

# EXPLORER



Tourism Magazine

SEKHUKUNE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

NEWSLETTER

QUARTER : 0 2



Executive Mayor  
Cllr Minah Bahula

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launch Sekhukhune**

**Sekhukhune's Heritage Institution:  
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**A Home of Cultures – focus on  
Ndebele Heritage**

**Tourism Thursday in Phiring:  
Discover Sekweneng and Sethunyeng**

**Sekhukhune turns up the heat at  
Spring Campaign 2025 unveiled**





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# EDITORIAL

## Message



## Explore Sekhukhune – Spring 2025 Edition

By Lemson Moropjane, Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to the Spring Edition of *Explore Sekhukhune*, where heritage, culture, and tourism converge in the heart of Limpopo. This issue celebrates the vibrancy of our communities, the beauty of our landscapes, and the resilience of our people. As we mark Heritage and Tourism Month 2025 under the themes “*Reimagine Our Heritage Institutions for a New Era*” and “*Tourism and Sustainable Transformation*”, we invite you to discover Sekhukhune’s stories, experiences, and opportunities. Whether you are a visitor, a local, or a tourism partner, let this edition inspire you to explore, connect, and celebrate the rich tapestry that makes our district truly exceptional.

As the Spring sun rises over the dramatic ridges of the Sekhukhune mountains, it brings with it not only renewal in the landscape but also renewal in our thinking. This September, South Africa celebrates Heritage and Tourism Month 2025 under two interconnected themes: “*Reimagine our Heritage Institutions for a New Era*” and “*Tourism and Sustainable Transformation*.” For Sekhukhune, these themes are not abstract ideals. They are lived realities, for we are fast becoming the heartbeat of domestic tourism in Limpopo.

The unveiling of the Tourism Month Events Calendar by the Limpopo Tourism Agency (LTA) and LEDET here in our district has confirmed what we have always known - Sekhukhune is rising. With its rich cultural landscapes, its stories of resistance and resilience, and its creative pulse that continues to inspire, this region is not just participating in South Africa’s tourism revival. It is leading it.

The call to reimagine our heritage institutions is particularly resonant for Sekhukhune. For too long, museums and cultural sites have been framed as static repositories of colonial memory. Yet in our valleys, heritage is living, breathing, and evolving. Sites like Tšate, the historic capital of the Bapedi kingdom, are not merely relics. They are classrooms of resilience and archives of identity.

To reimagine heritage means to transform these spaces into inclusive platforms of creativity and dialogue, where elders, youth, innovators, and entrepreneurs meet. It means seeing museums not only as places of remembrance but as incubators of innovation and drivers of entrepreneurship, where the past inspires solutions for the future.

Tourism Month reminds us that transformation must be bold, inclusive, and youth-driven. The statistics speak for themselves: in the first half of 2025, South Africa welcomed nearly 5 million visitors, an 11.9% increase from last year. Africa, in particular, remains our strongest market, growing by over 14%. But beyond numbers, transformation is about expanding opportunity, ensuring that tourism benefits a homestay in Ga-Masemola as much as it does a lodge on the Panorama Route.

Here in Sekhukhune, the potential is boundless. From community-led walking tours in Phiring, to farm stays in Nebo, to the internationally celebrated XIX World Black Bass Championship at Flag Boshielo Dam, our tourism assets reflect both diversity and depth. If nurtured, they can create jobs, inspire pride, and contribute significantly to GDP growth.

As Editor-In-Chief of *Explore Sekhukhune*, I believe our role is clear: to tell these stories with authenticity, to celebrate transformation as it unfolds, and to hold space for new voices, especially the youth. With youth unemployment at crisis levels, tourism offers a lifeline, but only if we consciously build bridges of access, mentorship, and innovation.

This Heritage and Tourism Month, let us commit to reimagining heritage institutions as living, innovative, and inclusive; driving sustainable transformation that places communities at the center, and celebrating diversity as the essence of our identity and our competitive edge.

Sekhukhune is ready. The Spring edition of this magazine is our contribution to the national dialogue, a testament that heritage is not only about the past but also about the future we dare to create together.

# Executive Mayor's Message

It is with immense pride and excitement that I welcome visitors, stakeholders, and fellow South Africans to Sekhukhune District as we celebrate Tourism Month 2025. This year, under the national theme “*Tourism and Sustainable Transformation*”, our district takes center stage as the rising heartbeat of domestic tourism in Limpopo. Tourism in Sekhukhune is more than leisure; it is a strategic driver of economic growth, cultural preservation, youth empowerment, and inclusive development.

As South Africa commemorates Tourism Month annually in September, we are reminded of the critical role tourism plays in our economy, society, and environment. The national *Do Tourism* campaign highlights that tourism is everyone's business, demonstrating how the sector's value chain touches countless lives, from local artisans, tour guides, and small business owners to families who rely on tourism-driven employment. Sekhukhune District proudly embodies this vision, showcasing the far-reaching impact of tourism on inclusive and sustainable development.

Our district offers visitors a vibrant tapestry of heritage, culture, and natural beauty. From the iconic Sekhukhune mountains to bustling towns and traditional villages, every corner tells a story. The launch of the Tourism Month Events Calendar at TT Lifestyle Pub and Restaurant in Jane Furse reinforced Sekhukhune as a destination where history, creativity, and adventure converge. Together with the Limpopo Tourism Agency (LTA) and the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET), we are ready to welcome travellers with open arms and authentic experiences.



**Cllr Minah Bahula**  
Executive Mayor

Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth remains at the core of our efforts. Tourism is a proven engine for job creation and economic empowerment, particularly for youth and SMMEs. Sekhukhune District is committed to creating an enabling environment where tourism enterprises can thrive, local entrepreneurs can innovate, and communities directly benefit. Whether it is guesthouses in Jane Furse, craft markets



in Burgersfort, or cultural tours in Phiring, each initiative transforms heritage into opportunity and supports inclusive growth.

Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship are central to our vision. Sekhukhune is home to rich biodiversity, heritage sites, and landscapes that must be preserved for future generations. Our tourism initiatives emphasize responsible practices, climate-conscious planning, and resource efficiency. Visitors are encouraged to explore our mountains, rivers, and cultural landmarks while contributing positively to the protection of our natural and cultural heritage.

Social Inclusiveness, Cultural Diversity, and Heritage are also key pillars. Tourism in Sekhukhune ensures everyone has a stake, from local artisans and traditional authorities to young innovators and women-led enterprises. In celebrating our cultural values, fostering mutual understanding, and promoting peace and security, tourism becomes a unifying force. We aim to build a sector that reflects South Africa's diverse identity, strengthens community pride, and preserves

our heritage while creating economic opportunity.

To all travelers, I encourage you to support local businesses, explore our heritage, and tell the stories of Sekhukhune with pride. Every visitor contributes to strengthening our economy, celebrating our culture, and positioning South Africa as a world-class destination for sustainable and inclusive tourism.

As we embrace Tourism Month 2025, let Sekhukhune inspire you with its festivals, cultural experiences, and natural wonders. Together, let us transform heritage into opportunity, innovation into growth, and tourism into a lasting legacy for all South Africans.

**Welcome to Sekhukhune - where culture, community, and creativity converge!**

**Cllr Minah Bahula  
Executive Mayor  
Sekhukhune District Municipality**



## MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S OVERVIEW:



Municipal Manager  
Meshack Kgwale

# “There Shall Be Peace and Friendship”, a heart-warming homecoming summer

The timeless call of the 1955 Freedom Charter, “There shall be peace and friendship”, still resonates across our valleys, mountains, and villages. It was a promise that South Africa would not only be free, but also reconciled; that nations, tribes, and peoples could coexist in harmony, bound by respect and shared humanity. In Sekhukhune District, this

vision is not an abstraction, it lives, breathes, and welcomes all who walk upon this land.

Here, peace and friendship are not just ideals but everyday practices. From the eMaswati communities who grace the slopes of the Leolo Mountain, to the AmaNdzundza Ndebele, Bakopa and BaNtwane in Elias Motsoaledi, from the VaTsonga, Northern Ndebele, Mapulana, and Bakoni who thrive across Ephraim Mogale and Fetakgomo Tubatse - Sekhukhune is a microcosm of South Africa's multicultural promise.

Within our 13,528 square kilometres, we host no less than seventy-five royal traditional leaders, the highest concentration of royal authority per area anywhere in the world. Yet, amid this diversity of heritage and hierarchy, peace has been our defining constant. This is not coincidence; it is leadership. It is diplomacy, indigenous diplomacy that long predates the modern state.

As summer unfurls its warmth, Sekhukhune opens its arms once again, not just to visitors, but to its sons and daughters returning home. This is a season of reconnection, nostalgia, and renewal. Across our valleys and hills, the roads are alive with buses and taxis bringing back the Makarapa, the migrant workers whose hard labour in Johannesburg, Rustenburg, and the mines of the Platinum Belt sustained both urban economies and rural homesteads. When they return home, the villages come alive with laughter, song, and celebration. For them, and for all of us, summer in Sekhukhune is not just a season, it is an emotion, a memory, a homecoming.

This year, the spirit of friendship and peace takes on new life through the Friendship Kingdom Summer Campaign, a district-wide tourism activation designed to celebrate Sekhukhune's cultural unity and natural beauty. At its heart lies the formal inauguration of the Mafulo a Matala Tourism Route, our flagship circuit that showcases the breathtaking wilderness and adventure experiences of the district. The name Mafulo a Matala, meaning “animals grazing on green land,” reflects both abundance and ecological balance, qualities that define Sekhukhune's relationship with its land and its people.

The route traverses some of the most scenic and ecologically rich terrains in Limpopo, from the tranquil waters of Flag Boshielo Dam and the vast Schuinsdraai Nature Reserve to the serene lodges, wildlife estates, and adventure farms dotting the Loskop Valley. Visitors can expect an immersive journey through landscapes that tell stories, stories of survival, coexistence, and transformation.

But the Friendship Kingdom Summer Campaign is more than a route launch; it is an invitation to rediscover Sekhukhune through experience. Through a fusion of traditional ceremony, digital storytelling, and sustainable tourism development, the campaign strengthens our identity as a destination of peace, diversity, and opportunity. It reflects the district's long-term vision, to transform tourism into a driver of inclusive economic growth, job creation, and local pride.

This summer, our call to visitors is simple yet profound: come home to friendship. Whether you are a traveller seeking adventure, a family returning for the holidays, or a professional investor exploring new

frontiers, Sekhukhune offers a destination like no other. The district's lodges and reserves, from Aloe Bush Lodge to Tambotie Ridge, Kubu Kwena, Kwê-Kwê, and Ruby River Resort, are ready to welcome guests with authentic hospitality, breathtaking views, and unforgettable experiences.

Imagine sunrise over the Olifants River, where early fishermen cast their lines into the quiet water. Imagine hiking through Schuinsdraai Nature Reserve, where the air smells of wild sage and the only sounds are the calls of hornbills and impalas in the distance. Imagine ending your day with a meal of traditional cuisine, pap, morogo, dikgobe, and freshly grilled fish, while the setting sun paints the Leolo Mountains gold. That is the spirit of Sekhukhune: grounded, generous, and gloriously alive.

This season also coincides with the unveiling of the Sekhukhune Development Agency (SDA) digital tourism platform, a landmark achievement in the district's digital transformation journey. The platform integrates geospatial mapping, interactive route itineraries, and mobile-friendly features to make planning a trip to Sekhukhune easier, smarter, and more rewarding. It reflects our readiness to compete in a digital global tourism economy while staying true to our authentic character and community-driven ethos.

In essence, the Friendship Kingdom Summer Campaign is a celebration of everything that makes Sekhukhune unique: its landscapes, its leadership, its languages, and its lasting peace. It is a reminder that tourism is not only about recreation — it is also about connection. Every road, every route, and every riverbank here carries the memory of friendship among people who chose dialogue over division, and peace over pride.

The Makarapa homecomings mirror this harmony, the return of the worker is the return of history, the merging of progress and tradition. Each arrival is a reunion of past and future. For visitors, this is the magic of Sekhukhune: a place where the modern and the ancient meet, where families gather around firesides to share stories of cities and mines, yet never forget the heartbeat of the village.

As a tourism destination, Sekhukhune stands at a defining moment. With the Friendship Kingdom Summer Campaign, we are not just launching a route, we are launching a movement. One that positions the district as a high-potential nature, adventure, and heritage destination within Limpopo Province and beyond. One that invites travellers to see not only our beauty, but our values, peace, friendship, and mutual respect, the very pillars that built our shared home.

In doing so, we carry forward the dream of the Freedom Charter, “Peace and friendship among all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all.” Sekhukhune is living proof of that promise. Here, diverse peoples have coexisted for centuries, not through dominance, but through diplomacy; not through uniformity, but through unity.

As we enter this heart-warming summer, we do so with gratitude and optimism. Gratitude for those who kept peace when it was fragile; optimism for those who will carry friendship forward into the future. This is the season to celebrate homecomings, to explore our natural treasures, and to share our stories with the world.

So let this summer be one of renewal, a season of laughter, song, and shared purpose. May it inspire a new generation of travellers, investors, and dreamers to experience Sekhukhune not only as a place to visit, but as a place to belong.

And when the sun dips behind the Leolo Mountains and the songs of the evening rise across the valleys, may we remember, in every dance, every handshake, every journey, the words that continue to guide us: “There shall be peace and friendship.”

# Limpopo's Spring Campaign launch Sekhukhune

On Thursday, 28 August 2025, Limpopo welcomed the season of renewal with a flourish of song, colour, and heritage as the province officially launched Tourism Month at TT Lifestyle Pub and Restaurant in Jane Furse. This year's Spring Campaign, themed "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation", carried a special resonance, it marked Sekhukhune District as the rising heartbeat of domestic tourism in Limpopo.

Against the dramatic backdrop of the Sekhukhune mountains, where history and culture breath through every valley, the Limpopo Tourism Agency (LTA) and the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET) unveiled their Tourism Month Events Calendar 2025. The event gathered an energetic mix of government leaders, traditional authorities, industry players, and storytellers, all converging to celebrate Limpopo's promise as a leading destination for both leisure and business.

In his keynote address, delivered on behalf of MEC Tshitereke Baldwin Matibe, LTA Board Chairperson Mr. Andrew Dipela underlined why Sekhukhune was chosen:

*"Sekhukhune is more than a host for the Spring campaign launch, it is a frontier of opportunity, where heritage, adventure, and enterprise converge. We deliberately brought this launch*

*here because Sekhukhune stands as Limpopo's most promising driver of domestic arrivals. The stories of its people, the richness of its landscapes, and the growth potential of its economy place it firmly at the centre of our tourism future."*

This choice reflects a bold pivot in strategy of anchoring provincial tourism growth not only in the well-established game reserves and heritage sites of Waterberg or Mopani but also in the rising destinations of Jane Furse, Burgersfort, and Steelpoort.

The launch was no ordinary press event. TT Lifestyle pulsed with traditional dance troupes, drummers, and musicians, creating an atmosphere that blended storytelling with celebration. Guests were treated to immersive showcases of Limpopo's cultural and heritage routes, its eco-adventures, and its emerging leisure destinations, all underpinned by the provincial sub-theme: "Customer Service – Our People, Our Brand."

MEC Matibe's speech emphasized this focus:

*"Tourism is not just about places; it is about people. It is the smile that greets you at a lodge, the warmth of a community that hosts you, and the professionalism of a guide who makes a journey unforgettable. Together, we can ensure that every visitor leaves with memories not only of Limpopo's beauty but of its unmatched*



hospitality.”

Sekhukhune’s rise as a tourism hub is also linked to its economic dynamism. With the Fetakgomo-Tubatse Special Economic Zone (SEZ) growing into a magnet for investment, business tourism is gaining momentum.

“The ripple effects of the SEZs, Musina/Makhado in the north and Fetakgomo-Tubatse here in Sekhukhune, will be transformative,” Dipela remarked. “They draw people for business, but those visitors also become tourists. They eat in our restaurants, sleep in our guesthouses, and explore our heritage. This is how we weave sustainable growth.”

The phrase “sustainable transformation” echoed throughout the programme. In Sekhukhune, where rural landscapes hold untapped potential, tourism is being positioned not only as an industry but as a catalyst for inclusive development.

The 2025 Spring Campaign highlighted opportunities for community-owned tourism enterprises, youth employment, and skills development, ensuring that the benefits of growth ripple from Jane Furse’s bustling lifestyle hubs to remote heritage villages.

#### Discovering Limpopo in spring

As the sun set over Jane Furse, the message was clear: Limpopo is ready to invite the world, starting with its own citizens, to

“Discover Your Limpopo in Spring.” The campaign promises an itinerary that spans wildlife adventures in Polokwane Game Reserve, heritage storytelling in Tšate Valley, adrenaline escapes in Sekhukhune’s gorges, and the legendary warmth of Limpopo’s people.

In the words of MEC Matibe: “This campaign is about pride. It is about inviting South Africans to travel their own backyard, to see Limpopo not just as a destination but as an experience. And it begins here, in Sekhukhune, the District lined-up with promise and transformation.”

As the drums echoed into the night, one thing became certain, Sekhukhune is no longer Limpopo’s hidden gem, it is the



# Tšate III, the glory of heritage institutions

The ochre-red dust of Maebe in Mhlaletse rose in gentle clouds as thousands of feet moved across it, marking Wednesday 24 September 2025 as a day that will be remembered for generations. It was on this day that the rolling hills of Sekhukhune's heartland transformed into a theatre of pride and cultural affirmation. Tšate III, named in remembrance of the original Tšate Heritage Site, capital of King Sekhukhune during the wars of resistance, stood both as fortress of history and cradle of revival. Thousands gathered here not only to celebrate but to reconnect, with heritage, identity, and a collective vision. At dawn, the day was ushered in with the Big Walk, a community procession along King Sekhukhune Road, the vital link between Schoonoord, Apel, and Mhlaletse. Each step carried the weight of memory, resilience, and pride, grounding the celebration in the lived experience of the people.

By mid-morning, as the sun asserted its familiar heat, ancestral drums answered in rhythm, giving voice to the theme: *"Reimagine Our Heritage Institutions for a New Era."* Their reverberations reminded all gathered that heritage is not static but a living current, evolving, adapting, and finding relevance for generations yet to come.

The Executive Mayor of Sekhukhune, Cllr Minah Bahula, captured the essence of the moment with words that resonated across the royal courtyard: "Today was a clear reminder that when we honour our past and embrace our present, we lay the foundation for a more united and progressive future."

Executive Mayor's words reflected not only the spirit of the day but also the enduring relevance of Tšate, a site sanctified by history, memory and identity.

The choice of Tšate III as host venue was no coincidence. Located in the Fetakgomo Tubatse Local Municipality, this site is more than ground; it is a living archive. The name Tšate recalls the legacies of resistance and resilience, from the fierce Anglo-Pedi wars of the 19th century to the cultural revival of the Bapedi people in the 21st century. For many, the presence of Her Majesty Queen Leganabatho II Mmanyaku Thulare, reverently called *Hlapogadi a Phaahla*, elevated the day's significance to regal heights. Draped in rich royal attire, she welcomed the multitudes who streamed into the Mošate grounds. Her words echoed with timeless wisdom:

"Our culture is the bedrock of our identity, and language is its living vessel. We must preserve and pass it on."

Her Majesty's message was not just ceremonial. It was a call to safeguard the fragile threads of identity in a world where modernity too often threatens tradition.

The event carried both cultural and political weight. Present were Deputy Minister of CoGTA, Dr Namane Dickson Masemola, provincial MECs, and municipal leaders, including Cllr Eddie Maila, Mayor of Fetakgomo Tubatse. Yet it was the

keynote address of Premier Dr Phophi Ramathuba that gave the celebration its philosophical heartbeat.

"Our heritage institutions are not relics of the past," she declared, "but living spaces that must speak to the realities of today and the aspirations of tomorrow."

The 2025 National Heritage Day theme -*"Reimagine Our Heritage Institutions for a New Era"* -reverberated throughout speeches, songs, and performances. It called for museums, archives, and heritage sites to evolve into inclusive, technologically innovative spaces. The Premier's voice carried conviction as she linked the symbolic significance of Tšate with the pressing demands of the present:

"Tšate is not just history. It is a symbol of Bapedi identity and most importantly the rich diversity of Sekhukhuneland. This land remembers the courage of those who resisted oppression, and it inspires future generations to defend their rights and dignity."

The celebration itself unfolded in a kaleidoscope of colour. Mohumagadi Maepa of the Maepa Traditional Authority described it perfectly: *"a day painted in diversity."*

Attendees adorned themselves in traditional attire, their garments narrating stories of lineage and belonging. The bold dresses of the Bapedi, the beadwork of the VaTsonga, and the vibrant patterns of the Ndebele formed a moving mural of South Africa's cultural richness.

Drums beat steadily, whistles pierced the air, and voices rose in ululation as dances, some centuries old, returned to life. The grounds of the Mošate became a living museum of performance and memory.

For Mr Sekgothe Phala, a celebrated local artist, the day was a milestone: "To see local artists given the chance to perform here at the Royal House is a dream. It shows that our art is part of the living heritage of this land."

Community member Mr Phalane Mogoba expressed the sentiment of many: "It was overwhelming joy to share this experience with such a multitude."

According to the Limpopo MEC for Sport Arts and Culture Mr Funani Jerry Maseko, all eyes are fixed on the future not just tradition which anchored the day.

"Museums stood at the heart of this year's theme, and the Sekhukhune District, with its 75 traditional royal kraals and seats of royal authority, itself serves as a living, dynamic museum. In a rapidly evolving society, these institutions face the dual challenge of remaining relevant while honouring the past – hence our choice to pay homage to Tšate III" explained MEC Maseko

“In Limpopo, the vision is clear, heritage institutions must transform into vibrant spaces of learning and innovation. Digital archives, interactive exhibitions, and oral history projects are increasingly vital tools for engaging youth and fostering a deeper connection with culture. With its layered history of resistance, mining, and rural transformation, Sekhukhune provides fertile ground for such initiatives. Tšate III, long revered as a site of memory, now carries an expanded role as a symbol of heritage in motion, alive, adaptive, and capable of inspiring generations to reimagine the possibilities of the past in shaping the future” added MEC Maseko

Amid political speeches and cultural displays, a unifying message emerged that development must be inclusive. Executive Mayor Bahula reiterated the commitment:

“As government, we remain committed to ensuring that development reaches every corner of our communities. Our culture continues to unite us, and through unity, we will strengthen service delivery and foster sustainable growth.”

Heritage Day at Tšate thus became more than festivity. It was a collective assertion that South Africa’s progress lies not only in infrastructure or policy but in the shared values embedded in tradition and language.

Tšate carries profound symbolism. Historically, it was the seat of the Bapedi kings and the stage of defiant battles against colonial encroachment. In her speech, Premier Ramathuba invoked this memory:

“Lefelo le ke bohlatse bja kganetso ya Bapedi kgahlanong le bagateledi. E gopola sebete le boikgafo bja bao ba lwelago naga le ditokelo tša bona.”

[“This place bears witness to the resistance of the Bapedi against oppressors. It recalls the bravery and sacrifices of those who defended their land and rights.”]

For the Bapedi people, Tšate is not just a monument, it is a wellspring of courage and inspiration, feeding the resolve of present and future generations.

In her closing words, Premier Ramathuba reminded all that “heritage is not static; it is alive and evolving with each generation, reflecting our stories, values, and aspirations.” At Tšate III, that vision came alive. What began as a provincial programme unfolded into a living affirmation of identity and hope. The ochre dust of Maebe bore not just history but the footsteps of a people walking boldly into the future. Beneath flags and the rhythm of drums, Heritage Day 2025 became more than commemoration, it was a promise to remember, to reimagine, and to belong.

# Sekhukhune’s Heritage Institution: Bushmen Rock Shelter

September is Heritage Month in South Africa, a time when the nation pauses to celebrate and reflect on its rich cultural traditions, diverse histories, and living heritage. This year’s commemorations take place under the theme “Reimagine Our Heritage Institutions for a New Era”, a call to action to position heritage as a foundation for a socially responsive, technologically innovative, and economically inclusive future.

In this spirit, Sekhukhune District proudly profiles one of its most treasured heritage institutions: the Bushmen Rock Shelter.

A short detour from the R36 road, which connects Sekhukhune to the world-renowned Kruger National Park, leads visitors to this extraordinary site perched on the Great Escarpment in Limpopo Province. The Bushmen Rock Shelter is not only an archaeological site but also a living portal into humanity’s shared past, offering insights into the lifeways of early modern humans in Southern Africa.

Excavations reveal an extraordinary stratified sequence spanning more than eight meters, where layer upon layer preserves a detailed record of human presence stretching back over 120,000 years. The shelter holds artifacts, organic remains, and evocative rock art, each fragment telling a story of survival, ingenuity, and symbolic expression. From stone tools and ochre fragments to vibrant paintings of wildlife and daily life, the site embodies both the practicality and creativity of ancient hunter-gatherer societies.

Since 2014, archaeologists from South Africa and France have been working meticulously at the Bushmen Rock Shelter. Their discoveries have shed new light on early symbolic communication, social interaction, and cultural expression, providing clarity on how anatomically modern humans

adapted to shifting climates and environments over millennia. What makes the shelter particularly unique is its preservation of organic material, bones, plants, and other fragile remains, which has allowed researchers to reconstruct ancient diets and ecological conditions with remarkable accuracy.

But the Bushmen Rock Shelter is not only a site for scholars. It is a place where heritage and identity intersect for communities across South Africa. A group of young people from the ZF Mgcawu District in the Northern Cape, accompanied by leaders such as the late Executive Mayor JJJ Olyn and Khomani San elder Oom Petrus Vaalbooi, once traced their footsteps to the shelter. For them, standing in this space was a transformative encounter with ancestry and belonging, an experience that underscored the power of heritage to inspire pride, continuity, and unity.

As South Africa embraces Heritage Month 2025, the Bushmen Rock Shelter invites the world to explore its depths. It is a reminder that heritage is not static but dynamic, continuously evolving as new knowledge emerges and as communities reconnect with the wisdom of the past.

To visit Sekhukhune is to encounter more than a district; it is to step into the beating heart of Africa’s Friendship Kingdom, where ancient stories live on in rock, soil, and spirit. The Bushmen Rock Shelter stands as a timeless testament to resilience, creativity, and interconnectedness, an open invitation for future generations to explore, learn, and cherish.

This Heritage, Sekhukhune welcomes the world to Mošate and beyond, to discover the Bushmen Rock Shelter, a cradle of memory and a beacon of humanity’s shared e

# Sekhukhune's Heritage Institution: The Shoe Museum

In the tapestry of South Africa's heritage landscape, museums have long been regarded as static repositories of artifacts, remnants of a colonial-era model of preservation and display. Yet, in a rapidly evolving society shaped by digital transformation, globalisation, youth activism, and inclusive economic aspirations, museums must reimagine themselves. They must become dynamic cultural hubs, spaces that inspire innovation, celebrate identity, and foster social cohesion.

This Heritage Month, observed under the theme "Reimagine Our Heritage Institutions for a New Era," invites us to think of heritage not only as preservation but also as a powerful driver of creativity, opportunity, and inclusive development. Sekhukhune District rises to this call with one of its most intriguing and unconventional heritage institutions: The Shoe Museum.

Snuggled along the R36, just 20 kilometres north of Ohrigstad on the Panorama Route, The Shoe Museum captures the imagination before one even steps inside. Built in 1990 by artist and sculptor Ron van Zyl, this giant concrete shoe brings to life the beloved nursery rhyme of the "Old Lady Who Lived in a Shoe." It is more than a whimsical landmark; it is a gateway into creativity, memory, and cultural dialogue.

Inside, the "Old Lady's" story comes alive through hand-crafted furniture, her bed, kitchen fireplace, dressing table, and even her baby cradles, all sculpted by Van Zyl himself. Each piece blurs the line between art and heritage, turning folklore into a tangible, immersive experience for visitors of all ages.

## A Museum Within a Shoe

Beyond its playful façade, The Shoe houses a small but fascinating museum that uncovers the deep history of the Ohrigstad Valley. Unearthed artifacts from a nearby cave include animal skeletons, Iron Age relics, and the skull of a Bapedi boy, offering rare insights into the ancient communities of the region. Exhibits on the history of malaria, tobacco cultivation, and traditional Bapedi initiation practices anchor the museum firmly in the cultural and social history of Limpopo.

The Shoe is also home to Ron's official art gallery, featuring hand-carved works in indigenous hardwoods. For over 45 years, Van Zyl has made a living by creating sculptures that capture both natural beauty and spiritual reflection. His works,

sold on site and by commission, extend the museum's reach into the vibrant world of South Africa's creative industries.

One of the most remarkable extensions of The Shoe is the Alpha Omega Cave, a visionary project of seven underground chambers. Here, Van Zyl carved a spiritual journey into stone, depicting the meaning of life, God's plan, and the message of salvation. The cave culminates in an underground chapel, a serene space that has hosted intimate weddings and continues to welcome visitors seeking reflection and inspiration.

Guided tours through the cave invite participants to engage not only with Van Zyl's artistry but also with the broader role of heritage as a medium for dialogue, belief, and meaning-making.

The Van Zyl family has made The Shoe a community hub, where hospitality and heritage intersect. Yvonne, Ron's wife and co-visionary, is known for the famous "Big Shoe Burger" served at their on-site tea garden, a treat that has nourished visitors for decades.

The Shoe Museum challenges conventional definitions of a museum. It is at once a gallery, a historical archive, a cultural attraction, a spiritual journey, and a family-run business that blends creativity with heritage-driven entrepreneurship. It demonstrates how museums can move beyond preservation to become inclusive, participatory spaces where heritage fuels innovation and opportunity.

In reimagining museums for a new era, institutions like The Shoe remind us that heritage must live, breathe, and evolve with the communities it serves. Museums are not only about the past, they are about shaping futures rooted in memory, culture, and imagination.

Sekhukhune, often called *Africa's Friendship Kingdom*, invites the world to visit The Shoe Museum. Step inside the story of the "Old Lady," explore the deep past of the Ohrigstad Valley, marvel at hand-carved artistry, and journey through the visionary Alpha Omega Cave.

This is more than a museum. It is a celebration of creativity, a beacon of community-driven heritage, and a reminder that in Sekhukhune, heritage is not confined to the past, it is actively shaping the future. This Heritage Month, step into The Shoe, and step into a world where art, history, and imagination walk together.

# Sekhukhune's Heritage Institution: Mabelebutšwe Heritage



In the heart of Sekhukhune District, where the rolling hills of Limpopo meet the echoes of ancestral traditions, a remarkable initiative is quietly reshaping the region's heritage landscape. Mabelebutšwe Heritage, founded by a visionary woman, is the first community-based museum in Sekhukhune District to be established by a female custodian of culture. Its founder, Mrs Palane Virginia Matlala, affectionately known as *Pebetse a Nape*, has dedicated her life to preserving and sharing the history, traditions, and daily lives of the Matlala people and neighbouring communities.

Born on 10 February 1952 in Mmashadi, now known as Jane Furse, Pebetse was the only daughter of Leloti Adam Manaswe and Mahlodi Manaswe. She attended Ga Rakgwadi Primary School, where she learned to read and write, and later underwent initiation school (*Mphato wa Mankwe*) at Mohlalootwane Ga Rakgwadi. In 1974, she married the late Kgoshi Mokgoma Maserumule Matlala, known as *Nape a Ngwato*, with whom she raised four children.

It was Pebetse's keen observation of the cultural gaps among young people that sparked the birth of Mabelebutšwe Heritage Centre. Concerned by the fading knowledge of traditional cuisine, attire, musical instruments, and everyday objects, she resolved to create a space where history could be experienced, taught, and celebrated. The museum's name, *Mabelebutšwe*, meaning "ripe sorghum" in Sepedi, evokes nourishment, not only of the body but of the mind and spirit.

The story of the museum's creation reflects Pebetse's ingenuity and determination. Using her skill in crafting miniature houses from cardboard, glue, and cow dung, she sold her works at Glen Cowie and invested the proceeds into constructing the building that now houses a growing collection of cultural treasures. Some items were personally made by Pebetse, others inherited from her late husband, and still more were acquired from the community. Within a year, she had assembled a comprehensive repository of objects reflecting the heritage of her people.

Visitors to Mabelebutšwe Heritage can explore an array of traditional items, including Mogaswa, a jackal- or wildebeest-skin blanket used at night; Botsorwane, an instrument central to communal music and entertainment; and a dazzling array of attire and accessories worn by young women before initiation, such as Mantlaralaxane (headpieces), Lebole (front covers), Semabejane (tops), and Sefotho (bracelets). Each object tells a story, preserving knowledge in Sepedi that might otherwise be lost to time.

Pebetse envisions a future where Mabelebutšwe Heritage grows into a nationally recognized institution. Her dream is for an open-air museum, recreating ancestral homesteads for immersive experiences that allow young people to step into the lives of their forebears. She also seeks to position the center as a hub for local tourism, cultural talent promotion, and economic opportunity, where traditional foods, crafts, and garments can be showcased and sold.

The museum's significance extends beyond its walls. In a country where Heritage Month celebrates the richness and diversity of cultural traditions, Mabelebutšwe embodies the principles of unity in diversity, inclusive growth, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. It exemplifies how community-driven initiatives, when supported by innovation, academia, and digital engagement, can reshape the heritage landscape, redress historical imbalances, and promote a more inclusive national identity.

As South Africans reflect on their past and chart their cultural future, Mabelebutšwe Heritage invites investors, tourists, and cultural enthusiasts to participate in this living narrative. Here, every artifact tells a story, every exhibit fosters understanding, and every visitor becomes part of a shared journey to preserve, celebrate, and grow the cultural heartbeat of Sekhukhune.

Mabelebutšwe Heritage is more than a museum, it is a testament to the enduring power of culture, community, and the vision of one extraordinary woman.



# Sekhukhune youth shine at Filmmaking Graduation

Sekhukhune, 31 July 2025 – Limpopo MEC for Sports, Arts and Culture, Hon Jerry Maseko, has applauded 30 young filmmakers who recently graduated from the SAACYF Film and Creative Scriptwriting Programme at Boeketlong Lodge, Jane Furse, under the Makhuduthamaga Municipality.

The graduates, 28 of whom hail from all four local municipalities in Sekhukhune District, completed an intensive 8-week programme titled “From the Script to the Screen”, powered by the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF). The initiative equips youth with the skills to write, produce, and showcase local stories, contributing to both cultural and economic transformation.

MEC Maseko described the milestone as a testament to the department’s commitment to nurturing creative talent and professionalizing the creative sector, stating: *“They graduate today to showcase their local stories, share the knowledge gained, and invest in their communities. This is a true embodiment of our youth reaping the fruits of our democratic government.”*

Special guests from the SABC telenovela Skeem Saam, including actors Putla Sehlapelo (“Mnr Magongwa”) and Skhumbuzo Mbatha (“Mnr Manaka”), attended the ceremony, offering words of encouragement and industry insight.

Certificates and awards were presented by SAACYF President Romeo Ramauda, Palesa Makgatho, and their team. Representatives from the provincial NYDA, Limpopo Arts and Culture Council (LACC), and National Lotteries Commission were also present, highlighting opportunities for continued youth empowerment and creative growth.

Executive Mayor Cllr Minah Bahula welcomed the initiative, noting that Sekhukhune is proud to be the first district in Limpopo to host such a talent development programme, positioning local youth as future storytellers and filmmakers.

With programmes like SAACYF’s film initiative, Sekhukhune’s young creatives are not only telling their stories but also contributing to the growth of film tourism and cultural expression in the province.



# A Home of Cultures – focus on Ndebele Heritage



In the rolling hills of Sekhukhuneland, where the rhythms of history echo through villages and valleys, cultures have long converged. This region of Limpopo has been called Africa's Friendship Kingdom, a fitting title for a land where eMaswati, BaKopa, BaNtwane, BaPedi including sub-groups like the Batau and Baroka, have shared space, customs, and destiny. Among them, the Ndebele have carved a legacy of resilience, artistry, and enduring friendship with their Bapedi neighbours.

## Bonds Forged in Struggle

One of the most enduring stories of this cultural interweaving is that of King Nyabela of the Ndzundza Ndebele and Kgoši Mampuru II of the BaPedi. In 1883, as Afrikaner commandos advanced, Nyabela offered refuge to Mampuru, shielding him from the onslaught. Their bond was so deep that each was prepared to die for the other, friends in life, death, and eternity.

This friendship is remembered every 19 December at the King Nyabela Annual Commemoration, held at eRholweni near Roosenekal. Declared a heritage site in 1992, eRholweni, also known as the Cave of Kings or Mapoch's Cave, served as a fortress during the Mapoch War of 1882–1883. The site holds rock art, pottery, and memories of resistance, symbolizing the Ndebele struggle against land dispossession. A statue of King Nyabela now stands there, anchoring the site as a place of remembrance and pride.

The Erholweni Cave Heritage Site is more than stone and

soil; it is a living museum. Here, King Nyabela and his people resisted an eight-month siege by Boer forces before finally surrendering. The defeat brought dispossession, forced indenture, and later removals during apartheid. Yet, the cave endures as testimony to defiance, a reminder that even in loss, culture survives.

Every December, thousands gather at Roosenekal. They sing, paint their faces, and wear the bright geometric designs for which the Ndebele are renowned. Ingwenyama Ndzundza Mabhoko III delivers the keynote, affirming the resilience of his people and their intertwined destiny with the Pedi.

The diversity of Sekhukhuneland is rooted in centuries of migration, settlement, and adaptation. King Musi, an early Ndebele ancestor, fathered seven sons, whose disagreements over succession led to the branching of Ndebele lineages - Manala, Ndzundza, Masombuka, Gegana, Rhwaduba, Sibasa, and Dlomu. As they spread across Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, and beyond, the Ndebele encountered and befriended neighbouring Pedi clans.

The Mamone Traditional Authority recalls how Bapedi royal members along with Kgoši Mampuru II once found refuge among the eMaswati and later the Ndebele of King Nyabela. These interwoven stories of exile, sanctuary, and alliance deepened bonds that have outlasted centuries of upheaval.

Despite colonial conquest and apartheid's forced removals,



the Ndebele retained their cultural identity, expressed in vibrant beadwork, striking mural art, and their tonal language. The Ndzundza-Mabhoko Royal Council today carries forward this heritage, asserting recognition for King Nyabela as both a warrior and a freedom fighter against colonialism.

Meanwhile, the Bapedi continue to honour Kgoši Mampuru II, executed by the Boer authorities in 1883, as a martyr. The shared commemoration of Mampuru and Nyabela transforms history into heritage, bridging past and present, Pedi and Ndebele, tradition and resilience.

For visitors, Erholweni offers more than a cultural stop. It is a place where rock art whispers ancestral voices, where the landscape itself tells of sieges and survival. Surrounded by rural settlements and agricultural lands, the site embodies both the struggles and the enduring beauty of Sekhukhuneland.

In declaring the site a national heritage landmark, South Africa affirmed the importance of remembering stories not only of kings but of communities that resisted against all odds.

Today, Sekhukhuneland stands as a microcosm of South Africa's diversity, a home of cultures where Bapedi and Ndebele histories intertwine. Each December at Roossenekal, when drums echo and ululations rise, the story of Nyabela and Mampuru is reborn. Here, in this Friendship Kingdom District of Sekhukhune, heritage is not only remembered - it is lived.



# Roossenekal heritage of the Afrikaner, Bapedi and Ndebele



Tucked at the foothills of the Mapoch Caves, Roossenekal is a place where South Africa's layered past still whispers through relics, rock, and ritual. The small town, formally proclaimed in 1886, carries the imprints of Afrikaner, Bapedi, and Ndebele heritage, its story as diverse as the communities who shaped it.

Pastor Marcus F. Basson, a preacher and passionate heritage custodian, has become one of Roossenekal's strongest advocates. In his home, artifacts tell stories of defiance and sacrifice: a pristine 1896 British bayonet with an inscription from Herklaas Stefanus Bouer to his son, a 1906 bullet belt, and a Ndebele spear under investigation. For Basson, these are not trophies but touchstones of memory. He envisions a community-based museum to honour Roossenekal's multi-faceted history.

That history is inseparable from the Mapoch War of 1882–1883, when the Transvaal Boers laid siege to the Mapoch stronghold under King Nyabela. After months of starvation tactics,

Nyabela surrendered, and two Boer commanders, Stephanus Roos and Frederik Senekal, were killed. Their names became etched into the town's identity, preserved in graves that still lie in Roossenekal today.

Beyond Afrikaner heroism, Roossenekal holds Ndebele resilience and Pedi solidarity. The nearby Mapoch Caves, where the MaNdzundza Ndebele sought refuge under King Mabhogo, remain a symbol of defiance. Here too is the tale of Ingwenyama Nyabela offering sanctuary to Kgoši Mampuru II of the Bapedi, forging a brotherhood that endured in life and death.

Today, Roossenekal faces harsh realities: unemployment nearing 70%, widespread poverty, and crime. Yet its heritage, from Mapoch Caves to the Yellow Arum Lily Festival and the new De Hoop Dam, positions it for renewal. "Roossenekal is more than a town" Basson reflects. "It's a bridge to our past, and a gateway to Sekhukhuneland's future."

# Honouring Ikosi Mahlangu, custodian of Sekhukhune's diverse heritage



The bells of history tolled solemnly on 9 August 2025 as mourners gathered at Nkosini, Ko Somtjhatjhana Village, to bid farewell to Ikosi Poni Jafta Mahlangu, Maphepha II, the revered leader of the AmaNdzundza-Ndebele in Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality. His passing on 22 July 2025 marked the end of a reign rooted in cultural pride, inclusivity, and the guardianship of Sekhukhune District's diversity.

As the head of the largest AmaNdzundza-Ndebele branch in Limpopo Province, Ikosi Mahlangu presided over numerous villages in Elias Motsoaledi, embodying the unity of a community interwoven with Bapedi, Ndebele, and other cultural groups. To his people, he was not only a traditional ruler but also a father figure who nurtured heritage while embracing modern challenges.

The funeral was attended by thousands, from kings and government dignitaries to ordinary villagers. Ngwenyama Mabhoko and Ngwenyama Makhosonke, kings of the AmaNdebele nation, joined traditional leaders from Mpumalanga, Gauteng, and Limpopo in honouring him. Representing the provincial government, MEC Basikopo Makamu conveyed Premier Dr Phophi Ramathuba's condolences, while Deputy Minister of CoGTA Dr Namane Dickson Masemola led the national delegation. "We have lost a community builder and a custodian of culture," Makamu said.

The scale of mourning underscored Ikosi Mahlangu's stature. His Royal Council spokesperson, Mbusi Mahlangu, described him as *"Ndabezitha Maphepha Wesibili ka Somtjhatjhana, whose memory will bind generations."*

Local leaders echoed these sentiments. Mayor David Tladi of Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality noted: *"Ikosi Mahlangu's dedication to his people and his heritage will be profoundly missed. His legacy of service and cultural stewardship will inspire us for years to come."*

His reign was marked by a unique sensitivity to Sekhukhune's cultural heterogeneity. He championed the teaching of isiNdebele as a mother tongue in schools, ensuring the younger generation grew in their own language and traditions. At the same time, he encouraged Ndebele-speaking subjects to preserve their linguistic identity under his authority. Retired teacher John Mohlala reflected: *"He was a cultural reformer. He made sure that no child in his kingdom felt alienated from their roots."*

Beyond language, Ikosi Mahlangu's leadership extended to promoting peace and stability across ethnic divides, reinforcing Sekhukhune District's title as "Africa's Friendship Kingdom." In him, the historic bonds between Bapedi and Ndebele, epitomised by the solidarity of King Nyabela and Kgoši Mampuru II, found a modern custodian.

At 68, Ndabezitha Maphepha II leaves behind a wife, 14 children, 20 grandchildren, and an enduring example of cultural guardianship. His other wife preceded him in death.

The Sekhukhune District Municipality, led by the Executive Mayor Cllr Minah Bahula, joined the Royal House in mourning, highlighting the strong partnership between traditional councils and local governance. Former Executive Mayor and MP Stanley Ramaila also paid his respects, affirming the role of traditional leaders as anchors of community identity.

As the sun set over Dlawulale, mourners reflected on a life that bridged generations. His subjects honoured him with the words: *"Maphepha ngotjani, abanye baphepha ngomthangala"*

In the quiet that followed, one truth remained: Sekhukhune has lost a custodian, but his vision of unity in diversity endures.

# Tourism Thursday in Phiring: Discover Sekweneng and Sethunyeng



*"By solving our water problems in Phiring, our livestock, crops, and tourism will flourish."*

Today, that vision has come to life in a vibrant programme of eco-tourism, agro-tourism, and cultural exchange, inviting travellers to step into Phiring's landscape and rhythm.

Phiring's crown jewels are its two nature sites, Sekweneng, a living tufa waterfall, and Sethunyeng, a pristine riverine forest trail.

Sekweneng, meaning *"place of the crocodile"*, cascades in a veil of water over moss-covered rocks, forming a scene that feels untouched by time. It is one of Limpopo's best-kept secrets, conveniently located along the Panorama Route.

Sethunyeng offers a contrasting experience: a 2.5 km trail meandering through wetlands, evergreen forests, and cattle grazing lands. Along the way, hikers encounter towering yellowwood and matumi trees, quartzite outcrops known locally as "gunrock," and a symphony of birdlife, including the elusive Narina trogon. The wetlands also nurture traditional madumbi farming, where women cultivate this nutritious root crop using age-old organic methods. With crystal-clear streams, ferns, damselflies, frogs, and hidden picnic spots, Sethunyeng is both a sanctuary and a storyteller of biodiversity.

For the adventurous, there are full-day mountain hikes: the 18 km Mawane route, which rewards hikers with eagle-eye views over the Lowveld, and a 9 km trail that links Sethunyeng and Sekweneng along cattle paths.

Phiring is also a living laboratory of agro-ecology. Guided tours reveal how locals integrate farming with conservation, protecting wetlands while sustaining their livelihoods. The star of the fields is the indigenous plant, a root crop rich in protein and nutrients, cultivated without chemicals, only manure from

On Thursday, 25 September 2025, the spotlight of Tourism Thursdays will shine on Phiring Village, a hidden gem on the Panorama Route and the emerging Platinum Stream Tourism Route. Tucked along the north-western boundary of the Blyde Canyon Nature Reserve on the R532 road, Phiring offers more than breathtaking scenery, it is a living classroom of heritage, ecology, and rural innovation.

At the heart of this experience is Ba-Dinkwanyane Tourism, a community-driven initiative born out of the Dinkwanyane Water Smart (DWS) Project, funded by the Government of Flanders and implemented in partnership with Bapedi Dinkwanyane, Conservation South Africa, Hoedspruit Hub, and the Kruger2Canyons Biosphere Region. The project recognised a simple but profound truth expressed by villagers:

livestock. Its nine-month growth cycle, from April to December, connects seasonal rhythms to household food security.

The DWS project has extended this wisdom to the younger generation. At the local primary school, a demonstration garden blends numeracy, literacy, and life orientation lessons with hands-on farming. Crops grown there feed the school's food programme, while ecosystem custodians provide teachers with support in weaving agro-ecology into daily lessons.

Rangeland management also plays a central role. Weekly cattle dipping ensures animal health, while veterinary inspectors and conservation organisations provide support. Auctions organised with the help of "Meat Naturally" create sustainable markets for livestock farmers.

Tourism in Phiring is not only about landscapes but also about people. Visitors can experience BaPedi dance and music, browse local crafts, or sample village cuisine ranging from vetkoek and kotta to traditional meals of pap, morogo, and chicken necks. Homestays are being developed to complement camping options in village gardens, where guests are welcomed with clean sites, pit toilets, and firewood.

Community members also organise chess and traditional game challenges, adding a playful dimension to the cultural exchange. At every turn, travellers encounter a hospitable community proud to share its heritage.

Operating hours for Ba-Dinkwanyane Tourism are 8 am to 5 pm, with bookings essential due to limited connectivity in the remote area.

- Distances from the tourism office:
- Creche Split: 1.4 km
- Sethunyeng parking: 4 km total
- Sekweneng parking: 5.7 km total
- Sethunyeng to Sekweneng on foot: 2.3 km

Nearby accommodation includes Echo Caves, The Shoe, Blydepoort Forever Resort, and lodges like Shikwari and Cape Vulture near Hoedspruit.

Food is part of the adventure, from fresh vegetables and free-



range chicken sold in the village to on-order tshisa nyama (grilled chicken) or fish and chips ready when hikers return from trails.

Phiring is more than a destination; it is a model of how rural communities can anchor climate-adaptive green economies while opening their doors to travellers. In intertwining ecology, agriculture, and culture, Ba-Dinkwanyane Tourism reflects the province's ambition to grow tourism inclusively.

As the Tourism Thursdays Campaign continues to highlight Limpopo's hidden gems, Phiring stands out as a kaleidoscope of cultures and landscapes, a place where wetlands feed rivers, traditions nurture resilience, and visitors leave with more than photographs, they leave with lessons in living lightly on the land.

On 25 September 2025, Tourism Thursday in Phiring will not just be an event. It will be an invitation to the world: come walk our trails, share our food, learn our wisdom, and help us celebrate a future where communities flourish through tourism.





# Ohrigstad at 180: A Historic Gateway to Sekhukhuneland

Nestled in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains, the small farming town of Ohrigstad (Afrikaans for “Ohrig city”) stands as a sentinel of South Africa’s layered history. Founded in 1845 by Voortrekker leader Hendrik Potgieter with support from Dutch merchant Gregorius Ohrig, the town was originally named *Andries-Ohrigstad* to honour Potgieter and Ohrig.

The settlement’s early years were turbulent. Malaria forced its abandonment in 1848, and only in the early 1900s, once the disease was under control, was the area resettled. By then, Ohrigstad had already secured its place in history. On 14 May 1873, the nearby Selati River revealed gold, and the region was declared a public gold field, linking Ohrigstad to the mineral wealth that would later define South Africa’s economy.

Yet the town’s heritage is inseparable from that of the Bapedi kingdom. Under King Sekwati, father of King Sekhukhune,

Ohrigstad became a frontier of contestation with the Boers. In 1838, Sekwati defeated the Voortrekkers at Phiring by occupying an impregnable hilltop fortress. Later, in 1847, tensions resurfaced as Sekwati resisted Boer demands for land, labor, and taxes. During these conflicts, the young Prince Matsebe earned the name Sekhukhune, honing the tactical brilliance that would make him one of South Africa’s most formidable warrior kings.

Today, Ohrigstad is a malaria-free farming community known for citrus, maize, and as a gateway to the Panorama Route and on the newly introduced Platinum Stream Tourism Route. As it celebrates 180 years in 2025, the town embodies both Voortrekker endurance and Bapedi resistance, reminding us that heritage is not only about the past, it is a foundation for innovation, social cohesion, and nation-building.

# XIX World Black Bass Championship 2025 brings Flag Boshielo Dam to life



The banks of Flag Boshielo Dam came alive on Monday 01 September 2025, as South Africa proudly unveiled the XIX World Black Bass Championship with a glittering opening ceremony at Sundowners Game Lodge in Marble Hall. Hosted under the auspices of the South African Bass Angling Association (SABAA), the event has transformed Ephraim Mogale Local Municipality and Sekhukhune District into the beating heart of international bass fishing, blending fierce competition with African heritage, tourism, and unity. This is not just another stop on the angling world's calendar. It is Africa's stage, and Sekhukhune's moment.

Themed *"The Spirit of Africa Meets the World of Sport"*, the opening night struck a perfect chord. It coincided with the African New Year, the dawn of spring in the southern hemisphere, and the official launch of the Limpopo Tourism Agency's (LTA) Spring Campaign week. The timing could not have been more poetic: a new season, a new beginning, and a celebration of life, culture, and competition.

As the sun dipped behind the Waterberg mountains, the flags of more than 15 nations fluttered at Sundowners Game Lodge. Teams from the USA, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Australia, Zimbabwe, Eswatini, Namibia and beyond joined hosts South Africa in a parade of nations that electrified the Marble Hall night. Traditional Pedi dancers greeted guests with rhythmic stamping and drums, while schoolchildren's voices lifted the South African national anthem into the warm air. It was a spectacle of culture as much as sport, a declaration that this world championship would belong not only to the anglers, but also to the people of Sekhukhune.

The selection of Flag Boshielo Dam, formerly Arabie Dam, as the competition venue carries both practical and symbolic weight. Situated on the Olifants River, the dam is one of Limpopo's largest impoundments, rich with timber and rocky structures that provide perfect habitats for largemouth bass. With spring

conditions placing the fish in prespawn and spawning phases, competitors face a challenging but exciting water body, one likened to Mexico's famed bass lakes. But the dam is more than a fishery. Its renaming honours anti-apartheid activist Flag Boshielo, embedding the venue with history and meaning. To host a global event here is to weave sport into the fabric of memory and identity.

When Team South Africa was introduced, the crowd erupted. With the current FIPSeD World No. 1 ranked angler among their ranks, the hosts are not here merely to participate, they are here to win. For years, South Africa has dominated world bass fishing, holding the No. 1 team ranking until it slipped in Italy in 2024. On home waters, the mission is clear: reclaim the crown.

"On these waters, Africa will rise," declared the team captain, his words met with thunderous applause.

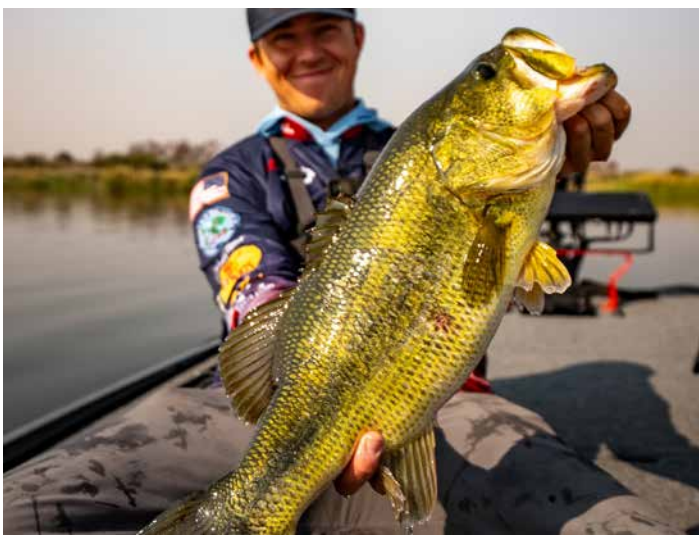
The pride is justified. South Africa's anglers are renowned for their technical skill, adaptability, and camaraderie. Fishing at Flag Boshielo Dam gives them a home advantage, an intimate knowledge of the dam's quirks and moods that may prove decisive.

The XIX Championship has assembled a truly global line-up.

**Team Portugal**, the original hosts of the very first World Black Bass Championship, return to African waters with deep experience and historic significance.

**Team Italy**, hosts in 2024, arrive with the confidence of champions and a determination to defend their crown.

**Team United States** brings star power and strategy under the guidance of legendary angler Kevin VanDam, making his debut as Team USA coach. His squad of six, including Scott



Martin and Ott DeFoe, is as formidable as it is famous.

**Team Australia** showcases the grit and determination of the Asia-Pacific, ready to test themselves against African bass.

**Team Zimbabwe and Eswatini**, neighbours and brothers, embody African spirit and drew some of the loudest cheers of the night.

**Team Spain** and other European nations add competitive fire and flair.

The parade of nations symbolised more than rivalry. It symbolised international friendship, a gathering of cultures united by water, rods, and reels.

For the Sekhukhune District, hosting the championship is

both an honour and an opportunity. The Limpopo Tourism Agency used the platform to showcase its Spring Campaign, positioning Limpopo as South Africa's ultimate destination of renewal. Visitors were invited to explore beyond the dam: from the Echo Caves to the Tšate battlefield, from the Mohlaletsi Royal Village to nature reserves alive with wildlife.

The cultural programme reinforced the message. Praise poets, marimba bands, and contemporary musicians filled the air with sound. Chefs served everything from pap and vleis to gourmet dishes featuring Limpopo's produce. Craft markets displayed beadwork, wood carvings, and textiles that told stories of heritage.

For international visitors, the opening night was not only an introduction to a world championship, but an immersion into the identity of Sekhukhune.

### Economic and social ripple effects

The influx of anglers, officials, and fans has already brought life to Marble Hall and surrounding towns. Lodges are full, restaurants are bustling, and transport operators are busy. Craft markets and local businesses are experiencing a surge in sales, while tour operators are welcoming bookings from foreign visitors keen to explore.

The event also carries a social legacy. Youth fishing clubs, schools, and community groups were invited to witness the spectacle. For many young people, seeing the world converge on their home dam was inspirational. The hope is that new generations of anglers, conservationists, and tourism entrepreneurs will be sparked by this experience.

Following the spectacle of opening night, 02 and 03 September were devoted to practice sessions. Teams used the time to familiarise themselves with the dam, test different strategies, and adapt to the behaviour of African largemouth bass in spring. Reports of strong bites and a few trophy-sized catches hinted at what's to come.

For spectators on the banks, practice days were a preview of the drama to unfold. Anglers fine-tuned their tactics, adjusting lures and reading the water. Each team kept their cards close, but the energy was unmistakable: competition is coming.

From 04 to 06 September, Flag Boshielo Dam will host the ultimate test of skill, patience, and teamwork. With world titles on the line, every cast will matter.

But as one emcee reminded the audience on opening night: *"This is more than fishing. This is about building bridges across waters."*

The XIX World Black Bass Championship 2025 is more than a tournament. It is Limpopo's declaration of pride, Sekhukhune's showcase of heritage, and South Africa's gift to the world of sport.

As fireworks lit up the Marble Hall sky, one truth became clear: Africa had welcomed the world, not with nets and lines alone, but with spirit, warmth, and boundless possibility.

***Le amogetšwe! Siyakwamukela! Welcome to South Africa. Welcome to Limpopo. Welcome to Sekhukhune, where Flag Boshielo Dam carries not just fish, but the dreams of nations.***





**SEKHUKHUNE**  
District Municipality

# Bridging Kingdoms: The Tšate–Isandlwana Benchmarking Tour



In the rolling valleys of KwaZulu-Natal, where battlefields echo with the memory of warriors and royal homesteads guard centuries of wisdom, a historic journey unfolded in August 2025. The Tšate–Isandlwana Benchmarking Tour, held from 18 to 22 August, brought together custodians of heritage, municipal leaders, royal representatives, and cultural practitioners on a five-day odyssey linking Sekhukhuneland with the Zulu Kingdom.

This was no ordinary tour. It was a cultural pilgrimage, rooted in the shared history of resistance led by King Sekhukhune I of the Bapedi Nation and King Cetshwayo kaMpande of the AmaZulu. It was also a forward-looking mission, aimed at strengthening heritage preservation, cultural tourism, and intergovernmental collaboration.

Above all, it was an act of gratitude, to the ancestors, to living communities, and to the partners who made the journey possible.

The tour officially began at KwaPhindangene Royal Residence in Ulundi, home of the late Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi and now seat of iNkosi Zuzifa Buthelezi, his son and successor. The delegation, the Tšate Heritage Development Steering Committee, was welcomed with warmth and dignity by the Buthelezi Royal House.

It was a symbolic starting point. Prince Buthelezi had long been the custodian of Zulu traditions and a bridge between the AmaZulu and the broader South African nation. As the delegation paid respects, they were also stepping into a living archive of memory.

For the Bapedi delegation, represented by Prince Phatudi Thulare, the visit carried profound meaning. “We are honoured to be among the first Kingdoms to visit His Royal Highness after he assumed his role,” he reflected. “This strengthens

our shared resolve to preserve the friendship between King Cetshwayo and King Sekhukhune.”

The Buthelezi Family reciprocated with gracious hospitality, offering the group a rare tour of the Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi Library. Here, manuscripts, photographs, and records of the late Prime Minister’s life are carefully preserved, making the stop both educational and moving.

Days later, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government would declare KwaPhindangene Royal Residence and the resting place of Prince Buthelezi a Provincial Heritage Site — a fitting tribute that underscored the tour’s timeliness.

## Walking in the Footsteps of Kings

From KwaPhindangene, the journey traced a path across key heritage landscapes: Ulundi, Ondini, uMgungundlovu, Isandlwana, Rorke’s Drift, and KwaDukuza. Each site offered lessons not only in history, but also in resilience and renewal.

### Ulundi

Once the capital of King Cetshwayo, Ulundi was razed by British forces on 4 July 1879 in the aftermath of the Anglo-Zulu War. The saying, “*Ulundi limahlikhlikana*”, Ulundi lies in ruins, still lingers. Yet today, Ulundi thrives as a town of over 30,000 residents. Its museums, reconstructed royal kraal, and cultural centres serve as powerful symbols of recovery. For the delegation, Ulundi demonstrated how heritage sites can evolve into engines of tourism and education while honouring the tragedies of conquest.

### Ondini Cultural Museum

Adjacent to Cetshwayo’s royal residence, the Ondini Cultural Museum blends archaeology and storytelling. Here, excavations revealed the scorched remains of 19th-century huts, preserved by fire. Walking through reconstructed beehive



huts and viewing artifacts of Zulu weaponry and beadwork, the group gained vivid insights into how cultural resilience can be curated for contemporary audiences.

#### **King Dingane’s uMgungundlovu**

Further north, in the Valley of the Kings, the delegation explored the reconstructed royal kraal of King Dingane. Established in 1829, uMgungundlovu was both a military stronghold and a seat of governance. The visit illuminated lessons in site interpretation, showing how ruins, oral history, and reconstructed architecture can collectively preserve memory.

#### **The Battlefields of Isandlwana**

The high point of the tour came at Isandlwana, where on 22 January 1879, Zulu warriors outmaneuvered and overwhelmed a well-armed British contingent. Standing on the windswept plain, the delegation could almost hear the war cries of 20,000 Zulu fighters executing the famous “horns of the buffalo” formation. The battle left over 1,300 British soldiers dead and remains one of the most stunning defeats ever inflicted on the empire.

At the Isandlwana Interpretive Centre, exhibits and multimedia displays offered context. Yet it was the open field itself, dotted with cairns marking mass graves, that delivered the most powerful lesson. History was no longer abstract. It was visceral, tactile, alive.

Although the group could not reach Rorke’s Drift, their guide, Mr. Lindizwe Ngobese, vividly described how a handful of British soldiers defended a mission station against thousands of Zulu warriors in the immediate aftermath of Isandlwana. Together, the two sites illustrated the drama and complexity of colonial conflict, underscoring the need to preserve battlefields as outdoor classrooms.

#### **KwaDukuza: Remembering Leaders**

The final leg brought the delegation to KwaDukuza, once the royal seat of King Shaka. Today, the town’s bustling streets hide deep roots. At the King Shaka Visitor Centre, the story of the great Zulu king unfolded through statues, exhibitions, and oral narratives.

Nearby, in Groutville, delegates visited the Chief Albert Luthuli Museum, housed in the Nobel laureate’s former home. Here,

the legacy of a 20th-century freedom fighter complemented the 19th-century histories the delegation had walked through. From Shaka to Luthuli, KwaDukuza embodied the continuity of leadership across eras, each figure reshaping South Africa's destiny in different ways.

### Lessons from Benchmarking

The Tšate–Isandlwana Benchmarking Tour was not a passive sightseeing trip. It was a strategic exchange, carefully designed to extract lessons for Sekhukhuleni's own heritage landscape, especially the Tšate Valley, declared a Provincial Heritage Site in 2007.

By engaging institutions such as LIHRA (Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority) and Amafa (KwaZulu-Natal Amafa and Research Institute), delegates gained practical knowledge in site management, legislative frameworks, and sustainable tourism. Municipal engagements, particularly with Nquthu Local Municipality, showcased how infrastructure upgrades and local economic development can go hand in hand with heritage tourism.

The delegation also noted the value of inclusive governance. From royal houses to local municipalities, from museums to grassroots custodians, the preservation of heritage required many voices at one table.

### Building the Future of Tšate

For the Bapedi, the benchmarking journey was also an act of remembering. At Isandlwana and Ulundi, they saw reflections of Tšate, once the stronghold of King Sekhukhune I, who

resisted Boer and British incursions in the 19th century. The parallels were striking: both royal capitals, both attacked, both still standing in memory and spirit.

The Tšate Heritage Development Steering Committee, representing municipalities, the Bapedi Kingdom, and provincial authorities, now carries the responsibility of translating these lessons into action. The vision is bold: to position Tšate as a world-class heritage destination, celebrating Sekhukhune's legacy while generating tourism, jobs, and cultural pride.

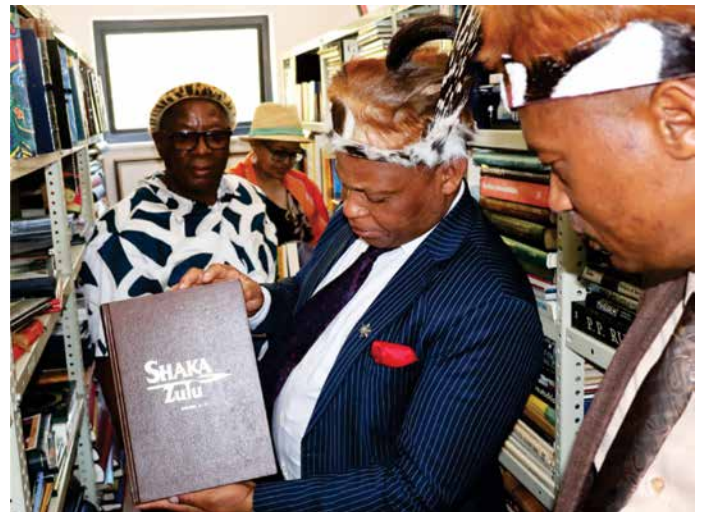
### A Journey of Gratitude

As the delegation departed KwaZulu-Natal, one sentiment echoed above all: gratitude. Gratitude to the Royal House of KwaPhindangene, to the Buthelezi Family, to the tour guides and municipal hosts, and to the ancestors who made this historic journey possible.

Mr. Nchabeleng captured it best: "By walking where others once walked, by listening where others once spoke, we have deepened our understanding of heritage not just as memory, but as a living tool for unity, development, and nation-building."

For South Africa, the Tšate–Isandlwana Benchmarking Tour stands as a reminder that heritage is never frozen in the past. It is alive, dynamic, and capable of shaping futures.

And for travelers, it offers an invitation: to walk, to listen, and to let history transform the present.





# Sekhukhune turns up the heat a Spring Campaign 2025 unveiled

When the Limpopo Tourism Agency (LTA) officially launched its Limpopo Spring Campaign on 28 August 2025 at TT Lifestyle Pub & Restaurant in Jane Furse, the message was crystal clear: *Spring belongs to Limpopo*. The province isn't just chasing the sunshine, it's staging a season of unforgettable festivals, exhibitions, music, food, culture, and outdoor adventure.

With KwaZulu-Natal leading overnight trips in Q1 2025 and Gauteng claiming the highest average spend per trip, Limpopo is flexing its tourism muscle, determined to claim its rightful spot as South Africa's most irresistible travel destination. And the province's strongest card this year? The Spring Festival Music Chillas headlined by DJ Maphorisa at Ga-Moretsele, Jane Furse, on 27 September 2025, the biggest drawcard not only in Sekhukhune but in the entire province. The full calendar stacks up, and why this year's spring in Limpopo is set to make the rest of Mzansi green with envy.

## Bass World Championship 2025

04 – 05 Sept | Schuinsdraai, Sekhukhune

Sekhukhune takes the spotlight as international anglers compete on its waters. Fishing may sound niche, but adventure tourism loves it. Teams arrive with entourages, stay long, and spend freely, transforming Schuinsdraai into a global angling hotspot.

## Baobab Night Market & Ndlovu Youth Choir Heritage Tour

05 Sept | Polokwane

Two powerhouses collide: Sun Meropa's Baobab Night Market with food, music, and fun; and the globally adored Ndlovu Youth Choir staging a Heritage Month showcase. Together, they put Limpopo nightlife on the map.

## Heritage Festivals Galore

Sept weekends | Vhembe, Sekhukhune, Mopani

From the Phalaphala Royal Heritage Festival to the Sekhukhune Culture & Heritage Experience and the Tzaneen Heritage Picnic, September drums with cultural pride. These aren't just festivals, they're identity builders.

## The Jewel in the Crown: Spring Festival Music Chillas

27 Sept | Ga-Moretsele, Jane Furse, Sekhukhune

All roads led to Jane Furse when DJ Maphorisa, one of South Africa's most electrifying music producers, takes the stage. With amapiano beats reverberating across Ga-Moretsele, the Spring Festival is more than a concert, it's a cultural explosion, a youth

magnet, and the biggest tourism drawcard in the province. Sekhukhune, often celebrated for its heritage valleys and battlefields, now positions itself as Limpopo's festival capital. The event pulled thousands from Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and beyond, filling lodges, B&Bs, and guest houses while creating ripple effects across food vendors, transport providers, and craft traders.

The scale is unmatched. For Limpopo, the Spring Festival isn't just another date on the calendar, it's the signature event of the Spring Campaign 2025, a powerful anchor that places Sekhukhune at the heart of provincial tourism growth.

In a competitive landscape for the number one domestic tourism spot Limpopo's Spring Campaign is its boldest move yet to own the season. By making September synonymous with Limpopo, and crowning Sekhukhune's Spring festivities as the flagship domestic tourism campaign, the province is firming its place not just in the top three, but right at the very top of South Africa's domestic tourism charts.



# SEKHUKHUNE

## District Municipality

# Sekhukhune Tourism Association elects new Executive Committee to drive destination growth

The tourism sector in Sekhukhune District entered a new chapter of leadership and renewed purpose following the successful Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Sekhukhune Tourism Association (STA), held on Tuesday, 07 October 2025, at Sekhukhune Lodge in Fetakgomo Tubatse. The AGM, convened at 10:00am, saw tourism stakeholders from across the district gather to review progress, reaffirm partnerships, and elect a new Executive Committee to steer the Association into its next phase of growth.

According to the electoral official, Mr Isaac Mahlakwane, Local Economic Development Officer at Sekhukhune District Municipality, "The AGM was conducted in full compliance with the STA constitution and governance framework. Members in good standing, with fully paid-up membership, participated in electing the new Executive Committee to guide the Association in the forthcoming term."

The newly elected Executive Committee is as follows:

Chairperson:	<b>Mr Waziwa Skhosana</b>
Deputy Chairperson:	<b>Mr Paul Mashoene</b>
Secretary:	<b>Ms Tlalane Ramoneta</b>
Deputy Secretary:	<b>Ms Phindile Maabane</b>
Treasurer:	<b>Mr Edward Motshana</b>

The new Chairperson, Mr Waziwa Skhosana, is the owner of Thaba Nkwe Game Resort, a landmark establishment on the R33 road linking Stoffberg and Groblersdal, strategically positioned along the Mafulo a Matala Tourism Route. Thaba Nkwe serves as the south-eastern gateway to the route, which connects tourism assets across the Elias Motsoaledi and Ephraim Mogale Local Municipalities.

In his acceptance remarks, Mr Skhosana extended heartfelt



appreciation to the outgoing Chairperson, Mr Jimmy Maboko, who continues to serve the sector as Deputy Provincial Chairperson of the Limpopo Provincial Tourism Association (LPTA).

“We extend our sincere appreciation to the outgoing Executive Committee for their tireless efforts and valuable contribution to advancing the tourism agenda in Sekhukhune District,” said Skhosana. “Their leadership ensured that our Association remains a credible voice within the broader district, provincial, and national tourism structures.”

Among the observers and well-wishers was Dr Mashudu Silimela, Chairperson of the LPTA, the strategic tourism marketing and communications liaison between government and the regional and community tourism associations in Limpopo. Emphasizing the new committee’s vision, Skhosana underscored the importance of clarity and coherence in tourism communication and branding.

“Hospitality is a communication function. What we communicate to tourists as a promise of experience must be delivered thoughtfully and thoroughly through the brand,” Skhosana explained.

He added that the new leadership’s focus will centre on strengthening collaboration with stakeholders, formalizing tourism enterprises, driving inclusive growth, and improving visibility and market access for local tourism products and services.

“Our goal is to position Sekhukhune District as a competitive and sustainable destination within Limpopo and South Africa. Sekhukhune is richly endowed with natural and cultural attractions, our task is to package these experiences clearly

and confidently,” concluded Skhosana.

With renewed energy, strategic clarity, and visionary leadership, the new Executive Committee of the Sekhukhune Tourism Association stands ready to recapture the imagination of travelers and investors alike, advancing tourism as a key driver of local economic development.



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