

# Calls for Durban to be permanent home of Tourism Indaba

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DURBAN: KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development and Tourism Mike Mabuyakhulu has made a strong case for the Tourism Indaba to be hosted in Durban permanently.



Addressing the 2013 Tourism Indaba breakfast at the weekend, Mabuyakhulu said for the Tourism Indaba to grow to its maximum potential, there needs to be certainty about its permanent seat. "All of us know that Fitur takes place in Madrid; that ITB takes place in Berlin and the World Travel Market takes place in London," he said.

He emphasised that the certainty he is pleading for will allow stakeholders and traders to plan ahead and commit resources with the full knowledge that the trade show will definitely take place at a definite venue.

"And, without blowing our horn, we want to confirm that the province of KwaZulu-Natal, based on its history of hosting this event, is able and willing to host the Tourism Indaba on permanent basis and, critically, to make the necessary investment, working with all stakeholders, to grow this trade show to the level where it rivals and outshines the best shows in the world."

Tourism Indaba has been in existence for 34 years, since its inception in 1979, and Durban has hosted the event about 24 times.

The 2012 Tourism Indaba attracted about 1312 exhibiting companies and 1872 international visitors from 88 countries in Africa, Europe, the Americas, Asia, Australasia and the Middle East, the MEC said.

Mabuyakhulu said the province of KwaZulu-Natal was poised to escalate the provincial tourism sector's contribution to a Gross Domestic Product of R111.6 billion from a base of just R22 billion. Through the full implementation of the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Master Plan, "we are confident that we will create in excess of 20 775 direct employment within our provincial sector by the year 2030," he said.

He said the Master Plan identifies some iconic and catalytic projects such as the Drakensburg Cable Car, cementing the

scenic experience and sheer majesty of this dramatic mountain range. Another iconic development on cards is a Bluff Bridge, connecting the Bluff with Point development at Durban's harbour entrance.

This, according to the MEC will deliver a clear statement to the world that Durban, at the heart of KwaZulu-Natal, is a progressive city. "Its impact is destined to be similar to that of the well-known Sydney Harbour Bridge or San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge and will become a tourist attraction in its own right," he said.

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