



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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## **Innovation critical to domestic tourism growth and competitiveness**

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Minister Derek Hanekom kick started tourism month celebrations with a two-day visit to Limpopo where he engaged with tourism business owners, industry stakeholders and academics. The Minister hosted a Business Breakfast event in Polokwane, and Public Lecture in Thohoyandou on issues concerning domestic tourism growth and increasing South Africa's competitiveness in the global market.

Speaking at a breakfast event attended by local business owners and stakeholders, Hanekom emphasised the need for the industry to focus on packaging tourism experiences that will cater for the unique needs of South Africans and encourage them to travel in their own country.

"We have set aside R100 million that will be utilised to promote domestic tourism. We need innovative ways to market our tourist destinations and product offerings to entice our citizens to travel and experience South Africa," said Hanekom.

"Economic constraints remain the major barrier to domestic travel. We need to find ways to transform this thinking, and highlight the invaluable benefits derived from the memorable, and life changing travel experiences on offer in this country," he added.

According to South African Tourism (SAT), the total number of domestic trips increased by 11% in 2014 to reach 28 million trips compared to the 25,2 million trips taken in 2013. Limpopo's domestic trips increased from 4.8 million in 2013 to 7.4 million in 2014, making it the top most visited province in South Africa.

"This year, the United Nation World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) theme for the World Tourism Day is '*One billion tourists, One billion opportunities.*' More than a billion people travel internationally, and we want a share of those tourist arrivals," said Hanekom.

Professor Berendien Lubbe, Head of the Division for the Tourism Management at the University of Pretoria, reiterated the minister's directive to the sector to find innovative ways to market the country domestically and globally.

"Understanding the attitude of a tourist, and the motivation behind travel will help us formulate favorable and innovative ways in which we package our unique offerings to drive tourists to South Africa," said Lubbe speaking at the Minister's Public Lecture held in Thohoyandou.

According to the UNWTO, experiencing different ways of life, discovering new food and customs and visiting cultural sites have become leading motivations for travel, and as a result, a crucial source of revenue and job creation, particularly for developing countries.

"Destination competitiveness is linked to the ability of a destination to deliver an experience of the highest quality. Tourists value experiential quality. We need to leverage on this to make South Africa competitive so that the 2020 vision of becoming one of the top 20 global tourist destination can be attained," added Lubbe.

The Business Breakfast and the Public Lecture are some of the events that the Minister will participate in during tourism month, leading up to the World Tourism Day (WTD) celebrations on 25 September 2015.

The WTD celebrations will be held in Limpopo under the localised theme "A Million New Opportunities Await."

"Being afforded the opportunity to host the World Tourism Day celebrations in our province will enabled us to focus our attention on promoting the province with a particular focus on our cultural and heritage products," said Mr. Seaparo Sekoati, MEC for Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism in Limpopo.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) estimates that cultural tourism accounts for 40% of international tourism.

"Limpopo, and South Africa as a whole, has exceptional cultural and heritage assets. It is critical for us to partner with our surrounding communities to protect and preserve our culture and heritage, in order for all South Africans to enjoy the benefits of tourism," added Sekoati.

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