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department of
Economic, Small Business Development,
Tourism and Environmental Affairs
FREE STATE PROVINCE

MEDIA STATEMENT

REDISCOVER AND EXPLORE THE FREE STATE

08 SEPTEMBER 2020

PART 1

The introduction of the Lockdown Level 2, the arrival of the spring and the start of the Tourism month at the beginning of September offers adventure lovers, out-door enthusiasts, travellers and tourist another long awaited opportunity to rediscover and explore the Free State.

This is the opportunity to get out of the lockdown hibernation in order to make new memories. The time is here for South Africans to shake of the blues of the long five months of staying at home. The Free State is ready for nature lovers to take a shot left to recharge as they prepare to the first festive season amidst Covid-19 pandemic.

From tour operators, tour guides, hospitality facilities, restaurants, entertainment places, the whole tourism value chain is ready to reintroduce the Free State flatland to the traveller. The Free State is endowed with a variety of natural attractions and provides tourism related activities for young and old as well as urban and rural folks throughout the year.

Given that the country remains closed for international travellers, focus this year will be to drive awareness about domestic travel among communities with a special focus on travel to rural areas, villages, and dorpies and smalls towns. From south to north, east to west, the Free State remains a playing ground for water enthusiasts, outdoor adventurers, sports fanatics, wildlife lovers and those who just want to be in harmony with nature. Like late President Nelson Mandela said in his book, *The Long Walk to Freedom*, "The Free State landscape gladdens my heart, no matter what my mood. When I am here I feel that nothing can shut me in that my thoughts can roam as far as the horizons".

Adhering to the national lockdown regulations, the province's spontaneous activities cater for everyone, from budget explorers, who are young people, to high-life enthusiasts who are successful go-getters, who travel to boost their social status and seek out exceptional service and luxury experiences. Seasonal leisure travellers who have a travel culture, who go on holiday regularly are also catered for.

Memel is situated in the north-eastern Free State, where it borders Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal, close to the Drakensberg Escarpment. Memel is on the tarred R34, between Vrede (Free State) and Newcastle (KwaZulu-Natal), about 250 km from Johannesburg. Not only does this area boast some of the best and most extensive



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habitat for high altitude grassland endemic bird species, but it also includes the extensive Seekoeivlei Wetland, a RAMSAR site, contained in the Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve. The reserve is named after the hippos that used to live in the wetland, it is still the only state owned reserve in the Free State with hippos. The area boasts a checklist of approximately 250 bird species. A two to three day stay in the pleasant surroundings is highly recommended, visitors are encouraged to visit this distinctive place during the day. The resort is open seven days a week for visitors.

#TourismMonth2020

#RediscoverTheFreeState

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