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## Tourism KwaZulu-Natal

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## Media Release

### **Tourism KwaZulu-Natal collaborates with top international partners to position KZN as a global destination**

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN) has teamed up with leading international tourism players to position the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) as a global tourism destination. These partnerships have seen a number of international travel agents and tour operators coming in numbers to explore some of the key tourism attractions on offer in KZN. Most recently, TKZN hosted a group of 58 agents from the United Kingdom (UK) who spent three days in the province as part of a familiarisation tour of KZN.

This was a result of a partnership between TKZN and Followme2AFRICA, based in the UK. The 58 top travel agents were in South Africa to attend a week long workshop where different provinces showcased their product offerings.

TKZN Chief Executive Officer, Ndabo Khoza, noted that, in order to have competitive advantage in the global tourism sphere, relationships with top operators are critical. "In order for us to derive the most value from these partnerships, it's critical that our partners have substantial experience in the tourism sector and have an extensive international network that we can benefit from. This allows us to retain and grow international arrivals from our key source markets like Germany and the UK, as well as explore other opportunity markets like Poland, Russia and South America".

The Followme2AFRICA Travel Academy is a unique training program that brings frontline sales agents to South Africa not only to learn about the destination but to experience it first-hand. The 2015 Academy was attended by agents from the UK, Germany, USA, and Australia just to mention a few.

Norma Meyer, Chief Executive Officer of Followme2AFRICA said that "The Travel Academy is now on its 10<sup>th</sup> year and this year's edition brought delegates from 10 different countries, the majority of whom had never been to South Africa, let alone KZN. This provides a

platform to create personal experiences with the destination for the travel agents. This balance between educational and experiential is vital to creating passionate ambassadors for selling South Africa and KZN.”

Khoza continued to say, “These partnerships have seen us make huge inroads in international markets. Last year, we saw over 2 000 Polish tourists travelling to KZN on chartered flights that landed directly at King Shaka International Airport from Warsaw, to spend two weeks on holiday in various parts of our province. Some 43 of those were top travel agents, and we are very confident that we will see many more tourists from that market because we do have what their customers are looking for - warmth, culture and heritage. This was done in partnership with Akilanga, Rainbow Tours and Tsogo Sun and it would not have been possible without such partners.”

At the end of April, TKZN partnered with Tourvest to host the “Dertour Laenderspecial (Top 100) that brought top travel agents from Germany and neighbouring countries to the province. Agents were given an option either to take a scenic drive from Johannesburg to Durban with a sleep over on the Midlands Meander, or fly directly to King Shaka International Airport. These options gave the agents a first-hand taste of what their customers can do when they visit KZN and they were thus able to showcase a wider variety of tourism experiences on offer in KZN to their clients.

“To have travel agents and tour operators learn more about our destination goes a long way towards selling and packaging destinations. Even in the age of the internet, international travellers still book their holidays through a tour operator, and travel agents are the first point of contact with a potential tourist. People sell what they know and have experienced in person, so learning more about a destination is critical in the sales conversion between an agent and a traveller”, concluded Khoza.

According to statistics received from South African Tourism, KZN currently receives close to 900 000 international visitors annually and initiatives such as these will go a long way towards bringing even more tourists to the Zulu Kingdom.

**ENDS.**

**Note to the news editors:**

#### **About Tourism KwaZulu-Natal**

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal was established in 1996 and is responsible for the development, promotion and marketing of tourism into and within the province, both domestically and internationally. The organisation is an entity that reports to the provincial Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs.

Social links to Tourism KwaZulu-Natal:

Website: <https://www.zulu.org.za>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/KZNTourism>

Hashtags: #GottaLuvKZN

**For more information please contact:**

Ms Boni Mchunu

General Manager: Marketing

TKZN

(031) 366 7512

083 388 8829

[boni@zulu.org.za](mailto:boni@zulu.org.za)