



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom launches Tourism Month in the Free State

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September is Tourism Month in South Africa and celebrations this year have started with an official launch today, August 25th, by Tourism Minister, Derek Hanekom at the Gariep Forever Resort situated on the banks of Gariep Dam in the Free State Province.

“Tourism Month gives us the opportunity to focus our efforts on Domestic Tourism in particular, using the period as an opportunity to encourage all South Africans to get out and explore this unique, beautiful and diverse country of ours,” said Minister Hanekom.

In line with this year’s Tourism Month theme “Tourism for all; Promoting Universal Accessibility”, Minister Hanekom urged all South Africans to take part in a national survey aimed at soliciting opinions of what South Africans want when they travel. Launched on August 1st by South African Tourism, the #TourismForAll campaign aims to promote local holiday travel by highlighting the fact that the South African Tourism sector aims to cater for all South Africans. The campaign will also highlight the affordability and accessibility of holiday travel in South Africa.

Tourism Month celebrations alternate among the six less visited provinces each year, with a different province given an opportunity to host the celebrations; all provinces are encouraged to showcase their leisure experiences on offer so as to inspire domestic travelers.

This year, World Tourism Day celebrations will be held in Parys on the 27th September, and as Tourism Month coincides with Heritage Month in South Africa, it is thus befitting that the Free State is this year’s host province. The Free State is home to the Vredefort Dome; a World Heritage Site recognised by the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) as a place of outstanding cultural and historical importance.

Due to its great diversity, the Free State is endowed with quaint, small towns with the friendliest people who are always ready to welcome visitors; and boasts a number of tourism routes.

“Do the Cheetah Route and discover the Mangaung District, the cultural and political heart of the Free State; follow the Eagle Route in the Free State’s southern border and explore some of the most picturesque landscape in the country or delve into the Flamingo route for the history of Lejweleputswa’s gold mines; or explore a taste of everything that is typically Free State in the Lion Route, from culture to nature to history. Today we’re on the Springbok Route, home to the largest dam, the Gariep Dam,” added Hanekom.

Minister Hanekom explained that domestic tourism is an extremely important component of growth in tourism, and critical to the long-term growth and sustainability of South Africa’s tourism industry.

“Today we are driving the message that regardless of who you are, where you come from, or your physical or financial status - tourism is something open to be enjoyed by everyone. All South Africans deserve to experience the wonderful country we live in and have access to important sites that commemorate and celebrate our heritage and diverse cultures. The growth of domestic tourism depends on our ability to make our tourist attractions and facilities accessible and affordable for more of our people, and to improve our communication of the joy and value that travel brings. Let us continue working together and with the industry to ensure that travel is affordable and accessible so that our people can take leisure breaks whenever they feel like it throughout the year” concluded Hanekom.

Source: South African Tourism