

9 May 2015

## Press Release

**Robben Island Museum's collaboration with Google now opens up the island to more visitors, and should have increase interest and ultimately visits to the island in the long term.**

Just over two weeks ago Robben Island Museum, along with Google announced that the island had been mapped using the revolutionary Street View technology which will now offer users of Google Maps 360 degree panoramic views of the island. Along with this, Google now also offers a virtual tour of the selected parts of the island, with section accompanied by a video narrated by former political prisoner –turned-tour guide Vumsumzi Mcongo.

Along with the island being mapped by Google, its archival documents including letters from prisoners, including Robert Sobukwe, is also available online as part of Google's Heritage Collection website.

Despite worries from the public and some in the media that fewer people might want to visit the museum, Robben Island Museum CEO Sibongiseni Mkhize says he's not worried.

"Actually we're expecting the opposite. The way things are today, even when people want to book hotels or visit places, they rely very much on the internet and visiting online to have an idea of what[to expect]. So we're expecting people to do the same for Robben Island Museum," said Mkhize.

Google's collaboration with Robben Island Museum should see more visitors taking the ferry to the island. Over the last five years visitor number have increased from 249 000 paid adult visitors in 2010 to 273 000 paid adult visitors in 2014.

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For more information, contact: Quinton Mtyala 076 190 1019

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**Always wanted to learn more about Robben Island, and its history as an apartheid-era maximum security prison for political activists? Google's inclusion of Robben Island in its Heritage Collection now makes it possible.**

With Robben Island Museum's inclusion as part of Google's Heritage Collection, those who seek to better understand the history of the island, along with the struggle against apartheid, can now read up on letters and other resources online.

Apart from the website which can be accessed through your desktop, Robben Island Museum has also launched a Android app which features all the archival content captured by Google which can be found in the Play Store.

"In Their Own Words" is a collection of stories from former political prisoners, held at Robben Island. These include video interviews with the likes of Ahmed Kathrada, Kgalema Motlanthe and Tokyo Sexwale. These former political prisoners give insight to their time on the island.

Google also takes visitors inside the cottage that Pan Africanist Congress leader Robert Sobukwe called home during his six year stint on the island. Sobukwe spent six years on the island from 1963 to 1969, and was released to Kimberley where he eventually died in 1977 from cancer.

Robben Island Museum's inclusion in Google's Heritage Collection brings the story of those who endured, and toiled on the island to life in pictures, letters and video and should serve as a testimony to the next generation to the cruelty of apartheid.

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