



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Limpopo celebrates World Tourism Day

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The Department of Tourism in conjunction with the Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (LEDET) and its marketing agency, the Limpopo Tourism Authority (LTA), celebrated World Tourism Day (WTD) on 25 September, in a ceremony inspired by the culture and heritage of Limpopo – under the localised tourism month theme – "A Million New Opportunities Await."

WTD is a United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) event celebrated annually throughout the world. Its purpose is to foster awareness among communities about the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political, and economic value.

"On the 27th of September, the world will celebrate World Tourism Day (WTD) under the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) theme 'One Billion Tourists, One Billion Opportunities'. We adapted and localised this theme to "A Million New Opportunities Await," to suit our South African context, and to celebrate the variety of cultures and heritage that continue to draw international visitors to our beautiful country," said Hanekom.

"More than a billion people travel internationally, and we want a share of those tourist arrivals. Our tourism is a success story that has created thousands of sustainable jobs. We need to continue to work together to build an inclusive, highly competitive sector that will boost our domestic and international tourism visitors," added Hanekom

September is Tourism Month, and it offered the sector a month-long opportunity to highlight the importance of tourism, whilst encouraging South Africans to explore the country as a holiday destination.

According to South African Tourism (SAT), the total number of domestic trips increased by 11% in 2014 to reach 28 million trips compared to the 25,2 million trips taken in 2013. Limpopo's domestic trips increased from 4.8 million in 2013 to 7.4 million in 2014, making it the top most visited province in South Africa.

"The beauty preserved at some of nature and game parks, our authentic cultural and heritage assets, and the warmth of our people has helped make Limpopo the top tourism destination of choice for South Africans and international visitors," said Mr. Seaparo Sekoati, MEC for Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism in Limpopo.

"At the core of our success are responsible tourism practices, that ensure the preservation of our heritage and culture; our buy local initiatives that help boost local economies and create employment opportunities for surrounding communities; our marketing efforts that showcase our unique and affordable tourist offerings, that appeal to the adventure, cultural and environmentally conscious tourist," added Sekoati.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) estimates that cultural tourism experiences accounts for 40% of international tourism.

"Limpopo has exceptional cultural tourism offerings that are strategically placed in remote and rural areas that ensure that our visitors get to fully experience our province. It has been critical for us to partner with surrounding communities to not only ensure the authenticity of our product offerings, but to protect and preserve our culture and heritage, for the benefit of all South Africans," said Sekoati

The National Development Plan (NDP) recognises tourism as one of the growth drivers of the country's economy and employment. The Department's Social Responsibility Implementation (SRI) initiatives have enabled local communities, especially women and the youth to start their own businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Whilst in Limpopo, Minister Hanekom officially launched the Nahakwe Lodge Project, a Social Responsibility Initiative (SRI), financed through the Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWP). Located at Mamaila Village in Limpopo, the Nahakwe Lodge is a community owned initiative, poised to boost tourism within the Greater Letaba Municipality.

"The Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWP) will support the creation of at least 11 000 tourism jobs by the end of the 2018/19 financial year," said Hanekom.

The construction of Nahakwe commenced in September 2010, with a total of R28, 5 million invested into the project through the EPWP fund.

Approximately 90 people from the Mamaile community were employed during the construction phase. Employees received accredited and non-accredited training throughout the construction of the lodge, capacitating them with skills that would enable them to support themselves post the project implementation.

Through the fund, the department facilitated the construction of conference facilities, 20 en-suite chalets, a reception/ front office area and outdoor entertainment facilities.

Nahakwe Lodge will be commercially managed by the Trans-frontier Parks Destinations (TFPD) to help the community owners build an economically sustainable operation. The TFPD has a successful history of managing establishments such as !Xaus Lodge in the Kgalagadi for the Mer & Khomani San communities, and Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge in the Northern Drakensberg for the Batlokoa community.

"Partnering with communities to commercialise their tourism assets is our mission. We are very proud to be able to add Nahakwe to the number of community run projects being overseen by the Trans-frontier Destination Parks Management (TDFM). This project will increase economic activity for the Mamaile district, and in future the cultural and environmental awareness aspects of this community," said Mr. Glynn O'Leary, TFPD Co-founder, and CEO.

Nahakwe is one of eight community initiatives that have been built in Limpopo by the department under its SRI programme. It is envisaged that the project will create employment opportunities, develop a vibrant, equitable and sustainable tourism economy that will assist the local community to share in the benefits of tourism.

For further information on SRI initiatives, visit www.tourism.gov.za

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