

A positive story of exciting opportunities offered by SANParks Cultural Heritage Management

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com**How to cite this article:**Sello, H., 2024, 'A positive story of exciting opportunities offered by SANParks Cultural Heritage Management', *Koedoe* 66(2), a1819. <https://doi.org/10.4102/koedoe.v66i2.1819>**Copyright:**© 2024. The Author.
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A conversation least held in this country is one about the conservation of cultural heritage. What this means is that inadequate attention is paid to systematic efforts directed at safeguarding and promoting traditional cultural knowledge, intangible customs, and all other types of cultural heritage.

SANParks is a conservation agency that manages geographically vast national parks, which are in different biomes that include grassland, fynbos, savanna and succulent karoo, and are home to a great variety of fauna and flora. Evident across these landscapes is rich evidence that points to the presence of humanity over thousands of years. This is a welcomed truth that demands that SANParks invest itself in the protection of our rich cultural heritage resources that are found within national parks. Doing so ensures that the 'windows into the past' are appropriately protected not only as a moral obligation but also in compliance with applicable national and international legislative instruments.

Increased resource allocation to the cultural heritage division of SANParks has also proven highly beneficial in ensuring that this mandate is increasingly being fulfilled. The publication of this Special Issue is intended to serve as a testament of this journey.

Also highlighted in this issue are areas of challenges that need attention. And through reflection of both the good and the gaps, we can chart a path of sustainable improvements that is enabled through valuable lessons learned. The growth of cultural heritage and its various spinoffs, including cultural tourism, is a vital step that ensures that cultural heritage becomes the central focus of attraction in tandem with the attention our rich vegetation biomes or the wildlife of our national parks receive.

A special word of appreciation goes to all role players who made this publication a possibility. May this be an inspiration that builds on other collaborative efforts that position cultural heritage as an asset embraced by a vast majority across society.

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Note: Special Collection: Celebrating Cultural Heritage within National Parks.