

WowZulu to boost community-based tourism

Community-based tourism has received a massive boost with the recent launch of WowZulu, an initiative that seeks to create inclusive tourist destinations that serve as a best-case South African model for the sector.



This is according to Tourism Deputy Minister Elizabeth Thabethe, who launched the project at the Luthuli Museum in Groutville, in KwaZulu-Natal on Friday.

“The first phase of the project focuses on supporting tour guides involved in emerging community tourism, eateries selling local cuisine, youth-owned coffee outlets, craft entrepreneurs, storytelling performers and dancers in Isandlwana Battlefields in the Nqutu area, Ohlange in the Inanda Valley, Ballito in the North Coast, Tembe in the Far North, KwaNzimakwe in the South Coast, Khula Village in St. Lucia Wetlands Park and eMazizizni Village in the Northern Drakensberg,” the department said on Saturday.

Already implemented in seven tourist destinations in KZN, the project is expected to inspire district municipalities across the country to become more sustainable environmentally, socially and economically while injecting life and offering hope for the rural unemployed.

“Responsible tourism is of paramount importance to the tourism sector hence South Africa was the first country to include this concept in its national tourism policy, the 1996 White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa,” said Thabethe.

Citing the document, the Deputy Minister said responsible tourism is an approach to the management of tourism aimed at maximising economic, social and environmental benefits and minimising costs to destinations.

South Africa, she said, is the pioneer of responsible tourism standards while the country was second only to Brazil to having a national minimum standard on responsible tourism.

“The historic launch is opening opportunities for growth and development of the tourism sector while contributing to the objective of the National Development Plan and the national imperative to fight poverty, unemployment and inequality,” Thabethe said.

The Deputy Minister commended the partnership of Africa Ignite, Better Tourism Africa, One Planet-Handle with Care’ Trust Fund including the United Nations Environment Fund with the National Department of Tourism to ensure that the local environment, economy and society benefit through the project.

ILembe District Municipality Deputy Mayor Dolly Shandu, representing Enterprise iLembe, expressed appreciation that the project was empowering women.

Her counterpart in the KwaDukuza municipality, Deputy Mayor Councillor Dolly Govender said that the programme will promote tourism to showcase the four blue drop beaches in the area.

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