



the detea

the department of economic
development, tourism and
environmental affairs
FREE STATE PROVINCE

FREE STATE PROVINCIAL TOURISM AWARDS AND TOURISM TOWN COMPETITION

30 SEPTEMBER 2009

Programme Director

Mayors present here today

Representatives from

Volksblad

First National Bank

PriceWaterHouseCoppers

Central University of Technology

Afrikaanse Handels Instituut

Nominees of both awards

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme director allow me to start by extending to this august audience the sincerest apology of MEC Mxolisi Dukwana, the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, who so much looked forward to addressing you today but due to other pressing commitments could not be here with us. He has sent his best wishes for a very successful event and wished all participants luck. He reiterated his message during the elimination rounds of the Free State Tourist Town that, Free Staters should be proud of their surroundings and their towns and should make other South Africans to look forwards to unforgettable experience in the Free State.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am standing here in front of you today as a very proud person. Our pride emanates from successful activities and an elaborate but fascinating task of promoting tourism in the Free State. The event we are holding today marks the end of tourism month, a month that was filled with exciting activities to commemorate this important economic activity in our province

The tourism month initiative is aimed at cultivating a culture of tourism amongst the people of the Free State. All Free Staters are encouraged to tour their province and know its diverse attractions and be natural tourist guides through the domestic tourism campaign Sho't Left. Ladies and gentleman as citizens, by travelling at home, we contribute meaningfully to the tourism industry, its competitiveness and service excellence.

The MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, MEC Mxolisi Dukwana indicated during tabling of our 2009/10 budget vote that we will put tourism at the centre of economic growth. Tourism has been identified as one of the pillars of not only South African economy, but the global economy as a whole.

To this end, we have undertaken to push as hard as we can to place tourism at the centre of our economic development through the following initiatives;

- The development of Maloti tourism route
- Vredeford dome tourism route
- Weekend tourism in Parys and Clarens
- Business and sports tourism in Bloemfontein
- Mine tourism in Matjhabeng
- Development of Xhariep Transfrontier Park
- FIFA 2010 tourism plan

Programme Director, we will have to double our efforts to ensure that the Free State becomes the tourism destination of Choice because of its tourism offerings in this province. This province offers unmatched spiritual rejuvenation through its tranquility, warm people, majestic mountains and the cultural diversity that it possess. Holding on to that and sharing it with the world can only make us tourism destination of choice above the rest of South Africa.

Tourism attractions in our province include but are not limited to internationally acclaimed Vredefort Dome in Fezile Dabi which continues to draw both local and international tourists to this historical monument; the scenic beauty and the cultural tourism in Thabo Mofutsanyana, business, sports and weekend tourism in Lejweleputswa and Motheo Districts. In Xhariep district, guests can be introduced to monstrous Gariep dam and Tigers breeding centre and the Xhariep Transfronteir park

We have to leverage these attractions if we are to make a mark in the booming tourism industry in this country. At this stage let me share with you the interesting and valuable statistics about tourism in South Africa.

For the period July –September 2008, total foreign arrivals in South Africa increased by 1% and for the same period, total foreign direct expenditure in SA excluding capital expenditure was R20,9 billion compared with an amount of R12,1 billion in 2007.

Foreign visitation to the Free State province was 12% compared to 11% in 2007. Foreign tourist bed nights spend in the Free State was 7, 1% in 2008(July-September) compared to 5.6% in the previous year. Gauteng, Kwa Zulu Natal, North West and the Free State have a significant amount of foreign tourists who spend their nights in unpaid accommodation (staying with friends and family).The Free State is visited mostly by tourists from Lesotho, UK and other European countries.

Research is required to understand our foreign visits pattern. This kind of information will help us to know exactly what attract them to come to the Free State so that we can improve on those attributes. The advantage of the study is that we can also learn more about those who do not visit our province and come up with relevant strategies to make Free State attractive to everyone.

The FIFA 2010 World Cup presents this country with the best ever opportunity to market itself to the world.We are expecting about 450 000 fans to South Africa, which would bring a total number of visitors next year to 10 million. We all have to put our strengths together and focus our energy to show these millions of people that our country is one of the best and can offer more than they expected.

We have to build on our experience of the 2009 CONFEDERATION Cup. Bloemfontein was one of the four host cities during the world cup precursor. We are very proud of our performance during FIFA Confederation cup but one has to indicate that, despite having a huge number of accommodation establishments, only few are graded establishments and this has a big impact on number of rooms contracted by MATCH for World Cup purposes. It is important that Awareness creation be increased to have more establishments graded and contracted to MATCH. A total of 55 000 rooms are required to meet the 2010 visitor demand in the Free State and to date only 23 000 rooms have been contracted.

Let me now turn to the business of the day, the first Free State Tourism Awards and the Free State Tourist Town Competition. Ladies and gentlemen, today we are giving the necessary recognition to service excellence and tourism potential among different role players in this important industry.

The invitation for the Free State Tourism Awards attracted twelve (12) entries in both the SMME and Previously Disadvantaged categories. Ten (10) towns were competing for the number one spot for the best tourist town. We want to congratulate all the participants and wish to encourage those who felt a bit inadequate to enter to do so next time around. We also wish to acknowledge and congratulate enthusiastic residents who voted for their towns.

According to organizers and adjudicators, voting was so vigorous that it could also match the best on television programmes like, Strictly Come Dancing, Pop Idols, Big Brother and others. We salute you.

Those that have been identified as viable business entities or winners will receive incentive prizes but most importantly, will automatically qualify for ETEYA and Welcome Awards National Competition. The Free State government saw it fit to equip these establishments in preparation for national ETEYA and other national competitions and help those who entered become independent, self-sufficient and sustainable. As government and private sector we need to encourage and give tourism businesses and products owners some form of inspiration and reasons to continue doing what they do best.

Programme director with the tourism awards and the tourism town competition we hope to acknowledge and profile provincial tourism businesses as well as providing an opportunity for towns in the Free State to position themselves as tourism attractions. It is envisaged that the awards will improve job creation, financial sustainability and development of the sector in the province by enhancing and complementing the tourism offerings in the Free State.

Today we are gathered here to give the most appropriate recognition to men and women of this province who continue to mould the Free State from what it was to what it is today and to what it ought to be. These men and women ladies and gentlemen, have perfected and/or shown a spectacular potential in the tourism industry hence we decided to honour their hard work, determination and dedication to this industry.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge and applaud the commitment and dedication the private sector is putting towards the overall Free State tourism development initiatives.

All entries and nominees for both awards are appreciated and commented for their participation. We hope this was a learning curve for them and come next year they will be more prepared.

Congratulations to all winners for making us proud of our Free State.

Thank you

