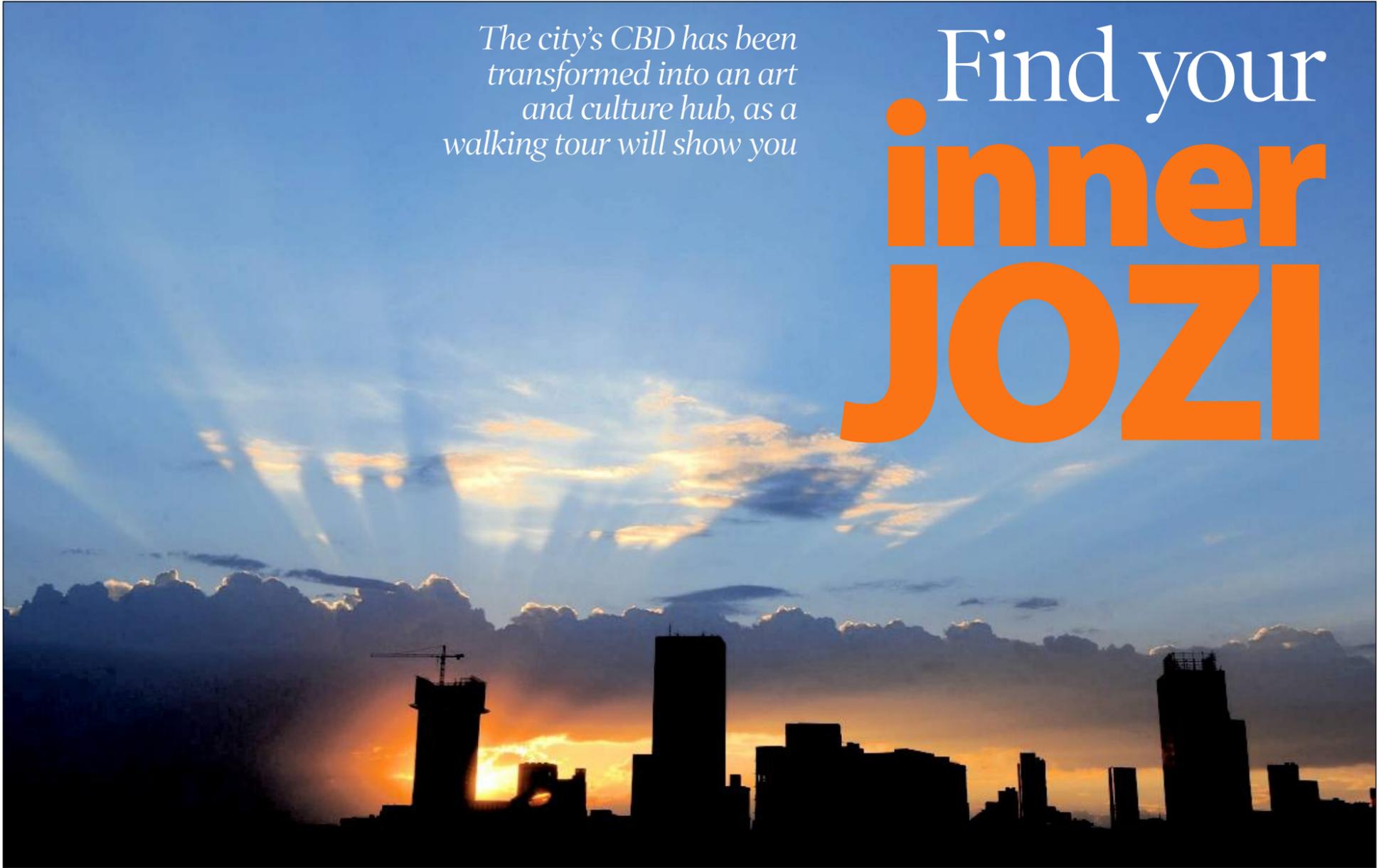


The city's CBD has been transformed into an art and culture hub, as a walking tour will show you

Find your inner JOZI



The setting sun silhouettes the Joburg CBD, outlining its potential as it casts aside its bad reputation as a concrete jungle.

WHEN you think "Joburg CBD", what comes to mind? Sadly, there are some who still associate the inner city of Joburg with crime, urban decay and hijacked buildings.

This may have been the case five years ago, but now the area has been transformed into an arts and culture hub, visited by an eclectic mix of people. This urban rejuvenation is taking the city by storm, and the CBD's tourism potential is limitless.

With this in mind, a group of people who either own buildings or are involved in tourism in the city formed Johannesburg City Tourism Association (JCTA), an organisation promoting and developing tourism and hospitality in the inner city and surrounds.

Their goal is to put the city centre on the map as the must-experience precinct, and to facilitate a perception change among Joburgers themselves, giving them confidence to visit the inner city and the freedom to explore everything on offer.

The primary target market for this project is the inner-city workforce – the thousands of people who drive to and from their CBD offices every day and never think to step outside.

Secondary target markets include Joburg's suburban population – people who live anywhere from Sandton to Soweto, who never spend recreational time in the city, as well as former Joburgers and international visitors.

Last weekend, the JCTA hosted more than 60 local and international journalists in the inner city, as a prelude to the Joburg City Festival it is co-ordinating from August



The dining room at the Apprentice Apartment.



Dinner at Turbine Hall.

HASMITA NAIR

Jozilicious



25 to 31.

During this festival, the city will come alive – restaurants and shops will stay open till late and there'll be exciting events taking place in public areas, covering music, comedy and adventure.

If the media weekend was anything to go by, this festival is going to be world-class.

Journalists were exposed to the diverse tourism offerings of the inner city. The weekend started with sundowners at the Apprentice Apartment in Commissioner Street, a glamorous 800m² penthouse on the sixth floor of National Bank House, with views across the

Jozi horizon.

The venue is available to rent for dinner parties and cocktail evenings, and comes complete with a 16-seater dining room table, a 20m balcony and a Jacuzzi. After mingling over champagne and canapés, guests walked to the Rand Club, one of Jozi's oldest buildings, and enjoyed a surprise city activation by the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra. The Rand Club has a regal, old-world feeling about it; Joburg was only a year old when the club was founded 126 years ago, when the men who made a fortune during the gold rush needed a place to spend their money. The present clubhouse is a gorgeous Edwardian masterpiece, and was a gentlemen-only club until a few years ago. Rand Club now focuses on functions such as weddings and birthdays, as well as conferences.

Next, it was on to the Reef Hotel, a four-star hotel that has relaunched its restaurant, Top 5.

The name comes from the five

previously disadvantaged amateur chefs working at the restaurant, who are doing their apprenticeship at a local culinary school. The restaurant is contemporary and slick; a great spot for a business lunch.

The next morning, the journalists – most of them – were up bright and early (others enjoyed Reef Hotel's rooftop bar a bit too much and needed more than one wake-up call), and were split into smaller groups, ready to explore the city.

My group was set to go on a walking tour of the city, with Joburg Places founder Gerald Garner, who believes that the best way to explore the city is on foot.

A tour is only as good as a tour guide, and Garner's passion for and knowledge of the city made every moment of the tour enjoyable, despite the unco-operative weather.

We visited some of the city's historic buildings, including the Barbican – an art deco New York style

building. When Old Mutual bought it in 1995, it was in a state of disrepair, because squatters had overrun the site. Old Mutual has since spent R55 million to restore it, and it is now used partly as an art exhibition space.

In-between showing us the landmarks, Garner told us about Joburg's history, taking us from when gold was discovered at Langlaagte in 1886, through to the events that unfolded which led to the Anglo-Boer War and, later, apartheid.

His descriptive storytelling had us imagining the opulent, thriving city that once was. He explained how the city became "lost Joburg", when factories and businesses moved out of the CBD and buildings were left to squatters.

We also visited the newly restored Johannesburg City Library, which has 700 000 books and free internet, and couldn't help but be