



SOUTH AFRICA STUDY TOUR REPORT

BY PETER GREENHALGH

Since 2005 IFEAT Study Tours have provided some unique educational and cultural experiences in the world of natural essential oils. Travelling with industry colleagues from many countries, all eager to learn and exchange detailed knowledge about the fascinating world of fragrance, flavour, aromatherapy, and related ingredients, has provided lasting memories for hundreds of IFEAT Members who have participated on previous tours. As the world reopened following the pandemic, which had seen the cancellation of several planned tours, IFEAT was able to hold its 12th Study Tour which took place in South Africa (SAST) from 4th to 12th November 2022. Several years of planning by the Local Organising Committee (with joint chairs Catherine Crowley and Nicola Laubscher of Eucaforest), the IFEAT Secretariat, and

Africa Awaits (the local tour agent) had gone into the SAST.

IFEAT's first Sub-Saharan Africa event was the successful Cape Town Conference in November 2006. Sixteen years later, on 4th November 2022, some 35 IFEAT Members from 18 countries met up in Cape Town for the start of IFEAT's first Sub-Saharan Africa Study Tour. South Africa is an increasingly important global supplier of essential oils, and the region is a significant producer of lesser-known indigenous essential oils and botanicals, increasingly used in new cosmetic and cosmeceutical formulations. The Welcome Reception and briefing were held at the Table Bay Hotel with beautiful views over

the harbour and the imposing Table Mountain beyond. Some delegates had climbed the 1,086-metre mountain earlier in the day and enjoyed stunning views over Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula, flanked by two of the world's largest oceans – the Atlantic and the Indian.

The tour began in the beautiful Cape floral region, a UNESCO World Heritage Site with the largest floral kingdom in the world, including the distinctive fynbos flora such as buchu, Cape chamomile, Blue Mountain sage, and Cape snowbush. Alongside fynbos oils, delegates saw organic rosemary, lavender, as well as the Cape Winelands. Then on to Durban and the east coast for a Scent Creation Workshop and to see the production and processing of tea tree, lemongrass, and eucalyptus. The final





BUCHU FIELDS
at Skimmelberg



SEEDLING NURSERY
at Skimmelberg



ARRIVAL AND WELCOME
at Mouton's Valley

day was spent on safari, incorporating stunning game drives and first-hand experience of fragrant and medicinal plants.

Following an initial briefing, the SAST began as it was to continue - convivial and knowledgeable people, excellent food and hotels, good weather, and many insights into South Africa's essential oil sector, the economy, the diverse cultures, the magnificent scenery and wildlife, and the history and politics. For many, it was their first visit to Sub-Saharan Africa. Each IFEAT Study Tour is both memorable and different. By the end of the SAST the delegates had taken two internal flights, stayed in six different hotels, travelled 4,750 km through magnificent and diverse scenery starting in the Western Cape, South Africa's most southern province, to Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and Johannesburg. While travelling around this large and beautiful

country, delegates not only saw diverse environments and magnificent scenery but also sampled the rich heritage of traditional music, dance, crafts, costumes, and cuisines.

The eight days were filled with visits to diverse companies and organisations - all IFEAT Members - involved in a range of F&F activities. Three sizable family-owned production and processing operations producing a range of essential oils were visited in the Cape area. Each farm, covering hundreds of hectares, some of which were protected and devoted to conservation, was set in a beautiful location and the owners were passionate about biodiversity conservation and actively promoting sustainable best practices and benefit-sharing. Skimmelberg Fynbos Oils farm (www.skimmelbergfynbos.co.za) is organically certified and produces buchu, Cape chamomile,

Cape May, Cape snowbush, and rooibos tea. Lindsay Chicken and Paul Hartwig, along with their colleagues, provided detailed descriptions of the production, harvesting, and processing of these products. Mouton's Valley Pty Ltd. (www.piquetbuchu.co.za), owned and operated by Eric and Michele Starke, has been producing buchu for over a hundred years, as well as a wide range of fruits. Today the buchu and other plants are cultivated rather than wild harvested as previously. Herbs-Aplenty (www.herbs-aplenty.com), owned and operated by Elmarie de Bruyn and her son Pietersaral de Bruyn, produces a range of oils and herbs: rosemary, lavender, Blue Mountain sage, African wormwood, and Cape chamomile - as well as a range of consumer products, including gin! Each of the above companies is evaluating possible new oils to produce. Whilst in the Cape, delegates had evening meals at the

Gold Restaurant, serving a range of African cuisine alongside African dancing, and the Morgenster Estate prior to which was a wine tasting session.

During the visit to the east coast, four essential oil operations were visited. Ayanda African Oils (<https://ayanda.co.za>) is a farming cooperative founded by a group of farmers to sell their products jointly and share their knowledge on the production, processing, and marketing of essential oils. There are currently 31 shareholding member companies producing oils on over 700 hectares. Mathias Wessels, the General Manager, and his colleagues provided detailed explanations of the extensive operations. Ayanda currently markets seven essential oils - tea tree, lemon-scented tea tree, rosemary, rose geranium,

lemongrass, niaouli, and *Eucalyptus smithii* and is currently investigating several other oils. The following day saw first a visit to Lion Rock Essential Oils, a joint venture combining decades of farming experience to become a world leader in producing organic *Eucalyptus radiata* oil. Dave Mitchell, one of the owners, shared his extensive knowledge and enthusiasm with the delegates on a tour of the farm. Following on was a visit to Oribi Oils (www.oribioils.co.uk), a producer group collaboration between large scale commercial growers and disadvantaged emerging farmers, headed by Stuart and Lauren Bateman. Oribi produces several oils including tea tree, rose geranium, rosemary, and *Eucalyptus radiata*. A highlight was a visit to the Khula

Community Centre, supported by Oribi Oils, which provides feeding and educational programmes to the rural community as well as being superbly entertained by the Marimba Boys band.

Unfortunately the final company visit of the tour was delayed a day because the four small chartered aircraft taking us from near Durban to Ermelo were unable to land because of dense clouds necessitating a detour to Johannesburg and a long coach journey back to Piet Retief. A very early start the next day enabled the visit to Eucaforest Pty Ltd (www.eucaforest.com) to see the harvesting and processing of *E. dives* including into its isolated constituents.



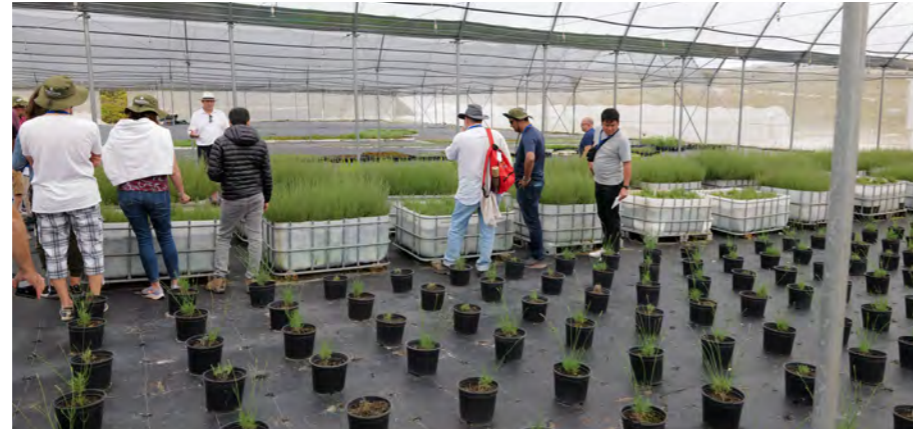
HERBS-APLENTY FACILITIES



1. NATURAL FYNBOS
at Herbs-Aplenty

In addition, the delegates were entertained by the Eucaforest choir and dancers to a moving rendition of Jerusalem, the global hit written recently in Zululand. The final day of the tour was a memorable visit to Thanda Private Game Reserve, where delegates not only saw some of the icons of African wildlife and learnt about the aromatic, medicinal, and traditional usage of indigenous plants, but also had the closing "Bush Dinner" under the stars accompanied by African dancers and drummers.

During each company visit delegates saw and discussed at length the production and processing of several essential oils. Each company gave a warm welcome, along with excellent food and drinks, and



1. FYNBOS SEEDLINGS
at Herbs-Aplenty

explained in detail the growing, harvesting, distillation, and further processing of various South African ingredients. It was interesting to see how each company was using different processing techniques to produce their oils. Moreover, it was exciting to see the important strides and efforts that the companies were taking to increase the volume and scope of natural flavour, fragrance, and aromatherapy ingredients. Finally, each company highlighted a range of projects in which it was giving back to the local community.

On every IFEAT Study Tour a great deal of time is spent on smelling oils, but a SAST innovation was an afternoon Scent Creation Workshop held at the beautiful Oyster Box Hotel at Umhlanga, overlooking the Indian Ocean. The Workshop (led by Frank Rittler of www.magnifiscent.gmbh) began with an overview of

perfume history, fragrance structures, ingredients, and applications. The local companies had provided their essential oils, including those provided by Teubes/Scatters Oils (www.teubes.com), and these were used in practical work by each delegate to create and evaluate their own scent creations. It was an exciting experience for all – for many it was the first time to create their own fragrance.

A key feature of Study Tours is the interaction between participants from many countries and various sectors of the industry. During the long hours travelling together they share their knowledge and experience through individual discussions - it is an intense learning experience in an enjoyable environment. Nevertheless, considerable stamina is needed -



1. SHORT SEMINAR ON UNIQUE CAPE OILS
at Herbs-Aplenty



1. DISTILLATION UNIT
at Herbs-Aplenty



1. AROMA & TASTE EXPERIENCE
at Lourensford Estate



1. SCENT CREATION WORKSHOP
with Frank Rittler



1. HARVESTING & COLLECTING TEA TREE
at Ayanda



1. CHIPPING & LOADING TEA TREE
at Ayanda



1. LEMONGRASS FIELD DISCUSSION
at Ayanda



1. SPREADING ORGANIC CHIPPED BIOMASS
at Lion Rock



AT THANDA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE



DISTILLATION INFRASTRUCTURE at Lion Rock



PRESENTING STUDY TOUR CERTIFICATE at Oribi



LECTURE at Oribi



MARIMBA GROUP at Khula Community Centre



TEAMS HARVESTING at Eucaforest



LOADING LEAF MATERIAL at Eucaforest



BRIEF ON MOBILE DISTILLATION at Eucaforest



CHIPPING ONTO CONVEYOR SYSTEM at Eucaforest



STAFF CHOIR ENTERTAINS at Eucaforest



STAFF AND DELEGATES IN JERUSALEMA DANCE at Eucaforest



PRIDE OF LIONS at Thanda

early rises, often daily checkouts, much travelling, being on the go all day, late nights, and dinners. What was clear by the end of the Tour was that everyone had thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and each returned to work refreshed and revitalised. The post Tour comments include:

"The Study Tour was nothing short of amazing! From the committee and attendees to all of the farms we visited - it was a trip of a lifetime!"

"So educational - it was great to witness the complete process - from the preliminary stages of planting to the distillation and drumming of the material. It was quite the experience to see how each supplier had their own techniques. Most importantly, it was so touching to see how each and every supplier gave back to the community!"

"The SAST was well planned, and well executed. The experience allowed us to engage with folks from different

companies and from a variety of functions (business owners, c-suite, marketing, sales, purchasing, QC, and R&D), which enabled a wide breadth of topics to be discussed throughout the trip in both social and work-related settings. Additionally, seeing the plantations and the various organisations and their unique circumstances in South Africa was a big educational lesson on the workings of an essential oils and naturals company. This type of exposure and learning is not easily accessible in the modern remote working environment or at our daily jobs because of most people's singular focus on their own responsibilities and company."

"The Scent Creation Workshop was a wonderful way to bring the experiences of visiting the plantations to a full circle since we used some South African oils in the process. In the end, the company, experiences, and learning were priceless to me, and I look forward to participating in future Study Tours"

and recommending others from my company to do so as well."

"As a new participant on the SAST it was a wonderful experience at every level. South Africa is a nice country with incredible landscapes and very large fields - I didn't expect them to be that big! I was amazed by the passion and explanations shared by the different people we visited together with their very warm and friendly welcome. It was great organisation, despite some unexpected events/delays that have been handled efficiently. It was also an amazing 'melting pot' of participants, with great group spirit - lots of memorable times and laughs, and new friendships"

"Everything was so well organised, so informative and so much fun! I can't fault it, Thanks for an amazing trip."

For more information on IFEAT Study Tours, see www.ifeat.org.

IFEAT 2023 FOCUS STUDY TOUR - SPANISH LEMON

Following several postponements, IFEAT's first Focus Study Tour (FST) took place in spring 2023. In comparison with existing IFEAT Study Tours, the FST was of shorter duration, lower cost, centred on one location, and aimed to appeal to less senior participants from IFEAT Member companies. The Spanish lemon industry tour was organised with AILIMPO (Spanish Lemon and Grapefruit Interprofessional Association) based in Murcia, southern Spain. AILIMPO has previously created an intensive series of visits to some of its members.

After a Welcome Reception and Cocktails on the Sunday evening,

Monday started with a presentation by AILIMPO on the Spanish lemon industry. This was followed by visits to two orchards, one growing conventional lemons, the other organic. The final visit of the day was to the packing operations of The Natural Fruit Company, an organisation annually processing 130,000 MT of lemons as well as other citrus. Tuesday was devoted to lemon processing and five major processing companies - all IFEAT Members - opened their operations. Each delegate visited two of the following companies: Citricos De Murcia, Citromil, Fruit Tech Natural, Miguel Parra E Hijos, and Riverbend España.

AILIMPO organised an excellent programme of visits, which, while focusing on technical and economic aspects, was combined with an introduction to the superb local gastronomy - with lemon playing a key role. The FST enabled delegates not only to learn a great deal about lemons but also, like the previous 12 IFEAT Study Tours, it was both enjoyable and unforgettable.

The next edition of IFEATWORLD will have a full report on the FST.