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EDITION

02

Bolanala



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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



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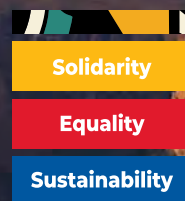
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G20

SOUTH AFRICA 2025



Tourism Priorities

Priority 1: People-Centered Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Innovation to enhance Travel and Tourism Start-Ups and SMMEs.

Priority 2: Tourism Financing and Investment to Enhance Equality and Promote Sustainable Development.

Priority 3: Air Connectivity for Seamless Travel.

Priority 4: Enhanced Resilience for Inclusive, Sustainable Tourism.



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September 2025



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G20 TOURISM MINISTERS' MEETING

IN MPUMALANAGA – THE PLACE OF THE RISING



Our G20 theme, “Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability”, served as a powerful call to action. It challenged us to look beyond borders, to create people centred policies, and to ensure that tourism delivered real value for local communities especially those historically left behind.

This meeting became more than just a policy platform. It offered an opportunity to deepen collaboration, share best practices, and commit to a vision of tourism that was inclusive, resilient, and future-focused.

Here in Mpumalanga, we did not just speak about tourism we lived it. Delegates witnessed the power of community-led initiatives, the importance of preserving natural heritage, and the true potential of tourism to uplift and empower.

The Meeting engaged in fruitful discussions, formed meaningful partnerships, and made bold commitments together, ensuring that the legacy of this meeting would extend far beyond these beautiful surroundings reaching every destination, every community, and every traveller.

Leading up to the meeting, the Minister and Deputy Minister of Tourism carried out a series of outreach programmes across Mpumalanga. These engagements were essential for promoting inclusivity, creating space for meaningful dialogue with local communities, and highlighting the socio-economic benefits of tourism and the G20. They also reinforced the critical role that communities could play in driving the growth of the tourism sector.

At the conclusion of the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting, the Chair of the Tourism Working Group presented a comprehensive summary of the year's deliberations and proposals. The key action areas were formally captured in the Ministerial Declaration, providing a strategic framework for future tourism cooperation and sustainable development.

By **Natasha Rockman**



This G20 Presidency goes beyond diplomacy and policy-making. It stands as a celebration of our continental pride, a powerful platform for amplifying African voices, and a call to action for real, inclusive change.

The Ministers' Meeting served as the culmination of the Working Group sessions held throughout the year.

As global leaders gathered in the “Land of the Rising Sun”, a province rich in history, identity, and pride they were welcomed with warmth, dignity, and homegrown hospitality, expressed through the prism of our Rainbow Nation.

Our host province, Mpumalanga, is deeply blessed from the fertility of its land to the

resilience of its people, to the rich heritage of its ancestors. Its cultural legacy from the vibrant isiNdebele murals to traditional Swazi festivals and sacred heritage sites remains a treasure to be both protected and shared. Through responsible and respectful tourism, we celebrated who we are, while inviting the world to connect with the soul of our nation. This form of tourism fostered authentic, lived experiences the kind that inspired visitors to return again and again.

Tourism ministers carried a shared responsibility: to ensure that tourism contributes meaningfully to economies, societies, and the planet. In the face of climate change, global inequality, and economic uncertainty, tourism was called upon to be more than just a driver of arrivals it needed to become a true force for good.





G20 TOURISM WORKING GROUP MEETING

As the G20 Tourism Working Group (TWG) Sessions reached their final stretch, all roads led to Mpumalanga the “Place of the Rising Sun.” These sessions not only brought valuable insights and expertise to the table, but also reaffirmed the vital role tourism plays in shaping inclusive, sustainable growth for our country, our continent, and the world.

Tourism is far from static. It remains dynamic, evolving, and deeply developmental. It grows with our people, our policies, and our partnerships. Throughout the Working Group engagements, we witnessed how thoughtful collaboration could shape a tourism sector that is future-focused, resilient, and rooted in local impact.

As the first African country to hold the G20 Presidency, South Africa took great pride in leading with a theme that addressed our shared global challenges: Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability. Under this banner, the TWG brought together senior officials, policymakers, and experts to advance a unified agenda for sustainable tourism across the G20 nations.

In 2025, South Africa made a deliberate choice to take G20 meetings beyond its major cities bringing them to provinces like Mpumalanga, where tourism was not just an industry but a way of life. By doing so, we promoted inclusive economic participation and ensured that local voices and communities were heard, seen, and celebrated.

Mpumalanga, with its iconic attractions from the world-renowned Kruger National Park and the breathtaking Panorama Route to its vibrant cultural villages and adventure offerings stood out as a shining example of tourism’s potential to transform regions and uplift lives.

As part of this inclusive approach, Mpumalanga’s tourism products were featured in national and international campaigns, including on the official G20 platform. Youth, creatives, and innovators were actively engaged through G20-linked hackathon and exhibitions ensuring that the future of tourism was shaped by those who would inherit it.

The G20 TWG meeting formed part of a broader series of strategic engagements leading up to the G20 Tourism Ministers’ Meeting in September. These sessions served to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and develop actionable deliverables informed by the following G20 tourism priorities:

- People-Centred Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Innovation to empower Travel & Tourism Start-Ups and SMMEs
- Tourism Financing and Investment to Advance Equality and Promote Sustainable Development
- Enhanced Air Connectivity to enable Seamless Travel
- Building Resilience for Inclusive and Sustainable Tourism Development

The TWG was one of 16 G20 Working Groups tasked with crafting multisectoral, policy-driven solutions to advance global socio-economic and political stability. As hosts, South Africa used its Presidency to champion a developmental agenda that uplifted the African continent working toward a better Africa, and a better world.

These Working Group sessions culminated in the G20 Tourism Ministers’ Meeting, where the Chair of the TWG presented a comprehensive summary of deliberations and proposals. The key action areas identified were captured in the Ministerial Declaration setting the direction for future tourism collaboration and sustainable development.

The Tourism Working Group advanced frameworks to enhance investor confidence, promote public-private partnerships, and ensures that global capital flows translate into local benefits. Tourism investment is not just smart economics, it is a moral imperative to drive shared prosperity and build a more equitable global future.

While leaders focused on high-level policy discussions, this moment also served as an opportunity to showcase both the province and the country not only as destinations of beauty and culture, but as committed global partners in sustainable tourism development.

Tourism remains one of Mpumalanga’s most powerful economic engines. It continues to create jobs, support small enterprises, preserve cultural and natural heritage, and breathe new life into communities. As South Africa guides this important sector forward, it remains committed to ensuring that global decisions translate into real, tangible benefits at the local level.

By Natasha Rockman



TOURISM INVESTMENT SUMMIT



South Africa hosted the inaugural Tourism Investment Summit in Cape Town, led by the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of South Africa, Patricia de Lille. The Summit, which is a G20 legacy project, firmly placed tourism investment on the global agenda ahead of the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting, which took place on 12 September 2025 in Skukuza, Kruger National Park.

"We stand here not only to showcase projects, but to invite partnerships. South Africa is a nation at work, and we are about action. Together, we can deliver a bold new chapter in tourism investment, for our country, for Africa, and for the world," Minister De Lille stated.

During the Summit, eight bankable tourism projects were unveiled, representing nearly R1 billion in potential investment. These projects are tangible opportunities for investors in eco-tourism, hospitality infrastructure, cultural heritage tourism, and green innovation.

"Our projects range in size, from the God's Window Skywalk in Mpumalanga, which is seeking an investment of R200 million (\$10.4 million), to the Hole in the Wall



Resort in the Eastern Cape, requiring R141 million (\$7.9 million). Together, all these projects reflect South Africa's readiness to welcome investment that delivers not only strong returns, but real benefits to communities," said Minister De Lille.

The projects are:

- Western Cape Tokai Manor Table Mountain National Park
- Tshwane's Eye of Menlyn
- Mpumalanga God's Window Skywalk
- Eastern Cape Water World Fun Park in Buffalo City
- Orpen Kruger Lodge
- Western Cape Groote Schuur Estate Tea Room and Restaurant
- Eastern Cape Hole in the Wall Resort
- Skukuza Rest Camp, Kruger National Park

"The eight projects are from both the public and private sectors, with strong return on investment and high community impact. And this is just a fraction of what lies in our national pipeline, which is rich, diverse, and growing. We stand here not only as a nation of immense tourism potential, but also as a gateway to Africa," Minister De Lille emphasised.

She also stated that under the Government of National Unity, policy shifts have been adopted and demonstrate the power to unlock growth. Effective 1 June 2025, the Amended National Treasury Regulation 16 for Public-Private Partnerships came into effect, introducing greater flexibility and innovation. These changes enable the adoption of diverse models ranging from Design-Build-Operate partnerships to blended finance and even crowdfunding. One of the key highlights of the event was the announcement by the Secretary-General of UN Tourism, Zurab Pololikashvili, of 100 UN Tourism scholarships for South Africa. These scholarships will support the development of the next generation of tourism leaders, equipping young people with the skills to contribute to a sustainable, inclusive, and competitive tourism sector.

The Summit served as a G20 Tourism Legacy platform, bringing together high-level decision-makers, investors, and industry leaders to unlock new opportunities in global tourism investment. A major outcome was the release of the Tourism Investment Guidelines, developed in partnership with UN Tourism. These guidelines provide a practical roadmap for aligning investment flows with responsible, inclusive, and sustainable tourism development across the G20 and beyond.

The G20 Investment Summit reaffirmed that with the right policies, guidelines, and partnerships, tourism investment can generate lasting legacies not only for global economies but also for local communities across South Africa and the world.

Reflecting on the Summit's significance, Minister De Lille stated: "This Summit is about jobs, growth, and transformation. Tourism is labour-intensive. Every investment here means jobs for young South Africans. Every Rand or Dollar invested is an opportunity created. And every partnership formed here will help us transform tourism into a driver of inclusive, sustainable prosperity."

By Ministry



SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH EXCEL AT THE INAUGURAL G20 TOURISM HACKATHON

Students, developers, designers, and tech enthusiasts came together from 27 to 28 June 2025, at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) Auditorium to devise creative and innovative solutions that promote sustainable tourism with a people-centred approach. The primary objective of this hackathon was to encourage the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions that can enhance tourism experiences, promote sustainability, and benefit society.

Launched in partnership with the Future Leaders Challenge, and in collaboration with the Centre for Public Service Innovation and Geekulcha, the Tourism Hackathon aims to develop future leaders who will drive innovation in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Speaking virtually from a rural village in the Eastern Cape, the Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, emphasised the importance of officially opening the G20 Hackathon Marathon. "As young people, you now have the opportunity to design your own future. This Hackathon gives real meaning to our commitment to empower young South Africans, not just with education, but with opportunities to lead, innovate, and build their own future," said the Minister.

"This is a legacy project that brings together government, business, and academia, as well as one that will outlive our G20 Presidency by planting a seed of a stronger, more tech-savvy tourism sector," the Minister added. The Hackathon challenge was a

collaborative event that focused on technology, where individual teams worked intensely on concepts within a stipulated timeframe. It was a challenge centred on people and artificial intelligence, with a focus on sustainable tourism innovation, structured into three themes: Smart Tourism and AI Solutions, Community-based Tourism and Rural Inclusion, and Heritage and Cultural Tourism Innovation.

The Marathon aimed to bridge the existing gap in digital technologies and cultivate talent, skills, and expertise among the youth. It also fostered collaboration and partnership among relevant stakeholders, including developers, designers, tourism professionals, and policymakers.

Approximately 48 learners from 21 Institutions across South Africa participated, with teams comprising students and mentors from tourism and hospitality programmes. Over the two days, they have worked on a challenge of designing a prototype solution that can support and grow tourism businesses both locally and internationally.

Dr Siphon Ngomane, Deputy Director-General: Corporate Management at the Department of Tourism (Chief Director: Tourism Sector HRD & Governance, at the time), explained that what stood out for him, was the energy and creativity that the students brought to the challenge. "We introduced them to a design-thinking approach to guide them through the process of ideation and conceptualisation.

It was encouraging to see how quickly they embraced the methodology, moving from problem identification to potential solutions with enthusiasm and purpose," said Dr Ngomane.

The G20 Tourism Hackathon Challenge proceeded to Mpumalanga on 10 to 12 September 2025, where the teams, guided by mentors, developed AI solutions to enhance tourism, promote sustainability, and create social impact. On the second day, teams presented their innovations to a judging panel of academics, tourism experts, and government officials. Entries were evaluated on innovation, feasibility, user experience, impact, and alignment with people-centred principles.

The winners of the G20 Tourism Hackathon Challenge were announced with top honours going to The Catalysts, who took first place and a prize of R175 000. In second place, Map My Biz won R140 000 while Ubuntu Unlimited secured third place and R105 000. Teams placing fourth to seventh each received R35 000.

The top teams also had the opportunity to present their solutions to the G20 Tourism Ministers. Minister De Lille praised the passion and commitment shown by the youth and affirmed that their innovations would be supported and developed into globally recognised, tangible products.

By Annah Mashile



MINISTER DE LILLE, DEPUTY MINISTER SOTYU, AND MEC SIDELL CHAMPION COMMUNITY-CENTRED G20 TOURISM OUTREACHES IN MPUMALANGA



It was all hands on deck for the Minister of Tourism, Ms. Patricia de Lille, Deputy Minister Ms Maggie Soty, and MEC for Economic Development and Tourism Ms. Jesta Sidel, as they led G20 Tourism Community Outreach events in Ehlanzeni and Gert Sibanda on the 31st of July and Nkangala on the 1st of August, engaging with more than 1,300 students, community members, SMMEs, and industry stakeholders.

“At the heart of our outreach is listening to hear your voice in shaping how tourism grows here,”

said Minister de Lille. Echoing the G20 Tourism Working Group and ministerial priorities, she highlighted:

- **People-Centred Artificial Intelligence and Innovation**, including the national G20 Tourism Hackathon, which has challenged young innovators to prototype accessible booking platforms and smart-city visitor systems.
- **Tourism Financing and Investment**, underscored by the Tourism Investment Summit in Cape Town in September 2025.
- **Air Connectivity for Seamless Travel**
- **Enhanced Resilience for Inclusive, Sustainable Tourism Development.**

Minister De Lille reminded communities that “South Africa will host more than 130 meetings and 23 ministerial-level meetings across major cities. Over 200 G20-related events are expected, pumping millions into local hotels, restaurants, and transport services.” She added that this surge will generate short-term jobs in hospitality, security, event management, and logistics, while exposing local tour guides, guesthouses, craft markets, and SMMEs to international audiences.

“Tourism must reflect the spirit, rhythm, and aspirations of our communities,” said Deputy Minister Soty in the Gert Sibande District Municipality, reinforcing Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability.

MEC Sidell participated in the Ehlanzeni and Nkangala outreaches, listening to concerns about road access and workforce training for local craft markets, and assuring delegates that the provincial government is working together with national departments to maximise Mpumalanga’s gains from the September G20 Tourism Ministers Meeting.

In Nkangala District Municipality, Minister De Lille celebrated the Ndebele cultural heritage and artists, including world-renowned icon, Mama Esther Mahlangu, and affirmed: “You will write the next chapter of South African tourism, the students, entrepreneurs, innovators, and storytellers of Mpumalanga.”

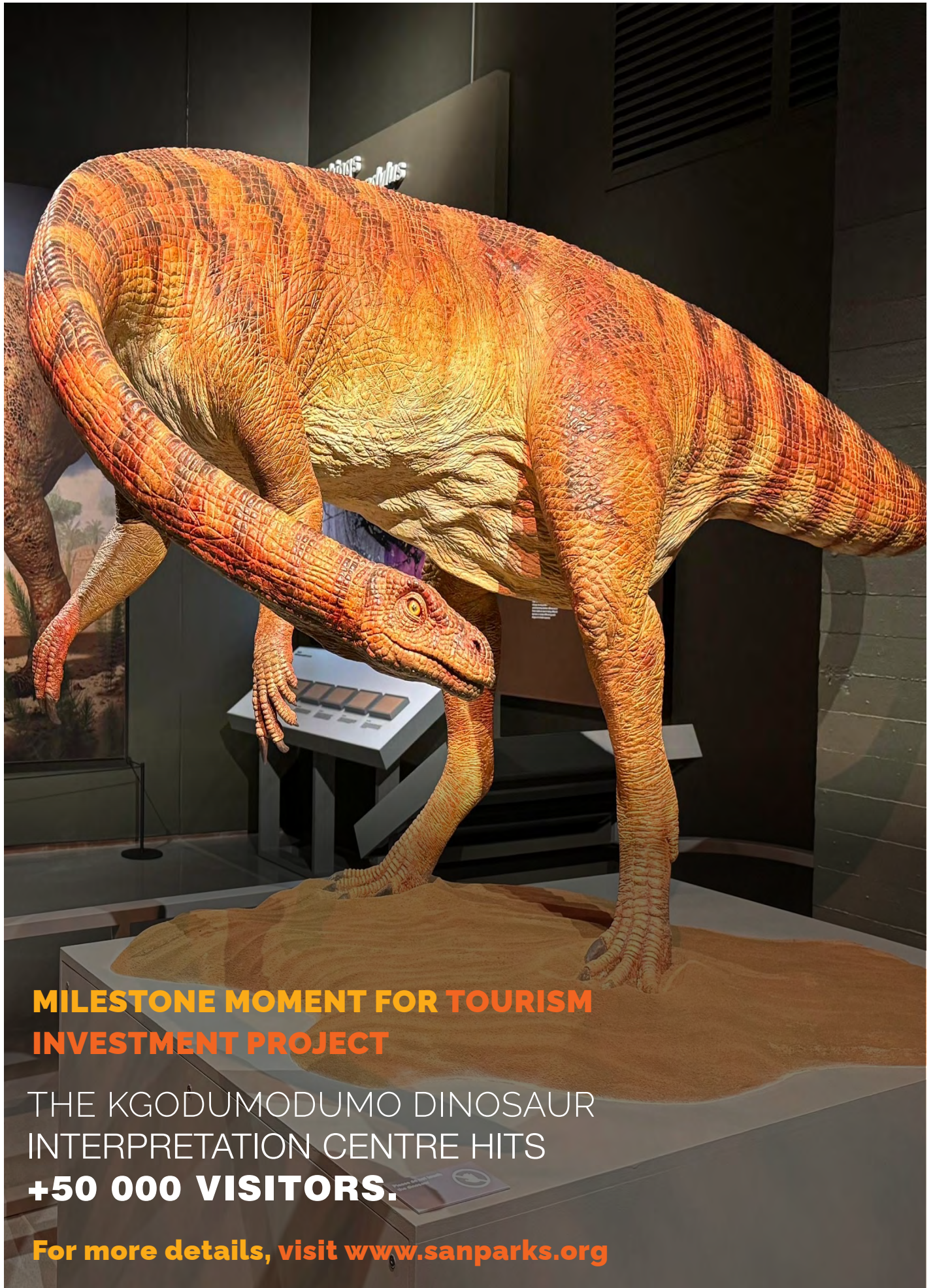
These outreaches covered all the districts in Mpumalanga with the goal of building momentum toward the G20 Tourism Ministers’ Meeting hosted by the province in September 2025, a milestone aimed at strengthening global partnerships, attracting investment, and showcasing local products on the world stage.

Minister De Lille closed the outreach by reaffirming: “We were here to listen, and through our Tourism Growth Partnership Plan, we will forge the partnerships that turn the community, tourism sector’s ideas into jobs, promote sustainable travel, and

open doors to global markets.”

By Annah Mashille





**MILESTONE MOMENT FOR TOURISM
INVESTMENT PROJECT**

THE KGODUMODUMO DINOSAUR
INTERPRETATION CENTRE HITS
+50 000 VISITORS.

For more details, visit www.sanparks.org

WESKUS FLOWER CAPITAL OF SOUTH AFRICA: A LIFELINE FOR OFF-PEAK TOURISM

From late July to mid-October, South Africa's Weskus transforms into a kaleidoscope of wildflowers, painting the arid landscapes of the West Coast with vibrant hues. This annual spectacle, centred in regions like Matzikama, Swartland, Cederberg, and Saldanha Bay, is more than a visual feast—it's a cornerstone of the region's tourism economy. As the winter chill fades, the flower season breathes life into local communities, drawing visitors globally to witness hectares of Namaqua daisies, vygies, and succulents in full bloom. This natural phenomenon not only showcases the biodiversity of the Weskus but also serves as a critical economic lifeline during the off-peak tourism months.

The flower season significantly bolsters the Weskus economy, countering the quieter winter period. In 2023, the West Coast National Park alone welcomed nearly 75,000 visitors during the bloom, generating substantial revenue for guesthouses, restaurants, filling stations,

and nature reserves. Local businesses, from Clanwilliam's craft stalls to Langebaan's seafood eateries, thrive on the influx, with 2025's early blooms fuelled by generous winter rains promising an extended season. Heinrich Robertson, responsible for tourism from the West Coast District Municipality, notes, "Offering something so unique during the off-peak season draws new visitors, bringing fresh possibilities for investment and future visits." This economic surge supports diverse sectors, including rooibos tea experiences at Carmiën Tea Shop and canola field tours in the Swartland, enhancing the region's appeal beyond flowers.

The season creates a wave of temporary jobs, vital for rural communities. From tour guides leading flower routes to seasonal staff at festivals, employment spikes in hospitality and transport. These roles provide income and skill development, sustaining families through leaner months. Small enterprises, like local vendors at

the Clanwilliam Wildflower Show (August 29–September 7, 2025), Hopefield Fynbos Show (August 28–31), and Darling Wildflower Show (September 19–21), also flourish, selling crafts and food to thousands.

Future plans aim to amplify the season's impact through festivals and building local capacity. Lessons from past seasons, such as drought impacts in 2017–2018, emphasize adaptive planning and visitor education to protect rare species. By balancing economic growth with conservation, the Weskus flower season solidifies its status as South Africa's Flower Capital, offering a bucket-list experience for photographers, hikers, and nature lovers alike.

By Jacqueline Melenephy





WELLNESS REIMAGINED

SOULFUL SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNEYS

DISCOVER HEALING EXPERIENCES GROUNDED IN LAND, LINEAGE, AND LIBERATION

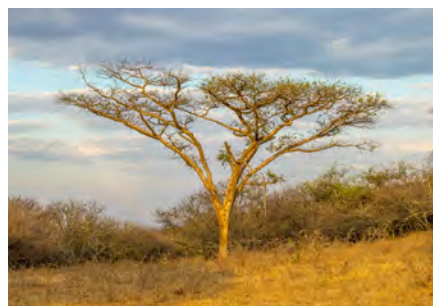
In South Africa, wellness is not a trend, it is a way of life woven into land, lineage and community. From ancestral plant rituals to mineral springs flowing beneath ancient baobabs, every corner offers a space for renewal. In this vibrant country, wellness is shaped by people who carry centuries of healing knowledge, villages where storytelling is medicine and retreats where silence becomes sanctuary.

Mzansi is a country of wide variety from mountains, coasts, villages and cities each offering its own path to restore the body and sooth the soul. When stepping into the early morning mist of the Leshiba Wilderness, high in the ancient Soutpansberg Mountains of Limpopo, something shifts. It's not just the clean air or the quiet hum of the bushveld that envelops you; it's a deep sense that you have arrived. Not just in a place, but in a presence.

In a time of turmoil, we seek stillness. A moment to fill our wells. To return to self and South Africa is primed to offer exactly that. Here, wellness is not just self-care - it is soul-

care. Find your joy again. Here are some of South African Tourism's suggestions to start your journey to healing.

Healing with Plants



In South Africa, plants are more than medicine - they are memory.

Buchu, once used by the KhoiSan for purification and inflammation, is still revered as a sacred cleansing herb. African wormwood (*Artemisia afra*) is burned in steaming rituals to clear the body and lift emotional heaviness. And imphepho a fragrant, golden leaved plant from the daisy family is among the most spiritually revered in South Africa. When burned, it does more than scent a space. As heritage

activist and herbalist Madoda Mditshwa explains, imphepho is central to rituals that cleanse negative energy and protect against harmful spirits and omens. It's not just smoke; it's a sacred call to the ancestors.

At Ekhaya Lempilo Cultural Village in Soweto, imphepho is central to healing. Here, guests are guided through ancestral cleansing, herbal steams, and dream interpretation in a space where each plant has a spirit and a story.

This wisdom is similarly honoured at Oppidum Health Retreat in Plettenberg Bay, where detox and gut-health programmes are paired with wild herb foraging in the fynbos-covered hills. And at Sterrekopje Healing Farm in Franschhoek, where herbs are transformed into teas, tinctures, and oils by hand, affirming the land as collaborator, not commodity.

These are rituals of remembrance...herbal, ancestral, embodied.

Healing with Water



Across South Africa, mineral springs have long been sacred sites of cleansing, prayer, and physical renewal. In Limpopo's north, Tshipise, A Forever Resort, rests beneath baobabs where thermal waters bubble up at 58 °C. Generations have turned to these mineral rich pools for healing and restoration where soaking becomes a rite of release.

Further south, in the Overberg, the Caledon Hotel & Spa offers an elegant take on water therapy. Built around natural iron-rich hot springs, the resort blends Victorian bathhouse heritage with contemporary hydrotherapy. Guests flow through cascading stone pools, steam rooms, and gardens, drawing on over a million litres of water released daily from deep within the earth.

Each spring reminds us that healing is not something we chase; it is something we return to.

Healing with Storytelling



In a village in the Amathole Mountains, in the Eastern Cape Province? Xhosa grandmothers gather guests by the fire to share stories not found in books. These are lineages alive with land, womanhood, and wisdom. Visitors are

invited to share their own stories too, creating a circle of vulnerability, remembrance, and reverence. In this space, storytelling becomes medicine reminding us who we are and where we belong.

Healing with Sisterhood



At Earth and Ember wellness retreat, set in the Soutpansberg Mountains, daily rhythms include meditations, yoga beneath cliffs, and mindful walks among giraffes and zebras. The silence of the land becomes a space for remembering of self, of sisterhood, of story.

In Namaqualand, Naries Namakwa Retreat offers another gentle sanctuary. Perched on the Spektakelberg between Springbok and Kleinsee, Naries is known for its stillness and natural beauty. Guests stay in stone suites that blend into the mountainside, enjoy home-cooked meals in the manor house, and wander walking trails in quiet solitude. Here, wellness is slow, grounded, and deeply personal. These are not escapes they are pilgrimages. Journeys of returning. Journeys of becoming.



Come Slow

Picture a week moving gently between mountain, coast, and village. Begin in Franschhoek, where you crush wild herbs between your fingers and steep healing teas at Sterrekopje. Wind your way through the Overberg, where the mineral springs of Caledon warm tired limbs and soothe the



nervous system. Drift east to Plettenberg Bay for barefoot foraging in the fynbos at Oppidum. Head north through Soweto, then ascend to the Soutpansberg, where silence and sisterhood wait at Earth & Ember. End your journey under the endless skies of Namaqualand, cradled by stone at Naries.

This is not a linear trip. It is a circular journey one that moves through body, memory, story and spirit. A winding way of wellness that echoes the rhythms of the land and the women who walk it.

Collect herbs at sunrise. Soak in sacred waters in the afternoon and share silence and story beneath stars at night. In South Africa, every moment is a cleansing of spirit and celebration of joy.

***"Come slow.
Come home.
Come and find
your joy again."***

By South African Tourism

CAPE TOWN

NAMED 2025'S BEST CITY ON EARTH

Cape Town was named 'Best City on Earth' by readers of The Telegraph newspaper in The Telegraph Travel Awards. More than 20 000 UK travellers cast their votes, placing Cape Town ahead of global destinations like Seville and Sydney. It's the seventh time the city has claimed this coveted title, and the second time it has been crowned the world's best city in 2025, after claiming the same title from Time Out magazine readers earlier in the year. The Telegraph Travel Awards are a set of annual awards that recognise excellence in the travel industry, and cover various categories that include airlines, cruise operators, hotels, ski companies, and destinations, with a focus on reader-nominated favourites. Journalists at The Telegraph said that "Cape Town's consistency makes it an easy pick", adding that "very few places on earth can match the city's photogenic qualities". This includes the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, the beaches of Camps Bay and the Cape of Good Hope. The British publication also highlighted the winelands to the east of the city, with fine vintages in Stellenbosch and Franschhoek. In the Time Out rankings, Cape Town rose from second place in 2024 to claiming the number one spot for 2025. The Time Out rankings are based on the opinions of 18 500 people worldwide, with survey questions based on food, culture, affordability, happiness and overall city vibe. The folks at Time Out said that Cape Town's rank was no surprise as locals and visitors enjoy the city's African penguins, world class wines and the cool neighbourhood of East City.

By South African Tourism



LAUNCH OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN

ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY (SAAO) VISITOR CENTRE



In an effort to connect science and research more closely with communities, the Department of Tourism, along with the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), inaugurated the Remote Operations Centre and the Visitor Centre at the South African Astronomical Observatory (NRF-SAAO), operated by the National Research Foundation in Cape Town. These key infrastructure projects were officially opened on 09 July 2025 by Tourism Minister, Ms. Patricia de Lille, along with Minister Prof. Blade Nzimande, his Deputy Minister, Dr. Nomalungelo Gina, and NRF CEO, Dr Fulufhelo Nelwamondo.

Key attendees included members of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Science, Technology, and Innovation, led by Chairperson Ms. Tsakani Shiviti; CEOs and board chairpersons of several DSTI entities; senior government officials; and representatives from the research community. Significantly, over 100 learners mainly from historically disadvantaged schools participated, experiencing interactive demonstrations and guided tours of the new centres.

The launch of these facilities forms part of the outreach programme of the DSTI's 2025/26 Budget Vote Debate, which was tabled earlier that day in Parliament. As South Africa continues to position itself as a global hub for astronomy, investments such as these further strengthen the country's scientific infrastructure while fostering greater public interest and participation in science.

The NRF-SAAO Remote Operations Centre is a state-of-the-art facility that enables scientists to remotely control and monitor telescopes and instruments at sites such as the Sutherland Observatory, located in the Northern Cape. This leap in operational capability improves efficiency, reduces logistical costs, and enhances South Africa's competitiveness in the global field of optical astronomy.

In addition, the launch of the NRF-SAAO Visitor Centre reflects a growing priority for public outreach and science communication. Designed as an accessible, engaging space for learners, tourists, and the public, the Centre will offer guided tours, exhibitions, and educational programmes that highlight astronomy and inspire a new generation of scientists.

Dr Shamilla Chettiar, Deputy Director General: Destination Development at the Department of Tourism, delivered a message of support on behalf of Minister De Lille. She said, "The launch of the Visitor Centre marks a major milestone in the implementation of the National Astro Tourism Strategy and Implementation Plan, which Cabinet approved in May this year. The facility stands as a testament to how science and tourism can collaborate to unlock new frontiers in experiential and educational travel." The Department of Tourism contributed R737,000 towards this Centre.

Minister Nzimande, in his keynote address, commended the NRF-SAAO for its commitment to expanding the frontiers of astronomy and public science engagement. He said: "Astronomy is one of the government's strategic priorities, and over the past three decades, there have been significant investments in building and upgrading the country's astronomy infrastructure. It is these investments that have made it possible for our country to earn the privilege of co-hosting one of the biggest scientific projects of our time the Square Kilometre Array."

"The two facilities are an important addition to the country's astronomy infrastructure," said Minister Nzimande. "They also serve to advance the objectives of our country's Astro Tourism Strategy. Most importantly, they are an implementation of the Department's ethos of placing science, technology, and innovation at the centre of government, education, industry, and society."

He concluded, "We wish to achieve several things, one of them being increased awareness of the work that is being done by our public science institutions and scientists, and inculcating a deeper appreciation for the value of science among communities. Therefore, by involving the learners and schools in today's event, we are addressing the aspects of 'education' and 'society' as reflected in our department's vision."

By Annah Mashille

TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION

Tourism touches the lives of all South Africans, and in turn, each of us influences the tourism experience. From arrival to departure, we all play a role in shaping a visitor's journey. Every South African is therefore a vital link in the tourism value chain. Tourism Month is however more than just a celebration of travel; it's a powerful reminder of how important tourism is to our economy, our communities, and our national identity.

Tourism Month in South Africa is not just a commemoration, it's a powerful tool for economic upliftment and social transformation. By encouraging travel within our borders, we grow our economy, create jobs, empower communities, and build a stronger, more united South Africa.

Tourism Month takes place annually in September. Since 1980, UN Tourism, previously known as the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), has celebrated World Tourism Day on 27 September, based on a global theme. Although not gazetted in South Africa, the Department of Tourism celebrates

September as Tourism Month. The theme for 2025 is *"Tourism and Sustainable Transformation."*

The purpose of highlighting Tourism Month is to raise awareness about domestic tourism activities planned as to encourage South Africans to travel within their own country, and to foster cultural appreciation.

While we celebrate this annual event, we are reminded that tourism is not a once off occasion; it must be lived and supported every day. Tourism is ever present, and it remains the heartbeat of a people-driven sector all year round.

The 2025 UN Tourism theme, focusing on transformation, highlights the need to strengthen the focus of the Department's sector transformation programmes beyond policy interventions and to consolidate state resources through partnerships to create targeted initiatives for inclusive growth and economic transformation. This theme aligns with South Africa's G20 Presidency.

Why is Tourism so important to us?

Firstly, tourism boosts our economy. Every tourist, whether local or international, brings money into our towns, cities, and rural areas. This supports small businesses, creates jobs, and helps many South Africans put food on the table. From tourist guides to hotel staff, from craft markets to transport operators, tourism gives life to many sectors. It also inspires young South Africans to become part of a growing industry with global reach and local impact.

Secondly, Tourism Month encourages South Africans to explore their own country. Through special deals and affordable travel options, more people discover the hidden gems of our land places they may have never thought to visit. This not only fosters pride in our home, but it also supports development in rural and lesser-known areas.





Thirdly, tourism celebrates our rich and diverse cultural heritage. South Africa is a rainbow nation, and tourism allows us to showcase our traditions, languages, music, food, and stories to the world and to each other. It helps us learn from one another and grow as a united people.

Lastly, tourism opens doors, especially for our youth and women. It provides opportunities for training, skills development, and entrepreneurship, showcasing the transformative power of tourism.

Tourism further empowers communities. Local people are no longer just observers; they become storytellers, performers, and hosts. Tourism provides them with a platform to showcase their culture, share their history, and take ownership of their identity.

To promote growth in domestic tourism, the Department coordinates a comprehensive campaign every September in collaboration with provincial tourism departments, government partners, and industry stakeholders. Each year, the Department also hosts a series of events in partnership with the province selected to host the annual Tourism Month celebrations, aligning with the UN theme for that year. The campaign kicks off in August with a media launch led by the Minister of Tourism, marking the official start of Tourism Month. These activities culminate in the World Tourism Day celebration on 27 September, held in Gauteng, the designated host province..

South African Tourism's Domestic Tourism division runs an annual campaign called Travel Week, designed to inspire South Africans to explore and enjoy the diverse offerings of our tourism sector. During Travel Week, a variety of tourism products are made available to the public at discounted prices. This initiative effectively sparks interest and conversation about domestic travel across the country

The Tourism Month media launch and World Tourism Day celebrations are deliberately held in less-visited areas to



promote geographic diversity and inspire domestic tourists to explore new and lesser-known destinations.

Tourism Month is not just about travel, it's about growth, unity, pride, and opportunity. Let us use this time to celebrate South Africa, support our local tourism, and continue building a nation that welcomes the world with open arms

By Natasha Rockman

TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT CONSTITUTION HILL



On 27 September 2025, the Department of Tourism hosted a vibrant celebration of World Tourism Day at The People's Park, situated within the historic grounds of Constitution Hill in Johannesburg. Under the global theme "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation," the event brought together tourism leaders, stakeholders and local communities under Johannesburg's iconic skyline for a day of reflection and celebration.

The United Nations highlights the important role played by tourism in economic development by being a catalyst for social progress, employment, while also delivering education and creating new opportunities. It is on this premise that this annual event aims to shine the spotlight on tourism.

The formal programme was expertly led by Ms Phemelo Motene, a seasoned

broadcaster, who brought warmth and eloquence as she guided the audience through the day's proceedings. In her welcome remarks, she congratulated the Johannesburg Tourism Council team who have launched a new brand identity campaign, "Welcome to Johannesburg", showcasing the city's unique charm as not only a leading destination for Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Events, but also a city blessed with rich history and heritage. It was only fitting that Constitutional Hill, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, played host to this celebration, as it stands as one of South Africa's enduring beacons of the country's transformative democracy.

Deputy Chief Justice (DCJ) of South Africa, Mr Dunstan Mlambo took to the podium to deliver an address on the theme "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation". The DCJ painted a vivid picture of how Constitution Hill, once an oppressive site

of incarceration, has become a sanctuary of the country's democracy and dialogue. While highlighting the transformative role that tourism can play, he also emphasised the importance of good governance for tourism to contribute meaningfully to South Africa's aspirations as enshrined in the country's Constitution. "The Constitution's preamble calls on all of us to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person. This is a call to transformation", said DCJ Mlambo.

His words were deeply emotive, linking the soul of South Africa's constitutional values with the spirit of sustainable tourism. "As we stand here on Constitution Hill, reflecting on South Africa's progress, this site itself tells a story of hope. Constitution Hill reminds us of how far we have come. It links the pain of our past to the premise of our future. In just over three decades of our democracy, we have established a thriving tourism industry and a constitutional democracy that serves as a model for the world. Yet, our journey is far from complete. Sustainable transformation is a path we must walk together", added DCJ Mlambo.

The programme then proceeded with an address by the Gauteng MEC for Economic Development, Mr Lebogang Maile, who affirmed the province's commitment to positioning tourism as a catalyst for job creation, youth development, and township revitalisation. MEC Maile highlighted the country's tourism figures, citing the important role that the sector plays towards the country's GDP. Furthermore, he affirmed Gauteng's plans for tourism growth, which include infrastructure development and attracting international events such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix. "The expansion of the Gautrain Project for example, to include key townships and tourism hubs is a transformation lever, connecting communities to opportunity and visitors to the authentic heartbeat of our province", said MEC Maile.

"The Vaal, OR Tambo and Lanseria Smart City SEZs are set to unlock the massive tourism infrastructure green fields projects of Vaal Marina, Jewellery City, 5-Star Hotel in the Cradle and Sports Entertainment Infrastructure in these corridors resulting in substantial job opportunities covering the construction, operation, and upkeep stages", added MEC Maile.



A lively art performance brought energy to the festivities celebrating Joburg's history and the country's diversity. It was a fitting prelude to the day's keynote address, delivered by Minister of Tourism, Ms Patricia de Lille.

Minister De Lille expressed the need to give meaning to this year's theme "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation" by ensuring that tourism benefits reach beyond metros and coastal hubs, but are widely shared to even villages and townships. "This transformation is not abstract. It is visible when a family-owned guesthouse in Bizana is fully booked, when walking tours by a young entrepreneur in Mamelodi tell our stories with pride and when a small café in Mpumalanga becomes a must-visit stop", said the Minister.

Minister De Lille also encouraged South Africans to explore the country and travel. She highlighted impressive travel figures for this year, showcasing that the country's

tourism is on the rise. "In July 2025, we welcomed over 880 000 international visitors, a 26% increase compared to the same month last year," said Minister De Lille. She indicated that these figures will be boosted further by the launch of the ETA, with an expected increase of over 1 million international arrivals and creating between 80 000 – 100 000 jobs.

The Minister concluded her keynote address, encouraging South Africans to travel domestically and help build a sustainable and transformative tourism sector. "We are building a tourism sector that is not just bigger, but better. Not just profitable, but inclusive. Not just competitive, but sustainable," the Minister concluded.

An announcement was made confirming Johannesburg and Durban as the host cities for Meetings Africa and Africa's Travel Indaba, respectively, for the next five years, commencing in 2026.

After the formal programme, guests were welcomed into a vibrant and engaging Sustainability Village Market, a major feature of the celebration designed to showcase responsible tourism practices, empower local Micro, Small and Medium enterprises (MSMEs), and enhance the overall visitor experience. The village brought together a rich and eclectic mix of tourism and hospitality products, local artisans, crafters, and eco-conscious entrepreneurs, creating a true celebration of South African innovation and creativity.

The day concluded with guided tours of Constitution Hill and the Jozi My Jozi Inner City Tours, giving guests an intimate encounter with Johannesburg's layered history and dynamic urban revival. These experiences underscored the day's message: that tourism, when inclusive, responsible, and people-centred, can be a transformative tool for storytelling, healing, and empowerment.

By Sifiso Halama



ATRIUM BOUTIQUE HOTEL OPENS ITS DOORS

A TRIUMPH FOR WOMEN IN TOURISM

In 2015, Mrs Lesetja Johanna Mukwevho dreamt of establishing more than just a hotel - a luxury boutique hotel that embodies a sanctuary of elegance and comfort beneath the golden skies of Polokwane in Limpopo. Mrs Mukwevho, together with the Mukwevho Group, envisioned a space that emulates serenity and an experience that encapsulates South Africa's vibrant spirit. A decade later, that dream has become a reality.

The official launch of the Atrium Boutique Hotel took place on 6 August 2025, marking a significant milestone in the realisation of what was once just a dream. This achievement was made possible through strategic funding partnerships, which included the Department of Tourism's Tourism Transformation Fund and Tourism Equity Fund, as well as the National Empowerment Fund and the Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency.

The launch also served as a celebration of women's role in contributing to transformative and sustainable tourism businesses. Speaking at the event, the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Maggie Soty, said: "The Atrium Boutique Hotel is a fully operational tourism development, highlighting the significant role of women entrepreneurs in fostering economic growth". Her statement echoed the



importance of women-led businesses and their participation in the tourism economy.

The 4-star Atrium Boutique Hotel is 100% black-owned and 60% women-owned, which signifies gender inclusivity in the

tourism sector. This new development has already created 16 permanent jobs, contributing to the growth of the tourism economy and youth empowerment in the Limpopo province. Mrs Mukwevho expressed the importance of youth empowerment, saying that many young people employed at the hotel, have also received on-the-job training.

The visionary design of the hotel features 16 luxury rooms that exude sophistication and authentic hospitality. Additional facilities include a 100-seater restaurant, a 100-seater conference venue, a boardroom, and a bar.

While celebrating this remarkable achievement, Mrs Mukwevho and the Mukwevho Group plan on taking their already sophisticated establishment to greater heights. Their aim is to expand on their amenities, which include extra rooms and spa facilities.

From just a dream, women like Mrs Mukwevho are proving that inclusive, women-led tourism businesses can drive sustainable economic growth and empower communities. Her story is a beacon, proving that with passion and purpose, even the boldest dreams can become a beautiful reality.

By Tiayana Afrikaner

WOMEN IN TOURISM

EMPOWERING WOMEN, ENRICHING TOURISM

Women in Tourism Western Cape (WITWC) stands as a proud, member driven movement that recognises, uplifts, and supports women in this vibrant sector. From entrepreneurs and creatives to community leaders and corporate professionals, our members are as diverse as the industry itself but united by a shared commitment to growth, inclusion, and excellence.

With courage, collaboration, and heart, our members contribute meaningfully each and every day. WITWC has hosted a range of meaningful engagements, including:

- **A Marketing Masterclass and Member Breakaways Session**, where women were encouraged to promote their brands, own their value, and collaborate.
- powerful **Diversity and Inclusion workshop**, designed to hold space for the real conversations and dialogue and to remind us that we need to break the stigma.
- Intimate **Connection Breakfast session**, where members could

connect, showcase their businesses, and engage on relevant opportunities.

- Representation at **WTM Africa** for the fourth consecutive year. Our presence at WTM was more than symbolic it was strategic. It offered an opportunity to amplify the voice of women-led tourism businesses, highlight the unique value we bring to the industry, and advocate for partnerships that benefit women across the tourism value chain.

Through it all, four core pillars guide our work:

1. **Visibility** – Creating platforms for women to be seen, heard, and celebrated.
2. **Capacity Building** – Equipping our members with practical tools, knowledge, and mentorship.
3. **Support and Partnerships** – Prioritising collaboration and growth.
4. **Networking** – Encouraging cross-sector connections, referrals, and partnerships.

WITWC is not a networking group it's a movement. A space where women show up fully, where we pour into each other, and where we choose community over competition.

As we celebrated Women's Month, we recognise those who paved the way, acknowledge the work still to be done, and renew our commitment to building a sector where women can thrive not only in numbers but in influence.

To every woman who is navigating this industry with grace, grit, and vision, we see you. And if you're not yet part of our WITWC chapter, we warmly invite you to join us. There is room at OUR table.

Together, with purpose and unwavering solidarity, we will go so much further.

By Women in Tourism





SATO VITO

KWAZULU-NATAL ANNOUNCED TO HOST TOWNSHIP AND VILLAGE INTRA-TRADE CONFERENCE 2025

KwaZulu-Natal has officially been announced as the host province for the highly anticipated Township and Village Intra-Trade Conference 2025, scheduled to take place on 12 and 13 November 2025. This announcement marks another significant milestone for township and village tourism development in South Africa.



Hosted by Tourism & Film KwaZulu-Natal, the 2025 conference will bring together industry stakeholders, tourism product owners, government officials, private sector representatives, and thought leaders under one roof. A pre-event networking session is also planned to offer delegates, partners, and stakeholders a valuable opportunity to connect ahead of the main conference proceedings.

Mr. Itumeleng Magongoa, Project Director for the conference and Head of Business Development & Communications at SATOVITO, emphasized the growing impact of the initiative. "The Township and Village Intra-trade Conference continues to be a powerful catalyst for grassroots tourism development. We look forward to building on the momentum from Mpumalanga in 2024, and we are confident KwaZulu-Natal will deliver an even more impactful experience for our delegates," said Magongoa.

The 2024 edition of the conference, hosted in Mpumalanga, saw a surge in participation and impactful discussions, driving meaningful partnerships and actionable outcomes. Previous editions have been successfully held in Limpopo (2022) and the Free State (2023), affirming the growing significance and reach of the Intra-trade initiative.

This year's 2025 conference is expected to welcome approximately 850 delegates, representing a wide cross-section of the tourism value chain. Township and village tourism products will be invited to participate via provincial tourism agencies and departments, ensuring equitable representation from across the country.

Notably, the South African Township and Village Tourism Organisation (SATO VITO) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with South African Tourism, marking a strategic partnership to further advance the development and visibility of community-based tourism. As part of this partnership, the South African Convention Bureau facilitated a transparent and competitive bidding process, during which provinces and municipalities responded with great enthusiasm and support.

Looking ahead, SATOVITO has also confirmed that it will host the second Township and Village Tourism Expo from 28–29 January 2026, further strengthening its commitment to promoting inclusive and sustainable tourism development.

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