



**tourism**

Department:  
Tourism  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Championing service excellence in tourism**

**18 July 2025**

EAST LONDON - The Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms. Maggie Sotyu, today hosted an award ceremony to recognise tourism enterprises that have pledged to advance a culture of Service Excellence in the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality in Mthatha, and the Enoch Mgijima Local Municipality in Komani in the Eastern Cape Province.

In the 2024/2025 financial year, the Department of Tourism implemented the Service Excellence Programme in the Eastern Cape Province. The Service Excellence Programme is a strategic intervention of the Department's National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS), and the Tourism Sector Master Plan, to drive the growth and development of the tourism sector through the service standards.

"Today, we amplify a profound and enduring principle: the pursuit of excellence in tourism service is not merely a standard—it is a recognition of hard work, passion, and commitment to going the extra mile."

"The Service Excellence Awards are far more than mere commendations. These awards help raise the bar for quality and professionalism. Excellence in tourism service creates value for all," Deputy Minister Maggie Sotyu said.

The Department of Tourism developed the Tourism Service Excellence Standards (SANS 1197) as a minimum requirement for service levels in the tourism sector. The Standard promotes inter alia; quality product development, clean, safe and professional environment in tourism products and sites. The service standards lay a foundation for a quality tourism experience that is memorable, achieves high levels of customer satisfaction, and encourages repeat visits.

The Department identified the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality, and the Enoch Mgijima Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape to implement the Service Excellence Awareness and Capacity Building Programme to enhance service levels and contribute towards growing visitor

numbers the areas. More than 300 tourism stakeholders participated in the programme that included workshops on the service excellence standards, round-table dialogues, and structured support assessments.

“Our National Tourism Service Excellence Strategy advocates for the implementation of capacity building empowerment initiatives in small towns to grow and advance tourism economies.”

“Over the years, the Department has implemented the Service Excellence Programme in small towns in the Northern Cape, Western Cape, Free State and KwaZulu-Natal provinces and has successfully addressed service delivery challenges, and inculcated a culture of excellence throughout these tourism value chains.

“I am confident that the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality, and the Enoch Mgijima Local Municipality, will be an exemplary beacon of excellence that will filter through the Eastern Cape province,” Deputy Minister Sotyu added.

Popular for its nature, culture and heritage offerings, the Enoch Mgijima and King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipalities in the Eastern Cape are a must-see destination for all visitors. Adventure enthusiasts can explore wildlife at the Tsolwana Nature Reserve and at the Komani Hiking Trails. Visitors to Mthatha can immerse themselves in the birthplace of South Africa’s liberation leaders, and explore the heritage routes that echo the legacy of South Africa’s first Democratic President - Honourable Nelson Mandela at three museums, namely: the Bunga Building in Mthatha, the Nelson Mandela Youth and Heritage Centre in Qunu, and the Mvezo Museum.

Tourism businesses in Mthatha and Komani welcomed the implementation of the Service Excellence Standards Programme. Speaking at the awards, the MEC for the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Nonkqubela Pieters, congratulated the recipients and highlighted that tourism is one of the most dynamic and resilient sectors of the economy.

“We gather not just to present awards, but to recognise the passion, innovation, and service that define tourism enterprises across the Eastern Cape and beyond. Each and every one of you, whether nominated or not, contributes immensely to building the image of our province as a world-class tourism destination. To all our award winners and finalists: you represent the gold standard of what we strive to become,” MEC Pieters added.

The successful implementation of the Service Excellence Programme in 2024/25 achieved all key objectives, delivering tangible improvements while laying a foundation for continued growth. Participating businesses will become part of the Service Excellence Legacy Team, which will support the sustainability and continuity of the programme. These teams will be coordinated by partners, with technical assistance provided by the Department. In a demonstration of continued commitment, the Department convened inaugural Legacy Team meetings in June 2025 in both Mthatha and Komani.

“As the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality, we are pleased to have collaborated with the Department of Tourism on the Service Excellence programme in our area. Our district boasts breath-taking tourism offerings, and the provision of excellent service is critical in our municipality, especially in enhancing the performance of the sector and its value chains.

“Our municipality is known as the home of legends as it is the birthplace of two icons namely: King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality, and the late President Nelson Mandela. We look forward to leveraging on the service excellence initiative of the legacy committee to inculcate a culture of service excellence among our local communities and grow our tourism economy,” Mayor of King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality, Cllr. Goodman Nelani concluded.

## **ENDS**

For further information on the Service Excellence Strategy, visit [www.tourism.gov.za](http://www.tourism.gov.za) or follow us on social media @DepartmentofTourism

### ENQUIRIES:

#### **Department of Tourism:**

Ms. Tasneem Carrim - Chief Director: Communication Department of Tourism

Tel: 082 467 9227

Email: [tcarrim@tourism.gov.za](mailto:tcarrim@tourism.gov.za)