



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa. Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax (+27 12) 444 7027  
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel. (+27 21) 469 5800, Fax: (+27 21) 465 321

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**DEPUTY MINISTER MAGGIE SOTYU CALLS FOR INCREASED COMMUNITY  
SUPPORT TO ADVANCE TOURISM IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE**

01 December 2024

FREE STATE PROVINCE - The Deputy Minister of Tourism Ms. Maggie Sotyú conducted an oversight visit at the Vredefort Dome UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Free State Province on Friday 29 November 2024 to assess the progress of the infrastructure developments at the Vredefort Dome Visitor Interpretation Centre.

The Vredefort Dome Visitor Interpretation Centre is an initiative of the Department under its Working for Tourism programme that supports greater destination competitiveness, transformation, and accelerated tourism and enterprise growth. Over the years, the construction of the Vredefort Dome Visitor Interpretation Centre has encountered a myriad of challenges that have impacted on the completion of the facility.

In January 2024, the Department through the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) appointed a contractor to refurbish and complete the exhibition centre; kiosk and ablutions facilities; the craft market; amphitheater; guard house; parking area; perimeter fence; ramps and walkways; landscaping, and the installation of signage. The refurbishments are at 55% completion.

Deputy Minister Sotyú's visit included an engagement with sector stakeholders and members of the community from the Nqwathe Local Municipality and the Fezile Dabi District Municipality on advancing tourism in the area. The Deputy Minister, as the District Development Model (DDM) Champion of Fezile Dabi DM, called on the community to work with government by supporting initiatives to grow local economies.

"The Vredefort Dome Visitor Interpretation Centre is a critical educational and geological facility that will bring socio-economic benefits for the country, and more importantly to the community members of the Nqwathe Local Municipality and the Fezile Dabi District Municipality."

“I have listened to the concerns raised by the community that relate to the construction of the Visitor Interpretation Centre. The challenges surrounding this facility have over the years robbed the sector, and the community, of an opportunity to boost the tourism and revive the local economy.”

“As a Department, we will endeavour to facilitate an amicable resolution that will lead to the completion of the Vredefort Dome Visitor Interpretation Centre. However, this resolution can be made possible if we all work together, realising the long-term future benefits of the successful completion of the Visitor Interpretation Centre,” Deputy Minister Maggie Sotyu said.

The tourism community engagement was supported by the executives of the Free State Department of Economic Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs. The event included discussions with the local community, information sharing on various programmes of the Department and exhibitions by the various spheres of government and sector stakeholders.

The Department facilitates the implementation of business orientated interventions such as the Market Access Support Programme (MASP); the Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP); the Tourism Transformation Fund (TTF), and the Tourism Grading Support Programme (TGSP) to stimulate the growth, development, and transformation of the tourism sector. These programmes play an integral part in creating a conducive environment for SMMEs, youth, women and people with disabilities to thrive in tourism.

Building a capable, ethical and developmental state is everyone’s responsibility said Deputy Minister Sotyu, highlighting that communities can play a greater role in eradicating the socio-economic challenges that impede the growth and sustainability of local communities.

“This week marked the start of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children annual Campaign.”

“Women are the driving force of the tourism economy. As of 2019, the statistics from the United Nations noted that 54% of the global tourism workforce is comprised of women, compared to just 39% in the broader global economy.”

“As government, we are working to advance gender equity to create an equitable and prosperous tourism sector that benefits all South Africans.”

“The upliftment of women in our societies will not only boost our economy, but it will ensure that tourism contributes to overall inclusive job creation, reducing poverty and the high cost of living,” the Deputy Minister added.

The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children annual Campaign calls on all members of society to address the root cause of Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), and advocate for the promotion of gender equity to create economic opportunities for women and children. Join the campaign and pledge your part in ending GBVF.

“I encourage women and the youth to actively participate in the programmes and initiative that are offered by government structures. The economic empowerment of women is one of the most powerful routes that will enable them to achieve their potential and advance their rights,” Deputy Minister Sotyru concluded.

For further information on the Department’s business incentive and skill empowerment programmes visit [www.tourism.gov.za](http://www.tourism.gov.za)

ENDS/

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

Ms. Tasneem Carrim - Chief Director: Communication and Spokesperson

Department of Tourism

Tel: 082 467 9227

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