



THE SPEKBOOM LABYRINTH

Fighting Climate Change & Poverty

Creating labyrinths is a concept that dates back over millennia, and soon, Stellenbosch will be home to the biggest labyrinth in Africa, with the hopes that this landmark will be a major player in neutralising our carbon footprint. The idea of creating a labyrinth came along when social entrepreneur and environmental activist Peter Shrimpton and his team, decided to create – with expert design by Terry de Vries – an 11-circuit Medieval labyrinth, one where visitors can embark on a pilgrimage through it. This initiative looks to fight both climate change in poverty in the community.

The plan is to build the biggest labyrinth in the world made of spekboom trees in order to create an awareness campaign for carbon reduction that grabs global media attention. It has been

adapted for cyclists and hikers and will also be open to the public to utilise.

Peter has noted that it all began with 300 trees, three years ago. He initiated the project by going into townships and then inviting underprivileged and unemployed people to grow the spekboom for him. All of the spekboom trees have been grown by previously disadvantaged people, being given all the materials to grow them.

Peter’s team then started a ‘Trepreneur’ programme, called Wonder Plant, with top performers who each have 25,000 trees. In total, the team planted over 65,000 and now have 164,000 in stock. The investment into the programme thus far has been close to R1.8 million. In total, Peter and his team aim to raise R9 million for the organization.

THE SPEKBOOM PROCESS

The team micropropagated through entrepreneurship in townships, then scaled up to township nurseries – this blossomed into 150,000 Spekboom trees!

Where is the labyrinth going to based?
It will form part of Stellenbosch Bridge Property Development, which is being built on smart city principles (which will be one of the first smart cities in Africa). This smart city is set to be over 3000 hectares of development, in between Stellenbosch and Klapmuts, being built and designed by the renowned expert, Terry De Vries.

When starting the process, Peter searched for the largest man-made object that can be seen



from space, the pyramid was on top of the list. It will be 230 x 230m, use 90,000 trees, and visitors will walk 5km in and 5km back out – but, the design will allow for escape routes and shortcuts too.

The trees are all on site, it has been levelled, and the team has started planting from January. They have called on community members to come and help plant in their spare time. It will hopefully be completed by April.

The Message? Be mindful of your carbon footprint. We're also encouraging everyone to plant their own spekboom trees.

Another pertinent question to ask is why?
South Africa releases over 500 million tonnes of poisonous CO₂ into the atmosphere each year. South Africa’s carbon emissions is 9.18 tonnes per capita – that’s over double the world average of 4.49 tonnes. This global landmark will serve as a living monument to environmental preservation on our planet.

Why a labyrinth?
A labyrinth is a pattern of pathways that weave in a circle around a central point. You walk through the pathways to get to the centre. A labyrinth is not a maze. There is only one way in and one way out, so you don't need to think about where you're going.

Labyrinths are powerful landmarks that intrigue and fascinate people from all walks of life throughout the world. They’ve got ancient roots. They’re found on Greek pottery, on Spanish petroglyphs, rock carvings, and on the floors of medieval cathedrals in Europe. Today, there is a global revival of labyrinths and tourists flock to see and experience these.

Spekbooms were the right choice for this as they are succulent trees and native to South Africa. They are easy to propagate, reach between 2m and 5m tall and live to be 200 years old. They are 10 times more effective at reducing carbon than tropical rainforest trees – one mature spekboom can remove 8.5kg of CO₂ per year, whilst surviving frost, fire, or drought.

