

Tourism building a sustainable tourist guiding sector

The Department of Tourism in partnership with SANParks and the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA), from 18 - 19 February 2016, celebrated the International Tourist Guides Day with a two-day event including activities and programmes ranging from presentations, motivational talks, excursions and workshops in Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga.



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The theme for this year's celebrations is "Building a Successful and Sustainable Tourist Guiding Sector" with the aim to capacitate tourist guides on sustainable tourism trends within the adventure, nature and cultural sub-sectors of guiding. The theme also emphasizes the opportunities for integration across these sub-sectors which could contribute to a more self-sustainable guiding sector.

Growth and transformation

The deputy director general, Morongoe Ramphela on behalf of the Deputy Minister of Tourism, said that as we celebrate International Tourist Guides Day, we need to continue being the biggest proponents of our brand in order to move South Africa forward. That, in turn, will, of course, bring more tourists to our country and boost our economy.

"We would also like to commend the significant growth that Tourist Guiding has shown in the past few years. "It is worth noting that the number of registered tourist guides increased over the years from 8,657 in 2009/2010 to 11,367 by the end of the 2013/2014 financial year which represents a 31% increase".

"The steady improvement in terms of transformation in the tourist guiding profession is notable given that the proportion of registered tourist guides from previously disadvantaged backgrounds increased from 2,502 in the 2009/2010 financial year to 3,875 guides by the end of the 2014/2015 financial year. This represents an increase of 55% during the said period" s Ramphela.

Enhancing tourist guiding

Ramphela noted that it is essential that efforts are made by the government and other tourism partners to enhance the level and quality of tourist guiding that is offered across the country. Not only will this ensure the integrity of the tourism sector but it will also result in higher levels of tourist satisfaction whilst ensuring its sustainability.

In terms of the legislative programme of the Department, draft regulations have been developed and will be published for

public comments during February 2016. Planned consultations will be held in each province to solicit as many inputs from the guiding sector as possible. Tourist guides were encouraged to participate in these consultation process. "Tourist Guides form a pivotal part of the value chain and the Department of Tourism is committed to fulfilling its mandate by extending further opportunities to increase market access and employment opportunities", Ramphela concluded.

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