and recreational appeal. Today, Port Alfred is a tourist destination with roots in the colonial era, where development was closely tied to infrastructure improvements and harbor construction efforts.

Historical Development of Coastal Tourism in Port Alfred

After facing setbacks in developing Port Alfred into a fully functional harbor, it gained popularity as a resort town, particularly among colonial settlers in the Albany District. The landscape and climate attracted many visitors. Most activities included swimming and walking along Shelly Beach. In the early days, Port Alfred lacked bathing facilities, and visitors would change into their swimwear behind dunes and shrubs (Bailes, 2010). It was not until 1894 that the local Council took charge of recreational activities and built bathing facilities. As Port Alfred continued to attract more visitors each year, existing recreational amenities became insufficient, especially during the Christmas season. Although the local Council hesitated to invest in additional facilities, by 1914 more amenities were eventually added (Bailes, 2010). Figure 3 shows a bathing pavilion that was built and operated for a fee, offering refreshments and surfboard rentals (Publicity Association, 1928).

Additionally, the Kowie River became a popular spot for fishing and boating. Visitors enjoyed canoeing or rowing on the river, as well as the tea gardens and picnic areas set up along the riverbank (Publicity Association, 1928). These activities laid the foundation for the town's tourism appeal, which centered on its accessible coastal environment (Booyens & Visser, 2020).

Over time, Port Alfred grew in popularity and became recognized across the Union of South Africa as a charming resort. The opening of a railway line in 1884 created new opportunities for leisure tourism. At that time, the town had only one boarding house and two hotels for lodging. The oldest and most famous hotel was the Styles Hotel, later known as the Grand Hotel, which was favored by visitors from throughout the Union of South Africa. It is said to have offered adequate accommodation facilities (Bailes, 2010).

During the Anglo-Boer War, a conflict between the British Army and the Boer states, the Boer Commandos invaded the Cape Colony, prompting many farmers in the Albany District to evacuate and establish refugee camps in Port Alfred. After the war ended in 1902, the Council bought 30 tents to rent to visitors for camping. As shown in Figure 4, the municipality charged 7 pence weekly for smaller tents and a shilling for larger ones. Port Alfred was divided into the East and West banks, with tents set up on the eastern bank. Unfortunately, the site was unstable and too low, causing the entire campsite to wash away during Christmas in 1909. Visitors had to find refuge at the town hall and in local homes, leading to the suggestion of building wooden bungalows (Bailes, 2010).

The founding of the Golf Club in 1916 marked another major step in the development of tourism in Port Alfred, attracting many visitors (Bailes, 2010). By 1928, accommodation options had grown, with the town having 13 hotels and 3 boarding houses (Publicity Association, 1928). A traveler in the 1930s described Port Alfred as: "to spend a holiday in Kowie is to apply an antidote to the poison of hard living. The charm of the old world is still upon the Kowie, Bathurst, and the district. The people seeking happiness find it in contentment" (Bailes, 2010).

The historical growth of racially segregated spaces remains a key area of research for South African human geographers (Rogerson, 2025). Apartheid enforced racial discrimination in tourism, reflected in segregated leisure areas and hospitality services, such as racially divided beaches and unwelcoming environments in areas designated for Black people (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2025).

In Port Alfred, as in other South African coastal towns, tourism was organized to restrict access for certain racial groups (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). Despite these limitations, Port Alfred continued to attract white tourists who valued the river and ocean views and the range of local entertainment options. The Kowie River and beaches remained popular tourist spots during this period, but access was restricted to specific groups (Rogerson, 2021). Under apartheid, recreational beach swimming was also segregated, with Black people using the East Bank, which was deemed unsafe for swimming, while the West Bank was reserved solely for white visitors.

Figure 3. Bathing Pavilion in Port Alfred



Source: Bailes (2010)

Figure 4. Municipal Charges for Tourism Facilities

Municipality of Port Alfred

CHARGES: BATHING LAGOON.

Bathing Tickets, 1d. Book of Tickets, 30 for 2/-.
Annual Bathing Tickets for Families (to be registered) including Private Dressing Room, 21/10/0
Monthly ditto, ditto 7/6
Private Dressing Room (per bather) 3d. each

Costumes, Towels etc., supplied at low charges.

CHARGES ON BEACH:

Public Rooms 1d. each per bathe
Private Rooms 3d. each per bathe

CHARGES FOR CAMPING GROUND:

Hire of Stand .. 7/- for Season or 10/- per Month
Water and Sanitary conveniences provided.

MARKET HOURS:

Every Wednesday & Saturday, commencing at 7 a.m.
December and January 6.30 a.m.

PUBLIC LIBRARY:

Hours: From 2.30 p.m. to 6 p.m. during Summer Months, to 5 p.m. during Winter Months, daily except Wednesday.

Subscription: Half-yearly, 10/-; Monthly, 3/6 for 1st Month, 2/6 for Renewals; Weekly, 1/6.
Free Reading Room attached.

Municipal Buildings (Public Hall, Public Library, Town Clerk's, School Board and Market Offices) on East Quay.

For all Municipal information apply to
W. ROSE, Town Clerk.

Source: Bailes (2010)

Kenton: The Holiday Village

Kenton is located between two estuaries, the Bushmans and Kariega Rivers, and is a seaside resort about 130 km north of Port Elizabeth. In its early days, Kenton was quite primitive, as the absence of a bridge connecting the two rivers meant that holidaymakers relied solely on ferries and ox wagons. The Bushmans River Mouth has been recognized as a holiday resort since the 1910s. By the 1930s, Kenton had established itself as a small village governed by a Local Areas Committee, and in 1941, it gained Village Management Board status. One of the first signs of development was the construction of a bridge linking the two rivers, which sparked a boom in property development during the 1950s and 1960s (Meiring, 1989). The history of Kenton-on-Sea is closely linked to the Butt family, who immigrated from Sussex, England, and settled in Kenton. Additionally, a later Mr. Tilt is credited with naming it Kenton-on-Sea because of his origins in Kent, a county in southeastern England (Meiring, 1989). It is said that Mr. Tommy Tilt owned the area of Kenton, having purchased land from Mr. Charles Butt (Meiring, 1989).

Tourism Development in Kenton

Kenton was a favorite holiday spot for white settlers, mainly farmers from the Albany District. Each December holiday season, preparations were made for a six-week vacation by the sea. Their ox wagons would be filled with large tins of jam, batches of biscuits, bottles of lemon syrup, and ginger beer. The bags, sails, and tents were stored underneath the wagons, and poultry and sheep were also brought along to provide fresh eggs and meat, as there were no shops in Kenton; supplies had to be brought from the farms.

There were three camping sites: one near the Kariega River Mouth and two at the Bushmans River. Early campers in Kenton enjoyed simple pleasures such as swimming, walking along the beach, and fishing. Mr. Charles Butt rented the camping sites at a rate of a shilling a day (Meiring, 1989).

Upon Mr. Charles Butt's death, his lands were sold to Mr. Tilt, who stopped camping to encourage others to buy plots and build vacation homes. However, many campers were unhappy about having to purchase plots, as some had been camping in Kenton with their families for nearly 50 years and saw no need to buy land. Although campers were removed, they were eventually forced to purchase land (Meiring, 1989).

In 1935, Mr. Tilt sold his land to Mr. Pudney, marking the start of Kenton's rise in popularity. The Pudneys put much effort into marketing Kenton, using posters and brochures to promote it as "the finest holiday playground and fisherman's eldorado in the Union" (Meiring, 1989, p. 35). Eventually, a boarding house was opened, which later became known as the Kenton Hotel. By the 1940s, Kenton reportedly hosted about 1,200 visitors during the December holiday season (Meiring, 1989).

Tourism as a Destructive Creation in Kenton

Postcolonial perspectives on tourism argue that the industry served as a way for white colonial interests to insert themselves into Africa, claim it as their own, marginalize and ignore indigenous people, and treat them as objects (Pirie, 2025, p. 454). Specifically, the coast historically marked the first point of conflict between white settlers and African populations. The colonial era was characterized by a deliberate separation of African people from the South African coast. It is emphasized that “Resorts became a tool for fostering and spreading the ‘civilized’ values of the colonial elite, for protecting the health and curing the ailments of colonizers, and providing them with a pre- and post-retirement haven” (Borsay, 2022, p. 420).

During apartheid, spatial planning prevented Black individuals from settling near the coast, limiting their access to marine resources (Mafumbu et al., 2022). Tourism can therefore be linked to the living histories of colonial conquest and apartheid. This study explores the underlying dynamics and consequences of coastal tourism development in Kenton during the apartheid era. The section briefly discusses the presence of the Black community in Kenton, focusing on forced removals, relocation, resettlement, and socio-economic conditions.

Scholars such as Devine and Ojeda (2017) have shown how tourism is connected to land dispossession using a critical geography approach. Their work highlights themes of enclosure and extraction, erasure and commodification, “destructive creation,” and (neo)colonialism. These scholars explain “how tourism drives violent practices of land privatization and dispossession, extracts natural and cultural resources, erases existing histories and people from the landscape, and ‘destructively creates’ new socio-natures, identities, and commodities based on partial power-laden tourism imaginaries” (Devine & Ojeda, 2017, p. 606).

Figure 5. White Campers With Their Black Servants at a Camping Site in Kenton.



Source: Meiring (1989)

Much of the Black community in Kenton consisted of servants catering to the needs of white European campers visiting the area, as shown in Figure 5. Once white Europeans built their holiday homes, their African servants were allowed to live in the ‘commonage’ provided by their employers. The township in Kenton where the Black community lived has been designated an ‘emergency camp’ since 1954, meaning the apartheid government considered it temporary and had no plans to provide proper facilities for the Black residents. Living conditions for the Black community in Kenton were dire, with issues such as overcrowding, lack of water and sanitation, unemployment, low wages, limited access to secondary education, and high rent payments to the Bantu Affairs Administration Board (BAAB). Additionally, apartheid police harassed Black residents in the township. In response, the Black community organized a protest in May 1985 to present a list of complaints, but they were met with tear gas and rubber bullets, leading to the arrest of 107 community members (Glenmore Forced Removals, Box PR.10301). Southall (1983) argues that apartheid policies affected every part of South African society, oppressing Black people through intimidation and police violence and stripping them of control over their lives.

Kenton—described as one of the most painful sagas in South Africa’s resettlement history—saw 1,500 Black and Colored people at Klipfotein Farm receive notices to gather their belongings as they were relocated to a township to be built in Glenmore (Meiring, 1989). The Black community in Kenton had faced threats of removal since their ‘temporary transit camp’ was established by workers in the 1950s. Lacking official residency permission, they built homes north of the town of Kenton. In 1963, it was recognized as an emergency camp under the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act. The land attracted the interest of local property developers, and according to a newspaper article, “the site where the Africans live is a valuable piece of ground.” Consequently, the municipality planned to sell the land after displacing the community, with the area designated for recreational development (The Herald, 8 August 1989).

Forced removals were common in the Eastern Cape’s coastal towns and cities, and by the 1960s, they were also occurring in East London. About 8,000 families were displaced from the East and West Bank and relocated to Mdantsane, a Xhosa-dominated township created in Ciskei’s homeland (Bank, 2015). In Kenton, forced removal began on April 2, 1979, when families were relocated from Klipfotein to Glenmore (The Herald, 8 August 1989). In Glenmore, they were promised three-room houses, a borehole for water, and employment as unskilled workers. In a letter, Mr. M. G. Whisson describes Glenmore as an “area 40 km from Grahamstown, a remote and rural place, known as one of the worst parts of the Eastern Cape, a hot and inhospitable wilderness” (Glenmore Forced Removals, Letter, Box PR.10301).

The removal and relocation were planned by the South African Government’s Department of Plural Relations. The government sent 50 trucks to move the families, their furniture, and livestock. Reports indicate that the families refused to move and were devastated when the government bulldozed their houses, and their belongings were loaded into trucks (Meiring, 1989). In some affidavits, families reported, “We did not want to leave Klipfotein. It was insisted that we must leave. Harassed by the police, I witnessed the knocking down of some houses... when the truck was about to load our furniture, there was a document I was told to make a cross—I did so—but I did not know what it

meant, it was not explained to me. I believe there was no alternative but to sign it” (Glenmore Forced Removals, Affidavit, Box PR.10301).

Additionally, others reported: “wonke umntu owaye hlala eKlipfotein wemka khona engafuni ukuya eGlenmore...ukufika kwethu apha safelwa zinkomo sophukelwa zimpahla zethu neBhokwe nayonke into esasi nayo” [Every person who lived in Klipfotein left unwillingly for Glenmore, and upon arrival, our livestock died and our furniture was damaged and broken] (Glenmore Forced Removals, Affidavit, Box PR.10301).

Several anti-apartheid groups, such as the Black Sash and the Institute of Race Relations, advocated against these forced removals, taking legal action and filing appeals to the Department of Tourism. The Klipfotein farm was near the Diaz Cross, along the beach from Bushmans River, which is recognized as a national monument. However, the response to these appeals was discouraging (The Herald, 14 April 1984). Indeed, Kenton illustrates a racialized landscape in which indigenous people were removed from their land to create a paradise for white holidaymakers.

CONCLUSIONS

Tourism studies can benefit from deeper engagement with historical research (Rogerson & Sixaba, 2024). The historical development of small-town tourism is barely documented (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2024). Therefore, it is crucial to fill this knowledge gap by recording tourism growth in coastal towns, especially in the Eastern Cape, where tourism research is limited. This study has tracked the historical changes in coastal tourism in Port Alfred and Kenton-on-Sea, analyzing the social, political, and economic forces that have shaped these areas. Using a historical geography approach, it demonstrates how these towns were established as spaces for white settlers during the colonial and apartheid periods, highlighting themes of segregation, displacement, and the exclusion of indigenous peoples.

The South African coastline is a contested space, shaped by the violent histories of colonization and apartheid. Its legacies are still visible today in South Africa’s coastal towns and cities, affecting patterns of coastal development and tourism. The history of wars in the Albany district during the colonial period contributed to the dispossession of the indigenous Xhosa and Khoi people, leading to the development of these coastal towns as exclusive enclaves for white recreation and leisure, with limited access for Black people. The forced removals in Kenton further reinforced these exclusions.

The study’s findings show that both towns became popular holiday destinations for white British settlers, especially from the 1820s. These towns grew in prominence among settlers due to their seaside appeal, which was the main attraction. However, the development of these towns also involved the marginalization of the Black community. The forced removals in Kenton highlighted the violent nature of apartheid policies that prioritized white leisure over Black livelihoods. During apartheid, racial policies limited access to the coast, with most beaches reserved for whites only. Black people were marginalized and denied leisure opportunities. For example, in Port Alfred, beaches designated for Black people were unsafe for swimming, reflecting systemic racism.

In the future, a more just and sustainable approach to tourism development is essential. Highlighting the stories of marginalized communities in tourism history can promote reconciliation and foster a more equitable industry. Furthermore, policies that restore access and economic opportunities to groups that were formerly excluded can help ensure that Eastern Cape coastal tourism develops in a way that respects its history and upholds social fairness.

REFERENCES

- Bailes, D. (2010). *Looking back at Port Alfred*. D. Bailes.
- Bank, L. (2015). Frontiers of freedom: Race, landscape, and nationalism in the coastal cultures of South Africa. *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 38(3–4), 248–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23323256.2015.1088790>
- Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc. (2025). *Antique map categories*. www.raremaps.com
- Bickford-Smith, V. (2009). Creating a city of the tourist imagination: The case of Cape Town, ‘The fairest cape of them all’. *Urban Studies*, 46(9), 1763–1785. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098009106013>
- Booyens, I., & Visser, G. (2020). Tourism-led local economic development in South Africa: A case study of Port Alfred. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 9(6), 1060–1075.
- Borsay, P. (2022). Spas and seaside resorts. In *The Oxford handbook of tourism history*. Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, C. T. (1897). *British South Africa: A history of the colony of the Cape of Good Hope from its conquest 1795 to the settlement of Albany by the emigration of 1819 [AD 1795–AD 1825] with Notices of Some of the British Settlers of 1820*. J. Haddon & Company.
- Crais, C. C. (1992). *White supremacy and black resistance in pre-industrial South Africa: The making of the colonial order in the Eastern Cape, 1770–1865* (Vol. 72). Cambridge University Press.
- Devine, J. & Ojeda, D. (2017). Violence and dispossession in tourism development: A critical geographical approach. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(5), 605–617. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2017.1293401>
- Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). (2014). *South Africa’s ocean economy: A national opportunity*. Government of South Africa.
- Department of Tourism. (2015). *Operation Phakisa: Unlocking the economic potential of the ocean*. Government of South Africa.
- Dimitrovski, D., Lemmetyinen, A., Nieminen, L., & Pohjola, T. (2021). Understanding coastal and marine tourism sustainability: A multi-stakeholder analysis. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 19, 100554. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2021.100554>
- European Climate Adaptation Platform. (2024). *Nature-based coastal restoration contributing to climate change adaptation*. <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu>

- European Commission. (2024). *European Capital of Smart Tourism initiative*. <https://transport.ec.europa.eu>
- Glenmore Forced Removals, Box PR.10301. Various Folders: 46–99. 1979–1985.
- Grahamstown Historical Society. (1971). *Annals of the Grahamstown Historical Society*. Vol. 1, No. 3.
- Gupta, P. (2015). Consuming the coast: Mid-century communications of port tourism in the Southern African Indian Ocean. *Comunicação Midia e Consumo*, 12(35), 149–170. <https://doi.org/10.18568/1983-7070.1235149-170>
- Hall, C. M. (2001). Trends in ocean and coastal tourism: The end of the last frontier? *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 44(9–10), 601–618. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0964-5691\(01\)00071-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0964-5691(01)00071-0)
- Langley, W. R. C. (1982). *The Buffalo I. (1871–1889): A History of the First Steam Tug in East London and the Last in Port Alfred*. [publisher not identified].
- Leposa, N. (2020). Problematic blue growth: A thematic synthesis of social sustainability problems related to growth in the marine and coastal tourism. *Sustainability Science*, 15(4), 1233–1244. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-020-00796-9>
- Mafumbu, L., Zhou, L., & Kalumba, A. M. (2022). Exploring coastal access in South Africa: A historical perspective. *Sustainability*, 14(7), 3971. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14073971>
- Meiring, J. (1989). *The Kenton story & the people of Kenton-on-Sea*.
- Meyer-Arendt, K. (2018). Tourism geographies: Geographic research on coastal tourism. *Tourism Geographies*, 20(2), 358–363. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2018.1434815>
- Mgadle, A., Dube, K., & Lekaota, L. (2023). Conservation and sustainability of coastal city tourism in the advent of sea level rise in Durban, South Africa. *Tourism in Marine Environments*, 17(3), 179–196. <https://doi.org/10.3727/154427322x16599399156575>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2021). *Managing tourism development for sustainable and inclusive recovery*. OECD Publishing.
- Patterson, C. (2021). *Protocols being developed for resumption of cruise operations*. Jamaica Information Service.
- Philipps, T. (1834). *Advantages of emigration to Algoa Bay and Albany, South Africa*, Effingham Wilson.
- Pirie, G. (2022). Tourism histories in Africa. In Zuelow, E. G., & James, K. J. (Eds.), (2025), *The Oxford handbook of tourism history* (pp. 447–467). Oxford University Press.
- Quader, M. S., Hassan, H. M. K., & Mahbub, T. (2025). Sustainable coastal and marine tourism in Bangladesh: A qualitative evaluation. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 31(2), 81–97. <https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.31.2.9>
- Rogerson, C. M. (2020). Coastal and marine tourism in the Indian Ocean Rim Association States: Overview and policy challenges. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 29(2), 715–731. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.29226-501>

- Rogerson, C. M. (2024). Traces of the past: The Bantu world and black South African travel mobilities in the 1930s. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 2, 359–366.
- Rogerson, C. M. (2025). The Inhospitable city: Historical racial segregation in Johannesburg c. 1890–1970. *Modern Geografía*, 20(1), 83–106. <https://doi.org/10.15170/mg.2025.20.01.05>
- Rogerson, J. M. (2017). ‘Kicking sand in the face of apartheid’: Segregated beaches in South Africa. *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, 35, 93–109. <https://doi.org/10.1515/bog-2017-0007>
- Rogerson, J. M. (2019). The evolution of accommodation services in a coastal resort town: Hermanus, South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 8(5), 1–16.
- Rogerson, C. M., & Rogerson, J. M. (2019). Emergent planning for South Africa’s blue economy: Evidence from coastal and marine tourism. *Urbani Izziv*, 30, 24–36. <https://doi.org/10.5379/urbani-izziv-en-2019-30-supplement-002>
- Rogerson, C. M., & Rogerson, J. M. (2020a). Resort development and pathways in South Africa: Hermanus 1890–1994. In: Rogerson, J., Visser, G. (Eds.), *New directions in South African tourism geographies. Geographies of Tourism and Global Change* (pp. 15–32). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29377-2_2
- Rogerson, C. M., & Rogerson, J. M. (2020b). Coastal tourism in South Africa: A geographical perspective. In: Rogerson, J., Visser, G. (Eds.), *New directions in South African tourism geographies. geographies of tourism and global change*. Springer, Cham. (pp. 227–247). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29377-2_13
- Rogerson, J. M., & Rogerson, C. M. (2023). Historical geographies of coastal tourism: Mossel Bay, South Africa c. 1850–1988. *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, 61, 7–17. <https://doi.org/10.12775/bgss-2023-0022>
- Rogerson, C. M., & Rogerson, J. M. (2024). The evolution of small town spa resorts in the Global South: The historical pathway of Montagu, South Africa. *Modern Geografía*, 19(3), 99–116. <https://doi.org/10.15170/mg.2024.19.03.08>
- Rogerson, C. M., & Rogerson, J. M. (2025). Racial discrimination in tourism: The record of apartheid Cape Town. *Modern Geografía*, 20(3), 47–67. <https://doi.org/10.15170/mg.2025.20.03.03>
- Rogerson, C. M., & Sixaba, Z. (2024). Rural tourism in South Africa’s apartheid bantustans: An historical view. *Modern Geografía*, 19(4), 67–83. <https://doi.org/10.15170/mg.2024.19.04.04>
- SA-Venues.com. (1999–2025). *Eastern Cape Regional Map*. www.sa-venues.com/maps/easterncape/physical.php
- Southall, R. J. (1983). *South Africa’s Transkei: The political economy of an “independent” bantustan*. Monthly Review Press.
- Suryani, A., Soedarso, S., Rahmawati, D., Saifulloh, M., & Agustin, D. S. Y. (2022). A Community marine tourism as a business sector: Challenges faced by local community. *International Journal of Business Studies*, 6(2), 198–217. <https://doi.org/10.32924/ijbs.v6i2.235>

- The Grahamstown, Bathurst, and Port Alfred Publicity Association and the South African Railways and Harbours. (1928). *Grahamstown, Bathurst, and Port Alfred: A Descriptive handbook*. Hortors. *The Herald* (Port Elizabeth Newspaper), various issues, 1984 –1989.
- Turpin, E. W. (1964). *Basket work harbour: The story of the Kowie*. Howard Timmins.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2016). *Community-based tourism as a driver of sustainable development*. The United Nations Development Programme.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. United Nations.
- United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (2020). *International tourism highlights, 2020 edition*. The United Nations Development Programme.
- Wildman, K. (2005). *The Beach: The Making & Remaking of Coffee Bay (1945–2005)* [Masters dissertation]. University of Cape Town.
- Worden, N. (2012). *The making of modern South Africa: Conquest, apartheid, democracy* (5th ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

*Ez a mű a Creative Commons Nevezd meg! – Ne add el! – Ne változtasd! 4.0 nemzetközi licen-
ce-feltételeinek megfelelően felhasználható. (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)*

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

*This open access article may be used under the international license terms of Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)*

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

