



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Donkey Tracking Route brings hope

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The launch of a Donkey Tracking Route through the scenic Cederberg mountains has brought jobs and hope for the remote Western Cape community.

The final phase of the Department of Tourism's developmental project was opened by Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom in Wupperthal this week.

The department has established amenities that tie in with the hiking and outdoor lifestyle of tourists to the Cederberg. Bridges and foot bridges were constructed to improve access for tourists, campsites and backpackers lodges have been developed to provide overnight accommodation, and shaded picnic sites with fencing and animal gates were built. Tourism signage has also been improved.

Tourists can book rides on traditional donkey carts owned by members of local communities along the route, which provide a unique, eco-friendly way of experiencing the mountainous terrain. Increased tourism activity along the route will be a major economic boost for the community of Wupperthal, where most families in the village and surrounding areas depend on small scale farming for a living.

The launch formed part of the Department of Tourism's Imbizo Focus Week, and Minister Hanekom engaged with people from local communities.

"Tourists are attracted to South Africa not only as a destination with diverse sightseeing opportunities, but also to experience a different perspective. Wupperthal offers these experiences in great measure," said Minister Hanekom at the launch.

"The unspoilt, rugged landscape lends itself to hiking and outdoor activities while the history, heritage and culture of the Moravian mission station offers a unique glimpse into rural South African life."

Partners include the Cederberg Municipality and the Moravian Church, who own the land on which some of the amenities have been established. West Coast Tourism and Cederberg Tourism will help the community to market their products. The assets and profits generated will be kept in trust for the community.

Minister Hanekom urged the partners to continue working together towards expanding the opportunities that have been created.

"There are challenges that you face as a community," he said. "But what you have in this Cederberg area is something unique and special, and it should be packaged and marketed to tourists so that the benefit to the community escalates. Only by taking hands in partnership can we overcome our challenges."

Minister Hanekom opened two Backpacker Lodges and handed over accommodation facilities for 62 tourists and 35 camping sites to the community.

The project has been designed to be socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. The Suurrug and Wupperthal lodges have solar energy power sources, making this the first "Green Tourism" project in the department's Social Responsibility Implementation programme.

Jobs created through construction of the facilities were funded by the government's Expanded Public Works Programme. Members of the community also benefitted from skills development and training to help them operate tourism-related businesses successfully.

Guests at the launch were entertained by members of the local Moravian Church brass band and treated to a performance by 'Die Nuwe Graskoue Trappers', a gold medal winning dance troupe from Wupperthal who took the World Championships of Performing Arts in Los Angeles by storm earlier this year with their fast-paced dance routines.

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