



**destea**

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

**SPEECH BY MEC HONOURABLE MAKALO MOHALE**  
**7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PROVINCIAL LILIZELA AWARDS 2019**  
**IMVELO SAFARI LODGE, BLOEMFONTEIN.**  
**26 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Honourable Premier - Sefora Ntombela

Deputy Minister of Tourism - Hon Fish Mahlalela

Mangaung Metro Municipality Executive Mayor - Cllr Olly Mlamleli

CEO of FSGLTA – Mr Kenny Dichabe

HOD - Dr Nokwequ

Senior Managers

Tourism Product Owners

Honoured Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentleman

Good evening to all of you.

Programme director, September is tourism month as well as heritage month. During this month, as South Africans, we are encouraged to celebrate our culture and be reminded of our diversity, beliefs and traditions in a wider context of a nation that belongs to its people. Let us be proud of who we are and teach our children about where they come from so that they can know where they are going.

As we celebrate outstanding work and determination in service excellence in tourism, in the Free State we want to ensure that our Heritage is found in our hospitality, our warmth and welcoming of our visitors. Our hospitality is our Heritage, our Heritage is in our DNA. We are also glad to be part of this occasion honouring those working tirelessly to ensure that travelers have a memorable experience whilst exploring our province.



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The theme is appropriate for tonight's occasion, "Honouring Best of The Best", because tourism contributes meaningfully to the economy of the province, we need to give it the attention it deserves. We need to acknowledge and recognise those who are doing outstanding work in the industry.

We would like to congratulate those who are participating in the programme tonight and I wish all the finalists well and hope that they will serve as a motivation for others to have confidence of measuring their work with their peers all in the name of Service Excellence. To all of you who have entered, we take this opportunity to thank you very much, you are indeed Service Excellence Heroes.

Our provincial products which are from the Five Tourism Routes are not only products and services that excel in their various expertise but they also contribute to the spirit of the "We Do Tourism" movement which was launched in May 2017 and aims to inspire all South Africans to actively participate and play their part in the growth of the tourism industry. WE DO Tourism encourages each and every one to have a role in creating a conducive environment for the tourism economy to flourish.

As government in order to improve product offering and stakeholder engagement in the province, we have called all role players to a tourism round table colloquiums, the main aim with this initiative is to improve both communication, coordination and alignment between private sector and government. In order to determine our strengths and weaknesses as a tourism destination, we are in the process of reviewing the Free State Tourism Master Plan. Through this plan we will be able to identify our competitive edge to ensure that tourism is a significant economic player.

We have also as government set a Free State Tourism Council where I will engage with municipalities and all role players to see what best could be done to ensure that Free State improves visitor experience and achieves its mandate to be the destination of choice. Similarly, the HOD is heading the FS Tourism Forum where he is engaging with MMs, LED Managers, officials as well as other tourism practitioners.

Our province lies in the heart of the country, we share borders with North West, KwaZulu Natal, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Mpumalanga as well as the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. We should use this great centered opportunity and attract all tourists who pass through the province and make sure that they experience the Free State. We should this advantage therefore with product owners, to exchange best practices in order to ensure we achieve enhance our desire to become best inland destination, through this we should be able to increase Bed Night and Tourism Spend in the Free State. Again through this Tourism Indaba, we create access to markets for our different tourism product owners by taking them to the conference to showcase their products and services to ensure that they match and compete with the best in the industry.



Programme Director, people who visit our province should experience hospitality, friendly service and professionalism, above all they should experience value for money, quality night sleep, cleanness, quality of our food, gushing rivers, singing birds and enjoy sitting around the fire, and enjoy the open sky.

As tourism industry safety should be our priority, people should feel safe in our facilities, there should be sense of security, protection and privacy. Grading and proper signage play an important role in positioning tourism products in the sector, our establishments should endeavor to be graded particularly those in the townships. This will give them a competitive edge with those in the urban areas.

According to available statistics, In the Free State province, the tourism spending as a percentage of GDP in 2018 was 5.55%. Tourism spending as a percentage of GDP for 2018 was 6.06% in South Africa as a whole. Free State Province had a total tourism spending of R 13.6 billion in 2018 with an average annual growth rate of 8.4% since 2008 (R 6.06 billion).

Our attention now is how to increase tourism spending, how much that is benefiting our transformation programme. We need township economy to benefit from it. Initiatives like the Lilizela Awards ensure that new entrants to the sector have access to market share.

Programme Director, the 23 -29 is the short left travel week in South Africa, aimed at encouraging people to travel their own areas. It's a known fact that, except for travel for church and similar activities most of our people have never had an opportunity to travel, visit or tour this beautiful country of ours. As part of the travel week therefore, I have decided to come up with a very innovative campaign appropriately titled #KeYaLeWena campaign. Through this campaign I invite first-time travelers such as people between the ages of 50 – 65 (men and women), domestic workers, security officers, petrol attendants, people living with disability and young people from disadvantaged families. To send their voice notes expressing which areas to visit and tour with me throughout the Free State. They should send their voice notes to 072 341 8080

Programme Director, whilst on this matter, let me indicate that another initiative that the department will be implementing is to fully support our stokvels to help them leverage on their purchasing power in order to accelerate their participation in the mainstream economy as opposed to be inclined to be just bulk buying consumers. This will entail necessary support mechanism such as acquisition of necessary licenses to formalize them and to ensure that their investments are best utilized to truly liberate them economically. One of the outcomes here we hope will be to attract stokvels to participate in the tourism industry, among others by owning property and or time shares.



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It is important to also indicate that the department owns and manages 10 resorts throughout the province. Working together with our partners we are engaged in an upgrade programme for these facilities in order for them to compete with similar establishments in the private hands. We will soon announce the government's plan in further enhancing these facilities, one of these facilities which is Phillip Sanders Resort just outside Bloemfontein, which is currently closed for public use in order to effect upgrade and maintenance programme. We are confident that it will be ready to accept visitors during festive season.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we bring the curtain down on tourism month, we will be hosting the official tourism month closing off activity on the 30th September in Gariiep Dam, the Southern tip of the Free State provides the best sun rises and Tussen die Revier- the confluence of Caledon and Orange Rivers with any 4x4 enthusiasts dream getaway. We invite you to be part of this event.

In closing, I will be committing an error if I could conclude without making a mention of Mangaung Cultural Festival, taking place in Bloemfontein from the 04 -13 October, it will attract thousands of revelers to Mangaung. Some of you who are sitting around here who are product owners will take advantage and accommodate these revelers as they visit our City. For this reason we will hence forth explore the visitation economy of this and other events in our province to determine the extent to which our tourism industry in particular and our economy in general with emphasis on township economy are benefiting from such events. It is with this reason we have initiated the Visitation Economy, it will assist with measuring how many SMME's benefited, how many jobs were created and how much was spent.

Ladies and gentlemen join us as we applaud the best of the best who continuously inspire and motivate the tourism industry, giving travelers and visitors more reasons to visit the Free State. We have to make the Free State a "Go To Province" and not the "Go Through Province".

**I thank you!**