

RISE WITH OUR LAND OF WIDE OPEN SPACES

**FREE STATE
INCENTIVE FACT BOOK**



NATIONAL CONVENTION BUREAU

Clarens – Free State





FREE STATE PROVINCE

Known as 'the bread basket' of South Africa, the Free State is all about wide open spaces and local hospitality. This province is situated in the heart of South Africa and, when it comes to incentive options as well as pre- and post-tours, visitors are spoiled for choice. From visiting the artists in Rosendal to tasting 'boerekos' at the wonderful restaurants in Clarens, exploring the beautiful landscapes of Golden Gate Highlands National Park and taking advantage of all the great watersports adventures on the Gariep Dam, there are countless incentive and leisure activities on offer. For a spot of inspiration, visit the Basotho Cultural Village and glean an understanding of local folklore and traditions. On the other end of the spectrum, take a township tour of Mangaung and get an authentic taste of city life according to the many fascinating people who live there. Mangaung/Bloemfontein is the capital of the province and South Africa's judicial capital. The city is a wonderful mix of history, heritage and modern-day attractions, and no matter where you are from, you will find a warm South African welcome in the Free State.



KEY ATTRACTIONS AND INSPIRING ACTIVITIES:

- **GOLDEN GATE HIGHLANDS NATIONAL PARK:** South Africa's only grasslands national park is named after the golden-hued sandstone mountains that are so distinctive. It is here that visitors can enjoy sightings of oribi, blesbok, springbok and Burchell's zebra. Delegates will love the intrigue of a guided walk through an enormous cave, where they can view ancient San rock art, or a visit to one of the few 'vulture restaurants' in the world. Guided walks and game drives are popular at Golden Gate Highlands National Park and the area is rich in both cultural and natural history.
- **BASOTHO CULTURAL VILLAGE:** Delegates will love interacting with the local colour and culture of the province and a trip to the Basotho Cultural Village in the Free State will definitely be an excursion to remember. Here, they can discover authentic Basotho hospitality, art and tradition in this fine cultural village, set amid the splendour of the Golden Gate Highlands National Park.
- **CLARENS:** The 'Jewel of the Free State', this quaint town is home to art galleries, great restaurants and lots of outdoor adventures. Delegates can shop up a storm at the little shops, followed by horse-back safaris in the gorgeous mountain surroundings. Smaller groups can also opt for pony-trekking adventures just across the border in Lesotho. Clarens is a fantastic spot for team-building, treasure hunts and incentives with a difference, and there is a wide range of accommodation available. The town is very popular for leisurely weekend getaways from Johannesburg or Pretoria.
- **SMALL-TOWN ADVENTURES:** The Eastern Free State is a wonderful place to take delegates on a 'road-trip adventure', from the aforementioned artsy town of Clarens, to cherry-tasting in Fouriesberg, the Lethoteng Weavers in Clocolan to buy gorgeous mohair, and Ladybrand to see some of the exquisite sandstone architecture for which the area is so well known. Another great place to take a road trip, not too far from the bright lights of Johannesburg and Pretoria, is Parys. Like Clarens, this is a quaint and arty village known for its eateries, galleries and fun water activities on the Vaal River.
- **VREDEFORT DOME:** This UNESCO World Heritage Site is located near the town of Parys, and is known as the world's oldest meteorite impact site. Guided walks are on offer, along with other outdoor activities like quad-biking, rock-climbing and mountain-biking.
- **MANGAUNG/BLOEMFONTEIN:** The city is definitely a highlight of any visit to the Free State and there is always a lot on the go. Visit the Loch Logan Waterfront, the Franklin Nature Reserve or Naval Hill and take a walking tour of the city's main attractions.
- **ROAD-TRIPPING:** There are various routes in the Free State that make for great bus tours for groups or self-drive options for independent travellers. These include the Maloti Drakensberg Route (through three provinces and Lesotho), the Friendly N6 Route (which connects the Free State to the Eastern Cape), the Battlefield Route (a must for history buffs with a fascination for the Anglo-Boer War) and the Bloemfontein Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu Heritage Route (aka the BBT Route).
- **GARIEP DAM AND NATURE RESERVE:** This is a popular attraction for watersport enthusiasts and another great destination for team-building and rewarding incentives. A variety of watersports (and a range of good accommodation) is on offer, as well as fantastic nature walks and bird viewing in this, the Free State's largest nature reserve.



FREE STATE: BLOEMFONTEIN

Rise with the warm heart of South Africa

Mangaung/Bloemfontein is a popular business and entertainment hub, yet it still has a pretty laid-back atmosphere, which means it's a great place for both business events and leisure activities and incentive travellers. 'The City of Roses' (named after the annual rose festival that takes place here) has a fascinating history and there is a range of different activities and exciting experiences on offer for those who want to spend a bit more time getting to know the place.

There is also a wealth of accommodation on offer both in the city and in close surrounds, and everything is easily accessible by good roads and excellent infrastructure. Attractions further afield include the Golden Gate Highlands National Park, the Gariep Dam and the small towns of Clarens, Parys and Fouriesberg – fantastic for road-trip adventures.

Accessibility

Bloemfontein is easily accessible through South Africa's major international airports located in the cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban with:

- 10 direct flights a day from Johannesburg
- Two direct flights a day from Cape Town
- One direct flight a day from Durban

Johannesburg is the gateway to South Africa via OR Tambo International Airport – the largest airport in Africa. Connecting flights via Johannesburg include:

- Europe: Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Istanbul, London, Luxembourg, Madrid, Munich, Paris, Zurich
- Middle East: Abu Dhabi, Cairo, Dubai, Jeddah
- North America: Washington, New York
- South America: Buenos Aires, Sao Paolo
- Asia: Bangkok, Beijing, Hong Kong, Mumbai, Singapore
- Australia: Perth, Sydney
- Africa: all major cities

Bloemfontein is also an easy three-to-four hour drive from Johannesburg, along the N1 highway.

Where to stay

There are over 1 543 graded hotels and establishments in Bloemfontein and surrounds and delegates are spoilt for choice when it comes to variety – from city hotels to country estates and guesthouses. Well-known local hotel chain Protea Hotels offer some options, including Protea Hotel Bloemfontein and Protea Hotel Willow Lake. Another popular business meetings venue that also offers accommodation is the Windmill Lodge. The basic, value-for-money City Lodge and Road Lodge are also on the accommodation list and, for something with a country feel De Oude Kraal Country Estate and Spa is an excellent option (the place has a fantastic reputation for its culinary offerings).

Loch Logan Waterfront, Bloemfontein - Free State



Exceptional incentive activities

- **CITY TOUR OF BLOEMFONTEIN:** Organise a 'party bus' to take your delegates on a fun tour around the city to visit the main attractions, including Naval Hill and the Franklin Game Reserve; Free State Botanical Gardens; Bloemfontein National Museum, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, the Choet Visser Rugby Museum and the famous and somewhat eccentric Mystic Boer pub.
- **A TREASURE HUNT IN CLARENS:** Your delegates may enjoy a treasure hunt activity in the small town of Clarens. Leave clues at various galleries, restaurants, pubs and shops, giving participants the opportunity to get to know this town a little better. Throw in some trout fishing, horseback riding and quad-biking as part of the mix and a good time for all is guaranteed.
- **THE FREE STATE'S GARIEP DAM NATURE RESERVE:** Offers visitors fantastic fishing and a range of watersports, including canoeing, angling, power-sailing and waterskiing. For those who prefer dry land, there's game viewing, horseback rides and hiking stopping off at viewpoints to take photographs and enjoy the beautiful surrounds. A tour to the Gariep dam wall – a pretty astonishing engineering feat – is also on offer.
- **FOSSIL HUNTING EXPEDITIONS:** The Eastern Free State is known for incredible fossil findings that date back to the early dinosaur age and there are a few specialised operators offering fossil hunting expeditions. You may not discover remnants of a 210-million-year-old dinosaur (actually discovered in the Ladybrand district of the Free State), but there is no doubt you'll have great fun trying.
- **RIVER RAFTING ON THE ASH RIVER:** The Ash River just outside Clarens is a rafting hotspot. The Ash River is fed by the Katse Dam, which sits high in the Maluti Mountains of Lesotho and ensures pretty significant water levels all year round. The river has both Grade 3 and Grade 4 rapids with names such as Car Wash, Fish Pond and Big Surprise.
- **HIKING IN THE GOLDEN GATE HIGHLANDS NATIONAL PARK:** From easy walks to more challenging hikes, there is something for everyone in this scenic park. Dramatic views are guaranteed and the area is known for its spectacular bird life. Delegates can also stay over the value-for-money SANParks accommodation.
- **BASOTHO CULTURAL VILLAGE:** For some insight into the heritage of the Basotho, visit this fantastic cultural village with your group of delegates and/or incentive travellers. For something a little different, you might want to book a walking trail with a herbalist/sangoma and learn which grasses, roots, herbs, leaves or bark in the veld are used for medicinal or ritual purposes.
- **PARYS, FREE STATE:** The town of Parys in the Free State is great place for adventure and watersports, with a range of activities for all ages and fitness levels. River rafting on the Vaal River with accredited facilitators is a half-day or a full day of fun. The experience is tailor-made to suit the age and capabilities of participants, and safety gear, life jackets and helmets are provided. For the less adventurous, this Free State tourism town offers a choice of art galleries, antique shops, pubs, delis, spas and restaurants.
- **BLOEMFONTEIN TOWNSHIP TOUR:** Get to know about the history and culture of Mangaung on a guided township tour. See the house of the late Thomas Maphikela and enjoy local beer and some authentic township cuisine and nightlife.
- **A NIGHT OF STARS:** Organise a night to remember for your delegates at the Boyden Observatory, where you get to explore the evening sky with the 13-inch Alvin Clark refractor (which is known as the third-largest telescope in South Africa). You will, however, need to arrange this beforehand.

Clarens – Free State

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