

**MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE OFFICE OF MR MARTHINUS VAN SCHALKWYK,
MINISTER OF TOURISM AND SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM**

MINISTER LAUNCHES TOURISM MONTH

“Domestic Tourism has to be our focus”

Domestic Tourism

As South Africa prepares to celebrate Tourism Month in September, Minister of Tourism, Mr Marthinus van Schalkwyk has stressed that domestic tourism *is* central to the growth and sustainability of the sector.

Speaking this morning at the official launch of Tourism Month 2011 at Freedom Park, Pretoria, Minister van Schalkwyk urged the tourism industry to join hands in its support to find innovative ways of stimulating domestic tourism. The Minister further called for greater cohesion from everyone involved at all levels of South Africa’s tourism sector and stressed the importance of a new approach to the domestic tourism market.

Against the backdrop of an industry still feeling the effects of the global recession, Minister van Schalkwyk said that “in difficult times we need to be even more united as the tourism industry to focus on markets that not only provide quick relief in the short term, but whose growth will be sustainable for many years ahead. With domestic tourism contributing over 70% of our country’s tourism volume and contributing to sustaining and creating much-needed jobs, the domestic market has to be one of our key focus areas”.

Minister van Schalkwyk added that in these tough economic times, the industry also need to look at *innovative* ways of marketing their tourism product to the domestic traveller which includes competitive pricing and showcasing our distinctive provinces, cultures, events and attractions in dynamic new ways and urged that tourism businesses, hotels and other establishments should robustly market themselves to the domestic market, especially in the current global economic climate.

International focus

Briefly shifting his focus on a global level, Minister van Schalkwyk reiterated that the National Department of Tourism and SAT remain committed to attracting tourists from every corner of the world, with its core markets still absolutely critical and exciting potential being seen for South Africa in new tourism markets.

While market conditions in the globe remained challenging, Minister van Schalkwyk highlighted that the first quarter of 2011 results showed South Africa was on the right track with its tourism marketing efforts. From January to April 2011 South Africa had 2,750,175 foreign tourist arrivals to South Africa, up 7.5% on the 2,558,715 recorded over the same period in 2010, with core markets holding their own and good growth

being recorded from new markets such as China, Brazil, India and from our continent. “Lower hotel occupancy does not mean arrivals are declining, in fact we continue to record impressive growth. It does, however, point to shifts in consumer choice and where people choose to spend their money whilst on holiday in South Africa. We need to therefore work even harder to understand the tourism market and respond to the needs of global travellers. Our major tourism revenues still come from our core markets in Europe and North America and we are working aggressively to defend and grow our position in these markets, while also actively exploring the potential for tourism growth from emerging markets in Asia, the Americas and Africa” Minister van Schalkwyk said.

“However, domestic tourism remains our industry’s backbone and we are committed to working with the travel trade to market the destination and their offerings” Minister van Schalkwyk added.

In 2010, 29.7 million domestic trips were taken, marginally less than the 30.3 million in 2009. However there were increases in the number of trips taken (2.2) as well as an increased length of stay and people travelling for the purpose of holiday (13.4% up from 12.0% in 2009).

Minister van Schalkwyk emphasised again that as part of the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) launched in March 2011, to grow tourist arrivals to South Africa, increase tourism’s contribution to the national economy and create jobs, the target has been set to grow domestic tourism from 30.9 million in 2009 to 54 million annual trips by 2020 and significantly increase its contribution to the country’s GDP “...but getting the revenue and the tourism numbers we need – and to sustain and grow our industry - will take a collective effort. It will require synergy from tourism bodies at national, provincial and local level and the critical support of the entire tourism industry and our thousands of world-class tourism products in making our world-class destination viable, competitive and even more attractive to local and international travellers. We must not lose sight that ours remains a world-class destination and we must continue to be positive in harvesting its tourism potential,” Minister van Schalkwyk added.

As a supplementary tool to enhance the NTSS and to ensure that the sector reaches its targets as set out in the NTSS, a Domestic Tourism Strategy has been drafted to further ensure the development of a diversity of products with an appeal to all market segments. The final draft Domestic Tourism Strategy is due for approval early next year.

SAT’s new *Sho’t Left* campaign, with its mantra of **‘there’s no such thing as a wrong turn’**, is an example of a novel approach to putting the tourism spotlight on all nine of our provinces and South African Tourism (SAT) and its partners are doing their utmost to market the attributes of the length and breadth of our destination. In its most recent phase of its *Sho’t Left* domestic tourism campaign, SAT is using a number of local influencers to take the message of tourism deep into the heart of the emerging target market. The latest phase of the campaign profiles each of the destination’s nine provinces and puts special emphasis on the hidden gems that many people might have heard about, but have not visited and explored. The campaign is supported by a number of private-sector and media partners.

South Africa will celebrate World Tourism day in Clarens in the Free State Province on 27 September. Further details of the event will be released shortly.

Ends.

Issued by the National Department of Tourism and South African Tourism

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