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EDITION

03

Bolanala



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

A **NATION** 
THAT **WORKS**  FOR ALL



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EDITORIAL

As we turn the final page of this year, we are reminded once again that tourism is a story written by many hands and what an extraordinary story you have helped South Africa tell.

Across our nine provinces, from our bustling cities to our quiet dorpies, from our mountains to our coastlines, our tourism partners, guides, entrepreneurs, creators, conservationists, community hosts, investors, and service champions have carried the spirit of South Africa forward with courage, pride, and unwavering determination.

This year, you reminded the world that South Africa is not just a destination; it is a feeling. A warm welcome. A shared meal. A story passed from one generation to the next. A landscape that steals your breath and a people who touch your heart.

You have shown resilience in the face

of challenges, innovation in the face of gaps, and unity when collaboration was needed most. Through your work, travellers discovered new reasons to fall in love with our homeland - and locals rediscovered the magic in their own backyards.

Thank you for lifting our sector, for nurturing jobs, for protecting our heritage, for empowering communities, and for proving once again that tourism is a powerful force for hope, pride, and possibility.

As we step into the festive season, a season of light, family, and celebration. We wish you moments of rest, joy, and reflection. May you find time to breathe, reconnect, and gather strength for the new horizons ahead.

To those who will be working through the holidays, keeping the wheels of tourism turning: we see you, we honour you, and we appreciate you. Your dedication

ensures that countless families experience unforgettable South African holidays.

As we welcome a new year, may we walk together with renewed purpose. May we continue to tell the world the South African story with authenticity, optimism, and the spirit of Ubuntu, letting our greatness rise because we choose to rise together.

From our desk to yours, and from Tourism House to every corner of the tourism landscape.

Thank you.

Happy holidays.

And may the year ahead bring abundance, inspiration, and endless possibility.

Bojanala Editorial Team

CABINET BACKS NEW TOURISM GROWTH PARTNERSHIP PLAN: A FIVE-YEAR ROADMAP TO TRANSFORM SOUTH AFRICA'S TOURISM SECTOR



South Africa's tourism industry is entering an exciting new chapter. Cabinet has officially endorsed the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan (TGPP) 2025–2029, a bold, collaborative blueprint designed to unlock exponential growth in the tourism sector over the next five years.

Developed jointly by government and private sector partners, the TGPP signals a renewed national commitment to positioning tourism as a major driver of job creation, inclusive economic growth, and global competitiveness.

The TGPP's endorsement comes at a pivotal moment. The Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) identifies tourism as one of the most labour-intensive industries in the economy - capable of absorbing youth, stimulating entrepreneurship, and uplifting communities in both urban and rural areas.

Tourism already supports millions of livelihoods, and as global travel rebounds, South Africa is determined to secure a much larger share of the world tourism market.

The MTDP further highlights the need to:

- Expand into new international markets while strengthening traditional ones, Modernise the visa system for faster, more efficient processing,
- Improve airlift capacity through new routes into South Africa, and
- Strengthen visitor safety at key tourist sites.

These priorities form the foundation on which the TGPP was built.

The Tourism Growth Partnership Plan is fully aligned with the Government of National Unity (GNU) 's focus areas for the next five years. These include:

- Driving inclusive growth and creating more jobs,
- Reducing poverty and the high cost of living, and
- Building a capable, ethical and developmental state.

Tourism sits at the heart of the 2025 State of the Nation Address (SoNA), where the President reaffirmed the government's commitment to visa reforms, new airline routes, and enhanced global marketing to grow tourism arrivals.

One of the flagship reforms highlighted in SoNA is the rollout of the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) system, South Africa's first fully digital, automated visa platform. The ETA is designed to speed up approvals, reduce inefficiencies, and make travel to South Africa easier and more secure. It also sends a powerful message to the world; South Africa is open for business and tourism.

The TGPP outlines five key pillars that will guide implementation from 2025 to 2029:

1. **Ease of Access** – including visa reforms and expanded airlift
2. **Coordinated Destination Marketing** – presenting South Africa with one clear, compelling voice
3. **Tourist Safety and Security** – ensuring a safe and welcoming experience
4. **Tourism Product Development** – diversifying attractions and experiences
5. **Job Creation** – unlocking opportunities at scale across the value chain and a more inclusive tourism economy.

Together, these pillars set a foundation for stronger partnerships, improved competitiveness, and a more inclusive tourism economy.

The TGPP sets out measurable targets to be achieved by the end of the seventh administration (2029). These include

- 15 million international tourist arrivals per year
- R115.2 billion in annual international tourism spend
- 1 million direct jobs supported by the tourism sector
- 2.3 million total jobs across the wider tourism value chain
- 45.1 million domestic tourist trips annually
- R139.4 billion in domestic tourism spend per year

These are not just numbers, they represent livelihoods, growth opportunities, and tangible progress for communities across South Africa. One of the defining features

of the TGPP is its collaborative nature. The plan was co-developed by government and private sector partners, reflecting a shared determination to overcome historical constraints and accelerate tourism growth.

The TGPP also aligns closely with South Africa's global commitments, including the G20 Tourism Agenda and the Mpumalanga Declaration, which highlight the importance of accessibility, digital transformation, community inclusion, and job creation.

The plan brings together the very best of South Africa's policy frameworks, including the National Development Plan (NDP), the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS), the Tourism White Paper, and the MTDP into a single, actionable roadmap.

Cabinet's concurrence of the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan marks a turning

point for the sector. It represents:

- A renewed confidence in South Africa's tourism potential,
- A commitment to modern, efficient, and visitor-friendly systems, and
- A national partnership that places jobs, communities, and economic opportunity at the centre of tourism growth.

With strong collaboration and bold implementation, the TGPP has the potential to transform tourism into one of South Africa's most powerful engines for inclusive development.

South Africa's next tourism chapter has begun stronger, smarter, and more united than ever.

By Natasha Rockman



SOUTH AFRICA UNVEILS SMART TOURISM VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE AT OR TAMBO — A DIGITAL GATEWAY TO THE NATION



South Africa took a significant leap towards technology driven tourism on 19 November 2025 with the official launch of the Smart Tourism Visitor Information Centre (VIC) at OR Tambo International Airport, the continent's busiest airport and the first point of entry for millions of travellers to South Africa.

The Smart VIC represents a shift towards digital innovation, seamless travel support, and strengthened public-private collaboration. Located just outside International Arrivals, the centre is designed to allow visitors access to accurate, real-time information from the moment they land in the airport. Jabulani Kambule, Regional General Manager for OR Tambo Airport and Bram Fischer International Airport, who welcomed the guests to the launch emphasised the significance of placing the Smart VIC at the country's most strategic travel hub.

"OR Tambo is far more than an airport; it is Africa's foremost gateway. This centre allows us to shape that all-important first impression, to inspire curiosity and excitement the moment travellers arrive."

He added that the Smart VIC will serve as a one-stop shop for all travellers, offering information on every province, whether a visitor is seeking "the dynamic pulse of Gauteng, the breathtaking landscapes of the Western Cape, or the untamed beauty of Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal."

The Smart VIC is a product of a groundbreaking partnership between the Department of Tourism, Airport Company South Africa (ACSA), South African Tourism (SAT), Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA), and the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA).

Highlighting the centre's long-term impact, TBCSA CEO Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa noted

that, "Information at the right place and at the right time is what drives tourism."

A visitor who has three hours to spare should be able to go to the VIC, find a nearby cultural experience, enjoy it safely, and return while supporting local entrepreneurs."

He stressed that digital platforms must connect directly with communities and small businesses. "Tourism transformation happens when travellers can easily discover home based chefs, traditional clothing makers, township tour operators, and all the hidden gems of South Africa."

South African Tourism (SAT) Chief Quality Assurance Officer, Bronwen Auret, described the centre as a model for the smart destinations of the future. "This VIC shows that every traveller, whether here for business or leisure, will receive a world-class welcome. With real-time digital tools, accessible design, and automated tourism complaints management, we're not just informing visitors, we are inspiring them."

The centre features interactive touchscreen digital destination displays, smart booking and itinerary planning applications, Wi-Fi connectivity, universal accessibility design, and trained multilingual Information Officers. The VIC is made up of six officers from the Department of Tourism, ACSA, and GTA, all trained in the "Welcome" customer service programme.

In her keynote address, Minister of Tourism Patricia de Lille positioned the launch within the context of South Africa's G20 Presidency, "It is fitting that, before we welcome the world for the G20 Summit, we unveil a facility that is modern, digital, and



globally competitive. It is a reflection of what becomes possible when government and the private sector work together." She emphasised that the Smart VIC is built on four core pillars, namely digitalisation, accessibility, sustainability, and creativity, and confirmed that this launch is only the first step. "We are already working on the development of a Smart Visitor App that will allow travellers to carry South Africa in their pockets. Technology must not leave us behind."

The minister celebrated robust growth trajectory in visitor numbers, noting that South Africa welcomed 7.63 million visitors between January and September 2025, 1.1 million more than the same period last year, describing the sector as "no longer recovering but growing."

Deputy Minister of Tourism Maggie Sotyu delivered an emotional message of appreciation and pride, applauding the collective work that made the Smart VIC possible. "Tourism is the mirror through which the world sees our nation. Today, that reflection is sharper, more confident, and unmistakably South African."

"This centre is the kind of thing one expects to see in Dubai or Frankfurt, yet

here it stands, proudly South African. What I saw this morning made me feel as if I was abroad, and that is what success looks like."

Deputy Minister Sotyu thanked the Department's teams, SAT, ACSA, GTA, and TBCSA for their commitment and extended her personal support to the ongoing digital transformation of visitor services. "When we collaborate, nothing is impossible. This VIC is not just a facility; it is an asset that the whole nation can be proud of."

The Smart VIC will operate as a pilot programme until March 2026, after which a feasibility study will assess rollout to other airports across the country. With the festive season expected to drive high travel volumes following the success of the G20 Summit, the centre is poised to enhance traveller confidence and support, encourage inter-provincial travel, increase visitor spending, and spotlight hidden tourism gems across all nine provinces.

A small step in technology, a giant leap in how South Africa welcomes the world.



By Annah Mashile





DEPUTY MINISTER SOTYU LAUNCHES MNEMBE SAFARI LODGE AND ENGAGES TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS IN QUEENSTOWN

On 27 November 2025, the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms. Maggie Sotyu, officially presided over the launch of Mnembe Safari Lodge in Queenstown, Eastern Cape marking a significant addition to Queenstown's tourism offerings. The launch was immediately followed by a Tourism Stakeholder Engagement Programme that brought together tourism stakeholders and SMMEs from across the tourism value chain to discuss strategies for tourism growth and collaboration.

The engagement formed part of the national 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign. During the programme, the Deputy Minister engaged tourism SMMEs on strengthening partnerships, promoting responsible tourism practices, and enhancing safety within tourism spaces, which are critical for creating welcoming and secure destinations for all visitors.

The Deputy Minister reaffirmed the

Department's commitment to unlock job and business opportunities through its incentives programmes, skills development initiatives, and Market Access Support Programme (MASP). The MASP is designed to help tourism businesses access local, regional, and international markets, expand their customer base, and build sustainable businesses.

By supporting skills development, facilitating market access, and promoting inclusive growth, the Department aims to strengthen local economies, empower entrepreneurs, particularly women and youth, and uplift communities across South Africa.

The Programme highlighted the crucial role of the tourism sector in fostering safe, inclusive, and economically vibrant spaces for visitors and communities alike, while contributing to broader social and economic development objectives.



By Sifiso Halama


CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: WTM AFRICA 2026

Are You Ready to Showcase South Africa to the World?

The Department of Tourism, through the **Domestic Market Access Support Programme (DMASP)**, is calling dynamic, innovative, and diverse small tourism enterprises to join the Department's MASP supported enterprises Pavillion at the WTM Africa 2026!

Event Details

13 - 15 April 2026

 Cape Town, Western Cape

The Department's MASP supported enterprises Pavillion is a dedicated platform for small and emerging tourism enterprises to connect with global buyers, showcase your unique offerings, and put South Africa's vibrant tourism landscape in the spotlight. We are looking for trailblazers who are redefining the tourism experience in South Africa.

Why Participate?

- **Gain exposure** to local and global tourism trade buyers.
- **Build valuable connections** with top-tier buyers and stakeholders.
- **Position your business** on a new trajectory for sustained growth.

If you're a small and emerging tourism enterprise with a unique tourist offering, and meet the DMASP requirements, **apply now!**

For the application form, programme guidelines and for more information on the eligibility criteria, special considerations and benefits offered, visit www.tourism.gov.za.



**Make sure to thoroughly read all
information on eligibility requirements!**



**Applications
close on Friday
16 January 2026**

ACT NOW!
**Limited meeting desks
are available!**



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TOURISM RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM: STUDENT COLLOQUIUM AND STAKEHOLDER CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP



Investing in the future of tourism research through government-academia collaboration, the Department of Tourism partnered with the Tourism Research in Economics, Environments and Society (TREES) research unit of the North-West University (NWU) to co-host a successful Tourism Research Symposium from 9 to 11 September 2025. The symposium, themed “Tourism in Transition: Resilience, Regeneration, and Responsibility”, brought together academics, students, and industry experts from across the globe to discuss the latest trends, challenges, and innovations shaping the future of tourism. Leveraging the NWU’s International Tourism Research Week, the Department of Tourism participated in initiatives to share knowledge and strengthen capacity in the realm of tourism research and skills development.

High-level plenary sessions featured presentations by international speakers including Prof Bernd Eisenstein from Germany, who spoke on measuring social sustainability in tourism and Dr Aaron Tkaczynski from Australia, who explored

how storytelling can connect tourists to sustainability actions. Dr Elisha Woyo from the United Kingdom examined the reimagining of accessible tourism and Prof Saskia de Klerk from Australia explored entrepreneurial ecosystems and innovation in tourism, while Prof Tim Harms from Germany examined how hikers are perceived in contemporary tourism marketing.

The Student Research Colloquium served as a dedicated and impactful platform for over 10 postgraduate students from various universities (including UP, UJ, UKZN, UNIVEN, NWU, and TUT) who were receiving financial support from the department, to present their research and receive crucial and constructive feedback from seasoned local and international academics and industry practitioners. The research topics focused on a range of themes, including conservation partnerships, LGBTQIA+ tourism, and the influence of social media on Generation Z’s travel motivations.

In the Stakeholder Capacity Building Workshop, participants benefited from

intensive and interactive sessions, focusing on critical research skills such as robust proposal writing, advanced data analysis, professional academic report and article writing and publication, and general postgraduate study.

Collaborations in tourism research underscore the Department’s commitment to using evidence-based information and knowledge to inform a vibrant, knowledge-driven ecosystem that ensures that the tourism sector remains a viable engine for job creation and socio-economic development in South Africa. The successful hosting of both events fosters the immense value of strategic partnerships and collaborations in advancing national research priorities. Equally important is ensuring that the research findings and recommendations reach a wider audience to enhance the utility of research, thus translating research into practice.

By Maria Mogane

ADVANCING TOURISM GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH:

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM HOSTS THE 2025 TOURISM RESEARCH SEMINAR

By Annah Mashile

The Department of Tourism hosted the Tourism Research Seminar 2025, on 24 October 2025 at the University of Pretoria (UP) Future Africa Campus under the theme “Advancing Tourism Growth, Development and Sustainability through Evidence-Based Research.”

The seminar served as a key platform for the dissemination and exchange of tourism research findings, with the overarching goal of enhancing evidence-based planning, policy formulation, and decision-making across the tourism value chain. The seminar also reflected on the Department’s ongoing commitment to strengthen the role of research in shaping a sustainable and inclusive tourism economy.

“It has been over 10 years since we have

been collaborating with institutions of higher learning and research institutions. Today they are here to share with us the work that we have been doing in the years. We want to take research findings out of the confines of academic genus and make them accessible to a wider audience, while we understand that academic publication is the primary channel to locate research findings,” said Dr Kholadi Tlabela, Director of Research at the Department of Tourism.

Since 2012, the Department of Tourism has collaborated with public universities and research institutions to promote applied, policy-relevant tourism research. This collaboration supports the translation of academic knowledge into practical solutions that advance the sector’s transformation, resilience, and

competitiveness.

The Seminar allowed both physical and virtual participation with stakeholders from national, regional, and international levels by including representatives from the African Union (AU), Southern African Development Community (SADC), United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), academic networks such as ATLAS: Africa, and other international tourism partners.

Seven high-impact research studies aligned with the Government of National Unity’s (GNU) priorities were presented. These studies address critical areas such as:

- The impact of visa requirements on travel and tourism demand;





- Tourism SMME digital technology adoption and innovation;
- Community-Based Tourism success factors and sustainability;
- Management and maintenance of state-owned tourism assets; niche tourism and digital technology opportunities;
- Optimising community-based tourism for inclusive growth; and
- Understanding tourism value chains to inform government interventions.

The studies collectively aim to support inclusive economic growth, job creation, and the development of a resilient and competitive tourism sector that benefits all South Africans.

Student-led initiatives were also featured as part of the seminar. The Research Poster Exhibition provided an opportunity for post-graduates financially supported by the Department of Tourism through MoAs with several public Institutions of Higher Learning to showcase their research studies.

The inaugural Next Gen Tourism Innovation Hub allowed students to develop and showcase innovative projects in the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport (CATHS) sectors. These platforms empowered students to amplify their voices as change-makers and demonstrated how universities are preparing graduates for sustainable and technology-enhanced tourism futures.

Research outcomes from this and previous seminars continue to inform key departmental initiatives, including the Tourism Grading Criteria Review, the development of the Tourism Resilience Model (TRM), and the implementation of capacity-building programmes targeting communities and tourism practitioners.

By investing in research and innovation, the Department of Tourism reaffirms its

commitment to driving evidence-based development, empowering communities, and ensuring the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of South Africa's tourism industry.





NATIONAL TOURISM SAFETY FORUM SETS A NEW PACE FOR VISITOR PROTECTION



South Africa's tourism sector has entered a renewed era of collaboration, strengthened leadership, and shared accountability following the National Tourism Safety Forum meeting under the 7th Administration on the 8th of December 2025. Convened in Johannesburg at

Powerhouse by the Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, the Forum brought together MECs, provincial tourism authorities, South African Tourism, the private sector, safety agencies, and industry organisations to accelerate national efforts in making South Africa a safer destination for all visitors.

This engagement served as a strategic review of the country's collective readiness ahead of the festive season, traditionally one of the busiest periods for domestic and international travel. Central to these preparations is the deployment of Tourism Safety Monitors across key hot spots and entry points.

Minister De Lille confirmed the deployment of 40 out of the 202 Tourism Monitors stationed under the Border Management Authority. "Safety is the foundation of tourism growth, and our ability to collaborate effectively determines how well we protect both visitors and the jobs

that depend on them," she emphasised. A significant development emanating from the Forum was the appointment of Deputy Minister Maggie Sotyu as Chairperson of the National Tourism Safety Forum. Minister De Lille highlighted: "Deputy Minister Sotyu brings deep experience, including her previous tenure as Deputy Minister of Police, and her leadership will be invaluable."

Deputy Minister Sotyu, addressing the forum virtually, added: "I look forward to working with this passionate and professional collective to rewrite the tourism safety fortunes of our country and position South Africa as a must-visit destination of choice."

Stakeholders emphasised that sustainable safety outcomes rely on cooperation across all sectors. The Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) highlighted significant investments, including safety upgrades in Durban, the Kruger Lowveld, and Nelson Mandela Bay, implemented through the Tourism Collaborative Fund.

The Forum reflected on the progress of the National Ten-Point Tourism Safety Plan since April 2024. This includes hotspot identification, integrated safety apps, provincial safety forums, improved victim-support systems, and strengthened alignment with NATJOINTS.

A recurring message was the essential role of communities in crime prevention and visitor safety. Minister De Lille reiterated the need for communities to work alongside government and the private sector.

Deputy Director General: Destination Development Shamilla Chettiar provided an update on SANParks' key infrastructure projects, including the Shangani Gate development and associated road upgrades, which are vital for accessibility and visitor management. The Forum showed a unified effort to fight tourism-related crime, with renewed leadership, collaborative models, and stronger implementation strategies.

"Tourism is everyone's business. By working together, sharing data, integrating our systems, and strengthening visibility, we can ensure that every visitor feels safe in our beautiful country," Minister De Lille concluded.

By Annah Mashile

#TravelWise in Mzansi



#ResponsibleTraveller Tips



LOCATION:

- » Update the GPS App on your mobile device to accurately navigate through our country



CLIMATE: South Africa's climate can get extremely hot and dry

- » Wear sunscreen and a hat
- » Wear the appropriate clothing and foot wear for outdoor activities
- » Carry enough water to stay hydrated
- » Avoid drinking water from rivers and streams



BE WATER WISE:

- » Read and follow the signs to ensure an enjoyable experience at the Beach

- » Only swim in designated areas
- » Take care when swimming as rip currents can pull you out to sea
- » Lifeguards are on call to ensure your safety



PERSONAL SAFETY: We care about your safety

- » Ensure your personal possessions are with you at all times
- » Keep passports and important documents in a safe at your hotel, and carry a copy whilst out and about
- » Do not share your banking details or pin code with anyone
- » Alert your hotel before going for a walk alone, or an excursion

Useful contacts: Should you require support or find yourself in distress, contact the authorities for assistance:

Police (SAPS): (T) 10111 | **Ambulance/Fire:** (T) 10177 | **Covid-19 emergency no:** 0800 029 99

Tourism Complaints: (T) 012 444 6000 or 0860 686 747, E-mail: complaints@tourism.gov.za



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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

SUMMER: CHOOSE SOUTH AFRICA, CHOOSE HOME

Summer in South Africa is more than a season – it is a vibe and a celebration. A celebration of sunshine on our coastlines, music in our townships and villages, stories in our heritage sites, and hope in every community that welcomes visitors with open arms. As the festive season settles over our nation, it brings with it an invitation: to explore, to reconnect, and to rediscover the beauty of home.

This year, we stood proudly on the global stage as hosts of the G20. And just as we welcomed the world to our shores, let us also invite each other into our hearts and spaces with the spirit of Ubuntu – the spirit that reminds us that “I am because we are.” Let that same warmth guide how we welcome fellow South Africans as travellers within our own borders.

South Africa is a country that does not require a passport to feel extraordinary. From the roar of our oceans to the stillness of our mountains, from bustling food markets to quiet heritage towns, every province carries its own magic. And this summer, that magic is calling all of us - families, friends, solo adventurers, young

explorers, retirees, artists, dreamers - to step outside and experience the wonder waiting right on our doorstep.

Domestic tourism is not just about travel. It is about rebuilding, reimagining, and reigniting our economy from the inside out. When South Africans travel locally:

- **Small businesses thrive** - from guesthouses and restaurants to tour guides, craft makers, shuttle services, and marketplaces.
- **Jobs are created and protected**, particularly in villages, townships, and small dorpiess where tourism is often the heartbeat of livelihood.
- **Communities grow stronger**, because tourism spreads opportunity beyond big cities to rural and remote corners of our country.
- **Cultural pride deepens** as we learn and share stories of our diverse heritage.

Every ticket booked, every meal ordered, every artisan product purchased, every overnight stay - these are not just moments of joy for travellers. They are seeds of opportunity planted in local communities.

Summer Is the Perfect Time to Wander. This year, let us embrace a “Summer of Discovery.”

A summer where we choose to slow down, to step away from the familiar, and to reconnect with the beauty that surrounds us.

Imagine:

- Waking up to the sunrise in the Drakensberg, clouds drifting like soft blankets across the peaks.
- Feeling the spray of the ocean along the Wild Coast or the Garden Route.
- Taking a slow walk through the Midlands Meander, meeting makers whose craft keeps our heritage alive.
- Discovering the stories of Robben Island, the Apartheid Museum, Constitution Hill, or the Mandela Capture Site - where history still speaks with power.
- Sharing shisanyama and laughter in our vibrant townships, where music, culture, and community come alive.
- Enjoying a scenic road trip through Limpopo, Mpumalanga, the Northern





Cape, or North West provinces filled with hidden gems, wildlife, and warm hospitality.

South Africa has 365 days of adventure. Summer simply reminds us of just how beautiful they can be.

Tourism is more than a sector, it is a powerful engine for economic recovery and shared prosperity. When we choose to travel locally, we choose South Africa. We choose jobs for our people. We choose growth for small businesses. We choose a future where no community is left behind.

Domestic tourism fuels our villages, strengthens our township economies, empowers our youth and women entrepreneurs, and reminds us that local travel is not a luxury - it is a contribution to nation-building.

As the National Tourism Sector Strategy

reminds us: "tourism must be a force for good, driving inclusion and spreading opportunities across all nine provinces." And each one of us has a role to play.

This summer, let us make a collective promise:

- To visit somewhere new. To support local.
- To bring our families closer through shared experiences.
- To remind the world why South Africa remains one of the most extraordinary destinations on earth.

Some experiences cost nothing but time. Some journeys require only curiosity.

And all of them leave us richer in connection, in memory, in pride. As the African proverb says, "The footsteps you take become the path for others to follow."

Let our footsteps this summer lead us across our country, its coastlines, its mountains, its villages, its cities, its stories, and its people. Because South Africa is not just a place to live. It is a place to explore. A place to love. A place to celebrate.

This Summer, Choose Local. Choose South Africa. Choose Home.



By Phathu Luvhengo



CAPE WINELANDS AIRPORT



The picturesque Cape Winelands region is set to soar to new heights with an estimated R7 billion airport expansion programme, marking a significant milestone in the area's development and accessibility. Cape Winelands Airport, established in 1943, is an integral part of the Northern District of Durbanville. As one of the oldest airfields in the region, it has primarily served the general aviation community. The airport's strategic location makes it a vital asset for the region, poised to contribute significantly to the local economy and the aviation industry.

The belief is that the holiday starts when arriving at the airport and not at your destination. The development plans include vineyards as part of the landscaping aesthetics to portray the region's wine culture, ensuring that when one arrives at the terminal precinct of Cape Winelands Airport, one will be surrounded by vineyards with open spaces that include

a plaza, a hotel, a conference centre, a wine tasting experience, an outdoor amphitheatre for events up to 5,000 people, an aviation museum, and plenty of at-grade parking all situated in a "park-like environment." In the controlled airside area of the airport, a portion of the land will include a botanical garden with a diverse collection of indigenous fynbos, both within the country and globally.

The airport will offer a range of contemporary amenities and services designed to enhance the travel experience. These include efficient check-in counters with advanced technology for swift processing, spacious and comfortable waiting lounges with ergonomic seating, and a diverse selection of high-quality dining establishments and boutique shopping outlets, ensuring that passengers have access to a wide array of food and retail options to suit their preferences and needs.

Cape Winelands Airport will serve as a crucial gateway to the Cape Winelands region, offering a range of domestic and international flight options and opening up new routes. By 2050, the airport will effectively process 2,000,000 international tourists and 3,000,000 domestic travelers per annum, increasing the overall annual passenger traffic to the region from 10 million to 20 million passengers. Beyond job creation, the airport is expected to have a far-reaching impact on the regional economy, with increased tourism and business opportunities contributing to the growth of local businesses and industries, particularly around the logistics clusters.

The airport aims to be self-sufficient and off the grid for water and electricity wherever feasible. Through a commitment to sustainability and innovation, it will harness renewable energy sources, such as solar and chicken-manure biogas power, to power its facilities and operations.



This shift towards self-sufficiency will not only reduce the carbon footprint but will also ensure a reliable and uninterrupted energy supply, even in adverse conditions. The airport will implement state-of-the-art water recycling systems, capable of conserving and purifying water for various airport needs. Additionally, its waste

management practices will prioritise recycling and composting, further reducing its environmental impact.

Over the past three years, the team has diligently engaged in meticulous planning and extensive consultation with stakeholders from the broader aviation industry. This collaborative effort underscores the commitment to delivering world-class services and facilities to passengers, airlines, and partners. By meticulously crafting a strategic vision through years of dedicated work, Cape Winelands Airport aims to enhance the travel experience, boost operational efficiency, and remain at the forefront of innovation in the aviation sector.

Facts and figures

- **Main Runway** – can accommodate an Airbus A380.
- **Code 4F Runway** – with a category 9 fire cover and a category 3 ILS.
- **Secondary Runway** – 700m, Code 1A, primarily focused on small planes in crosswind conditions.

- **Passenger Market** – estimated to handle 25% of all passenger traffic into Cape Town by 2050, reaching 5 million passengers annually.
- **Innovation** – anticipated to introduce the first digital tower and control room in Africa.
- **Buildings and Facilities** – to include hangarage for aircraft storage; facilities for light manufacturing and industrial purposes; logistics and warehousing services; food processing facilities; spaces for educational and commercial office purposes; retail spaces; venues for events and conferences; a hotel; a bulk aviation fuel farm; and a public filling station.

Additional Cargo Capacity

It is estimated, using Customs and Excise reported data on kilograms imported directly into Cape Town by air, that having a closer alternate destination airport in Cape Town will significantly increase cargo capacity into the area. This supply will, in turn, lead to consequential reductions in air cargo prices.

By Cape Winelands Airport





EXPLORE THE STORY OF RURAL TOURISM THIS SEASON WHILE EMPOWERING LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS

While major destinations in South Africa provide unique stories about the beauty of the country and its tourism narrative, an authentic and vested in local economy is the story of rural tourism.

From townships to villages, these destinations offer tourists a phenomenal experience rooted in culture and a diverse history which tells of the past of this country.

In a recent South African Township and Village Tourism (SATOVITO) 4th annual Township & Village Intra-trade conference in Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal, the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Maggie Sotyu, affirmed this story.

The conference brought together more than 500 delegates across South Africa to accelerate the growth of township and village tourism as a key driver of inclusive economic development.

“South Africa’s story is not written only in the skylines of its cities or the splendour of its landmarks; it is lived, every day, in its townships and villages, the heartbeat of

our nation,” she said. From Vilakazi Street in Soweto, home to South Africa’s great leaders Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, to Botshabelo Historical Village in Mpumalanga these are some of many destinations where creativity meets history.

In the spirit of promoting local and inclusive tourism, tourists cannot only explore these destinations but simultaneously contribute to local economies, enrich local entrepreneurs and ensure communities are actively participating in economic tourism.

Sotyu told conference delegates that the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) reminds them that tourism must not only grown numbers, but also grow people. “It must turn progress into participation, and success into shared prosperity. For two decades, our policies have carried a clear message: communities must not stand on the margins of tourism; they must stand at its centre,” she said.

For every tourist who stays in a township, invest their money in small businesses either through buying a handmade craft or eating at a local Shisanyama, they are

not only embracing local identity but transforming local economies.

As a non-profit organisation that represents township and village-based tourism businesses and stakeholders across all nine provinces, SATOVITO, persists to assist small, community-based tourism operators.

To build resilient communities, allow entrepreneurs to participate in the tourism economic sector, the Department of Tourism through its Tourism Incentive programmes (TIP) supports upcoming entrepreneurs in this space.

While your destination may only be an opportunity to explore the area you may have not known, every cent you contribute to that community allows the department to uplift entrepreneurs, create jobs and give locals access to economy.

The incentive programmes allow the Department to promote, transform and encourage the development and growth of the tourism sector.



The department implements the Tourism Transformation Fund to provide grant funding to majority black-owned tourism enterprises, with a focus on financial support for black investors and communities investing in capital projects in the tourism sector.

The fund aims to drive transformation in the tourism sector in a more direct and impactful manner.

A tourist visits to these establishment and destinations either in rural villages or in the townships will develop and empower these entrepreneurs to expand and grow. This will influence the department to accelerate the rise of a new generation of black owned youth, women and community owned tourism enterprises that take the sector to new heights.

When domestic tourists visit these destinations, they are not only socially engaging with the locals in those communities but also learning the culture of that community.

A milestone of the township and village tourism can be achieved when the locals

are able to exchange cultural norms in a diversity society, learn critical skills to flourish in the sector.

Through Market Access Support Programme (MASP), SMMES (including women, youth, and disability-owned enterprises) can participate in domestic and international tourism trade platforms.

One of the Department's initiatives is the Tourism Grading Support Programme (TGSP) which offers discounts of either 80% or 90% on grading assessment fees for accommodation and meeting venues that apply for star grading by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa.

With the focus on supporting local tourism while simultaneously embracing the main destinations that attracts international tourists, the Department of Tourism also facilitates the Tourism Equity Fund projects to increase ownership and participation of designated groups in the tourism sector.

One of these programmes that contribute to expansion of tourism economy is the Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP), aimed at graded tourism establishments,

offering partial grant funding support for the cost of retrofitting tourism facilities.

In her recent article, Bronwen Auret, Chief Quality Assurance Officer, South African Tourism, indicates that the soul of South Africa lies in its people and the diverse cultures woven into the fabric of its townships and rural villages.

Despite its immense potential, this sector continues to face unique and often overlooked challenges such as access to finance, market information, skills development and sometimes basic infrastructure.

Her message from South African Tourism to all tourism establishments is to embrace quality assurance through the TGCSA not just a compliance step but a strategic investment that unlocks opportunities to become a recognised and celebrated part of South Africa's rich and authentic tourism narrative.

By Phathu Luvhengo

MEETINGS AFRICA AND AFRICA TRAVEL INDABA PREVIEW



The stage is set for the South African Tourism-owned continent's leading trade shows where delegates will converge in the country to facilitate valuable connections with various partners from across the globe.

Over 300 highly qualified hosted buyers from tourism authorities and hotels to event specialists are expected to meet at the Sandton Convention Centre from 23 to 25 February 2026 as Meetings Africa continues to connect the world.

Another milestone event in the tourism calendar, Africa's Travel Indaba is set to be held at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre (Durban ICC) from 11 to 14 May 2026.

During the announcement of these dates, the minister of the Department of Tourism Patricia de Lille said these were not just dates but important milestones in the continent's tourism and business events calendar.

These events affirm South African Tourism's

commitment to partnering and working with the global tourism and business events sector, to facilitate valuable connections with various partners from across the globe.

They subsequently affirm South Africa's position as a leading host of world-class business events.

Meetings Africa as a business events trade show specifically creates a market access platform for African business events products and enables the growth of the business events industry on the continent.

Owned by the South African Tourism, for over 20 years, Meetings Africa had been a platform of market access for African business events products and continues to provide an immense number of workshops, exhibitions and training sessions to all visitors.

It is set to continue playing its definitive role in driving economic impact and exhibiting the continent's innovation, diversity and collaboration.

Meetings Africa is not just about tourism but economic opportunities, job creation and positioning Africa as a globally competitive destination.

Building on the success of 2025, the Department of Tourism will continue to support 25 exhibitors in 2026 as was in 2025 through one of the Tourism incentive programmes, Market Access Support Programme.

The programme aims to assist small inbound tourism SMMEs to access and engage with tourism buyers in new and existing markets. This programme reduced the cost burden of qualifying enterprises to attend and participate in predetermined international and domestic tourism trade platforms.

Africa's Travel Indaba, one of the leading leisure tourism markets events globally, bringing together African tourism products, services, and stories, will continue to reinforce the economic impact of the tourism sector.

Delegates from across the world are expected to converge at the Durban ICC for a trade show in a coastal city synonymous with its warm and inviting coastline and friendly beaches, and safari parks.

Delegates can look forward to vibrant spice markets, authentic Zulu culture and a vibrant cityscape and nightlife.

Opened by Deputy President Paul Mashatile in 2025, the Indaba continued to build on its Africa's unlimited potential as not just a vision but a Pan-African reality waiting to be realised.

"We are determined to accelerate investment, open our skies, deepen our partnerships, and position Africa not at the margins of the global economy, but firmly at its centre where it belongs," Deputy President Mashatile said in his opening address.

Under the theme: "Unlimited Africa" Africa's Travel Indaba projected economic benefits from infrastructure and logistics to accommodation, restaurants, and local transport services to Durban's estimated GDP of R574 million.

The event which hosted more than 9,900 delegates from across Africa attracted 1,348 exhibitors and 1,037 buyers with 27 participating countries from the continent. Deputy President Mashatile said the 2025 theme speaks of an Africa unbound by old stereotypes, an Africa driven by its own ambitions and solutions.

"This is an Africa where intra-continental trade, investment, and tourism are no longer mere aspirations but rather everyday realities."

"Tourism undoubtedly serves as a significant economic engine, a catalyst for social change, and a cornerstone of inclusive growth," he said.

Both Meetings Africa and Africa's Travel Indaba serve as critical economic levers, generating leads, promoting investments, and boasting intra-African trade and connectivity.



By Phathu Luvhengo

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS:

Africa's Travel Indaba (ATI) 2026

Are You Ready to Showcase South Africa to the World?

The Department of Tourism, through the **Market Access Support Programme (MASP)**, is calling on dynamic, innovative, and diverse small tourism enterprises to join the Hidden Gems Pavillion at Africa's Travel Indaba (ATI) 2026!

Event Details

11 - 14 May 2026

 Durban ICC, KwaZulu-Natal

The Hidden Gems Pavillion is a dedicated platform for small and emerging tourism enterprises to connect with global buyers, showcase your unique offerings, and put South Africa's vibrant tourism landscape in the spotlight. We are looking for trailblazers who are redefining the tourism experience in South Africa.

Why Participate?

- **Gain exposure** to local and global tourism trade buyers.
- **Build valuable connections** with top-tier buyers and stakeholders.
- **Position your business** on a new trajectory for sustained growth.

If you're a small and emerging tourism enterprise with a unique tourist offering, and meet the DMAPS requirements, **apply now!**

For the application form, programme guidelines and for more information on the eligibility criteria, special considerations and benefits offered, visit www.tourism.gov.za



Make sure to thoroughly read all information on eligibility requirements!



**Applications
close on Friday
16 January 2026**

ACT NOW!
**Limited meeting desks
are available!**



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

A **NATION** 
THAT **WORKS**  **FOR ALL**



THE FLAVOUR FESTIVALS

The Department of Tourism plays a vital role in ensuring that the benefits of tourism extend beyond large cities and major attractions to reach local communities, especially those in rural areas, villages, small towns, and township economies. It is therefore actively working to develop tourism in villages, townships, and small dorpiés (VTSDs) in South Africa, aiming to promote inclusive regional upliftment and economic growth.

Festivals are important for small towns and tourism in South Africa because they combine economic, social, and cultural benefits into one event, helping communities thrive while attracting visitors. They promote:

- **Direct employment** – tourism generates jobs in the tourism value chain
- **Entrepreneurship opportunities** – the development of small businesses
- **Skills development** – women and youth gain skills in hospitality, marketing, and management, which can enhance their economic agency
- **Preservation of cultural roles** – tourism values local heritage, crafts, and traditions turning cultural knowledge into economic capital.

The benefits of festivals cascade down to communities. Festivals attract both local and international tourists. When visitors come to attend events like the Cape Town Jazz Festival, Macufe in the Free State, or the Durban July, they spend on accommodation, transport, meals, and shopping. This spending supports local businesses and brings life to the surrounding economy.

Not only do festivals boost sales, but they also create jobs, particularly for young people. Whether it's setting up stages, catering, guiding tourists, or selling local crafts, festivals provide temporary employment and open doors for entrepreneurship.

More importantly, they help promote tourism in lesser-known areas, bringing attention to rural towns and cultural communities that may otherwise be overlooked. Festivals attract new tourists to the area, promoting tourism beyond peak seasons.

Festivals bring people together. They celebrate who we are as South Africans - our music, dance, art, languages, and traditions. They provide opportunities to

connect with one another, share stories, and build unity in our diversity.

For many communities, festivals are also a source of pride and identity. Local residents are often involved in planning and performing, which strengthens community bonds and preserves cultural heritage. Festivals also foster cultural exchange: when people from around the world attend our events, they leave with a better understanding of South Africa - its beauty, its people, and its spirit of Ubuntu.

Festivals in South Africa are far more than moments of celebration; they are powerful drivers of economic growth, community upliftment, women and youth empowerment, and tourism development. By investing in and nurturing our festivals, we are not only enriching our tourism sector but also strengthening social unity and national pride. Let us continue to support these important platforms - not just for entertainment, but as vital contributors to the future of our country.

By Natasha Rockman





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