



the detea

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

PLACING TOURISM IN THE FREE STATE UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

The Free State is endowed with natural beauty fauna and flora that pleases the soul and mind and offers peaceful spiritual rejuvenation. The Thabo Mofutsanyane District was a beehive of activity recently with MEC Qabathe hosting a large contingent of guests that included Deputy Minister of Tourism Ms. Thokozile Xasa, the council of Thabo Mofutsanyana board, Mayor of Dihlabeng Local Municipality and artists from all over the Free State to expose the tourism offerings in the area. This area of the Free State is known as the jewel of tourism.

The visit included the fly over the attraction points such as the wetlands at Memel Seekoei Nature Reserve, A visit to one of the highest lodges in the Drakensburg mountains owned by the Batlokoa Community the Witsieshoek Hotel presents a breath taking view of the Sentinel Peak covered with snow where one could be forgiven to think that they are in Switzerland. The lodge accommodates mostly mountain hikers and travelers. The other stopover was at Dinosaur inside the Goldengate National Park.

The visit to the eastern Free State is never complete without the visit to the Basotho Cultural Village. The place traces the history and the life style of the Basotho Nation and how it evolved to the modern day Mosotho. Here the group got in touch with their cultural roots and enjoyed the traditional cuisines and washed them down with freshly brewed African beer.

Overwhelmed by the natural beauty of what has become known as the Jewel of South African tourism, the Deputy Minister encouraged partnership between Free State, Kwazulu Natal to package this area as the prime leisure and adventure destination.

The Lionsrock, the Big Cats Sanctuary situated in north east of Bethlehem, the only one in Africa is a home for lions, cheetahs, tigers, caracals, hyenas, springboks and ostriches collected all over the world where they were found abused. These are complemented by wildebeests, zebras, waterbuck and a range of antelope species for game lovers. Lionsrock also serves as Guesthouse for those fascinated by the range of fauna and flora that can be found in the park.

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At the Lionsrock guests were thrown into frenzy when the contemporary band group Allah Yen belted out what has become the Free State tourism signal “Woza Free State”. This was in response to MEC Qabathe’s challenge to the creative artists in the Free State to come up with unique works that could promote the Free State as a tourist destination.

The journey continued to meander through the Free State and southern tip of the Free State, Xhariep was the next stop. This leg started with a visit to the Boyden Observatory where the group enjoyed watching stars and planets and astronomy lecture about the universe.

The first stop in Xhariep was the Philipolis van der Post Museum then the Philippolis N G Kerk and then the old Philipolis Jail found in the town of Philipolis, where a short history of this three places was told. The interesting story about the church is that the oldest bible in the province is found in this church and the bible is honored because it was stolen and returned back to the church. At the museum there is a Labyrinth, which is believed to have healing powers and can reduce the person stress level if you pray before walking on it.

Phillippolis was followed by Gariiep where the artists and journalists participated in a boat cruise around Gariiep dam whilst others took 1000 steps down to the belly of monstrous Gariiep Dam.

The last leg of the month long programme with activities to promote tourism in the province was the official opening of Koppies Dam Nature Reserve. On the 29th of September 10 new wooden chalets were inaugurated by Premier Ace Magashule. This was preceded by performances of music, drama, poetry and dances all telling the story of tourism in the Free State. More than 1000 people from all over the Free State descended on Koppies Dam Nature reserves to bring the curtain down on a very exciting tourism journey that criss-crossed the length and breadth, crossing rivers and mountains, meeting the worm people of the Free State, discovering the Free State of mind.

In thanking everybody for their willingness to get involved in this endeavour, the MEC said, “Our sincerest gratitude goes to all our friends who accepted our invitation to journey with us to ‘Discover the Free State of Mind’ and to make Tourism Month 2012 a memorable one. We believe that all the exciting activities during this month ushered in a whole new travelling and tourism culture in the Free State that calls on all of us to appreciate the scenic beauty, the majestic mountains, the flat lands and the tranquility of our beautiful province.

We therefore extend a permanent invitation to you and others in the province and beyond to ‘Tour de Free State’ and experience the unmatched spiritual rejuvenation found only here. **The Free State beckons, Woz’e Vrystata Thank You”.**

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