



## We are open!

St Helena has spent the past three months successfully 'back on the map', welcoming travellers once more: All COVID-related entry restrictions were removed from 8 August 2022, and weekly flights recommenced from 8 October 2022.

By the time St Helena reopened, around 97% of the population was fully vaccinated. Today, St Helena has successfully got through its peak of positive cases, with 0 deaths and 0 hospitalisations resulting directly from the introduction of the virus.

The island has now joined the rest of the world in 'living with COVID', just in time for summer!

Plus, for the first time since before the pandemic, cruise ship season has started. More than 500 passengers of the Seven Seas Voyager spent a full day exploring the island on 12 January.



## A breath of fresh air

St Helena Tourism is launching its first brand strategy and plan, giving tourism a fresh face as the island emerges from the pandemic. The brand is based on qualitative research conducted 100% locally; specifically, the brand is based on more than 400 adult stakeholder interviews (including local residents, former visitors by air, yachting visitors and more) and feed-in from all local schoolchildren. The brand focuses on celebrating the people, culture and qualities that make St Helena so incredible and unique.

The new strapline 'A Breath of Fresh Air' replaces the former strapline of 'Secret of the South Atlantic'. The new brand aims to encapsulate the spirit of St Helena, including it being off-the-beaten-track, a safe location and an unspoilt, friendly subtropical paradise. The strategy comes alongside the reopening of the island post-pandemic, and comes at

a time when rebuilding the island's tourism sector is a unique challenge, as St Helena only introduced air access in late 2017, meaning the emerging destination was almost immediately hit by the pandemic after its first and only airport opened.



# Eleven yachts celebrate completion of Cape to St Helena Yacht Race 2022

The Cape to St Helena Yacht Race is a 1,700 nautical mile (3,060km) race that attracts all sorts of sailors, from the hard racers to those simply seeking adventure.

Originally known as the Governor's Cup, the race launched in 1996 and is usually held every other year; however, the 2020 race was cancelled due to the pandemic, meaning that the 2022 race was the first since 2018.

In the 2022 Cape to St Helena race, 12 competitors battled their way across the Atlantic Ocean, from South Africa to the remote British Overseas Territory of St Helena Island.

Competitors departed Cape Town on the afternoon of 29 December, when Commodore Neil Gregory fired the cannon promptly at 14h00 to signal the start of the race.

The fleet endured extreme weather patterns, strong winds, rain squalls and lumpy seas. The conditions made for entertaining daily reports, describing flying fish on deck, Christmas trees of oilies around the mast, and snacks-bartering to sit night watches. Unfortunately one team sustained electronic damage and had to divert into Luderitz, Namibia – leaving the other 11 participants racing to the finish line.

The first three boats arrived in St Helena with haste, one after the other, from 6 January. Kevin Webb's Banjo took line honours, while a dash for second place resulted in Di Hutton-Squire of Tintin taking second and Dale Kushner of Kia Paarl Fomo taking third. This dash was followed by another incredible finish – after racing for almost exactly nine days, Rocket (4th place) and Compromise (5th place) finished with only 5 minutes between them, proving that the race is never over until you cross the finish line. Naledi, the team with the lowest average crew age – (Anna celebrated her 12th birthday onboard on 2 January) was the sixth boat over the line. Anastasia was 7th, Serendipity 8th, Sulunga 9th, Unwind 10th and Suidoos 2 11th.

The event organisers extended a 'thank you' to Airlink, the event partner and official air carrier between South Africa (JNB) and St Helena (HLE), for providing the prize for the 'Overall Winner of the Cape to St Helena Race 2022' – two Airlink tickets to any destination. Congratulations to Tintin on winning this incredible prize, and the race organisers look forward already to the next event.



## Whale sharks and humpbacks in one sighting



In October, marine tour operator Craig Yon took a family of visitors on a guided boat trip and spotted a whale shark. At the time it wasn't peak whale shark season, so this was a lovely surprise for the family. They took the opportunity to swim with the whale shark, when suddenly in the distance, humpback whales appeared and began performing.

Stunned, Craig Yon commented: "An unforgettable experience! It was a stroke of luck seeing these two species in such close proximity to each other. This sighting shows how St Helena's waters are truly one of a kind."