



tourism

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Department looks to make tourism more accessible to locals

14 May 2013

Pretoria – The Tourism Department, in partnership with the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), has commissioned an audit of underutilised state assets and properties that can be developed into tourist attractions and facilities, Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk said today.

Delivering his department’s Budget Vote Speech in the National Assembly, Van Schalkwyk said the department was thinking innovatively of new ways to ensure that more South African families had access to the places inherited as a nation.

He said in order to deliver on the promise of tourism, the department had to create spaces that make the tourism experience and the treasures of our country accessible and affordable to a much greater share of the population.

“It is simply wrong to have state resources stand vacant while there is cropped-up demand in certain market segments.

“Pursuant to this, we have also commissioned a feasibility study for a pilot budget resort chain, which could in some or other way be de-risked through partnership approaches.

“The time has come to remove the final barriers to fully unlock our country’s tourism treasures and the intrinsic value of travel for all South Africans, thereby bolstering our contribution to job creation and poverty alleviation,” Van Schalkwyk said.

Growing domestic tourism

He said they were working hard to ensure that travel and tourism became attainable for ordinary South Africans, noting that three quarters of all tourists in South Africa were South Africans. Domestic tourists have contributed R101 billion to the country’s economy in 2011.

“We are determined to promote and enhance domestic tourism and implement strategies to grow this sector, which is the lifeblood of our tourism industry.

“Last year, we developed and implemented our first ever Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy together with the “Vaya Mzansi” domestic tourism marketing campaign,” he said.

The minister said South Africa had not only established itself as a leisure destination, but it had made great inroads as a business tourism destination as well.

“In the first year of the establishment of the National Convention Bureau, it has secured 87 new association meetings for the period 2013 to 2017, which will contribute more than R2.6 billion to the economy.

“In 2013 alone, the 38 secured association meetings will bring more than 57 000 delegates to South Africa, who will inject R680 million into our economy.”

He further noted that in 1993, South Africa received a mere 3.4 million foreign visitors. This figure grew by 300% to 13.5 million visitors in 2012, 9.2 million of whom were tourists.

This, Van Schalkwyk, said showed that South Africa was continuing to entrench its status as a major international tourist and business events destination.

“These results demonstrate the effectiveness of our economic diplomacy, underpinned by a sound foreign policy. They also indicate our systematic investment as the National Department of Tourism in policy and strategy development and implementation.”

He said it was commendable that South Africa recorded double-digit growth, as the country received 10.2% more tourists in 2012; 9.2 million international tourists visited South African shores compared to the 8.3 million tourists who travelled to the country in 2011.

South Africa’s tourist growth rate in 2012 was more than double the rate of average global tourist growth, which the United Nations World Tourism Organisation estimated at about 4%, Van Schalkwyk said.

A few years ago, South Africa took the decision to invest in the emerging markets on the continent, in South America and Asia.

“The results in these markets were astounding. Arrivals from our continent have maintained a solid growth path, which we have become accustomed, to with growth of 8.5%. In light of this, we will invest R218 million over a three-year period to grow our share of this market even further.

“We will also be opening offices in Nigeria, Angola and Kenya in this financial year, and will expand our footprint to Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda through a hub strategy.” – **SAnews.gov.za**