

Freedom PARK

a heritage destination

an agency of the
Department of Sport, Arts and Culture

In 1999 Dr Nelson Mandela said "...the day should not be far off, when we shall have a people's shrine, a Freedom Park, where we shall honour with all the dignity they deserve, those who endured pain so we should experience the joy of freedom".



That day has arrived and driven by the necessity for the diverse people of South Africa and the world to understand and appreciate the country's struggle for liberation, Freedom Park was born as a national and international icon of humanity and freedom.

The Park was established in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25 of 1999 Section 7.1. It is a product of the government's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the nation urging government to create a monument and memorial to celebrate those who sacrificed for a free and democratic South Africa.

Freedom Park is the South African tale in the voice of the South African people. Using our unique culture, heritage, history and spirituality, it tells of the events that shaped us and why we are who we are today. It is the heart and soul of our nation captured in one breathtaking space.

Situated close to our capital's city centre, Freedom Park stands as a memorial to what we have achieved as a nation. Most importantly,



Mveledzo

(Tshivenda)

1

The **Mveledzo** or spiral path links all these elements into one conclusive whole. The path has been designed in such a way that visitors are taken on a contemplative journey in the serenity of the natural landscape as they walk between the elements.



It stands as a beacon to guide all South Africans on the route of hope and patriotism to a proudly united nation. Freedom Park urges us to experience and appreciate our history, to walk where our ancestors have walked and to learn about our shared heritage as brothers and sisters. In this way, it emphasises and celebrates the distinct unity to be found in our diverse nature.

A visit to Freedom Park as a liberating, spiritually cleansing and inspirational experience: a pilgrimage to dispel the myths and prejudices that have concealed and distorted the image and achievements of South Africans.

The deep wounds that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission revealed remain, unfortunately, the scar tissue that forms the fiber of our society today. It is also our unfortunate reality that we have still not reached agreement on our past. Freedom Park therefore guides the nation on a healing route through ongoing dialogues and interpretation so that we can reach understanding and compassion for one another.

The Park has been divided into different areas or elements, each one dedicated to a different aspect and serving a specific purpose. Once complete, Freedom Park will have the following major elements or areas:

- Isivivane
- S'khumbuto
- Moshate
- Uitspanplek
- Tiva
- //hapo and
- The Pan African Archives

The names chosen for the elements reflect various South African languages, thus enhancing the sense of inclusivity and representation for all.

Isivivane, S'khumbuto, Moshate, Uitspanplek and the spiral path has already been completed and were opened to the public in December 2009.

The construction of //hapo and surrounding structures has also been completed and the completed architectural offering with temporary exhibitions was opened to the public on 16 June 2010.



Uitspanplek

(Afrikaans)

2

Uitspanplek is a peaceful place where families can spend the day together or where visitors to the Park can relax and reflect after a tour. The concept is derived from the Groot Trek era where the Voortrekkers would interrupt their journey to rest and replenish as they moved into the interior of the land. This place of rest would be called the uitspanplek.



S'khumbuto

(isiSwati)

S'khumbuto is the main memorial. It stands as a testimony to eight conflicts that have shaped the South Africa of today. These are Pre-Colonial Wars, Slavery, Genocide, Wars of Resistance, the South African War, the First World War, the Second World War and the Struggle for Liberation.

The concept of S'khumbuto signifies a place of remembrance for those who have died, but also a place of invoking their assistance in current and future affairs. S'khumbuto is a place of celebration rather than grief and mourning. As a tribute to African and human dignity, S'khumbuto is a place for the renewal of the human spirit.

S'khumbuto has various elements, each one with its own symbolism and meaning.

3

Wall of Names

The Wall of Names is an awe-inspiring structure inscribed with the names of those who played a significant part in the eight conflicts within South Africa's history. To date, over 180 000 names have been inscribed. The design also allows for future generations to memorialise their heroes and heroines.

4

Amphitheatre

Embraced by the Wall of Names, the reeds and the Gallery of Leaders, is the Amphitheatre - a terraced space that can seat 2,000 people. It serves as a multi-purpose venue for major national events or celebrations.

5

Sanctuary

The Sanctuary is a serene environment conducive to the outpouring of emotion. Visitors are invited to conduct a ceremony or light a candle in remembrance of the victims in our struggles for freedom or simply to celebrate the life of a loved one.

6

Eternal Flame

The Eternal Flame adjacent to the Sanctuary calls on visitors to remember the unknown and unsung heroes and heroines who lost their lives without their names being recorded in history.

7

Gallery of Leaders

The Gallery of Leaders is an indoor space reserved to showcase those leaders whose contributions stand out in human memory and history - nationally, continentally and internationally. It aims to inspire visitors to emulate the sacrificial and heroic lives of these commemorated leaders.

8

Reeds

Silhouetted against the sky stands the majestic sculpture of ascending reeds. With over 100 reeds, the tallest measuring 32 meters in height, this spectacular sight ensures visibility of Freedom Park from all around the capital city. The reeds signify the rebirth of the South African nation as well as a nation embracing the future.

9

President's Tree

This African Olive tree was planted by former president Thabo Mbeki in June 2002. The olive tree is traditionally considered as a tree representing peace.

10

Moshate

(seSotho)

Moshate is a high-level hospitality suite, which will be used for presidential and diplomatic functions. It also acts as a VIP retreat for negotiations, discussions and signing agreements and accords.

The architectural concept was derived from the design of the various kingdoms within the South African landscape. In this way, the institution of African traditional leadership is being honoured.



Isivivane

(isiZulu and isiXhosa)

Isivivane is a sacred space – the spiritual resting place for those who played a part in the freedom and liberation of South Africa. Inclusive of all faiths and religions, it invites South Africans to celebrate their shared spirituality and heritage.

Isivivane asks us to take a moment to contemplate our united humanity. Despite our differences in race, culture and creed, all human beings share a common bond in the way in which we experience emotions such as joy, pain or loss. As South Africans, Africans and citizens of the world, Isivivane is the ideal space to explore and celebrate this thread that runs through us all.

Isivivane is a reflection of the spirituality of our continent. Traditionally, every household had its own spiritual space or umsamo. This concept was used to construct Isivivane as South Africa's national spiritual space.

To infuse Isivivane with a sense of sanctity, representatives from various religions and beliefs performed the necessary rites and rituals to ensure a spiritual haven which all South Africans can call their own. As a sign of respect, we ask that all visitors remove their shoes when entering Isivivane. This tradition of removing shoes when entering a spiritual space is also drawn from our continent's spirituality, where individuals would remove their shoes and cleanse their hands before entering the umsamo.

Isivivane has four key components to look out for, namely the Lesaka and its boulders, the Lekgotla, water and trees.

11

The Lesaka and boulders

(Setswana, Sesotho and Sesotho sa Lebowa)

This is the symbolic resting place for the spirits of those who played a part in the struggles for humanity and freedom in South Africa. This occurred through performing Cleansing and Healing and Return of Spirits ceremonies in areas of conflict nationally, continentally and internationally. As part of the Return of Spirits ceremonies, soil from areas where conflicts occurred was also brought to the Lesaka as part of the process of laying the spirits to rest.

To construct the Lesaka, each of the nine South African provinces provided a boulder from a place of importance within that province. These nine boulders, together with a boulder representing national government and a boulder representing the international community, forms the circular shape of the Lesaka.

12

The Lekgotla

(Setswana, Sesotho and Sesotho sa Lebowa)

This semi-circular seating structure is built around an Umlahlankosi tree, allowing visitors to meet and hold discussions in the same way as was done in various African traditions. This meeting place is symbolic of the African political system, which afforded all the opportunity to discuss matters of importance. The Lekgotla within Isivivane serves as a beacon of this important practice, which is the heritage of all nations.

13

Water points

Water plays a significant role in cleansing and healing in many belief systems. Water points have been stationed at both Isivivane's exits so that visitors can wash their hands when leaving. Various communities in Africa practice this tradition as a sign of leaving a sacred area.

14

Umlahlankosi

(IsiZulu)

Nine Umlahlankosi trees, each donated by one of South Africa's nine provinces, surround Isivivane. Traditionally, the branches of these trees were used as a medium to transport the spirits of the departed from the grave site or place of death to the home of the deceased. These trees symbolise one of the mediums through which the spirits of South Africa's fallen heroes and heroines have been brought to Isivivane.



//hapo

(Khoi)

Khoi proverb:

//Hapo ge //hapo tama /haohasib dis tamas ka i bo

(A dream is not a dream until it is shared by the entire community)

//hapo forms part of the final phase of Freedom Park, drawing all elements of this 52-hectare site together into a united whole. It serves as the starting point for visitors' journeys through Freedom Park. Here, guests receive a warm welcome and guidance to their chosen destinations, whether they opt for a full tour of the site or a brief visit to a specific space.

//hapo tells a story spanning 3.6 billion years, focusing on southern Africa while also touching on the rest of the continent. Our rich and diverse history unfolds in seven epochs, from creation to contemporary issues of reconciliation and nation-building.

Like other elements of Freedom Park, //hapo seamlessly blends into the landscape rather than imposing on it. The structure, designed with steel frames overlaid with copper, resembles boulders. Each of the seven epochs is depicted in a separate boulder. Over time, the copper weathers to match the natural stone hues of the surrounding area. Nestled among large trees and lush vegetation, //hapo harmonizes with the natural environment on the side of Salvokop.

Inside //hapo, the history of our region comes to life, encouraging visitors to engage beyond passive observation. Stories unfold in layers, inspiring wonder and curiosity. Instead of merely presenting facts, //hapo provides clues and tools that empower visitors to imagine, "What might it have been like for me?"

//hapo is much more than a traditional museum. It is a dynamic space where South Africa's historical, cultural, and spiritual narratives come alive. Here, visitors gain deeper insights into a complex past, celebrate the nation's cultural diversity, and contribute to shared dreams for the future. The ultimate goal of //hapo is to serve as a 'living' interpretive center, one that resonates personally with every South African.

Exhibitions are designed around social spaces that foster live interpretation, performance, and storytelling. Many exhibits include cultural or historical objects that visitors can touch, discuss, or use in interactive experiences. Guests actively participate by creating narratives, images, and videos, engaging in performances, crafting cultural objects, or taking part in other group activities. This immersive approach transforms visitors from spectators into participants, leaving their personal imprint on history.

By amplifying previously marginalized voices, //hapo highlights a people's history that showcases creativity, resilience, and the enduring spirit of our communities. It prioritizes indigenous knowledge, uplifting the African voice as a paradigm of understanding. The seven epochs that form the foundation of southern Africa's story are:

Epoch 1: Earth

Through African creation stories, this epoch explores the origins of the universe. Different societies attribute creation to a singular or multiple creators, while others emphasize natural forces. Scientific perspectives also play a role in shaping contemporary understanding. This epoch journeys back 3.6 billion years to examine the earliest forms of life and the geological origins of southern Africa, home to some of the oldest rocks and continental crust on Earth.

Epoch 2: Ancestors

This epoch examines the concept of ancestors from both physical and spiritual perspectives. It explores how early humans

developed control over their environment while recognizing ancestral veneration across cultures. Burial ceremonies and spiritual practices demonstrate humanity's deep connection with those who have passed, emphasizing the enduring presence of ancestors in cultural traditions.

Epoch 3: Peopling

This epoch challenges the notion of pre-colonial African societies as static, highlighting their dynamic historical evolution. It showcases African innovations in science, culture, and spirituality over millennia. For more than 4,000 years, African communities have developed rich cultures, languages, spiritual traditions, and sustainable ways of life.

Epoch 4: Resistance and Colonization

This epoch chronicles the major historical forces that shaped modern South Africa, a nation forged through centuries of struggle, oppression, and resilience. The arrival of colonialists in the late 1400s disrupted African societies, imposing systems of subjugation and exploitation. However, these hardships sparked a powerful resistance that ultimately contributed to the downfall of apartheid.

Epoch 5: Industrialization and Urbanization

This epoch delves into the large-scale mineral exploitation during colonial rule and its impact on indigenous industries and settlement patterns. It highlights the coercion and violence used to create an African labor force, while also showcasing how workers fought to preserve their dignity and humanity amidst economic exploitation.

Epoch 6: Nationalisms and Struggle

This epoch examines the competing forces of white state formation and the struggle for a democratic South Africa. The consolidation of white power was neither uniform nor straightforward. It resulted from complex political negotiations and compromises, ultimately leading to the apartheid system that took hold in 1948.

Epoch 7: Nation-Building and Continent-Building

In this epoch, visitors engage with the story of South Africa's transition from apartheid to a constitutional democracy. The journey begins in the late 20th century, exploring the reclamation of freedoms enshrined in South Africa's Constitution.

By narrating the region's history from an African perspective, //hapo integrates indigenous knowledge with contemporary scientific understanding. It serves as a fusion of African wisdom and Western scholarship, offering a comprehensive story of the southern African continent.

//hapo is a place where South Africans gather to dream together, forging a shared vision for the future.

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