

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM,  
MS. MAKHOSAZANE MSILELA, MPL, DURING THE OCCASION OF THE 2024  
TOURISM MONTH MEDIA LAUNCH HELD AT THE INCWALA LODGE, EMAKHAZENI  
LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

***Tuesday, 03 September 2024***

Programme Director; The Big Zill;

Our host, Executive Mayor of the Emakhazeni Local Municipality, Councillor Nomhle Mashele;

Member of the Mayoral Committee, Planning and Economic Development of the Nkangala District Municipality, Councillor Lindiwe Mahlangu

Other Councillors present;

Acting Head of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Mr. Lemmy Mdluli;

MTPA Board Chairperson, Mr Victor Mashego;

Other MTPA Board members present;

Acting CEO of the MTPA, Mr. Justus Mohlala;

The owner of The Incwala Lodge, Mr. Mbongeleni Pilson;

Our strategic partners in the tourism and private sector in general;

Officials from the Department, the MTPA and the Municipality;

Members of the media present – who continue to partner with us by creating awareness about *Destination Mpumalanga*;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

***Sanibonani!*** Good evening

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1. Programme Director, it is an honour and privilege, to address you today at this magnificent tourism product, ***Incwala Lodge***, which is located in the middle of the breath-taking and beautiful region of the Nkangala District Municipality.
2. The ***Incwala Lodge*** is a family run and owned establishment, with a distinct kind of hospitality that is uniquely Mpumalanga. Nestled in the mountains of Emgwenya is a sanctuary of bird life; trout fish, ancient ruins and it provide guests with a sense of being home away from home.
3. On a sombre note, today, we are gathered here this evening exactly four (4) days after the tragic death of a male tourist, at our tourist attraction site, the Bourke's Luck Potholes. As government, we are struggling to come to terms with the death, particularly the circumstances around the fatal incident, precisely because we have invested heavily in ensuring safety of our tourists who visit our tourism products.
4. As we continue to mourn the death, we reiterate our call to our tourists to adhere to all safety measures put in place at all our tourist attraction sites, so as to avoid injuries and fatalities. The Department and the MTPA extend its heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of the deceased tourist.
5. Going back to business of the day, I do not have any doubt, that the Tourism Month is an opportune time to celebrate the rich tapestry of our nation's beauty and cultural diversity. It allows us to showcase the countless wonders that make South Africa a true gem of the African continent.
6. During my maiden Policy and Budget Speech last month in August, we committed to create around **100 000 new and sustainable jobs every year** if we are to achieve the Mpumalanga Vision 2030 employment target of 2.1 million by 2030. If developed properly, tourism is one sector that will propel government to realise its commitment.

7. Tourism is our gold mine in Mpumalanga; hence, it must be continuously nurtured in order for government to reach its target as it relates to job creation. In this regard, the Department, will continue to support the MTPA in its quest of making Mpumalanga a tourism destination of choice.
8. Programme Director, the Department will continue to pursue the plans of developing high impact projects aimed at stimulating inclusive growth and job creation in the tourism sector. This includes catalytic projects such as the Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains World Heritage Site, and the Blyde Canyon Cable Car.
9. To this end, I have already instructed the MTPA to fast track its programme of revitalising their nature reserves, with a view of attracting both foreign and domestic tourists into these nature reserves.
10. Programme Director; today's launch marks the kick-off of a series of Provincial tourism events, that will happen during the month of September, and culminating into the National Tourism Day on the 27th of September which will be celebrated in Kimberly, in the Northern Cape Province.
11. During the Tourism Month, we will, therefore, undertake a set of activities to **foster tourism awareness in local communities** of our Province, especially, within our townships and the less visited areas of Mpumalanga.
12. We will create awareness about domestic travel among communities, with a special focus on travel to rural areas, villages and small towns.
13. We will also, amongst other activities of the Month, host the third edition of the **Mpumalanga Tourism Careers Expo** in Middleburg, in the Emakhazeni Local Municipality, tomorrow, 04 September 2024.

14. And in our quest to promote domestic tourism, we will once again **grant our people free entry to our selected nature reserves**, during what we termed Mpumalanga Parks Week, starting from 09 until 13 September.
15. We will also celebrate our own **Provincial Tourism Awareness Day**, on the 14th of September in Masibekela, in the Nkomazi Hani Local Municipality.
16. Furthermore, we will continue to **host the Annual Mpumalanga Tourism Expo** from the 4<sup>th</sup> until 06 October in Mbombela. The Expo aims to showcase and promote products of tourism SMMEs.
17. On 28 September, we will again host the Makhonjwa Mountain Marathon. This is a race qualifier towards the Two Oceans and the Comrades Marathon.
18. As I close, I urge the media to partner with us as our ambassadors on our journey to promote Mpumalanga as the tourism destination of choice. In your reporting, I implore you to paint a positive picture about the beauty of the Province. The influence of your voice and reach cannot be overemphasised.
19. Programme Director; we can now confirm, without any shadow of doubt, that Mpumalanga tourism is open for business. It is, thus, my profound pleasure, to **launch the 2024 Tourism Month, under the theme: “Tourism and Peace – 30 years of connecting people, places and culture”**
20. ***We Leave No One Behind, as we continue to grow the economy of Mpumalanga together***, through inclusive tourism!

***I thank you***