



tourism

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Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Universal accessibility promotes tourism for all

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“All our people and tourists deserve equal access to our attractions and facilities. When we talk about **“Tourism for all, promoting universal accessibility”**, it is primarily about people with disabilities and the challenges they face in accessing our tourism facilities. We also want them to enjoy the dignity they deserve so they are not kept closeted away from enjoying the things that most of us take for granted. As far as possible, airports, hotels, and other tourism facilities must cater to meet the needs of people living with disabilities”, said Minister Hanekom in his opening remarks during the 2016 Public Lecture held in Bloemfontein today.

Under the United Nation World Tourism Organisation 2016 World Tourism Day theme, **“Tourism for All – Promoting Universal Accessibility”**, the lecture focussed on how South Africa can enhance and promote Universal Accessibility (UA) in tourism.

The Public Lecture is a platform hosted in partnership by the Minister of Tourism, the host province in this year’s case the Free State, and an institution of higher learning in that province (Central University of Technology), aimed at exchanging ideas with various sector stakeholders including industry, academia, policy makers and practitioners in order to enhance strategies and policy decision-making within the tourism sector. The Department of Tourism identifies UA in tourism as an important initiative to enhance South Africa’s competitiveness.

“In the survey we conducted on Provincial Tourism Departments and government-owned provincial parks, we found that there was insufficient technical knowledge of what needs to be done to achieve compliance. More training is required to enable staff to serve people with special needs,” highlighted the Minister.

Representing the Central University of Technology (CUT), Professor Albert Strydom committed his institution to digging deeper in order to understand the 21st century challenges facing the tourism industry in South Africa and the world at large to allow ourselves to have a dynamic, engaging analysis of our constitutional rights to equality, to provide solutions to the sector, and direct our thoughts into these issues that are dear to the CUT community, our parents in government, business and industry, media and the general public at large.

“As we plan together and invest resources in a collaborative way, our partnership will enable us to examine ways in which our province can tackle the growing demands for universal access and produce intended outcomes of Universal Accessibility and restore some dignity to the downtrodden”, said Professor Strydom.

In her keynote address, Ms Therina Wentzel, who is the National Director at the National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa, explained that accessible tourism for all is not only about providing access to persons with disabilities, but also addresses the creation of universally designed environments that can support people that may have temporary disabilities, families with young children, the ever increasing ageing population as well as creating a safer environment for employees to work in.

“The Bill of Human Rights in South Africa supersedes all legislation in the country, because everybody is equal, and everybody must be treated as such”, said Ms Wentzel. She explained the distinction between **universal design**, a set of consideration made to ensure that a product, service, and/or environment is usable by everyone without the need for adaptation or specialised design, and **accessibility** which describes the degree to which a product, service, and/or

environment is made available for everyone.

“Whereas the former is a design methodology, the latter is its most common associated metric. Tourism is about experience, so what can you as a service provider in tourism do to give people a memorable similar experience for everyone,” asked Ms Wentzel in her closing.

The keynote address was followed by a panel discussion, led by the following speakers from various organisations, who all focused on the experiences and advocacy for people living with disabilities, including success stories, challenges and areas of improvement:

- Mr Francois Deysel – Deaf SA
- Mr Simon Netshituni – Blind SA
- Mr Freddie Botha – Kaleidoscope SA
- Ms Pam Taylor – Flamingo Tours and Disabled Ventures
- Mr Gary Hopkins – I love coffee

A full presentations of the keynote speaker and panel members will be loaded on:

www.tourism.gov.za.

In his vote of thanks, the MEC for Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs in the Free State Mr Sam Mashinini acknowledged all the Public Lecture partners, for tackling the UA challenges in the tourism sector.

“We need to ask ourselves how we ensure that universal accessibility in our space is improved. As we close this year’s edition of Tourism Month, we wish to invite you to all our activities the province still has to offer in this month. These are the World Tourism Day Celebration, the National Tourism Career Expo, the Trade Bridge, Macufe and the Flower Festival”, said MEC Mashinini.

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