



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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MEDIA STATEMENT

19 July 2023

Tourism honours the #Khomani with the launch of the Twee Rivieren Interpretative Centre in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

Traversing landscapes of space and time, the Kalahari is known for its rich cultural and tourism offerings of the Kalahari Red Dune Route. The route passes through such small communities such as Mier, Ashkam, Noenieput and Andreisvale, still home to the world's oldest ancient tribe, the #Khomani.

The sound of the Khomani reverberates through centuries, echoing the stories of its people. Pulsating through the Kalahari, the gift of these ancient people will be shared with all when the Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, today launched the R3.5 million Twee Rivieren (#Khomani) Interpretative Centre and Narrative Development Project.

"I am delighted and deeply honoured about the launch of Twee Rivieren Interpretative Centre project in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park as it pays homage to the unique culture of the #Khomani San. Through this centre, the Department of Tourism has enabled the local community to proudly share the narrative of their captivating culture to thousands of tourists who visit the park annually," stated Minister De Lille.

Modern design meets ancient wisdom as the Interpretative Centre will provide a unique stop for tourists at Twee Rivieren Rest Camp. The exhibition installation will provide visitors with a demonstration of the cultural and natural heritage of the Park ensure an immersive experience. It includes the collection of narratives and storyline of the local #Khomani communities within the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

The #Khomani Cultural Landscape World Heritage Site is an important landscape as it forms part of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park with Botswana and borders Namibia. The significance of the park can be attributed to its compelling history, and a very rich cultural heritage, with the original inhabitants, the #Khomani living close by and able to contribute in the interpretation of the park. Despite its rich cultural heritage, there is no interpretation centre to assist visitors to gain a full understanding and appreciation of the cultural landscape. Apart from the rich cultural heritage, the World Heritage Site has two important biomes with diverse fauna, and this attracts visitors from all over the world.

Minister De Lille said: “The outcomes of this initiative are to improve the overall visitor experience of tourists to the Red Dune Kalahari Region, facilitate educational trips of school groups and provide entrepreneurial opportunities for the local communities.”

The project scope of work includes: the conversion of an old existing building into the Interpretative Centre, situated in the middle of the Twee Rivieren rest camp and is the only access point for visitors from South Africa, which was completed in March 2023. Also included in this, is a Market Tree (Selling Point) where San crafters can sell their products.

“This R3.5 million-project is funded by the Department of Tourism, and SANParks has been appointed as the Implementing Agency. It is situated in a rural node within the Northern Cape Province, one of the regions identified by government for socio-economic development. The Department has supported a number of projects within the region, all with socio-economic beneficiation on the San Communities” the Minister added.

Ms Hapiloe Sello, the Chief Executive Officer for South African National Parks, stated: “We are proud to be the custodian of the project that will assist in showcasing the rich culture of the Khomani and Mier communities and

which is also the reason why Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park was incepted as one of the World Heritage Sites in South Africa.”

She commended the Department of Tourism for their interest and support in preserving this important heritage for the future.

“This centre is a remarkable achievement which could not have materialised had it not been for the collective input of the #Khomani, experts in history and anthropology and SANParks in the research and development of the narrative. It is a showcase of how Parks and Communities can work together for the greater good. This centre is about the people, by the people and for the people,” concluded Ms Sello.

To further give expression to this project, the Department of Tourism has implemented tourist guide training for ten (10) beneficiaries from the Khomani and Mier communities. The learners completed training as both Nature and Culture Site Guides for the Kgalagadi Transfontier Park and surroundings areas. This training will allow the communities to directly benefit from the interpretation centre and tourism activities in the area. The interpretation centre will also ensure that tourist guides have access to information that is comprehensive, factually correct and objective.

“I encourage tourists to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park to visit the Twee Rivieren Interpretative Centre as well as take a guided hike with a #Khomani tourist guide to learn about the wisdom, customs and folklore of this ancient tribe, without it, no tour to the Kalahari will be complete,” the Minister concluded.

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