15 facts you didn’t know about Johannesburg

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Friday, 09 July 2010 13:33

1. Even though Johannesburg is well over 120 years old (founded on 4 October 1886 during the gold rush), it is still one of the youngest major cities in the world.

2. There is only one other city on the continent that is bigger than Joburg, and that is the bustling metropolis of Cairo in Egypt. Johannesburg is the second biggest city on Africa.

3. The Chris Hani-Baragwanath Hospital is the largest acute hospital in the world, with 2 964 beds, is the only public hospital serving the 3.5 million people in Soweto, Johannesburg.

4. Johannesburg is the world’s biggest man-made forest, with over 10 million trees. This number is set to grow, as City Parks launched the Greening Soweto project in 2006, with the goal of planting an extra 200 000 trees in the famous township. Not only do Joburg’s trees combat the greenhouse effect, they help reduce noise in this ‘urban jungle’.

5. Johannesburg is the world’s largest city not built on a coastline, or on a lake or river. That’s why Joburg is also called the world’s biggest ‘dry port’. More than half of the cargo that arrives through the ports of Durban and Cape Town arrives at the container terminal at City Deep.

6. With the rich archaeological site known as the Cradle of Humankind on the outskirts of the city, it’s not surprising that 40% of the planet’s human ancestor fossils have been discovered in the Jo’burg area.

7. At 269m high, the Hillbrow Tower is the tallest structure in Johannesburg. It used to have a revolving restaurant at the top, before it was closed down in 1981 for safety reasons. It is a prominent feature in the city’s beautiful skyline.

8. The Johannesburg Zoo based in Parktown, is over 100 years old, and houses the only two polar bears in Africa – Geebee (who came from Canada) and Wang (who came from Japan).

9. OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg – named after the famous former leader of the African National Congress – is the biggest and busiest airport on the continent of Africa. It is estimated that 28 million passengers pass through its terminals every year.

10. While Johannesburg has a reputation as one of the most dangerous cities in the world, it takes an average of only 60 seconds for police to respond to a crime scene in the central business district (CBD). There is a CCTV system that covers every street corner and scanning vehicle licence plates.

11. There is also a Johannesburg in California, although it only has a population of 176 people (2000 census). It was named by miners who had worked in the gold mines of Johannesburg, South Africa.

12. It takes one-minute longer to boil an egg in Johannesburg than it does in the coastal cities of Cape Town and Durban. This is because Joburg is 2000m above sea level, and the air
13. The Shaft of Terror, located at the popular amusement park of Gold Reef City, is a
vertical-drop roller coaster that has the distinction of being **the tallest and fastest roller coaster in Africa**. It has a
47-metre drop, and a G force of over 6 Gs!

14. Johannesburg is **the home of Kwaito music**, a catchy genre of African house music
that was born in the 90s and has become a South African phenomenon. It is most famous for its
catchy lyrics that embody post-apartheid township culture.

15. While Johannesburg is also known as the City of Gold, or ‘eGoli’ because of its
beginnings as a gold-mining town, it is known fondly to locals by the shortened ‘Joburg’, or now
more popularly as ‘Jozi’.