



tourism

Department:  
Tourism  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## MEDIA STATEMENT

### **Tourism Deputy Minister Makhotso Sotyú urges the sector to invest in initiatives that connect the youth to economic opportunities**

**18 JUNE 2026**

**#YouthMonth2026** – Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms. Makhotso Sotyú today called on the tourism sector to invest in initiatives that will connect the youth to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the tourism value chain.

Speaking at the **#YouthInTourism** Engagement in the Free State province, Deputy Minister Sotyú said the youth in South Africa have immense potential to lead and transform our country, and their potential should be supported innovatively through initiatives that create skills and empowerment opportunities.

"The youth in our country are vibrant, innovative and they have the ability to actively participate in building South Africa's future. Tourism is uniquely positioned to support their efforts."

"Tourism is a people-centred economy. It is built by people, powered by people, and sustained by people. As policy makers and drivers of this economy, we must ensure that young South Africans are equipped with the skills, support, and opportunities to participate meaningfully in the economy and contribute to our country's development," Deputy Minister Sotyú said.

Themed "*Reset@50 – A future in tourism calls,*" today's **#YouthInTourism** engagement featured a myriad of activities that included a culinary showcase of South African cuisine, presentations by various sector stakeholders, mentorship, and networking opportunities among chefs and industry professionals. The event highlighted the economic value of tourism in advancing individuals, businesses and communities.

As an economic driver, tourism contributed 4.9% to the country's GDP, and it sustained 954 000 direct jobs in the economy in 2024. Deputy Minister Sotyú said Tourism's growth and economic contribution has always been firmly anchored by the domestic tourism market which is driven by the success of small businesses that have continuously opened pathways into the economy for the youth.

"Tourism creates pathways and opportunities into the economy for young people. As government, we recognise that unlocking these opportunities requires investment. We remain committed to implementing programmes aimed at skills development, entrepreneurship support, and capacity building.

With continued support from our stakeholders, we can look forward to empowering more youth to enter the sector equipped with skills that support that will assure their future success," the Deputy Minister added.

The **#YouthInTourism** engagement was hosted collaboratively with Free State provincial Government, the Free State Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA), the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, the Free State Tourism, Liquor and Gambling Board, and tourism stakeholders.

Echoing the Deputy Minister's sentiment of investing in tourism communities, Free State Premier Maqueen Letsoha-Mathae said investments are a catalyst for industrialisation, job creation, skills development, and enterprise growth. The Premier reaffirmed the province's commitment to building an inclusive and thriving economy through investment.

**ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM**

“At the recent investment mission in China, the Free State Government successfully negotiated a historic investment commitment amounting to approximately R400 billion. This is a clear vote of confidence in our province, our people, and our vision for economic transformation. This investment will secure opportunities for the many, particularly young people and women.” Premier Letsoha-Mathae stated.

The **#YouthInTourism** engagement takes place as South Africa commemorates Youth Month in June 2026, marking the 50th Anniversary of the 1976 Youth Uprising. The commemoration urges the youth to actively participate in shaping South Africa’s democratic, economic, social, and cultural future.

**ENDS**

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