

Capacitating tourist guides to continue the growth of tourism

2017 International Tourist Guides' Day celebrations took place on Robben Island from 2 to 3 March 2017, under the theme "Peace and Development through Guiding". The celebrations aimed to create awareness about peace and sustainable development in the tourism industry and provided tourist guides across the country a platform to network, discuss challenges and share best practices.



Industry experts shared presentations on various issues affecting the sector with some 250 tourist guides and stakeholders. Robust discussions also took place among tourist guides in the form of round-table discussions where key concerns were noted and proposed solutions were discussed. The round-table discussions formed a critical component of the policy review process which is currently underway.

International Tourist Guides' Day is celebrated every year on 21 February. It was first launched by the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations in 1990 and at which time only 15 countries participated. Today, tourist guides in more than 75 countries join in the celebrations. The Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom, gave the keynote address at a dinner which formed part of the activities during the two-day event.

He praised tourist guides for the excellent work and referred to them as the leading lights of our country. "Tourist guides are absolutely critical to the continuing success and growth of tourism in our country. Everyone involved in the long and wide tourism value chain whether as tourist guides or as other links in the chain, has reason to feel very proud of how our sector is performing right now," said Hanekom.

Tourist Guides App

As part of new ways to develop the sector, a Tourist Guides App was showcased. "This app is the first of its kind that would enable users to access registered tourist guides at their convenience. Consumers of such services will be able to utilise the app to verify the status of their guides which would help in our fight to curb illegal guiding practices," said Deputy Minister of Tourism, Tokozile Xasa.

As it celebrates 20 years as a National Museum, Robben Island Museum is one of the World Heritage Sites in the country that benefits from the Department's programme to capacitate tourist guides at World Heritage Sites. These programmes are aimed at improving the quality of the tourist guiding sector, attracting the right people into the profession and continuously growing the economy through tourism. The deputy minister concluded by saying: "We are here as government to create the conducive environment to help you thrive and feel that you are part of South Africa's heritage through peace and development."

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