



## tourism

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Tourism  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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### World Tourism Day Celebrations Media Statement

**27 September 2012**

“South Africans should be tourists in their own country and enjoy what attracts millions of foreign tourists each year: a beautiful destination, rich in culture and heritage, and unsurpassed in its warm, friendly, welcoming way of life.”

This was the message from Minister of Tourism, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, during the National celebrations of this year’s World Tourism day at the Mbashe Royal Village, Eastern Cape, on 27 September 2012. The Minister was joined by Deputy Minister Tokozile Xasa, the MEC for economic development and Tourism in the Eastern Cape, and other dignitaries.

World Tourism Day is celebrated annually by the South African fraternity aligned to the UNWTO celebrations as part of tourism month. Nationally, all nine provinces have had activities that were activated throughout the month with the official celebrations hosted in the Eastern Cape.

The strategic objectives of Tourism Month include:

- entrenching a culture of domestic tourism through strategic activities designed to engage South Africans to travel their own country
- raising awareness of travel and tourism within the country with focus on the less visited local destinations and to promote geographic spread
- celebrating and generating awareness of the enormous contribution domestic tourism contributes to the economy and to job creation

Domestic tourists are the lifeblood of South Africa’s tourism industry, which is regarded as a major driver of the country’s economic growth. Minister Van Schalkwyk announced that almost 5, 5 million domestic trips were taken in the first quarter of 2012, which contributed R5, 2 billion to the economy. This is over R600 million, or 13%, more than last year’s economic contribution over the same period.

Minster van Schalkwyk urged South Africans to become a nation of tourism ambassadors who are knowledgeable and speak positively about our destination, who warmly welcome foreign tourists, and are helpful when they meet visitors. Well-travelled locals can easily and confidently recommend to both foreign tourists and fellow South Africans the best places to visit in South Africa for the best local experiences

South Africa has adopted the United Nations World Travel Organisation (UNWTO) theme for World Tourism Day 2012 (27 September) – Tourism and Sustainable Energy: Powering Sustainable Development.

Responsible and sustainable tourism has been identified as the most appropriate (and important) concepts and guiding principles for tourism development in the country. South Africa was also the first country in the world to include responsible tourism as a key pillar of its national tourism policy.

Energy is key for the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism sector. The Tourism Greening and Climate Change programme initiated by the Department of Tourism aims to promote efficient use of natural resources.

In 2011 the National Department of Tourism developed the National Minimum Standards for Responsible Tourism which promotes the implementation of Responsible Tourism principles in tourism businesses, harmonise sustainable tourism certification programmes and set a national benchmark for tourism businesses to aspire to.

A draft Tourism Bill scheduled for Parliament later this year provides for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism for the social, economic and environmental benefit of South African citizens and for the enjoyment of all its residents and foreign visitors.

Turning to the tourism industry the Minister's message was that they should value the customs of domestic tourists as much as they value those of foreign visitors.

"Take the leisure travel needs of domestic tourists – the lifeblood of our industry – as seriously as you take the travel needs of foreign tourists. It is critical for the tourism sector to engage fully with domestic tourists and to hone their products and tourism offerings for the domestic market, which in 2011 accounted for 76% of the total tourism volume in the country," Minister Van Schalkwyk said.

The Minister noted that South African Tourism and the country's tourism trade were doing their utmost to stimulate domestic travel, having made available nearly 2,5 million special offers to the South African public during Tourism Month, thereby making leisure breaks even more accessible and affordable.