



## tourism

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Tourism  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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### Mandarin trainees head for China

**29 November 2016**

The first group of frontline tourism staff to be trained in Mandarin have completed the initial phase of their training and are heading to China for cultural learning experiences.

The 20 trainees were selected for the specialised training from establishments frequented by the growing number of Chinese tourists visiting South Africa.

Modules for reading, writing and speaking, situational role playing sessions and the three-week visit to China will enable trainees to communicate in Mandarin, which is used by about 1000 million speakers, mainly in the People's Republic of China.

The trainees in this innovative course received certificates from Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom at a ceremony held in Johannesburg today.

"The language training will enhance the experience of our Mandarin-speaking visitors and make their stay in South Africa even more memorable," says Minister Hanekom.

"The frontline people will help Mandarin speakers with making arrangements for travel, accommodation and sites to visit. The tourist guides will be able to tell the fascinating stories behind our sites better, and the tourists will understand them better, and spread the word when they return home," says Minister Hanekom.

China is the world's largest outbound market for tourism. Over 128 million Chinese tourists visited other countries last year.

South Africa has enjoyed spectacular growth in arrivals from China this year. Arrivals between January and August this year were 64% better than the same period last year.

"The ability to communicate in the language of our visitors reduces their levels of anxiety when they arrive and try to find their way around a place they are not familiar with. It makes them more confident and they can relax and enjoy their stay," says Minister Hanekom.

"The first group of trainees are pioneers in this field. They have opened a new pathway for many others to follow.

"This programme shows how the public and private sector can work together to sustain the growth we are experiencing in tourism. We thank the Chinese Culture International Exchange Education Centre, Air China, the Yangzhou University and the Hilton Hotel group for their contributions to this programme.

"We invite other partners in industry to become involved in the language training programme, so that we can take the concept to scale and extend it to other languages.

"The ultimate aim is to improve the experience of all our tourists at every step of their journey. This will grow tourism even further, and help us to support more jobs and economic opportunities in tourism and in the many other sectors which tourism relies on," says Minister Hanekom.

The Department of Tourism is creating a database of the trainees, linked to SA Tourism's websites to make it accessible to establishments who need Mandarin speaking staff or guides.

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**Issued by The National Department of Tourism**