

■ W I L D L I F E

Visit a national park free

SOUTH African National Parks (SAN-Parks) will be presenting the 14th annual SA National Parks Week from September 8 to 15, and is once again proud to celebrate it with partners Total South Africa and FNB.

This year, SANParks is pleased to announce that it has extended the week to include a weekend, heeding a request from South Africans who don't have time to visit national parks during the week.

This annual event gives all South African citizens the opportunity to visit one of the 21 national parks for free. This year is special as the country celebrates 25 years of democracy.

Every year, SANParks aims to increase the number of citizens granted free access to national parks during this time.

"Since we started the programme in 2006, some 438 361 South Africans have been afforded the opportunity to enter national parks, and we want to see these numbers grow.

"It's important for South Africans to visit and know the importance of national parks. They act as spaces to practice sustainable conservation, as spaces that preserve and celebrate our culture and heritage, and we now see national parks playing the critical role of empowering communities living adjacent to parks through job creation and we continue to explore ways of creating business opportunities particularly for small business owners," said SANParks chief executive Fundisile Mketeni.

"Through our socio-economic transformation programmes and our expanded public works programme, we work closely with communities living adjacent to national parks with the aim of strengthening our relationships with them, to be more inclusive so we can tackle issues of wildlife crime with their help, afford them more access to parks for cultural use, inform young people about the different career options that parks have to offer and create job opportunities. SANParks hopes to strengthen and enable those communities to reap the benefits of the national parks," he added.

He encouraged people to take advantage of the week to see what the country's parks had to offer .

◆ Visit the website for more information: www.sanparks.org/about/events/parks_week | South African National Parks (SANParks) Corporate Communications



ON A night drive, a spotlight illuminates rhino walking through the bush in Kruger National Park. | **KAREN SANDISON** African News Agency (ANA)