



MINISTRY  
TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## **SPEECH**

**DATE: 29 OCTOBER 2024**

### **MINISTER OF TOURISM PATRICIA DE LILLE LAUNCHES SUMMER CAMPAIGN IN BLOEMFONTEIN, FREE STATE**

Premier of the Free State, Maqueen Letsoha-Mathae

MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism in the Free State, Ketso Makume

Executive Mayor of the Mangaung Metro Municipality, Cllr Gregory Nthatisi

Sias Meyer Chairperson of the Vaal Corridor Tourism Association and Johan Prinsloo

Rosemary Anderson, National Chairperson of FEDHASA

Executive Management of South African Tourism

Board members of the Provincial Tourism Authorities

CEOs and Executive Management of Provincial Tourism Authorities, Tourism Associations and Stakeholders

Members of the media, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon, goeie middag, molweni, dumelang, sanibonani

It is with great excitement that I welcome you all to the launch of the 2024 Summer Campaign.

I am thrilled to stand before you to unveil this summer campaign that promises to showcase the vibrant culture, breath-taking landscapes, diverse tourism offerings and rich heritage of our beloved nation.

This event marks not just the beginning of summer, but a renewed commitment to invigorate our tourism industry and create memorable experiences for travellers from near and far.

#### **Why the Summer Campaign?**

The summer season is one of the key travel periods in our calendar, making it essential to capitalize on the tradition of individuals traveling throughout the country.

Many people return to their hometowns to reunite with family during the holiday season.

This time of year, we see a notable increase in visitors to the South African tourism sector, encompassing local, regional, and international travellers.

The Summer Campaign creates a good platform to promote an inclusive South Africa as an appealing and must-experience tourism destination for both Domestic and International travellers while showcasing a wide variety of experiences including Hidden Gems, in the Festive season.

We are proud to continue the Gimme Summer – Sho't Left Campaign after all, it is our country and we must enjoy and explore it.

South Africa is a well-known travel destination although tourists mostly only visit some of our provinces and our key mission is to ensure that tourists are made aware of all the tourism offerings and variety in all nine provinces.

It is for this reason that we have intentionally selected to launch this year's Summer Campaign in the Free State to give exposure to the tourism offerings in this province.

We have been moving our events to different provinces focusing on lesser visited provinces to expose the hidden gems and ensure that the economic impact of tourism is felt across the country.

This is also an opportunity for South Africa to showcase how welcoming and inclusive we are to our Regional and International Tourists.

This campaign within South Africa will be led by the Sho't Left "Gimme Summer that Sho't Left" campaign.

By driving domestic tourism, which is the bedrock of our tourism sector, we ensure we also build a culture of travel for South Africans and therefore making them a welcoming nation to Regional and International tourists.

South Africans are struggling with the high cost of living and to address affordability concerns for domestic travellers, we have engaged the tourism sector to provide special offers to South Africans.

For now, there are at least 440 offers that have been loaded on the Sho't Left website that includes offers at a reduced rate from accommodation establishments and tour operators.

These offers will ensure that travellers have a range of experiences and accommodation at their disposal.

We encourage more companies to load offers on the Sho't Left website so that South Africans who are struggling with the high cost of living, can also after a hard year, enjoy our tourism offerings.

In return for companies joining the Summer Campaign, SA Tourism will market these companies and offers on all our platforms including international platforms.

The impact of last year's Summer Campaign is that for the Summer Season for 2023, we saw over 10million domestic trips with a spend of over R38billion for these trips.

### **Consumer Insights: Preferred Month of Travel**

Ladies and gentlemen, we know that the festive season is our busiest period for tourism as research shows that more than half of the travellers prefer to travel in the month of December, followed by September and April.

This necessitated that we continue to inspire South Africans to take a Sho't Left in the Summer season and also provide them with information and deals to book their ideal trip.

We are launching the Summer Campaign today and the special offers campaign will run until 12 January 2025.

These offers will also be available to Regional and International tourists.

### **Summer Campaign Support Summary**

Provinces have started finalizing their summer campaigns – to support them in their summer campaign efforts, we will promote cross provincial travel.

South African Tourism will support and collaborate with the provinces to ensure consistent messaging from the tourism sector throughout the summer season.

Events form a critical part of the Summer Season therefore key events will be promoted through both Domestic and International Platforms to inspire tourists to enjoy South Africa.

### **Government Priorities**

Ladies and gentlemen, tourism is a vital sector for our economy as stated in the National Development Plan and it is an important vehicle for achieving the Government of National Unity's priorities.

The Government of National Unity has resolved to dedicate the next five years to actions that will advance three strategic priorities:

- Firstly, to drive inclusive growth and job creation.
- Secondly, to reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living.
- Thirdly, to build a capable, ethical and developmental state.

Our primary goal for the next five years is to achieve 15million tourism arrivals to our country by 2030, as per the National Development Plan.

What is needed is to develop the action plans to achieve this, which will be part of government's Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) for the next five years.

The Department of Tourism is currently working on finalising our 5-year plan which will align to the GNU priorities, the National Development Plan, the Tourism Sector Master Plan, the Tourism White Paper and the National Tourism Sector Strategy.

As the NDP states: Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors and there is an opportunity to increase employment in this sector.

In the first 100 days of the GNU, we were pleased that on 4 October, we gazetted the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa, following Cabinet approval on 18 September.

The White Paper provides guidance to the next phase of tourism development and ensure that the country as a tourism destination moves towards reaching its full potential.

The policy envisages a sustainable, competitive and inclusive tourism sector that leverages on innovation, digital technology, addresses barriers to tourism growth, builds partnerships and responds to the social imperatives of the country.

It further will enable the tourism sector's contribution to the broader economy, employment and entrepreneurship whilst ensuring that the sector becomes resilient as it better responds to the future needs of the tourism sector.

The Tourism White Paper focusses on, promoting safety and security; facilitating ease of access; domestic tourism; crises management; promoting transformation; enabling technological developments and recommits to the responsible tourism agenda.

### **South Africa's Tourism Performance**

In 2023, we welcomed around 8.5million international arrivals – up by 48.9% from the 5.7million arrivals in 2022 which contributed R95 billion in terms of spend.

From January to August this year, we welcomed 5.8million international arrivals, up by 7% compared to 2023.

For the first Quarter of 2024: Total spend was R25.7 billion from foreign travel into South Africa.

Also, in the first quarter of 2024, tourism's direct and indirect contribution to GDP was 8.8%, more than that of the mining, construction and transport sector.

### **Domestic Tourism**

In 2023, 37,9 million overnight domestic trips were undertaken, 11.3% more than in 2022.

On these trips, South Africans spent R121,4 billion, an increase of 22.4% compared to the 2022 domestic overnight expenditure.

### **Free State Tourism Performance**

The Free State contributed 2.7 million overnight domestic trips in 2023.

In terms of spending, the Free State saw a total contribution of R7,1 billion of spend from domestic tourism.

### **January – July 2024 Domestic Performance**

The domestic market was promising from January to July 2024, with a total of 21.5 million overnight trips recorded.

Additionally, about R66,3 billion was spent during these months, highlighting the enthusiasm of South Africans' for traveling locally.

Of these 21.5 million overnight trips, the Free State, received 2.1 million trips.

In terms of expenditure, from January to July 2024, R5billion was spent in the province.

### **About the Free State**

The Free State's appeal lies in its scenic beauty and natural attractions. This province is in the heart of South Africa – it borders six of the nine South African provinces, as well as the kingdom of Lesotho.

The Free State is one of South Africa's top agricultural provinces because of its good soil and climate, much of the land is taken up by agriculture – the area produces over 70% of the country's grain.

But it also boasts astounding scenic beauty: wide, open plains and majestic mountains characterise this province.

The spectacular Drakensberg and Maluti mountain ranges are popular for adventure tourists, and the province boasts some of the best rock features in the world and is rich in San rock art.

A popular attraction is the Golden Gate Highlands National Park, which gets its name from the surrounding gold sandstone cliffs.

Great for exploring on foot and home to hundreds of bird species, it's an excellent site for birders.

The Free State is known for its great hospitality and sedate lifestyle, and is particularly appealing for those interested in exploring small-town South Africa.

But it is not all about sedate strolls and birdwatching; there's more than enough to keep the adrenaline junkie occupied.

There are plenty of opportunities for hiking, abseiling and canoeing and other activities while the Ash River – the only river in the country that has year-round high-water levels – makes for excellent white-water rafting.

### **Top visitor experiences in the Free State:**

**Nature and adventure activities:** Hiking trails abound in the majestic Maluti and Drakensberg mountains and around Clarens.

Adventure seekers can enjoy water sports such as white-water rafting, fishing, kayaking and boating in the Northern Free State.

**Cultural experiences:** At the Basotho Cultural Villages that borders the Golden Gate National Park, visitors can immerse themselves in the culture and traditions of the Basotho people.

They can meet local Basotho people, consult with a traditional healer, enjoy interactive exhibits and performances, and buy Basotho crafts.

**Wine and beer tasting and culinary experiences:** The province is home to a variety of local wines, craft beers, and culinary delights.

Bloemfontein's renowned 2nd Avenue offers culinary experience and a selection of gourmet restaurants showcasing local and international cuisine.

**Wildlife and ecotourism:** The Free State's vast landscapes are a haven for wildlife enthusiasts.

The Gariiep District, home to the Gariiep Dam, is a hotspot for ecotourism, birdwatching, and safari experiences, enabling visitors to engage with the region's incredible biodiversity.

Apart from well-known attractions such as the Basotho Cultural Village, the Free State National Botanical Gardens, the Golden Gate Highlands National Park, the Free State has many other attractions such as:

Naval Hill offering panoramic views of the city in Bloemfontein

River rafting for adrenaline seekers

Vredefort Dome which is a World Heritage Site and leads to an adventure tourism site, attracting hikers, river rafters and campers

The Free State also has many quaint and unique little towns and dorpies such as Clarens which has many attractions including Clarence Xtreme Adventure Company with a range of adventure tourism activities

There is also the Vaal Tourism Corridor with a range of accommodation options, cruises, fine dining, canoeing, fishing, paddle-boats, power-boats, jet-skis or kite surfing and so much more to cater for any traveller's needs.

I want to give a special welcome the Chairperson of the Vaal Tourism Corridor Association, Mr Sias Meyer.

Parys, Harrismith are also exciting hidden gems of the Free State as well as the Tiger Canyon Private Game Reserve on the banks of the Orange River.

The Clarens Valley, situated in the Eastern Free State Highlands, is known for its spectacular sandstone mountains. This village has become known as the "Jewel of the Free State" – rich in beauty, peace and tranquillity.

The "Diamond and Wine Tourism Route" is also a popular tourist attraction and follows the original diamond prospectors to the region includes open diamond mines at Koffiefontein and the mining village of Jagersfontein.

The Qwa-Qwa National Park in Harrismith offers the discerning birdwatcher a rich variety of birds, including aquatic birds and game-watchers will be able to see a variety of antelope, such as eland, red hartebeest and springbuck, as well as zebra.

The Sterkfontein Dam Nature Reserve near Harrismith is renowned for its water sport and angling opportunities, especially yellow fish angling amongst the many activities in the area.

Visitors can also get to know about the history and culture of Mangaung on a guided township tour and see the house of the late Thomas Maphikela, one of the founding members of the ruling party.

Other township attractions and activities include enjoying local beer and some authentic township cuisine and nightlife.

In terms of Sports Tourism: Sports lovers can revel in the energetic atmosphere of Bloemfontein's stadiums, where local fans passionately support the local team Marumo Gallants Football Club, national soccer team, Bafana Bafana, the cricket team and the Proteas as and when they are playing in Bloemfontein.

The city is home to the Cheetahs rugby team and Knights team which has already commence its cricket season at Mangaung Oval.

There's no shortage of choices and activities for visitors in the Free State including at our venue today, the De Oude Kraal Country Estate which offers a variety of activities in this tranquil setting including a spa, tractor rides, horse riding and mountain trail hiking.

### **Department of Tourism Investment**

The Department of Tourism has also made substantial investment into various tourism infrastructure projects in the Free State under the Destination Development Programme.

There are currently 8 projects underway and nearing completion including community-based projects and maintenance projects.

These include the project with SANParks, the Dinosaur Interpretative Centre, Golden Gate National Park in Clarens.

The refurbishment work at the Gariep Dam Resort has achieved practical completion. Expenditure of the project is to the value of R4.1million.

Community projects in the Free State include the QwaQwa Guest House to the value of R23 million where conditional practical completion was achieved earlier this year and 63 jobs were created during construction phase.

The work at the Vredefort Dome Interpretation Centre is just over 50% complete due to a new contractor needing to be appointed. This project valued at over R21million has so far created 46 construction jobs.

### **Conclusion**

Ladies and gentlemen to drive greater growth and elevate tourism's profile, it can only be achieved if we all work together. Our mission must be to eradicate poverty, to empower people, to support businesses to start and grown and ensure that more people taste the fruits of our democracy,

Thank you for being part of the 2024 launch of the Summer Campaign. Let's make the most of the day of exploring, and networking. Let us make sure we are ready to welcome more visitors, let's keep our cities and towns clean and ensure that communities understand the value of tourism and are involved in tourism projects.

Let us work with law enforcement agencies to ensure that we keep all visitors and residents and our roads safe and let us ensure that we ensure that we enjoy the summer festive period safely and responsibly.

Thank you all for joining us today and here's to a busy, exciting and impactful summer tourism season. God bless.

### **ENDS**

#### **Media Queries:**

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