

PURE ALLURE: COUNTRY THEME FOR AFRICA'S GREATEST HORSE RACING EVENT



HOLLYWOODBETS DUBAN JULY 2026

Beneath wide South African skies the thoroughbreds run free, Hooves thunder with courage for all the world to see. Jockeys chase the horizon where glory will endure - Where freedom meets elegance on fields wide and pure.

Along the rail, bold silhouettes begin to take their turn, Suede, silk and statement hats with fearless flair that burn. Not borrowed western costume, but country re-imagined sure - Where style moves freely and moment feels assured.

As music lifts the moment and the celebration stirs, Laughter, rhythm and glamour belong to all who are hers. A rebel touch of country, refined yet wild for sure - So release your spirit at the Hollywoodbets Durban July, in

Country Allure

DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA - "Anybody can be good in the country," a celebrated wag once wrote, "there are no temptations there." Well, Hollywoodbets hosts and title sponsors of the Durban July would beg to differ.

They have revealed "Country Allure" as the theme for this year's edition of Africa's greatest horse racing event.

It's an invitation to designers, fashionistas and racegoers to draw inspiration from our country's dramatic, rural landscapes and the elegance of our equestrian culture. It's an opportunity to give imaginations free rein as guests learned at the launch event, at Hollywoodbets Greyville on 19 March 2026.

Beyond the fashion, the Hollywoodbets Durban July represents a red-letter day on Mzansi's sporting calendar as well as a tremendous boost for KwaZulu-Natal's economy. It tempts racing aficionados and fun lovers by the thousands to Hollywoodbets Greyville to revel in the heritage and excitement of thoroughbred racing.

MARSHALL

Stephen Marshall, Head: Major Events, Marketing and Broadcast at Race Coast, says the Hollywoodbets Durban July has long been a magnet for all who share a passion for horse racing and the glamour that surrounds it.

"This year's theme, 'Country Allure', pays homage to the elegance and authenticity at the heart of the sport's heritage. It reflects the beauty of the landscapes where thoroughbreds are bred and trained, while inspiring people's creativity and celebrating what's beautiful about the countryside," says Marshall.

Hollywoodbets brand and communications manager, Devin Heffer, rightly calls the Hollywoodbets Durban July: "The most anticipated highlight on South Africa's sporting and lifestyle calendar."

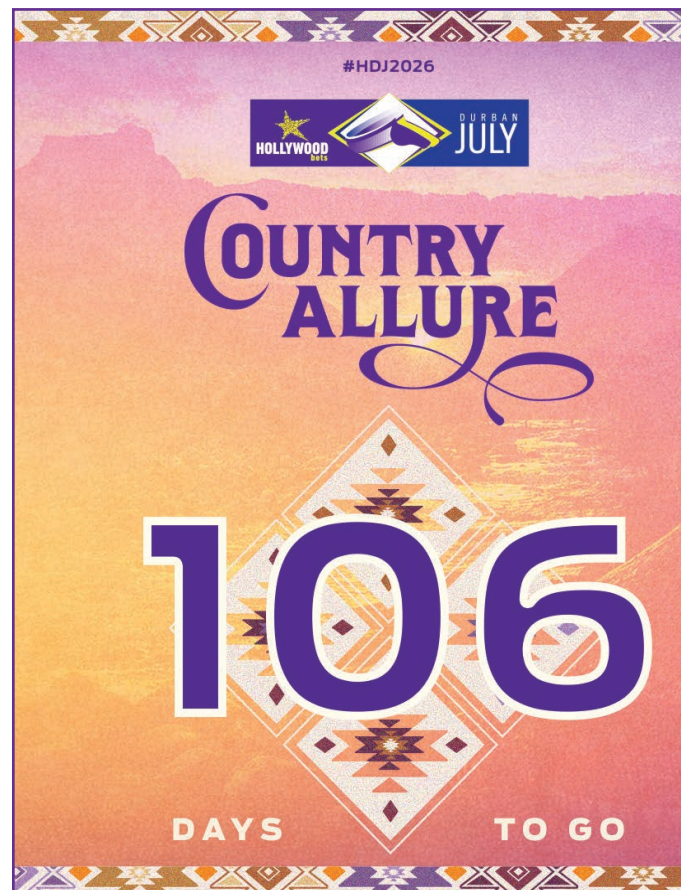
HEFFER

"It's by equal measure the country's biggest horse race and an unforgettable social occasion," says Heffer. "This year offers a nod to the timeless relationship between horse racing and the countryside. The racing spectacle promises another exceptional celebration of sport, fashion and entertainment. We look forward to welcoming guests from across the country and the world for what is sure to be an unforgettable day at the races," says Heffer. Last year's Hollywoodbets Durban July welcomed 40,192 attendees. They were treated to a thriller as the 14-1 chance The Real Prince, ridden by Craig Zackey and trained by Dean Kannemeyer, beat favourite Eight On Eighteen by a neck.

The big turnout served as a strong indicator of the resurgent appeal of the Hollywoodbets Durban July. An assessment of the 2025 race confirmed it created about 4500 jobs across a host of sectors, contributing an estimated R840-million to the city's GDP. Consider too, the R50-million it generated in national and provincial tax revenue and the hotel occupancy rates of 80% achieved in Durban during race week. If anything, the numbers look set to be even better come Saturday, 4 July 2026 when all eyes turn to Hollywoodbets Greyville.

Alluring?

"Goodness, yes. By a country mile," says Marshall.



LINDIWE KUZWAYO ACADEMY OF FASHION: Kwame Kuzwayo, Lindiwe Kuzwayo - PMB SCHOOL OF FASHION: Pavashan Pillay - FEZILE FASHION SKILLS ACADEMY: Fezile Mdletshe, Ayanda Cele, Thandanani Majola - IGODA INCUBATOR: Zola Shabangu, Sanele Shabangu - INSCAPE: Aphelele Chonco - ESAYIDI FASHION SCHOOL: Zama Ntshangase - UMGUNGUNDLOVU TVET COLLEGE: Lucas Bhengu, Martin Steenkamp, Nandi Shamase, Mvuyi Myandu.

Photo: Race Coast/Anneke Akal Kitching

Country Allure Unveils a Magnetic New Mood for Hollywoodbets Durban July

HEIDI GIBSON

EXCITEMENT for Mzansi's biggest day on the racing and fashion calendar was ramped up a notch this week, with the launch of the official theme for this year's Hollywoodbets Durban July setting the stage for a more stylish, immersive and unforgettable event than ever before.

On Thursday, at the iconic Hollywoodbets Greyville Racecourse Parade Ring, award-winning fashion designer Kathrin Kidger had the honour of officially revealing 'Country Allure' as the theme for this year's fashion to an audience of top South African designers, fashion college representatives, lecturers and VIPs from around the country.

It is this theme that will serve as the curriculum for fashion students, guiding them in the creative process that will assist them to produce award-winning designs and creations - a binding fibre that will weave through every choice, model and technique.

KIDGER

"At its core 'Country Allure', as presented by Hollywoodbets Durban July, is not about replication - it's about re-interpretation. Designers should be encouraged to move beyond the literal and tap into the essence of the South African rural landscapes and lived experiences," said Kidger.

"It's about capturing the spirit of our countryside, which is the grounding, the openness and the quiet strength that is our land and translating it into garments that are deep rooted - authenticity comes through texture, tones and narratives."

Speaking about the types of fabrics expected on the runway, Kidger said: "We are seeing a shift towards earthy, sun-washed palettes, tactical fabrics and silhouettes that echo ease and movement rather than restriction. A strong emphasis on storytelling, garments that reflect personal or cultural connection to land heritage and identity, rather than surface level references".

Steve Marshall, Head: Major Events, Marketing and Broadcast at Race Coast, said, "Country Allure is the thread that literally brings the whole event together. The fashion pillar is a very important aspect of the Hollywoodbets Durban July event."

Reflecting on the theme, he said, "Country Allure, I think, is a nod to Western, but with, most definitely, an Mzansi flair. This is a proudly South African event and so I expect to see textures like silk, suede, leather and linen. All of these talk to that country feel and we are really excited to see what our fashion designers will come up with, and how the public will interpret this year's theme."

Primarily built on horse racing, the Hollywoodbets Durban July is also constructed on other pillars such as fashion, entertainment and hospitality.

Marshall said one of the key aspects that has already been announced is that the stakes for the Hollywoodbets Durban July has increased from R5million to a massive R10million, making this 'the 'richest race in Africa' that delivers a prize worthy of this pinnacle event.

He said the public can look forward to some major announcements as we move toward race day on July 4. In the coming weeks and months we will learn the name of the local artist who will sing the national anthem just before the main race, as well as artists who will take to the main stage.

"We are hoping to break through the 40 000 pax we had last year. As the largest VIP hospitality event in SA, we are building on last year's successes. If you think about the flights, hotel stays, restaurants and other related tourism industries, the Hollywoodbets Durban July has a huge knock-on effect for the city and for the province's GDP."

PRIOR

Durban Fashion Fair programme director Tiffany Prior said, "This year's theme is wide open, allowing designers to draw from their roots and their experience of our beautiful historical heritage. Designers must think figuratively rather than literally."

For those aspiring fashion students, Hollywoodbets Foundation public relations and communications officer Vuyisile Ngobese confirmed a massive pledge of R150 000 in bursary funding for the top three winners of the Young Designers award.

The winner will receive a special 'travel package to Johannesburg to experience SA Fashion Week courtesy of Race Coast and SA Fashion week, as well R70 000 towards bursary funding and R15 000 in cash compliments of Race Coast and Schweppes.

The second prize winner will receive R50 000 in bursary funding plus cash, and the third prize winner will receive R30 000 plus cash to go towards settling their student loan.

"It is important not to under-estimate the platform, the Hollywoodbets Durban July provides to Young Designers from which they can springboard their careers. Young designers will have to look for original and unique creative elements that bring in culture from our shared African landscape," she said.

Follow the charm of what makes South Africa great, to the 'greatest horseracing and social event of the year' for what promises to be a better, more exciting experience than ever before.

Tickets go on sale on April 8 from TicketPro, Spar and Pick n Pay.