

PRESS RELEASE

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TOURISM MONTH PROGRAMME LAUNCHED IN MPUMALANGA

September is Tourism Month and to honour this distinction, the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) will today celebrate the official launch in the province, announcing a series of events and activities poised towards promoting Mpumalanga as a destination of choice.

The intention during Tourism Month is for South Africans to discover the hidden treasures of their land, which offers something for everyone, from nature lovers through to fun seekers. The theme for this year is **“A million new experiences are a shot left away”** and the province has developed a number of initiatives aimed at showcasing some of our unique tourism offerings. This theme presents an opportunity to highlight the economic impact of each tourist that partakes in those million experiences

“The backbone of tourism in any country is domestic tourism and our aim in Mpumalanga is to showcase the exciting attractions the province has to offer, many of which have left international tourists awe-struck, but which are still to be discovered by local traveller’s right here at home”, said Mr William Lubisi, Chairperson of the MTPA Board.

Throughout September MTPA will be focusing on encouraging more people to embark on leisure activities and visiting some of the less visited areas in the province.

“With some exciting and groundbreaking events taking place along the way the MTPA has teamed up with various stakeholders like Tourism Enterprise Partnership, South African National Parks, various government departments, district and local municipalities. This partnership will allow us an opportunity to leverage on the offerings that are provided by the various stakeholders aimed at profiling the vast product offering available in the province, especially in the less visited areas”, said Abe Sibiya, Acting CEO of MTPA.

As part of our tourism awareness campaign, the Awareness Day scheduled to take place in Wakkerstroom in the Gert Sibande District will allow MTPA an opportunity to interact with various stakeholders and educate the community at large about responsible tourism and further encourage the preservation of heritage and culture. Small positive actions by tourists can go a long way in improving the lives of local communities.

“It is important for our communities to understand the impact of tourism in their lives. Tourism provides the much needed jobs and wealth. Therefore it is important to protect tourists visiting our local areas and not make them to fall victims of crime. We want to encourage the youth that are currently studying or

completed their studies to explore opportunities of starting their own tourism businesses in areas like tour operating, tour broking, guest lodge owners and many more”, commented Lubisi.

The SMME day scheduled to take place in Emalahleni is aimed at sharing information on tourism opportunities available, addressing challenges affecting the tourism industry in the area and further creating synergy between various stakeholders in the province.

“MTPA will be introducing Mahala Week for the first time this year in our 11 provincial nature reserves throughout the province which will be open to the public from 21 – 27 September. During that week we encourage the public to take advantage of this opportunity and explore and appreciate the wildlife and natural heritage surrounding some of our communities. We trust that it will afford us an opportunity to showcase some of the less visited nature reserves in the province”, explained Sibiya.

“There is a need to continuously work together to improve the country’s image as a destination. We are hopeful that with some of the planned initiatives during September, we will be able to offer travelers unique product offerings”, added Sibiya.

“To travel is to see as the saying goes. Whenever we travel we become part of a global movement that has power to drive positive change within our province. This September take a short left to discover a million new tourism experiences on offer”, concluded Lubisi.

This year’s World Tourism Day will be celebrated in the Limpopo Province on September 25, 2015.

To view the Mpumalanga jam packed tourism month programme, visit www.mpumalanga.com and follow us on various social media platforms like facebook, twitter and Instagram. Upload your experiences on **#tourismmonthMP**.

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