



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa. Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax (+27 12) 444 7027
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel. (+27 21) 469 5800, Fax: (+27 21)
465 321

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Domestic tourism – the bedrock of South Africa’s tourism sector – Let’s explore South Africa and grow local tourism even more

Today, the tourism industry, led by Minister of Tourism Patricia de Lille, came together for the launch of Tourism Month 2023 and to reflect on tourism’s vital role in our country’s growth and development - particularly, domestic tourism.

South Africa commemorates Tourism Month in September to coincide with World Tourism Day on the 27th of September. Tourism Month aims to create awareness and promote domestic tourism and cultivate a culture of travel among South Africans. It is also an opportunity to showcase the country’s diverse tourism offerings and foster a sense of national pride and appreciation for the beauty and richness of South Africa. Speaking at the national launch of Tourism Month, Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, highlighted the importance of domestic tourism to South Africa’s tourism sector.

The global theme as set by the UNWTO for this year is “*Tourism and Green Investments*”. This theme emphasises the significant role of tourism in fostering inclusive economic growth and development. By generating employment opportunities, stimulating local economies, and promoting social inclusion, tourism becomes a powerful catalyst for positive change.

“Domestic tourism is the bedrock of our industry. It serves as the heartbeat that sustains our hospitality sector supporting local businesses, and generating employment opportunities for our people. When we choose to explore our own land, we not only discover the breath-taking landscapes and connect through the vibrant cultures that define us, but we also contribute significantly to our nation’s economic prosperity.

The impact of domestic tourism on our economy cannot be underestimated. As South Africans, each journey we embark upon within our country’s borders has a ripple effect on various

industries. It sustains our hotels, lodges, restaurants, and countless small businesses that rely on our patronage,” said Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille.

In line with the theme, the national launch of Tourism Month took place at the Thaba Legae Guest Lodge in Rustenburg. The lodge is also one of the beneficiaries of the Department of Tourism’s Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP) and is owned by Millicent Shai.

Thaba Legae Lodge’s solar PV installation was co-funded by the Department of Tourism to help the establishment operate despite energy constraints and offer an uninterrupted visitor experience.

The GTIP was developed and informed by escalating electricity prices, the intensifying pressure on the national energy grid and associated load-shedding conditions, as well as water scarcity and drought conditions which negatively impact the tourism sector. The programme aims to encourage private sector tourism enterprises to move towards the installation of solutions for the sustainable management and usage of electricity and water resources.

The GTIP programme has been running for the past few years and so far, 130 applications for GTIP funding were approved at a total grant value of R76.1million. This funding was disbursed to tourism establishments all over the country with the department co-funding their water and energy efficiency measures.

“We are committed to doing our part in tourism to help the sector adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change so that the sector not only grows, but thrives. Sustainability and Responsible Tourism have, over the last few years, been a great focal point in tourism, both here in South Africa and globally. Our country has great tourism products that espouse Responsible Tourism and this month we not only take this opportunity to showcase those but we also want to encourage South Africans to advance responsible practices not only when they travel but in their everyday lives too. We all need to embrace sustainability,” added de Lille.

Minister de Lille was joined by various dignitaries and industry leaders including MEC for Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (DEDECT) in The North West Province, Mme Virginia Tlhapi

“As the North West province we stand proud to be part of this auspicious occasion, the timing of the tourism month national media launch and the subsequent hosting of the World Tourism Day on the 27th of September 2023 couldn’t have been more opportune because it comes at a when we have gone into over drive in terms of recalibrating tourism sector.

“We believe this occasion will go a long way in demonstrating that the tourism ecosystem is functioning once again, while no effort is being spared in re-engineering the tourism economy of the province for the benefit of our people. Our province being a multi layered destination, we also hoping to use the Tourism Month program with its concomitant activities as a precursor to the Harties centenary celebrations, which is one of our iconic tourist destinations in the province, “ enthused MEC for DEDECT in the North West province, Virginia Tlhapi.

As the official host province for the month, the North West province will also host the World Tourism Day celebrations taking place on 27 September 2023. The entire country will also enjoy the festivities of Tourism Month with nationwide events and activations taking place.

Research by South African Tourism indicates that South Africans want to travel and explore their country, however, they cite affordability as a challenge for them. As Tourism Month aims to increase awareness of the accessible, affordable, and world-class attractions available within the country, including hidden gems and lesser-known tourism products and services, South Africans keen to explore the sights and sounds of their own country will have a great opportunity to get their hands on exciting local travel deals next month.

South African Tourism's annual Sho't Left Travel Week, will once again this year, see a host of trade partners, airlines, hotel groups, and tour operators offering generous discounts of up to 50% between the 4th and the 10th of September.

"In response to what South Africans have told us and in ensuring that we make our country accessible, the Sho't Left Travel Week campaign offers South Africans access to discounted deals, in a bigger way so they can explore and experience the length and breadth of South Africa's tourism offering. It seeks to dismantle current perceptions, unlock access to the country and is further underpinned by the general call to all South Africans: It's your country. Enjoy it!" said Acting CEO of South African Tourism, Nomasonto Ndlovu.

Domestic tourism has seen a remarkable resurgence, with a 30.8% increase in domestic overnight trips during the first four months of 2023, in comparison to the same period of 2022. Although the average length of stay has decreased by 7.1% to 2.6 nights, domestic tourists are taking more frequent trips. Day trips have also experienced a significant boost, with a 16.2% increase in the number of trips taken from January to April 2023, compared to the same period in 2022. Domestic expenditure rose by 19.7% compared to 2022, showcasing the impact of the adventurous South African tourist.

"As we focus on investments on people, the planet, and prosperity, let us also acknowledge the significant role of domestic tourism in achieving these goals. Exploring the wonders of our country builds bridges between cultures and strengthens the fabric of our nation. Let us embrace the spirit of adventure and explore the richness of our own land. Let us be stewards of our natural treasures and ambassadors for our nation's warmth and hospitality. Investing in a more sustainable and inclusive tourism industry creates a legacy of prosperity and environmental stewardship for future generations," concluded Minister de Lille.

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For further information, contact:

Zara Nicholson

Ministry Media Liaison Officer, Cell: +27 (0) 79 416 5996

Email: znicholson@tourism.gov.za

OR

Thandiwe Mathibela at South African Tourism
GM: Global PR, Communications and Stakeholder Relations
Tel: +27 825 520979
Email: mediaq@southafrica.net
Website www.southafrica.net