

# Access SA National Parks for free

South African National Parks (SANParks) is again opening its doors for free from Monday, 14 September until Friday, 18 September as part of the annual South African National Parks Week.



This campaign under the established theme 'Know Your National Parks' will allow locals with valid identity documents an opportunity to spend a day at a national park of their choice free of charge.

The week-long campaign will be applicable to all the national parks managed by SANParks, with the exception of Boulders in Table Mountain National Park and Namaqua National Park in the Northern Cape. Some of the parks will be extending the week to include the weekend. For individual park dates please visit: [www.sanparks.org](http://www.sanparks.org).

## Cultivate a culture of pride

According to SANParks Acting Head of Communications, Reynold Thakhuli the objective of the week is to cultivate a culture of pride in all South Africans in their relationship with the country's natural, cultural and historical heritage. "When people start to take pride in the national parks, then we believe that they will start to understand the importance of conservation".

The idea of a national parks focus week is a world-wide campaign and was conceived in in South Africa in 2006, after realising that a vast majority of South Africans were not accessing the national parks. The feature element of this campaign is the free access granted to all South African day visitors carrying their official Identity Documents. Young persons under the age of 16 will be allowed free access without proof of identity. It should be noted that the free access to the parks will not include accommodation and any commercial activities in the park such as guided safaris in vehicles or guided walks.

All of the parks will be hosting activities during the week which will be aimed at education. "We are focused on involving young people and communities, to cultivate knowledge of the importance of conservation and an appreciation for the country's natural heritage", said Thakhuli.

The Garden Route National Park (GRNP) will launch the week in Knysna on 14 September which will focus on conservation initiatives, activities in the forestry and estuarine areas and business opportunities in the Park. Karoo National Park outside Beaufort West in the Western Cape will host two groups from the local community to a special programme every day.

This will kick off with an entertaining presentation about the search and recapture of Sylvester, the lion which went on a walkabout from the park for 24 days. The Kruger National Park will host two seminars for traditional leaders from the surrounding communities bordering the park and also strategic media executives for the purpose of exposing them to the tourism products that exist in the Park.

The annual SA National Parks Week has been made possible with support from First National Bank (FNB) since inception 10 years ago. "In recent years, awareness of environmental issues and the impact we have on our environment has increased greatly. At FNB we recognise the immediate and potential threats posed by global warming, rhino poaching and other environmental issues, and have taken steps to minimise our impact on our surroundings" says Danny Zandamela, CEO FNB Public Sector Banking

Total South Africa has also stepped up to the plate to help South Africans access these beautiful acres of land across the country. "Our goal through this initiative is to encourage all South Africans to visit the parks, not only during SANParks Week but even after this week has passed. Our partnership with SANParks is an extension of our commitment to preserve our natural habitat and the many precious animals and species that live within the park while at the same time raising awareness about the need to sustain the beauty of our national parks for future generations," says Christian des Closières, MD and CEO Total South Africa.

SANParks encourages all South Africans and especially educators and school groups to diarise these dates and plan a visit to a national park nearby. "The survival of the South African national parks system and our natural and cultural heritage lies in the people of South Africa," concludes Thakhuli.

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