



tourism

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Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Media statement by the office of the Minister of Tourism, Mr Marthinus van Schalkwyk on the occasion of the launch of the Blue Flag season 2013/2014 in Ramsgate, KwaZulu-Natal

8 October 2013

Last month World Tourism Day 2013 was celebrated across the provinces with the theme: Tourism and Water. In keeping with this theme, Minister of Tourism, Mr Marthinus van Schalkwyk, launched the new Blue Flag season in Ramsgate today.

“The South Coast is a very special jewel in the crown of KwaZulu-Natal. This is indeed a fitting venue for the event given that the KZN South Coast is the stronghold of the Blue Flag programme in the province” the minister said.

The environment is one of tourism’s most valuable resources and they enjoy a mutually beneficial sustainable relationship. Many touristic activities depend very directly on water, not least golf courses, rivers and lakes, pools and spas, irrigated gardens and hotel guest rooms. For other tourism activities that depend on fauna and flora and a moderate climate, the dependence on water is indirect. As the global sector grows, its impact on natural resources also grows, and therefore the need for sustainable planning and management becomes imperative for this industry – and Blue Flag does just that.

In order to promote and ensure quality water for inland and marine tourism, the Blue Flag and Blue Drop programmes were introduced. The Blue Flag programme promotes sustainable development marine areas, and the Blue Drop is an innovative means to manage the tap water quality.

The voluntary eco-label is given to beaches that meet 32 main criteria spanning over four aspects of coastal management: (1) **water quality**, (2) **environmental education and information**, (3) **environmental management** and (4) **safety and services**, which include excellent life-saving standards, top-rate parking and sparkling ablution facilities.

Blue Flag originated in Europe in 1987 with the sole purpose of encouraging beaches to comply with the European Union’s Bathing Water Directive. From that starting point, the programme has grown and developed significantly. Internationally, this year sees the programme running successfully for 27 years. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the international Blue Flag is the most well-known and oldest thriving eco-label of its kind. Currently, more than 40 countries across Europe, South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, New Zealand, Brazil, Canada and the Caribbean are participating in the programme. In 2013, internationally, 3 849 beaches and marinas were awarded Blue Flag status.

This year, South Africa celebrates its 13th year of running the Blue Flag successfully. High on our list of achievements we celebrate the growth of Blue Flag beaches, from only three beaches in the first year to 41 beaches and 5 marinas for this year. Twelve beaches also hold pilot status. Growth has been significant and sustainable for most coastal municipalities and each year sees new beaches being introduced to the programme. The host province, KZN proudly boasts four beaches with pilot status in the eThekweni municipality.

Although the original focus of the international Blue Flag Programme was on encouraging

beaches to comply with water quality standards, it has since expanded to take a holistic view of safety, amenities, cleanliness and environmental management issues, with a strong focus on environmental education and biodiversity conservation. In addition to beaches, the programme now also provides environmental accreditation to marinas and whale-watching boats. This year – for the first time – Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) were included in the International Blue Flag Criteria.

We have the capability and the means, the welcoming culture, and the varied, textured, beautiful destination that the world's travellers – ever more demanding and discerning – want when they choose a destination. However, in order for South Africa to further optimise its tourism potential, it is critical that we offer both domestic and international visitors clean, safe and well-managed beaches.

It is important to note that tourism growth and development, environmental conservation, and social wellbeing can be mutually reinforcing. Tourism can contribute towards a green economy transition through investments leading to water efficiency, climate-change mitigation, waste reduction, biodiversity and cultural heritage conservation, and the strengthening of linkages with local communities.

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world and one that is heavily dependent on a natural resource base. Attractive coastal landscapes, such as sandy beaches, dune areas, estuaries, and coastal lakes are also preferred sites for tourism development. Hence, uncontrolled and ill-planned tourism significantly degrades the environment.

Water management is important in that it promotes a good image of the country which in turn will result in tourism growth and job creation. The lack of water management in the country can result in the decrease of investment and have a negative impact on the environment, conservation and health.

In South Africa, tourism has taken its place as a vital contributor to economic growth, catapulting South Africa from a **pre-1994 pariah** to one of the world's fastest-growing and most desired leisure holiday destinations today. In 1993, the country received just over **3.4 million** international arrivals. In 2012, we witnessed over 13 million international arrivals, of which some **9.2 million** were international tourists. In 2012, our overall year-on-year international tourist arrivals growth was **10.2%**. This was against an average global industry growth of **4%**, as reported by the UNWTO.

Domestic tourism is a key component of our journey going forward. At any given time, three quarters of all tourists in South Africa are South Africans, with domestic tourists having contributed **R101 billion** to our economy in 2011.

It is therefore of critical importance that all role-players in the industry continue to contribute towards the growth and development of our sector. This is exactly what the Wildlife and Environment Society of SA (WESSA) has done as research indicated that the Blue Flag programme has impacts in terms of economic benefits, job creation and improved environmental management.

Blue Flag gives local and foreign visitors the knowledge that their beaches adhere to international safety and other tourist standards. Feedback has shown that both international and domestic tourists value the quality assurances that Blue Flag beaches offer. South Africa's Blue Flag beaches increase our desirability and reputation as a world-class destination and enhance the country's competitive edge as a world-class and internationally desirable tourist destination.

It is a known fact that, as the number of Blue Flag beaches increases in South Africa, domestic visitors are increasingly exercising their choices in which beaches they visit and, as with international trends, our Blue Flag beaches are becoming the '**beach of choice**'.

The success of the Blue Flag programme in South Africa could not have been achieved without the support of coastal municipalities – from Mayors and Councillors down to the beach cleaning officials and lifeguards and beach managers working day-to-day on the

beaches.

Providing world-class beach facilities in a country where beach tourism is an important part of our 'brand' is a great tool for marketing. And offering international and domestic tourists opportunities to choose destinations which have Blue Flag beaches will certainly help improve South Africa's competitiveness in the global market.

Blue Flag 2013 / 2014

Host province: KZN beaches with pilot status: eThekweni municipality – Umdloti main, Umdloti tidal, uShaka and Umgababa.

Marinas	Marina and beach
	Thesen Island, Knysna ^{new}
	Yachport, Saldanha Bay
	Granger Bay Water Club, Cape Town
	False Bay Yacht Club, Cape Town
5	Royal Alfred Marina, Port Alfred
KZN Beaches	Southport Beach, HCM
	Ramsgate Beach, HCM
	Lucien Beach, HCM
	Umzumbe Beach, HCM
	Trafalgar Beach, HCM
	Marina Beach, HCM
18	Alkanstrand Beach Richards Bay, uMhlatuze
Western Cape	Strandfontein Beach, Vredendal, Matzikama
	Silverstroomstrand, Atlantis, COCT
	Camps Bay, COCT
	Clifton IV, COCT
	Bikini, Gordon's Bay, COCT
	Muizenberg, COCT
	Strandfontein, COCT
	Mnandi, COCT
	Llandudno, COCT
	Kleinmond, Overstrand
	Hawston, Hermanus, Overstrand
	Grotto, Hermanus, Overstrand
	Witsand, Hessequa
	Lappiesbaai, Stilbaai, Hessequa
	Gouritsmond, Hessequa ^{new}

	Preekstoel, Stilbaai ^{new}
	De Bakke, Mossel Bay
	Kleinbrak, Mossel Bay
	Santos, Mossel Bay
	Hartenbos, Mossel Bay
	Wilderness, Garden Route National Park, Eden
	Buffalo Bay, Knysna
	Brenton Bay, Knysna
	Keurboomstrand, Plettenberg Bay, Bitou
	Robberg V, Plettenberg Bay, Bitou
26	Nature's Valley, Garden Route National Park, Bitou
Eastern Cape	Dolphin Beach, Jeffrey's Bay, Kouga
	Humewood Beach, NMMB
	Kings Beach, NMMB
	Kariega, Kenton-on-Sea, Ndlambe
	Middle Beach, Ndlambe ^{new}
	Kleinemond, West Beach, Ndlambe ^{new}
	Boknes Beach, Ndlambe
8	Kellys Beach, Ndlambe
Northern Cape	MacDougalls Bay, Port Nolloth, Richtersveld
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