

Media Release

Attention: News Editors / Journalist
For immediate release

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FREE STATE PARTICIPATION AT THE AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA – A PUSH TO INCREASE ARRIVALS AND CREATE LOST JOBS OPPORTUNITIES.

Bloemfontein. The Free State Province is delighted to announce its active participation in the highly anticipated Africa's Travel Indaba, scheduled from the 14th to the 16th of May 2024, with the esteemed Business Opportunity Networking Day (BONday) preceding on May 13th. This prestigious tourism leisure trade show event, to be hosted at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban, serves as a vital platform for global engagement within the tourism sector, spotlighting the province's rich and diverse offerings.

A comparative analysis over the past three years indicated that there has been slide growth in the share of international arrivals, recording 221 000 (2021), 597 000 (2022) and 864 000 (2023) – with the average spent of R2 billion over the three years.

Through the participation of experienced narrators (exhibitors), the Free State seeks to craft compelling narratives that resonate with diverse audiences, highlighting the province's key themes of action and adventure, culture and heritage, kasie flavor, wildlife safaris, and beautiful open spaces. This approach ensures a comprehensive representation of the province's offerings while also facilitating meaningful business-to-business interactions to drive tour sourcing and collaboration.

Overall, the Free State's strategic approach to Africa's Travel Indaba reflects a concerted effort to harness tourism as a catalyst for economic development, job creation, and sustainable growth, positioning the province as a compelling destination on the global stage.

Crafting a convincing story is indeed pivotal for driving the length of average stay and increasing tourist spending in the province. Over the preceding three years, the province has seen an average influx of 10.5% of the country's total arrivals. The aim now is to secure a cumulative annual growth of 2% over the upcoming three years.

Entity's initiatives in the coming years are focused on bolstering job creation and nurturing growth within the tourism sector. Particularly, emphasis will be placed on empowering small and micro enterprises, as they are primary engines for job generation.

The Acting CEO, Mr. Lefa Kalane, emphasized that the Free State will prioritizing discussions with buyers from India, the Middle East, and South-East Asia to grasp their preferences. This understanding will enable the province to craft customized packages that appeal to their interests, enticing them to visit. Additionally, efforts will be made to strengthen ties with neighboring countries, bolstering the African Continental Free Trade Agreement through collaborative negotiations. Initial focus will be on nations with significant contributions to international arrivals to province during the past year which, are Lesotho (91.8%), Botswana (1.4%), Eswatini (0.9%), and Namibia (0.7%).

Sixteen of the finest narrators from the Free State will engage buyers and media, showcasing the province's story to enhance tourism and foster global connections, thus bolstering the local tourism sector.

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