

MEC ON SONG WITH PLANS

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MEC Mamiki Qabathe. Picture: Maryna van Wyk

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The provincial tourism department has roped in artists to help promote the beauty of Free State, and to make the province a destination of choice.

At the shindig held at the Soetdoring Nature Reserve, MEC for economic development, tourism and environmental affairs Mamiki Qabathe discussed several plans to market different tourist attractions in the province through art.

At the gathering there were about 500 musicians, actors and poets, including Tina Mnumzane, Don Laka and Nateez.

Departmental spokesperson Festy Nyamati said the exercise was a follow up to the successful Tour de Free State, an international cycling contest which traverses the province in five days.

Qabathe said the Free State missed a marketing opportunity by not having a DVD with different tourist attractions to give to the cyclists as a token of appreciation to share in their countries.

At the resort Qabathe and her guests enjoyed watching the feeding of the lions and cheetahs. Qabathe indicated that artists would be taken through other private and state-owned resorts and reserves in the province with the aim of showcasing the activities of those facilities.

The Free State is endowed with the abundance of natural beauty and has a special appeal to city-dwellers who wish to escape to the countryside. Tourists can be introduced to exciting 4X4 trails in the Tussen-die-Riviere Nature Reserve, the monstrous Gariep Dam, the world acclaimed tiger breeding centre in Phillipolis, among others, in Xhariep district in southern Free State.

The province is also known for cultural tourism and scenic beauty in Thabo Mofutsanyana district (Clarens area and Sterkfontein Dam) where Basotho and San artifacts and art work are on display. Sports and business tourism is centred in the Motheo district (Bloemfontein).

Fezile Dabi (Parys and Sasolburg area) in the north is associated with weekend and leisure tourism, during which visitors come for old, small town charm.

Other attractions in the province are Koppies Nature Reserve, and motor sports at the Phakisa Race Course outside Welkom, in the Lejweleputswa district.

Qabathe raised a serious concern about Free Staters not exploring and touring their own province and therefore not knowing what it had to offer.

She encouraged all communities to know and appreciate the province and keep the Free State in mind for weekend or holiday traveling.

[Source: www.thenewage.co.za]