

# **ELDO COACHES**

## **GETTING ABOUT IN STYLE**



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*Eldo Coaches has helped to keep Gauteng moving safely and efficiently for more than half a century: now it is making inroads into South Africa's long-haul and tourist routes*

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**B**us transport could have been made for South Africa. Though it's a big country with huge variety across its nine provinces, unlike many of its neighbours it has an excellent road network and one of the four major intercity bus lines travels to nearly every city and village. Not only is cross-country bus travel in South Africa cheaper than flying but it is far more satisfying. The Rainbow Nation's landscape is as varied as its people.

Unfortunately a lot of misconceptions about South Africa persist, particularly where urban transport is concerned, and some of the very local bus operators, it is true, can help to perpetuate the image of overcrowded and unreliable buses, stripped of all comfort and carrying as many chattels as actual people. Back in 1956, though, the Moola family set up a company with a different vision – to bring dignity and comfort to the travelling majority. In those days it was not easy for black people to set up a business and those that did succeed were tested to the limit. Moolas Transport Services faced many challenges in an era that was dominated by the minority white population.

The company was the first wholly black owned operator to venture into the luxury coach market. Permit applications and financing were difficult to obtain at that time. However the company's commitment and track record in taking their services to the people has enabled the company to grow continuously. Today it is a very different company from 57 years, when the founders Ahmed Moola and his brothers



The company's drivers undertake a week long training course with Scania before getting behind the wheel



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Ismail and Mahomed were doing every job in the operation, even driving the buses themselves when required. Ahmed's son Mohsin subsequently joined the firm and is now Chief Operating Officer.

Eldo Coaches was set up to serve the majority of working people in the Johannesburg area. This meant that in the early days it was predominantly providing a transport infrastructure to people commuting from rural areas into the city areas whether to work or to shop. This division still operates today. The company has now

grown its fleet to 75 commuter buses and it is an established contractor to the Gauteng Department of Transport.

Despite competition from low-cost operators for whom compliance is not a priority Eldo Coaches has stuck firmly to its principles of quality operation. The fleet is renewed on a five-year cycle with coaches imported from Brazil – they have Scania Chassis and bodies manufactured by leading coachbuilders such as Marco Polo and other local specialist firms. All vehicles are maintained and serviced by Scania South Africa,

**45**  
 .....  
 The number of drivers employed by Eldo Coaches

which provides a round the clock roadside breakdown service throughout the country. Tyres, a frequent cause of accidents if they are not maintained, are regularly inspected and replaced.

These levels of best practice are essential in the growing tourist market. As the company's luxury coaches were increasingly hired by tour operators to show South Africa's amazing scenery and attractions to visitors from overseas the decision was made to set up Eldo Tours as a separate division offering luxury travel to the tourist industry as well as smaller buses for shorter tours or as airport to hotel transport and even a fleet of chauffeur-driven Mercedes sedans much in demand by corporates and VIPs. You won't find better facilities anywhere in the world. These coaches are all equipped with air conditioning, reclining seats, personal reading lights, DVD and audio entertainment and of course toilets. Safety will always be the priority, says Mohsin Moola, and added benefits from a modern well maintained fleet include fuel economy, reliability and that priceless item you can't put on the balance sheet – a great reputation.

The best equipped coach is still only as safe as its driver. Passengers can further be reassured by the support Eldo Coaches gives its drivers.



Part of the fleet

The company's 45 drivers are all experienced professionals; new recruits are carefully selected, and have to take a week long training course with Scania before getting behind the wheel. Drivers and vehicles are constantly monitored in real time through a state of the art satellite system that can check any coach's location and speed, and detect any poor driving practices like harsh braking or fast cornering. One of the biggest causes of coach accidents in the world

is tiredness, and one of the chief cost cutting methods used by unscrupulous operators is making drivers work excessive hours. Not at Eldo Coaches, where working times are strictly monitored and enforced, and on shorter routes with only one driver on the bus, resting periods are de rigueur.

The current structure of Eldo Coaches comprises three divisions and we have already spoken about Eldo Tours. The Inncity division provides a 'semi-lux' service to Johannesburg and its suburbs under a licensed contract for Gauteng Department of Transport using its 75 buses. The Intercity division has five luxury coaches that run a service between Johannesburg and Durban via Lenasia, Heidelberg, Harrismith, Estcourt and Pietermaritzburg. There are



Coach facilities

several departures a day and this is a great alternative to air transport for business and private passengers alike, at a fifth of the price. The 350 mile journey takes rather longer of course but the comfort of the coach provides an opportunity for rest or to catch up with reading or writing.

The strategic plan is to increase the number of intercity routes plied by Eldo Coaches. Incumbent coach operators, not to mention airlines, should be on their guard if they are offering anything less than total safety, reliability and value for money. **BE**

“THE STRATEGIC PLAN IS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF INTERCITY ROUTES PLIED BY ELDO COACHES”

For more information about Eldo Coaches visit: [www.eldocoaches.co.za](http://www.eldocoaches.co.za)



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